

PUBLIC SELECTION BASED ON QUALIFICATIONS AND INTERVIEW FOR THE AWARDING OF NO. 1 EXPERIENCED GRANT LASTING 24 MONTHS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH PURSUANT TO ART. 22 OF LAW NO. 240/2010 AT THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, LITERATURES AND CULTURES (A.R.F. 10/N1 - ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN, MIDDLE EASTERN AND AFRICAN CULTURES- A.D. L-OR/12 - ARABIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (TYPE B)

announced with decree of the Chancellor Rep. no. 264/2019 of 14th of May 2019 and posted on the official registry of the University on 14th of May 2019

RESEARCH PROJECT

The Arabic linguistic tradition and the translation of its metalanguage into Italian

Research structure: Department of Foreign languages, literatures and cultures

Duration of the grant: 24 months

Scientific Area: 10 - Antiquities, philology, literary studies, art history

Academic recruitment field: 10/N1 - Ancient near eastern, Middle Eastern and African cultures

Academic discipline: L-OR/12 - Arabic language and literature

Scientific Director: Prof. Pierluigi Cuzzolin

Objective:

The theoretical assumptions of the research are based on the observation of a change of interest and a new perspective of analysis that, from the treatises of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Ġurġānī (d. 1078) onwards, can be found inside the Arabic linguistic tradition. From this point of view, the research intends to follow the dynamics that brought to a progressive focus on the relationship between form and meaning, that is to say the formal representation of the meanings, also in consideration of the different ideological and cultural context in which the linguistic speculation kept on developing.

The aim of the research is to deal with the complex problem of the translation of the metalanguage of the Arabic linguistic tradition into Italian (and into European languages), not only in reference to some post-classical treatises, which are characterized by a marked semantic approach, but more in general to the grammatical theory as it was elaborated by the Arabic grammarians, then received and interpreted by Arabists. More specifically, putting the theory of grammar in continuity with the theory of discourse, one can recognize a different way of reading and interpreting the Arabic linguistic thought and highlight the resulting effect on the translation of its metalanguage. For this purpose, an annotated Italian translation of some particularly relevant texts by 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Ġurġānī will be accomplished

Theoretical framework:

In more or less recent years some scholars (Bohas, Carter, Larcher, Levin, Owens, Versteegh and others) attempted to trace the main evolutionary lines of the Arabic grammatical thought. At times they preferred to cover its history and to split it, within certain limits, into different stages (Carter 2007, Versteegh 1997), other times to focus on a particular stage (Owens 1990, 1991) or on some innovations and deviations (Versteegh 1997), or to take into consideration different linguistic topics (Bohas 2006; Larcher 1990, 2013; Levin 2007; Owens 1988; Versteegh 1977). No matter what is the specific field of their study, the Arabists who have dealt with this tradition seem to agree in interpreting the theory of the Arab grammarians in syntactic terms. In this perspective, the thought and work of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Ġurġānī seem to mark, at least in part, a deviation from the path traced by the previous grammarians. By questioning the mainly syntactic interpretation, the research aims to bring to the foreground what shows continuity with the past, in order to better explain the transition to the new theory of discourse elaborated by al-Ġurġānī. This new theory will be caught within the complex cultural and juridical-theological background of his time. The interest for issues that cannot be reduced to the bare grammar depends on such a cultural frame, as well as the recourse to a metalanguage more suitable for their discussion.

Research project description:

The research aims to investigate the less known grammatical works of al-Ğurğānī, in order to relate them to his two major works: *Dalā'il al-'iğāz* 'The proofs of the inimitability [of the Qur'ān]', a treatise of 'ilm al-ma'ānī (lit. "science of meanings"), a discipline that studies the relationship between the variation of syntactic constructions and meaning; some scholars call it "semantics of syntax" (S.A. Bonebakker), "grammatical semantics" (Dj.E. Kouloughli), "stylistics of syntax" (G.J.H. van Gelder); and 'Asgār al-balāğa 'The secrets of rhetoric', a study of 'ilm al-bayān, that is eloquence, which is probably one of the first Arab works concerning rhetoric and literary criticism. Especially within the first of these two treatises, the author has theorized a semantic and pragmatic approach to the study of language, ushering in a method and a field of study that would have been fully recognized only a few centuries later, in particular with as-Sakkākī (d. 1229) and al-Qazwīnī (d. 1338). However, most of al-Ğurğānī's speculation consists of grammatical essays in the traditional way: about the theory and the use of grammatical "operators", al-Ğumal 'The propositions' and Mi'at 'āmīl fī an-naḥw 'One hundred grammatical operators'; about noun and verb morphology, al-Miftāḥ fī aṣ-ṣarf 'The key in the flexion' and al-'Umud, Kitāb fī at-ṭaṣrīf 'The columns, A book about flexion; or as a commentary on the Kitāb al-'Idāḥ 'The book of clarification' by 'Abū Alī al-Fārisī (m. 987), al-Muqtaṣid 'The medium [commentary]'. Through the study of these "minor" writings, one can identify those features, sometimes very subtle and almost peripheral, of al-Ğurğānī's linguistic thought which allow scholars to glimpse a semantic approach or a generic interest in the realization of meanings. The translation of one or more of these treatises (al-Ğumal, al-Miftāḥ fī aṣ-ṣarf, al-'Umud), possibly combined, if the need arises, with the discussion of the available critical editions, will finally allow to face the problem of the translatability into Italian of the Arabic metalanguage. At the same time, it will highlight how the very possibility of the translation is conceivable only through, and in parallel to, an articulated metalinguistic speculation, that one might perform also to evaluate the validity of the solutions proposed by the modern Arabic studies.

Key-words:

'Abd al-Qāhir al-Ğurğānī, 'ilm al-ma'ānī, 'ilm al-bayān, Arabic linguistic tradition, theory of grammar, theory of discourse, semantic approach, metalanguage.

Planned timing and schedule of activities:

The research will be developed over a period of 24 months and be divided into several stages:
 1st stage: bibliographic survey, finding of the editions and / or manuscripts of al-Ğurğānī's works; survey of the cultural and juridical-theological background of al-Ğurğānī's life and work;
 2nd stage: study of al-Ğurğānī's linguistic thought, particularly through the analysis of his grammatical treatises, possibly compared with the *Dalā'il al-'iğāz* 'The proofs of the inimitability [of the Qur'ān]';
 3rd stage: translation, possibly together with the discussion of the related critical editions, of one or two of his minor grammatical treatises (for example al-Ğumal 'The propositions' and al-'Umud 'The columns') as the outcome of the speculation on the Arabic linguistic tradition metalanguage;
 4th stage: presentation of the results of the research through the publication of one or more papers and / or through local, national or international conferences.

Originality and expected results:

Although the project foresees a research largely focused on the translation of the metalanguage of the Arabic linguistic tradition, as a whole this survey is intended to be a cross-sectional contribution to the fields of Arabic studies, linguistics, translation studies and language teaching, in particular to:

- the overview of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Ğurğānī's works within the Arabic linguistic tradition;
- the assessment of the conceptual categories and the investigative tools applied so far by scholars to the study of the Arabic grammatical theory;
- the reconsideration, and possibly the reinterpretation, of some bedrocks of the Arabic linguistic tradition, for example the theory of operators, the relationship between definiteness and referentiality, the time-aspect relationship within the verbal system;
- the study of the linguistic and extra-linguistic motivations that determine the translation process, in particular the lexical choices involving terminology;
- the teaching of Arabic grammar to students who are not Arabic native speakers, bearing in mind that many works by 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Ğurğānī have a didactic aim and are considered among the most ancient testimonies of the so-called "pedagogical stage" of Arabic grammar treatises.

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