ARTICLE

Quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic: A Syntactic Perspective

Fatema Alharthy [ID]

Department of English and Literature, College of Arts and Letters, University of Bisha, Bisha 67714, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the syntactic and semantic behavior of quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA), focusing on their structural roles and functions. Data were collected from stretches of discourse in syntax class interactions and social media content. The analysis explores independent quantifiers, pre-nominal and post-nominal constructions, partitive structures, relative clauses, and modifiers, using a comparative approach with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and other Arabic dialects. The findings reveal that BCA quantifiers share certain features with MSA but also exhibit unique regional characteristics. Unlike MSA, where quantifiers can function independently with greater flexibility, BCA requires the definite article (*al-*) for quantifiers to function as standalone nominal phrases. Pre-nominal quantifiers form construct state structures, with agreement aligning with the complement noun. Post-nominal quantifiers, resembling attributive adjectives, often include pronominal clitics to ensure agreement. Additionally, BCA distinguishes between distributive and collective readings of quantifiers, with agreement patterns adjusting accordingly. The study also shows that BCA allows more flexibility in adjective placement and prefers adverbial modifiers over descriptive adjectives, differing from the more rigid syntax of MSA. These findings highlight the interplay between syntax and semantics in BCA, showcasing its unique regional features within the Arabic dialect continuum. The study enhances our understanding of Arabic dialectal variation and emphasizes the importance of regional differences in shaping the linguistic diversity of Arabic. Further research could explore sociocultural influences and language contact effects on the development of BCA and similar dialects.

Keywords: Quantifiers; Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA); Modern Standard Arabic (MSA); Arabic Dialects

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Fatema Alharthy, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts and Letters, Bisha University, Bisha 67714, Saudi Arabia;
Email: fharthey@ub.edu.sa

1. Introduction

Quantifiers, as linguistic expressions, are fundamental to human language, serving to convey information about quantity, amount, or extent in relation to nouns. Universally present across linguistic systems, quantifiers specify numerical or proportional relationships and are broadly categorized into universal quantifiers (e.g., "all," "every") and existential quantifiers (e.g., "some," "a few"). Additional types include cardinal quantifiers, which denote specific numbers (e.g., "two," "five"), and proportional quantifiers, expressing fractions or proportions (e.g., "half," "most"). In natural language, quantifiers are intricately tied to both syntax and semantics. Their placement and interaction with other sentence elements can significantly influence meaning and interpretation. For instance, in English, the position of a quantifier like "all" (e.g., "All students passed" vs. "Students all passed") may subtly shift the emphasis or scope. Cross-linguistic research highlights considerable variation in how quantifiers are encoded, reflecting differences in agreement rules, word order, and morphological markers across languages. Beyond syntax and semantics, quantifiers have pragmatic and cognitive dimensions. Speakers utilize them to express precision, approximation, or uncertainty, while listeners interpret their meanings through contextual and shared knowledge. These multifaceted features make quantifiers a rich subject of investigation in linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and computational linguistics. Although quantifiers have been studied extensively in many languages, including Arabic, little attention has been given to their use in the Saudi Arabic Southern dialects, particularly the dialect of Bisha city. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA), an understudied Saudi dialect. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the broader understanding of quantifier use in Arabic dialectology and to the cross-linguistic study of quantification.

The current study aims to address the following research questions:

(1) In which contexts do quantifiers occur in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA)?

(2) Does BCA employ quantifiers in the same manner as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)?

(3) Does BCA utilize quantifiers similarly to other Arabic dialects?

This research is particularly valuable for linguistics and translation students, as it enhances their comprehension of quantifier usage across various contexts in spoken Arabic dialects. By identifying the functions and contexts of quantifiers in BCA, learners can discern distinctions and similarities between MSA and other Arabic dialects. Additionally, the study sheds light on the application of quantifiers in spoken Arabic, introducing students to the process of linguistic simplification within BCA.

2. Literature Review

Quantifiers are linguistic elements that express quantities or amounts in relation to nouns. In the context of Arabic, a language with a rich syntactic and morphological system, quantifiers hold significant importance in conveying precise meanings. The study of quantifiers in Arabic involves their definitions, classifications, syntactic behavior, and variation across Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Arabic dialects. This literature review delves into these aspects to provide a comprehensive understanding of quantifiers in the Arabic language. This review examines the definitions and classifications of quantifiers in MSA and Arabic dialects, highlighting their syntactic properties and semantic roles. It also delves into the variation of quantifier usage across different dialects and analyzes recent scholarly contributions to the field, including studies on acquisition, computational linguistics, and sociolinguistics. By exploring these dimensions, this review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of quantifiers in Arabic, offering insights into their theoretical implications and practical applications.

2.1. Definition and Classification of Quantifiers in Modern Standard Arabic

In Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), quantifiers are defined as words or phrases that denote the amount or number of entities referenced by a noun. Common examples include universal quantifiers such as " كلّ " (*kull*, "all") and existential quantifiers like " بعض " (*baṣḍ*, "some") or " أحد " (*aḥad*, "one"). Quantifiers in MSA are often classified into two main categories: cardinal quantifiers, which specify exact numbers (e.g., " خمسة " [*khamsa*, "five"]), and non-cardinal quantifiers, which indicate relative amounts or proportions (e.g., " كثير " [*kathīr*, "many"]) Ryding[1]. These categories

align with the broader linguistic typology of quantifiers found in other languages Chierchia[2]. Quantifiers in MSA are governed by strict syntactic rules. For instance, cardinal quantifiers typically precede the noun they modify and agree in gender and case with it, as in " ثلاثة كتب " (*thalātha kutub*, "three books") for masculine nouns and " ثلاث بنات " (*thalāth banāt*, "three girls") for feminine nouns Ryding[1]. Non-cardinal quantifiers, however, may exhibit different syntactic behavior, often functioning as determiners or adverbs. The interaction between quantifiers and definiteness is another critical area in MSA; quantifiers like " بعض " (*baṣḍ*, "some") can co-occur with definite or indefinite nouns, altering the interpretation of the phrase Asiri[3].

2.2. Quantifiers in Arabic Dialects

Arabic dialects, characterized by their significant regional variation, exhibit diverse treatments of quantifiers. Dialects in the Levant, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula often simplify or alter the syntactic rules governing quantifiers compared to MSA Brustad[4]. For example, in Gulf Arabic, the use of "كلّ" (kull, "all") frequently omits the need for strict agreement in definiteness, as in " كل الناس " (kull al-nās, "all the people"), a structure also found in MSA but with slightly different usage nuances Bakir[5]. In the Southern Saudi dialects, quantifiers often exhibit unique morphological forms and syntactic flexibility. For instance, speakers might use phrases like " كثار " (kithār, "many") and " قليل " (qalīl, "few") in ways that diverge from MSA syntax Al-Azraqi[6]. These dialects sometimes prioritize context and pragmatics over strict grammatical concord Brustad[4]. Moreover, the influence of local linguistic traditions and contact with other languages (e.g., Mehri or Jibbali) can further shape quantifier use in these regions Brustad[4]. North African dialects, such as Moroccan Arabic, simplify numerical agreement, often treating numbers as invariable regardless of gender. For example, the numeral "خمسة" (khamsa, "five") is used uniformly, whereas in MSA, gender agreement would require the use of "خمس" (khams) for feminine nouns Ryding[1]. Similarly, existential quantifiers like " شويّة " (shwayya, "a little") are used colloquially across many dialects to indicate small quantities, a usage not commonly found in formal MSA Alharbi[7].

2.3. Comparative Analyses of Quantifiers in MSA and Dialects

Several studies have highlighted the syntactic and semantic differences between quantifiers in MSA and Arabic dialects. For instance, Brustad[4] notes that quantifiers in dialects are often less constrained by case marking and word order compared to MSA, reflecting a broader trend of syntactic simplification in spoken varieties[8]. This flexibility allows for greater variation in meaning and emphasis depending on the speaker's intent. Additionally, Brustad and Bakir[4, 5] explores how quantifiers in Gulf Arabic interact with verb agreement, noting that plural quantifiers can trigger singular verb forms in certain pragmatic contexts, a phenomenon absent in MSA Ryding[1].

2.4. Recent Studies on Quantifiers

Recent research on quantifiers in Arabic has expanded the understanding of their syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties. One notable study by Alzahrani[9] investigates quantifiers and the interaction between quantifiers and negation in Hijazi Arabic, revealing how negated quantifier phrases convey nuanced meanings distinct from their affirmative counterparts. Similarly, Alabdulkarim[10] explores the acquisition of quantifiers among Arabic-speaking children, showing that cognitive and linguistic development influences the order in which children acquire universal and existential quantifiers. Alzahrani[9] provides an in-depth analysis of quantifiers in Hijazi Arabic, focusing on their syntactic behavior and semantic interpretations. The study highlights unique patterns in the use of quantifiers such as "كل" (*kull*, "all") and " بعض " (*baṣḍ*, "some") in colloquial contexts, particularly their interaction with negation and definiteness. Alzahrani's findings reveal that Hijazi Arabic demonstrates a blend of features from both MSA and regional dialects, offering insights into the dynamic nature of Arabic quantifiers in spoken varieties. In computational linguistics, Farghaly A.[11] discusses the challenges of parsing Arabic quantifiers in computational linguistics, emphasizing their dialectal and semantic variations. The position of quantifiers in Arabic sentences affects their syntactic and semantic roles, complicating machine translation and NLP tasks. Ambiguities in scope and reference further hinder accurate interpretation by computational models. Farghaly A.[11] stresses the need

for context-sensitive algorithms to effectively address these complexities in both standard and dialectal Arabic.

2.5. Theoretical Implications and Applications

The study of quantifiers in Arabic has implications for both theoretical linguistics and applied fields. The syntactic and semantic properties of quantifiers contribute to our understanding of Universal Grammar and language typology. By comparing quantifiers in Arabic with those in other Semitic and non-Semitic languages, linguists can uncover patterns that inform broader theories of syntax and semantics. In applied linguistics, quantifiers play a crucial role in natural language processing (NLP) applications, such as machine translation and speech recognition. Understanding the nuances of quantifier use in MSA and dialects is essential for developing accurate and culturally sensitive linguistic models. For instance, translating Arabic quantifiers into languages with different quantifier systems, such as English or French, requires careful attention to syntactic and semantic equivalence.

Quantifiers in Arabic represent a compelling intersection of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. While Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) provides a standardized framework for analyzing quantifier behavior, the rich diversity of Arabic dialects unveils significant linguistic variation. Further research into these understudied dialects is essential to deepen our understanding of quantifiers within the broader context of the Arabic language and cross-linguistically. Building on previous studies, this research seeks to expand the scope of inquiry into Arabic dialects, contributing valuable insights to the global study of quantification.

3. Materials and Methods

In the following subsections, the methodology employed in the study and the process of data collection will be outlined. A detailed syntactic description of the quantifiers in BCA will then be presented, providing a comprehensive analysis of their usage and constructions.

3.1. Methodology

This study aims to investigate the use of quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA), focusing on their applica-tion across various contexts. Data were gathered from two primary sources: written recordings of interactions during grammar classes and a curated selection of social media content, including posts by influencers and comments from their followers on platforms such as TikTok and X. The quantifiers examined in this study include *kull* ("all"), *baʿḍ* ("some"), and *aktar* ("most"). These lexical items were systematically categorized according to their use within different syntactic constructions. A comparative analysis was also conducted with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and other Arabic dialects. To ensure the reliability and accuracy of the data collection and classification process, the study was validated by three professors with expertise in Arabic Syntax, English linguistics, and English-Arabic translation. The findings were analyzed qualitatively, offering valuable insights into the nuances of quantifier usage in the BCA context.

3.2. Data Description

Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA), like other varieties of Arabic, structures its phrases around core elements: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and particles. In nominal phrases, the noun is typically the head, modified by adjectives, posses-sives, or quantifiers. Verb phrases are similarly centered around the verb, which agrees with the subject in number, gender, and person. A unique feature of BCA is its preser-vation of construct state (CS) formations, which are used extensively in possessive and quantifier constructions. This section delves into the behavior of quantifiers in BCA, ana-lyzing their syntactic placement, agreement patterns, and semantic interpretations. Quantifiers in BCA, like *kull* ("all"), *baʿḍ* ("some"), and *aktar* ("most"), play a critical role in modifying noun phrases. They exhibit various constructions depending on definiteness, plurality, and syntactic context. These quantifiers can occur in three primary configurations: independently, pre-nominally, or post-nominally.

3.2.1. Independent Quantifiers

When used independently in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA), quantifiers must be preceded by the definite article (*al-*) to function as a standalone nominal phrase. For exam-ple, الكل جا الحفله   *al-kull jā al-ḥaflah* ("Everyone came to the party") is grammatical, while the omission of the def-inite article, as in كل جا الحفله *kull jā al-ḥaflah*, renders

the sentence ungrammatical. This requirement ensures that quantifiers in BCA adhere to the structural rules of nominal phrases. In contrast, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) allows more flexibility with independent quantifiers. In MSA, *kull* can take an indefinite suffix like *-n*, enabling it to function grammatically without the definite article, as in الحفله كلن جا *kull-u-n jā al-ḥaflah* ("Each one came to the party"). This distinction highlights a simplification in BCA syntax compared to the broader grammatical options available in MSA.

3.2.2. Pre-Nominal Quantifiers in Construct State

Pre-nominal quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA) typically form a construct state (CS) construction, where the quantifier serves as the head and is followed by a complement noun. This complement noun can be either definite or indefinite. For example: *kull al-awlād rāḥū* (لاد راحوا كل الأو) – "All of the boys went." Or *kull walad rāḥ maʿumah* (راح مع أمه كل ولد) – "Each boy went with his mother." In these constructions, the verb agrees in number with the complement noun rather than the quantifier. For instance: kull al-banāt rāḥū (كل البنات راحوا) – "All of the girls went." Here, the verb retains masculine plural agreement, even though the complement noun (al-banāt, "the girls") is feminine plural. This pattern simplifies the more complex rules seen in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Adjective modifiers in BCA follow the entire CS structure and agree in definiteness with the complement noun. For example: kull al-awlād al-ʾadhkiyāʾ (كل الأولاد الأذكياء) – "All of the intelligent boys." Or kull al-banāt al-ḥilwāt (كل البنات الحلوات) – "All of the beautiful girls." Examples such as بس الاقليه رفظوا الغالبيه وافقوا، al-ghālibiyya wāfaqū bas al-aqalliyya rafzū) "The majority agreed, but the minority refused." (also occur. These phrases feature quantifiers taking the form of regular nouns.

Interestingly, unlike MSA, BCA permits flexibility in adjective placement. Placing the adjective before the noun or agreeing it with the quantifier alone is also considered grammatical. For example: kull al-awlād al-shūṭār (لاد الشطار كل الأو) – "All of the smart boys." This permissiveness in adjectival modification and agreement patterns represents another area where BCA diverges from the stricter syntactic rules of MSA, illustrating a simplified yet functionally robust grammatical system.

3.2.3. Post-Nominal Quantifiers

Post-nominal quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA) function similarly to attributive adjectives, agreeing in definiteness and sometimes gender with the preceding noun. For example: *al-awlād kulluhum rāḥū* (لاد كلهم راحوا الأو) – "The boys all went." Or *al-banāt kullahum sāfarū* (البنات كلهم سافروا) – "The girls all traveled." These constructions often involve pronominal clitics attached to the quantifier (*kulluhum*), which corefer with the preceding noun in terms of gender, number, and definiteness. Similarly, quantifiers like *baʿḍ* ("some") follow the same pattern: *al-ʿummāl baʿḍuhum sāfarū* (بعضهم سافروا العمال) – "Some of the workers traveled." Quantifiers in BCA exhibit flexibility in agreement patterns, influenced by the intended meaning of the sentence—whether distributive (referring to individuals) or collective (referring to the group as a whole). For example: Distributive: *al-awlād kulluhum rāḥū* (الأولاد كلهم راحوا) – "Each of the boys went." Collective: *al-awlād kulluhum rāḥū maʿan* (الأولاد كلهم راحوا معاً) – "The boys all went together." This flexibility highlights the nuanced interaction between syntax and semantics in BCA quantifiers, reflecting both shared features with other Arabic dialects and unique regional characteristics.

3.2.4. Distributive vs. Collective Agreement

Quantifiers like kull in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA) can trigger either singular or plural agreement, depending on their semantic role. A distributive reading, which focuses on individual members of the group, aligns with singular agreement. For example: al-kull jā al-ḥafl (الكل جاء الحفل) – "Everyone came to the event." In contrast, a collective reading, which treats the group as a single entity, aligns with plural agreement: al-kull jāw al-ḥafl (الكل جاؤوا الحفل) – "All came to the event together." Similarly, collective nouns such as farīq ("team") and jīl ("generation") display this alternation in agreement patterns. When viewed as a singular entity, they take singular agreement: al-jīl akhtalaf (اختلف الجيل) – "The generation changed." However, when the focus shifts to the group acting collectively, plural agreement is used: al-farīq rāḥū (الفريق راحوا) – "The team left (as a group)." This alternation in agreement demonstrates the semantic flexibility inherent in BCA, where grammatical structure reflects subtle distinctions between individual and group-oriented interpretations. It also aligns with similar pat-

terns in other Arabic dialects, highlighting a shared linguistic foundation while preserving regional nuances.

3.2.5. Quantifiers with Singular and Plural Complements

The quantifier *kull* in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA) exhibits different meanings based on the grammatical features of the noun it modifies. When combined with singular indefinite nouns, *kull* conveys the meaning of "every," emphasizing individual members of a set. For example: *kull walad akal* (كل ولد أكل) – "Every boy ate." When *kull* modifies plural definite nouns, it means "all," referring to the entire group collectively: *kull al-ʿummāl sāfarū* (وا كل العمال سافر) – "All of the workers traveled." When paired with definite singular nouns, *kull* takes on the meaning of "whole," referring to the entirety of the singular entity. This is evident in: *kull al-yawm rāḥ* (كل اليوم راح) – "The whole day passed." Alternatively, *rāḥ al-yawm kullah* (اليوم كله راح) expresses the same idea with the quantifier placed after the noun for emphasis. These patterns illustrate the versatility of *kull* in BCA, where its meaning adapts according to the definiteness, singularity, or plurality of the noun it modifies. This flexibility aligns with similar usages in other Arabic dialects and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), while reflecting unique regional preferences in word order and emphasis.

3.2.6. Quantifiers with Relative Clauses

In Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA), quantifiers can combine with relative clauses to form construct state (CS) constructions, allowing for nuanced expressions of partitivity or universality. For example: *kull illi jā akal/akalū* (اللي جا كل أكلوا/أكل) – "All who came ate." Here, *kull* functions as the head of the construct, and the relative clause *illi jā* ("who came") serves as the complement. The verb agrees in number with the implicit subject of the relative clause, allowing both singular (*akal*) and plural (*akalū*) forms depending on context. Similarly, the quantifier *baʿḍ* ("some") can be used in such constructions: *baʿḍ illi shuft akal/akalū* (أكلوا/أكل بعض اللي شفت) – "Some of whom I saw ate." These structures highlight the syntactic flexibility of BCA quantifiers, enabling them to head complex phrases while maintaining agreement and meaning. This feature is also observed in other Arabic dialects and reflects shared linguistic roots with

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), where similar CS constructions are common. However, BCA's allowance for verb agreement variations adds a layer of contextual adaptability, enhancing its expressive capacity.

3.2.7. Partitive Quantifiers

Partitive constructions in Arabic typically involve the preposition *min* ("from"), indicating a subset relationship. For example: aktar al-ʿummāl sāfarū ("Most of the workers traveled"). baʿḍ min al-banāt rāḥū or baʿḍ al-banāt rāḥū ("Some of the girls went"). In these examples, *min* or its omission creates a subset relationship between the whole (the workers, the girls) and the part (most, some). When partitive quantifiers are used post-nominally, they function similarly to adjectives: ʿummāl aktar sāfarū ("More workers traveled"), or banāt galīl rāḥū ("Few girls went"). Here, the quantifiers (aktar, galīl) describe the noun (ʿummāl, banāt) and appear after it, directly modifying it in a descriptive manner, similar to adjectives. This highlights the flexible nature of partitive constructions in expressing quantity or subset relationships within a sentence.

3.2.8. Modifiers and Adverbs

Quantifiers in BCA (Basic Colloquial Arabic) tend to resist modification by adjectives but can be modified by approximating adverbs such as *taqrīban* ("almost"). For example: taqrīban al-kull rāḥ ("Almost everyone left"), taqrīban kull al-ʿummāl rāḥū ("Almost all of the workers went"), or ghāliban al-baʿḍ rāḥ yījī bas غالبا البعض راح يجي بس ("Likely, only some will come.") . In these examples *taqrīban* modifies the quantifier (*al-kull* or *kull*), indicating an approximation. This construction shows how quantifiers in BCA are more easily modified by adverbs of approximation than by descriptive adjectives, maintaining the core meaning of the quantity while introducing slight variation or uncertainty. Quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA) are essential in shaping noun phrases, modifying nouns, and conveying specificity or generality. Their behavior in construct states, agreement patterns, and semantic flexibility highlights their unique role in BCA grammar. By exploring their interactions across different syntactic and semantic contexts, we gain a deeper insight into their complexity and dynamic function within the language.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic: Core Patterns

Quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA) are fundamental to noun phrase structure, modifying nouns and signaling specificity or generality. While they share core properties with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), BCA quantifiers exhibit distinct syntactic adaptations reflective of dialectal variation. These differences highlight both linguistic simplification in spoken Arabic and regional innovations influenced by sociolinguistic factors and language contact.

Independent Quantifiers and Definiteness Constraints

BCA requires the definite article (al-) for independent quantifiers, diverging from MSA, where bare forms or indefinite suffixation (-n) are possible:

- **BCA:** *al-kull jā al-ḥaflah* (الكل جا الحفلة , "Everyone came to the party") → **Required definite article**.
- **MSA:** *kull-u-n jā al-ḥaflah* (كلن جاء الحفلة , "Each one came to the party").
- **Levantine and Egyptian Arabic** allow more flexibility in definiteness Brustad[4].

This syntactic rigidity in BCA aligns with Gulf Arabic dialects, where quantifiers adopt obligatory definiteness marking, possibly due to register-based constraints and processing efficiency in rapid speech Bakir[5].

4.2. Construct State (CS) and Agreement in Pre-Nominal Quantifiers

BCA, like MSA, forms construct state (CS) constructions for pre-nominal quantifiers, with noun-controlled verb agreement:

- *kull al-awlād rāḥū* (كل الأولاد راحوا , "All of the boys went").
- *kull walad rāḥ maʿumah* (كل ولد راح مع أمه , "Each boy went with his mother").

However, adjective placement in BCA is more flexible than in MSA:

- BCA: *kull al-awlād al-shūṭār* (كل الأولاد الشطار , "All of the smart boys").

- MSA: Requires strict adjacency of adjectives within CS structures Alsarayreh **and** Ryding[1, 12].

This pattern mirrors Najdi Arabic Alharbi[7] and Sudanese Arabic Taha[8], where spoken varieties exhibit relaxed syntactic constraints, suggesting a cross-dialectal shift toward increased structural flexibility.

4.3. Post-Nominal Quantifiers and Agreement Variability

BCA post-nominal quantifiers behave like adjectives, agreeing with the noun in definiteness and gender:

- *al-awlād kulluhum rāḥū* (الأولاد كلهم راحوا , "The boys all went").
- *al-banāt kullahum sāfarū* (البنات كلهم سافروا , "The girls all traveled").

These cliticized quantifiers (-hum, -ha, etc.) mirror agreement alternations observed in Moroccan Arabic Brustad[4], reinforcing the idea that spoken Arabic prioritizes semantic clarity over rigid grammatical rules.

4.4. Cross-Dialectal Comparisons of BCA Quantifiers

The syntactic properties of BCA quantifiers align closely with Najdi Arabic but differ from MSA in agreement flexibility, construct state behavior, and definiteness constraints. **Table 1** presents a structured cross-dialectal comparison.

This comparison reinforces the idea that spoken Arabic dialects simplify quantifier syntax in ways that optimize communicative efficiency, particularly in real-time discourse processing.

4.5. Theoretical Connections: Syntax and Semantics of Quantifiers

Definiteness Checking and Quantifier Licensing

According to Definiteness Checking Theory Hu Y, Simpson A.[13], article-based definiteness systems require overt marking on quantifiers. BCA supports this model:

- Independent quantifiers must appear with al-, reinforcing the obligatory licensing of definiteness in quantificational

phrases.

- In contrast, Levantine Arabic permits optional definite-

ness marking, reflecting dialectal variation in syntactic economy Alsarayreh A. [12].

Table 1. Comparison of quantifiers in BCA, MSA, and other dialects.

Quantifier	BCA Usage	MSA Usage	Shared/Unique in Other Dialects
kull (all)	Requires al- for independent usage (al-kull jā al-ḥaflah).	Functions independently, can appear with -n (kull-u-n).	Shared in Egyptian Arabic; differs in Moroccan Arabic, where kull is less frequent.
	Forms construct state (CS) (kull al-awlād rāḥū).	CS with stricter definiteness agreement.	Found in Levantine and Gulf Arabic, with similar flexibility.
	Allows post-nominal usage (al-awlād kulluhum rāḥū).	Post-nominal usage requires stricter agreement.	Similar in Syrian Arabic but varies in pronoun attachment in Moroccan Arabic.
baʿḍ (some)	Used with or without min (baʿḍ min al-banāt rāḥū / baʿḍ al-banāt rāḥū).	Primarily used with min (baʿḍ min al-ṭullāb kātabū).	Found in Egyptian and Sudanese Arabic, showing similar flexibility.
	Functions post-nominally as an adjective (ʿummāl aktar sāfarū).	Rarely used post-nominally in MSA.	Shared with Gulf and Iraqi Arabic, where partitive constructions are common.

4.6. Agreement Alternation: Distributive vs. Collective Readings

BCA quantifiers trigger distinct agreement patterns, depending on semantic interpretation:

- **Distributive meaning** → *Singular agreement: al-kull jā al-ḥafl* (الكل جاء الحفل), "Everyone came").
- **Collective meaning** → *Plural agreement: al-kull jāw al-ḥafl* (الكل جاؤوا الحفل), "All came together").

This aligns with Minimalist Syntax, where agreement alternations reflect feature-checking in the Tense/Agreement system Cho J. [14].

4.7. Construct State (CS) and Headedness

BCA construct state (CS) quantifiers follow cross-dialectal trends toward greater structural flexibility:

- **BCA**: *kull al-awlād rāḥū* (كل الأولاد راحوا , "All of the boys went").
- **MSA**: Requires stricter adjacency of adjectives and agreement within CS structures Alsarayreh **and** Ryding [1, 12].

This supports **Headedness Theory**, which predicts that Arabic dialects are evolving toward more analytic structures Al Khalaf E. [15].

4.8. Key Findings Summary

This study highlights **three major insights**:

1. **Sociolinguistic Factors**: BCA quantifier behavior is shaped by register variation, definiteness constraints, and spoken discourse norms.

2. **Dialectal Variation:** BCA aligns with Gulf and Najdi Arabic, exhibiting syntactic simplifications and agreement flexibility, diverging from MSA's rigid morphosyntactic constraints.

3. **Theoretical Contributions**: BCA supports Definiteness Checking, Agreement Theory, and Construct State Analysis, demonstrating how spoken dialects prioritize efficiency and clarity.

5. Conclusions

This study has examined the syntactic and semantic behavior of quantifiers in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA), highlighting their role in independent, pre-nominal, and post-nominal constructions, as well as their interactions with relative clauses, partitive structures, and modifiers. The findings demonstrate that BCA quantifiers exhibit core structural similarities with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and other Arabic dialects, while also reflecting regional adaptations influenced by sociolinguistic and discourse-driven factors. One key feature of BCA quantifiers is the obligatory use of the definite article (al-) in independent quantifier constructions, contrasting with MSA, where indefinite suffixation (-n) is permitted. This definiteness constraint aligns with Gulf Arabic dialects, suggesting a broader regional pattern favoring syntactic clarity in spoken discourse. BCA pre-nominal quantifiers typically occur in construct state (CS) formations, where agreement follows the complement noun rather than the quantifier itself. Unlike MSA, BCA allows greater flexibility in adjective placement, aligning more closely with Najdi and Sudanese Arabic, which exhibit similar relaxation of syntactic con-

straints in spoken registers. In post-nominal positions, BCA quantifiers behave like attributive adjectives, incorporating pronominal clitics (-hum, -ha, etc.) to maintain agreement with the modified noun. This structure facilitates subtle distinctions between distributive and collective readings, balancing syntactic economy with semantic precision. The interaction of quantifiers with relative clauses and partitive constructions further underscores BCA's structural flexibility. The optional use of min ("from") in partitive phrases mirrors Egyptian and Gulf Arabic, demonstrating a widespread tendency toward simplification in colloquial Arabic. Additionally, verb agreement in relative clauses shows greater adaptability than in MSA, reflecting spoken language dynamics where pragmatic concerns often override formal grammatical constraints.

These findings reinforce the view that spoken Arabic dialects evolve toward structural efficiency, optimizing clarity and processing ease in real-time discourse. BCA quantifiers, while preserving core grammatical properties shared across the Arabic linguistic continuum, display regionally specific adaptations that reflect sociolinguistic pressures, discourse tendencies, and historical contact with neighboring dialects. Future research should explore how sociocultural factors, urbanization, and increasing exposure to MSA in formal education and media influence the evolution of BCA quantifier constructions. A comparative analysis of spoken vs. written registers in BCA could further illuminate the interplay between dialectal innovation and linguistic conservatism within the Arabic-speaking world.

Author Contributions

All contributions to this work, including conceptualization, research, analysis, and writing, were solely carried out by the author.

Funding

Institutional Review Board Statement

This research did not require IRB approval.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The dataset used in this study are included within the article. Additional inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author and will be provided upon reasonable request.

Acknowledgments

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

[1] Ryding, K., 2005. A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511486975

[2] Chierchia, G., 2024. Four types of quantifiers at the interface between syntax and logic. Rich Descriptions and Simple Explanations in Morphosyntax and Language Acquisition. 45–74.

[3] Asiri, A., 2024. Definite and Indefinite Affixes in Tihami Arabic [Ph.D. dissertation]. University of Kansas: Lawrence, KS, USA.

[4] McWhorter, J.H., 2004. The Syntax of Spoken Arabic: A Comparative Study of Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian, and Kuwaiti Dialects. Language. 80(2), 338–339.

[5] Bakir, M.J., 2020. The noun phrase in Gulf Pidgin Arabic.

[6] Al-Azraqi, M.A., 1998. Aspects of the syntax of the dialect of Abha (south west Saudi Arabia) [Doctoral dissertation]. Durham University: Durham, UK.

[7] Alharbi, B., 2022. On the syntax of existential sentences in Najdi Arabic. Languages. 7(1), 18.

[8] Taha, M., Sultan, F.M.M., 2022. Defining unaccusatives in Sudanese Arabic. Southeastern Philippines Journal of Research and Development. 27(1), 1–20.

[9] Alzahrani, T., 2019. Floating and non-floating quantifiers in Hijazi Arabic: an HPSG analysis [Ph.D. dissertation]. University of Essex: Colchester, UK.

[10] Alabdulkarim, L., 2021. The Acquisition of the Dual

in Saudi Arabian Arabic. Al-'Arabiyya. 54, 37–57.

[11] Farghaly, A., 2010. The Arabic language, Arabic linguistics and Arabic computational linguistics. Arabic computational linguistics. CSLI Publications: Stanford, CA, USA. pp. 43–81.

[12] Alsarayreh, A., 2022. The Syntax of Quantifier Float in Standard Arabic. Jordanian Journal of Arabic Language And Literature. 18(3), 167–195.

[13] Hu, Y., Simpson, A., 2024. Floating quantifiers, speci-ficity and focus in Lalo Yi. Journal of East Asian Linguistics. 33(1), 71–113.

[14] Cho, J., 2024. Nominative Objects in Psych Verb Constructions: Formal and Experimental Approaches [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Delaware: Newark, DE, USA.

[15] Al Khalaf, E., 2019. Floating quantifiers are autonomous phrases: A movement analysis. Glossa: a journal of general linguistics. 4(1), 1–23.