Adjective inflection in Zahrani Spoken Arabic

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Abstract

This paper deals with the morphology of adjectives and illustrates the inflectional processes in Zahrani Spoken Arabic (ZSA). Adjectives in ZSA vary according to their derivation: they are derived from lexical roots and other parts of speech such as verbs, including present and past participles. Some adjectives are formed from adjectives derived from nouns that have nisbah suffixes. Another set of adjectives are formed by using root/pattern rules. Adjectives usually come after the noun in ZSA. Adjectives in postnominal position agree with the noun in gender, number and definiteness. Adjectives also occur in prenominal position in ZSA where they do not agree fully with the noun.

Key words: Saudi Dialects, Zahrani Spoken Arabic, morphology, inflection, adjectives

1. Introduction

An adjective phrase may consist of an adjective alone or contain other elements such as degree adverbs. Adjectives can be definite or indefinite depending on the nouns they modify. Examine these examples:

(1) a. maʁzu:l
mad.SG
'mad'
b. maʁzu:l-un
mad.SGM-INDF
'mad'
c. al-maʁzu:l
def-mad.sgm
'the mad'

In the above examples, the adjective maʁzu:l 'mad' stands alone to form an adjective phrase as in (1a). An adjective phrase can also contain other elements such as the indefinite suffix marker -un (0b) or the definite article al-.

Adjective phrases can also include degree adverbs such as ʤahda: 'very' in Error! Reference source not found.b), ʃiwayah 'little' in Error! Reference source not found.c), and marrah 'so' in Error! Reference source not found.d). The phrase can contain two degree adverbs but when they reflect the superlative sense as in Error! Reference source not found.
Adjective inflection in Zahrani Spoken Arabic

Reference source not found. e), marrah ‘so’ must come second. Hence, example Error! Reference source not found. g) is not acceptable.

(2)

a. hala:h
toggle 'nice'

b. hala:h ʤahda:
nice.SGM/F very

c. hala:h fiwajah
'little

d. hala:h marrah
'nice so

e. hala:h ʤahda: marrah
'nice so much

f. *hala:h fiwajah marrah
'little so

g. *hala:h marrah ʤahda:
nice.SGM/F so much

Adjectives usually come after the noun in ZSA. Adjectives in postnominal position agree with the noun in gender, number and definiteness. 1

(3)

a. bint hurr-ah
'girl.SGF good-SGF

b. al-bint al-hurr-ah
DEF-girl.SGF DEF-good-SGF

(4)

a. ʤabal kibi:r

1 ZSA does not have case marking.

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The above examples show full agreement between the nouns bint ‘girl’ and ʤabal ‘mountain’ and the adjectives alħurrah ‘good’ and alki:b:r ‘big’. Both nouns are singular and modified by singular adjectives. Also, the gender of the head noun controls the gender of the modifier (the adjective). Human reference and non-human reference show no difference in regard to agreement with singular adjectives. So, the noun has to have full agreement with the adjective regardless of its reference.

However, there are some exceptions in the plural. With animate plural nouns, adjectives agree in gender, number and definiteness with the nouns they modify. On the other hand, adjectives modifying the plurals of inanimate nouns are treated as feminine singular. That is, inanimate plural nouns trigger the feminine singular on adjectives. Note the following examples:

(5) a. al-bana:t al-hilwa:t
DEF-girl,PLF DEF-beautiful-PLF
‘the beautiful girls’

b. al-mudarris-i:n al-haḍˤri:n
DEF-teacher-PLM DEF-present-PLM
‘the present teachers’

(6) a. as-sajjar-a:t al-gidi:m-ah
DEF-car,PLF DEF-old-SGF
‘the old cars’

b. al-ʔaʕla:m al-gidi:m-ah
DEF-flag,PLM DEF-old-SGF
‘the old flags’

In example (6) above, it is seen that both albana:t ‘the girls’ and almudarris-i:n ‘the teachers’ are modified by alḥilwa:t ‘beautiful’ and alhaḍˤri:n ‘present’, where they show full agreement in gender, number
and definiteness. On the other hand, example (6) shows no agreement except with definiteness. Inanimate nouns are always modified by a feminine singular adjective regardless of gender or number, consequently the inanimate plural nouns assajjara:t ‘the cars’ and alʔaʕla:m ‘the flags’ in (6) are modified by the feminine singular adjective algidi:mah ‘old’.2

Interestingly, adjectives also occur in prenominal position in ZSA where they do not agree fully with the noun. This structure is found in MSA and Hebrew and is known as adjectival construct state (Al Barrag, 2013). It is argued that this structure combines the features of adjectives and nominal construct state (Al Sharifi & Sadler 2009; Kremers, 2003, 2005). Both regular adjectives and superlative adjectives can appear prenominally. However, unlike MSA,3 this kind of adjectival construct state is less productive in ZSA and limited to idiomatic phrases.4 Examine the following examples:

(7) a. su:d al-widgt: h
   black.PL black.PL black.PL black.PL black.PL 
   DEF-face-PLF ‘the badly-behaved people’

b. ʔuūr al-djiba:l
   green.PL green.PL green.PL green.PL green.PL 
   ‘the grassy mountains’

c. manku:ʃ al-ʃaʕr
   curly.SGM curly.SGM curly.SGM curly.SGM curly.SGM 
   ‘the curly hair’

d. tˤawi:l allias:n
   tall.SGM tall.SGM tall.SGM tall.SGM tall.SGM 
   ‘talkative’

e. tˤawi:l lias:n

2 Masculine dual nouns take masculine plural adjectives as modifiers if they refer to humans (Section 2.1.2) and feminine dual nouns take feminine plural adjectives as modifiers when they refer to humans (Section 2.1.4). However, when the referents are non-human, both masculine and feminine dual nouns are modified by feminine singular adjectives (Section 2.1.4).

3 In MSA adjectival construct state can contain any regular adjective (Bardeas, 2010; Fassi Fehri, 1999; Kremers, 2003) whereas it is limited in other Semitic languages such as Hebrew.

4 This process is not common even in other Saudi dialects such as HA (Al Barrag, 2013).
افتتاحية العدد

ينفي العدد الجديد من مجلة كلية الآداب - جامعة الزقازيق رقم 86 صيف 2018 ثرية أبحاثه وأفكامه المتنوعة التي تغطي جانباً كبيراً من الدراسات الإنسانية. يحتوي هذا العدد على تسع أبحاث وأعمال، وتشمل عدد من الموضوعات التي تتعلق بدور اللغة العربية في التفاوض، والتعاون، والتبادل، والانفتاح، والتأثر، والانتماء، والتحاول في مجال العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية.

By looking at the above examples, it is clearly noted that there is gender and number agreement between the adjectives and the modified nouns as in (7,b,c,d) although some adjectives do show only gender agreement as in (0,a,f,g). In construct state, however, there is no agreement in definiteness, hence, the following examples are ungrammatical:

a. *as-su:d al-widj:i:h DEF-black.PL PLF
  b. *tˤawi:l-behaviour allias:n DEF people'
  c. *al-manku:f af-faːir
  d. *atˤ-tˤawi:l allias:n DEF-tall-SGM
  e. *atˤ-tˤawi:l lias:n DEF-tall-SGM
  f. *atˤ-tˤawi:l allias:n DEF-tall-SGF
  g. *atˤ-tˤawi:l lias:n DEF-tall-SGF
المصري والأثيوبي حول مشكلة مياه النيل وبناء سد النهضة، واعتمدت الدراسة على منهج تحليل خطاب عدد من وسائل الإعلام المصرية في تناول قضية سد النهضة.

أما البحث الثاني فهو للمؤلف عبد الملك بن عبد العزيز الشلوعي وعوائنا: "معوقات البحث الإعلامي لدى أعضاء هيئة التدريس في كليتي وأقسام الإعلام في الجامعات السعودية" دراسة مسحية، وذكر الدراسة على دور البحث العلمي في قيادة الجامعات في المجالات العلمية والمعرفية من أجل التطور والابتكار والازدهار بالمستوى والقدرات العلمية والتقنية الوطنية.

وفي الدراسات التاريخية نجد بحث بعنوان: "تأثير الثقافات الصينية على الفن الصيني" للمؤلف/ إبراهيم عبد العظيم أحمد والذي يرصد تأثير الفنون الصينية على العالم، ويفolume عن طريق إدخال العديد من الأنواع الفنية الصينية للعالم الإسلامي مثل رسم الصور الشخصية والزخرفة واستخدام الأشكال الهندسية والأحجار المربعة ودورها في التصميم المعماري وابتكار التطورات الفنية اللاندست.
Interestingly, plural nouns inflect for definiteness but there is no adjective agreement. Singular nouns, however, never inflect for definiteness. Note the following examples:

1.  1. Plural nouns with a definite article:

   a. *ʔakbar al-sajjara-ah
   biggest.SGM DEF-car-SGF
   'the biggest car'

   b. *ʔakbar al-djamaal
   biggest.SGM DEF-camel-SGM
   'the biggest camel'

   c. ʔakbar as-sajjar-a:t
   biggest.SGM DEF-car-PLF
   'the biggest cars'

   d. ʔakbar djima:l
   biggest.SGM DEF-camel-PLM
   'the biggest camels'

2. Adjective inflection

As mentioned above, Adjectives in ZSA inflect for gender, number and definiteness. Many adjectives also inflect for degree (comparative and superlative). Adjectives must agree in gender, number and definiteness with the nouns which they modify, as will be seen in the following sections. So, they are in concord with those modified nouns where the agreement system is direct. Unlike MSA, ZSA does not show any case inflection.

Because adjectives follow the modified nouns in their inflections, the following section will include all the different inflectional categories: gender, number and definiteness. So, ZSA inflects for masculine and feminine and singular and plural. It also inflects for definite and indefinite, as will be illustrated below.

2.1.1 Inflection: gender, number and definiteness

2.1.2 Masculine singular adjectives

The masculine singular form of adjectives is the base form as the unmarked form. They modify masculine singular nouns. Consider the following examples:

1.  1. a. wald ədaki

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5 McCarthy (1994) refers to adjectives as targets of the agreement requirements of nouns.

6 The dual is lost in ZSA.
It is seen in the above examples that the adjective ʔaðkija: ‘smart’ agrees in gender and number with the modified noun wald: ‘boy’ in 0. It also agrees in definiteness in 0. The same thing applies to non-human nouns as shown in the following examples:

(12) a. galam ʔabijaḍ pen.SGM white.SGM ‘a white pen’
    b. al-galam ʔabijaḍ DEF-pen.SGM white.SGM ‘The white pen’

2.1.3 Masculine plural adjectives

Masculine plural adjectives modify and agree with masculine plural nouns if the referents are human beings. Consider the following examples:

(13) a. ʔawla:d ʔaðkija boy.PLM smart.PLM ‘smart boys’
    b. al-ʔawla:d ʔaðkija DEF-boy.PLM smart.PLM ‘The smart boys’
    c. mudarris-i:n ʔaðkija teacher-PLM smart.PLM ‘smart teachers’
    d. al-mudarris-i:n ʔaðkija DEF-teacher-PLM smart.PLM ‘The smart teachers’

(14) a. ʔawla:d ʕa:gil-i:n boy.PLLM mature-PLM
The above examples show that the adjectives agree in gender and number (0) and definiteness (0) with the modified nouns. Also, it is noticed that the above examples exhibit two different types of plurals: broken plural as in ʔaðkija: ‘smart’ (0) and sound masculine plural as in ʕaːgil-i:n: ‘mature’ (0).

In addition, unlike MSA, ZSA uses masculine plural adjectives to modify masculine dual nouns when they refer to human beings. Consider the following examples:

(15) a. wald-eːn ʕaːgil-iːn
   boy-DLM mature-PLM
   ‘Two mature boys’

b. al-wald-eːn al-ʕaːgil-iːn
   DEF-boy-DLM DEF-mature-PLM
   ‘The two mature boys’

c. mudarris-eːn ʕaːgil-iːn
   teacher-DLM mature-PLM
   ‘Two mature teachers’

d. al-mudarris-eːn al-ʕaːgil-iːn
   DEF-teacher-DLM DEF-mature-PLM
   ‘The two mature teachers’

The above examples show gender agreement as well as definiteness agreement. Because ZSA does not have dual adjectives agreement, they show disagreement in number between adjective ʕaːgil-iːn: ‘mature’ and the modified nouns wald-eːn: ‘two boys’ and mudarris-eːn: ‘two teachers’ respectively.
agreement (gender, number and definiteness) with feminine plural nouns only when they refer to human beings. However, they show agreement only in gender and definiteness with the feminine dual nouns when they refer to human beings.

Adjectives show inflection for the comparative and the superlative forms using various patterns relying on the type of the roots to show increasing degree of intensity. They are derived from sound roots (\(\lambda\alpha C_1C_2V_C\)), double roots (\(\lambda\alpha C_1V_CV_C\)), hollow roots (\(\lambda\alpha C_1C_2V_C\)) and defective roots (\(\lambda\alpha C_1C_2V\)). The comparative adjectives do not inflect for gender, number or definiteness, except if they are the suffix marker /\. Consider the following examples:

- Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia.
- "The short story"

The comparative adjectives are used as the first term in the “genitive construct” in the masculine singular form followed by a singular indefinite where they do not inflect for gender. They can be also followed by a plural noun (masculine or feminine) where they do not show any agreement. The superlative adjectives can be used with an object pronoun suffix or with the definite article alone, but not with both.

References


Moreover, unlike MSA, ZSA uses the feminine singular adjectives to modify both the masculine dual nouns as in 0) when they refer to non-human beings. Consider the following examples:

a) 
- *\(\lambda\alpha\text{bi}j\text{a}\text{d})*
- *white.SGF*
- ‘a white house’

b) 
- *al-\(\lambda\alpha\text{bi}j\text{a}\text{d})*
- *DEF-house.SGF DEF-white.SGF*
- ‘The white house’

The above examples show the feminine adjectives *\(\lambda\text{a}k\text{ij}\text{a}\text{d})*: ‘smart’ and *ga\(\text{s}\text{i}\text{r}\text{a}\text{h})*: ‘short’ agreeing in gender, number and definiteness with the modified nouns referring to both human and non-human nouns. The feminine nouns may or may not carry the feminine suffix marker /-. Consider the following examples:

- *\(\lambda\text{a}k\text{ij}\text{a}\text{d})*
- *smart-SGF*
- ‘a smart girl’

- *al-\(\lambda\text{a}k\text{ij}\text{a}\text{d})*
- *DEF-smart-SGF*
- ‘The smart girl’

- *\(\text{s}\text{a}\text{l}\text{i}\text{f}\text{a}\text{h})*
- *SGF short-SGF*
- ‘a short story’

- *as-\(\text{s}\text{a}\text{l}\text{i}\text{f}\text{a}\text{h})*
- *SGF DEF-short-SGF*
- ‘The short story’

Like MSA, ZSA uses the feminine singular adjectives to modify feminine singular nouns as in

- *\(\text{s}\text{a}\text{b}\text{i}\text{j}\text{a}\text{h})*
- *girl-SGF*
- ‘a smart girl’

- *al-\(\text{s}\text{a}\text{b}\text{i}\text{j}\text{a}\text{h})*
- *DEF-girl-SGF DEF-smart-SGF*
- ‘The smart girl’

The above examples show the feminine adjectives *\(\text{a}\text{ð}\text{k}\text{ij}\text{a}\text{h})*: agreement in gender, number and definiteness with the modified nouns referring to both human and non-human nouns. The feminine nouns may or may not carry the feminine suffix marker /-. Consider the following examples:

a) 
- *\(\text{s}\text{a}\text{l}\text{i}\text{f}\text{a}\text{h})*
- *SGF short-SGF*
- ‘a short story’

b) 
- *as-\(\text{s}\text{a}\text{l}\text{i}\text{f}\text{a}\text{h})*
- *SGF DEF-short-SGF*
- ‘The short story’
airport.DLM
‘The two new airports’
(19) a \( da:r-e:n \ 3idi:d-ah \)
house-DLF new-SGF
‘Two new houses’
b \( ad-da:r-e:n \ al-3idi:d-ah \)
DEF-house-DLF DEF-new-SGF
‘The two new houses’

Interestingly, example 0) shows \( 3idi:d-ah \): ‘new’ where it does not agree in gender nor in number with \( mata:r-e:n \): ‘two airports’. However, the feminine singular adjective \( 3idi:d-ah \): ‘new’ shows agreement in definiteness with the modified noun \( mata:r-e:n \), as shown in 0). On the other hand, the same feminine singular adjective \( 3idi:d-ah \): ‘new’ shows agreement in gender with the feminine dual noun \( da:r-e:n \): ‘two houses’ but not in number, as opposed to MSA. Also, the same adjective \( 3idi:d-ah \): ‘new’ agrees in definiteness with the modified noun \( da:r-e:n \: two houses’, as in 0).

In addition, the feminine singular adjectives are also used to modify the non-human plurals for both non-human masculine plural nouns, as in 0), and non-human feminine plural nouns, as in 0).\(^7\)

Consider the following examples:

(20) a \( \ddagla:m \ 3idi:d-ah \)
pen.PLM new-SGF
‘New pens’
b \( al-\ddagla:m \ al-3idi:d-ah \)
DEF-pen.PLM DEF-new-SGF
‘The new pens’

(21) a \( biju:t \ 3idi:d-ah \)
house.PLF new-SGF
‘New houses’
b \( al-biju:t \ al-3idi:d-ah \)
DEF-house.PLF DEF-new-SGF
‘The new houses’

\(^7\) Ryding (2005, p: 242) refers to this type of agreement as “deflected” agreement.

2.3 Inflection for nunation
Like nouns, adjectives do not inflect for case. However, nunation occurs with some adjectives which are indefinite, as shown in the following examples:

(34) a \( fa:h-i: \ harr-un \ marrah \)
tea.SG hot-DEF very
‘very hot tea’
b \( ha:rb-un \ min-hum \)
running away-DEF from-3PLM.OBJ
‘He is running away from them.’
c \( fa:h-i: \ harr-un \)
tea.SGM hot-SGM.INDF
‘Hot tea’

Interestingly, unlike other Saudi dialects, ZSA has nunation in the final position as well as non-final position as seen in 0) above.

3. Conclusion
In this paper, it is shown that adjectives can inflect for gender, number and definiteness following the nouns they modify. Adjectives show inflection for degree (comparative and superlative). ZSA does not inflect for case due to the absence of case marking in nouns.

The masculine singular form of adjectives is the unmarked form which can be used to derive other forms. Masculine plural adjectives modify and agree with masculine plural nouns as well as masculine dual nouns when they refer to human beings. So, they show agreement in gender but not in number when used to modify the dual nouns. Both forms show agreement in definiteness. ZSA uses the feminine singular adjectives to: (1) modify the feminine singular nouns referring to human or non-human nouns; (2) modify both the masculine dual nouns and the feminine dual nouns if they refer to non-human beings; (3) modify the non-human plurals for both non-human masculine plural nouns and non-human feminine plural nouns. Thus, the feminine singular adjective is an exception with regard to the agreement system, except with definiteness. Feminine plural adjectives show full...
However, it shows number agreement. This agreement takes place as coincidence. Consider the following examples:

(31)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. ʔaӠadd sajjar-ah</td>
<td>newest.SGM car-SGF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The newest car’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. ʔaӠadd mata:r</td>
<td>newest.SG airport.SGM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The newest airport’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above example, the definite marker, which is an indicator distinguishing the superlative form from the comparative form, disappears. So, this structure is an exception.

The superlative adjective can be also followed by a plural noun in the “genitive construct” in which the adjective has the masculine singular form whether the following noun is masculine or feminine. So, it neither agrees in number nor in gender.

(32)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. ʔaӠadd sajjar- a:t</td>
<td>newest.SG car-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The newest cars’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. ʔaӠadd mata:r-a:t</td>
<td>newest.SG airport.PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The newest airports’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the superlative adjective can be used with an object pronoun suffix or with the definite article alone as illustrated in the following examples:

(33)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Ali  ka:n aṣṣar-hum</td>
<td>BE.3SGM.PF youngest-3PLM.OBJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Ali was the youngest among them.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ali  ka:n al-aṣṣar</td>
<td>BE.3SGM.PF DEF-youngest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Ali was the youngest.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. *Ali  ka:n al-aṣṣar-hum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(34)  
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. bina:t ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td>girl-PLF mature-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mature girls’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. al-bina:t al-ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td>DEF-girl-PLF DEF-mature-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The mature girls’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. mudarris-ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td>teacher-PLF mature-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mature teachers’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. al-mudarris-ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is worth noting that the above examples show that the non-human masculine nouns may have broken plurals as in ʔagla:m: ‘pens’. However, they can have the sound feminine plural marker /-a:t/ as in mata:ra:t ‘airports’, as shown below:

(22)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. mata:r-a:t 3idi:d-ah</td>
<td>airport-PLM new-SGF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘New airports’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. al-mata:r-a:t al-3idi:d-ah</td>
<td>DEF-airport-PLF DEF-new-SGF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The new airports’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Ali  ka:n aṣṣar-hum</td>
<td>BE.3SGM.PF youngest-3PLM.OBJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Ali was the youngest among them.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ali  ka:n al-aṣṣar</td>
<td>BE.3SGM.PF DEF-youngest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Ali was the youngest.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. *Ali  ka:n al-aṣṣar-hum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(34)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. bina:t ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td>girl-PLF mature-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mature girls’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. al-bina:t al-ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td>DEF-girl-PLF DEF-mature-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The mature girls’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. mudarris-ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td>teacher-PLF mature-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mature teachers’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. al-mudarris-ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is worth noting that the above examples show that the non-human masculine nouns may have broken plurals as in ʔagla:m: ‘pens’. However, they can have the sound feminine plural marker /-a:t/ as in mata:ra:t ‘airports’, as shown below:

(22)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. mata:r-a:t 3idi:d-ah</td>
<td>airport-PLM new-SGF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘New airports’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. al-mata:r-a:t al-3idi:d-ah</td>
<td>DEF-airport-PLF DEF-new-SGF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The new airports’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above example, the definite marker, which is an indicator distinguishing the superlative form from the comparative form, disappears. So, this structure is an exception.

The superlative adjective can be also followed by a plural noun in the “genitive construct” in which the adjective has the masculine singular form whether the following noun is masculine or feminine. So, it neither agrees in number nor in gender.

(32)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. ʔaӠadd sajjar- a:t</td>
<td>newest.SG car-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The newest cars’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. ʔaӠadd mata:r-a:t</td>
<td>newest.SG airport.PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The newest airports’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the superlative adjective can be used with an object pronoun suffix or with the definite article alone as illustrated in the following examples:

(33)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Ali  ka:n aṣṣar-hum</td>
<td>BE.3SGM.PF youngest-3PLM.OBJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Ali was the youngest among them.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ali  ka:n al-aṣṣar</td>
<td>BE.3SGM.PF DEF-youngest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Ali was the youngest.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. *Ali  ka:n al-aṣṣar-hum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(34)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. bina:t ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td>girl-PLF mature-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mature girls’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. al-bina:t al-ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td>DEF-girl-PLF DEF-mature-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The mature girls’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. mudarris-ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td>teacher-PLF mature-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mature teachers’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. al-mudarris-ʕa:gil-a:t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like MSA, the above examples show full agreement (gender, number and definiteness) between the feminine plural adjectives with the feminine plural nouns in ZSA. However, the feminine plural adjectives are also used in ZSA to modify the feminine dual nouns when they refer to human beings as well. Consider the following examples:

a. bint-ʕa:gil-ʔa:t
girl-DF mature-PLF
'Two mature girls'

b. al-bint-e:n al-ʕa:gil-ʔa:t
def-DF girl-DF mature-PLF
'The two mature girls'

c. mudarris-te:n ʕa:gil-ʔa:t
teacher-DF mature-PLF
'Two mature teachers'

d. al-mudarris-te:n al-ʕa:gil-ʔa:t
def-DF teacher-DF mature-PLF
'The two mature teachers'

The above examples show the feminine plural adjective ʕa:gil-ʔa:t: 'mature' agrees only in gender with the modified nouns for both binte:n: 'two girls' and mudarriste:n: 'two teachers', as in 0). They also have agreement in definiteness, as in 0.

The following tables show a summary of all the above discussion and examples. It is seen that non-humans do not need to have the plural masculine form as well as the plural feminine one.

The superlative form of adjectives shows one of the main differences from the comparative form by having the definite article /al-/ always definite as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Superlative form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kabi:r</td>
<td>al-ʔakbar</td>
<td>the biggest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gali:l</td>
<td>al-ʔagall</td>
<td>the fewest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tajib</td>
<td>al-ʔatjab</td>
<td>the best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḏaki:</td>
<td>al-ʔa thởka</td>
<td>the smartest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The superlative adjective can be used in different contexts. It may modify the preceding noun agreeing with that noun in gender, number and definiteness as shown below:

a. ad-daraذ ah aṣ-ṣuʁra
degree-DEF lowest-SGF
'The lowest degree'

b. al-mata:r al-ʔaުMARK
airport.SGM smallest-SGM
'The smallest airport'

Moreover, the superlative adjective can be used as the first term in the “genitive construct” followed by a singular indefinite noun in which the adjective remains in the masculine form. That is, it does not inflect for gender regardless of the gender of the following noun.

9 It is worth noting that the noun bint: 'girl' ends in /t/. So, there is no need to have the /t/ again with the dual feminine suffix marker /-te:n/.

10 The adjective al-ʔaުMARK: 'the smallest' has a feminine counterpart aṣ-ṣuʁra: 'the lowest'.
Adjective inflection in Zahrani Spoken Arabic

Dr. Salih Alzahrani

Table 1: Adjectives agreement for human beings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human being</th>
<th>SGM</th>
<th>SGF</th>
<th>DLM</th>
<th>DLF</th>
<th>PLM</th>
<th>PLF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SGM</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGF</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLM</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLF</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Adjectives agreement for non-humans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human being</th>
<th>SGM</th>
<th>SGF</th>
<th>DLM</th>
<th>DLF</th>
<th>PLM</th>
<th>PLF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SGM</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGF</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Inflection for comparative and superlative

The comparative and the superlative forms of adjectives are also called “elative” forms in Arabic (Ryding, 2005). They signify increasing degree of intensity. Like MSA, ZSA shows different comparative form patterns depending on the root type.

2.2.1 Triliteral roots

Triliteral roots show various patterns for the comparative form as in (0).

(26) Root type | Adjective | Pattern | Comparative form | Meaning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sound roots</td>
<td>kabi:r</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2VC3</td>
<td>ʔakbar</td>
<td>bigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>haži:n</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2VC3</td>
<td>ʔahzan</td>
<td>sadder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gadim:n</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2VC3</td>
<td>ʔaqdam</td>
<td>older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double roots</td>
<td>ʔadi:d</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2VC2</td>
<td>ʔaʔadd</td>
<td>newer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gali:l</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2VC2</td>
<td>ʔagall</td>
<td>fewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ʔafif:</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2VC2</td>
<td>ʔajaff</td>
<td>lighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollow roots</td>
<td>ʔajjib</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2VC3</td>
<td>ʔatjaj</td>
<td>better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ʔajjig</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2VC3</td>
<td>ʔadajag</td>
<td>narrower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lajin:</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2VC3</td>
<td>ʔaljan</td>
<td>softer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defective</td>
<td>ʔa-C1C2V</td>
<td>ʔagwa</td>
<td>ʔagwa</td>
<td>stronger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second consonant is always a glide because they are hollow adjectives. That is, they are not the same pattern as the sound roots’.