A GRAMMATICAL SKETCH OF SOQOTRI: with Special Consideration of Negative Polarity

This study describes the major syntactic features of the Soqotri language, spoken in Socotra Island, Yemen. The Soqotri language belongs to the Modern South Arabian (MSA) languages which with the modern Ethiopian Semitic languages and Central Semitic form the West Semitic sub-branch of the Semitic family (Huehnergard and Rubin, 2011). Based on UNESCO’s classification that shows the levels of language endangerment, Soqotri is considered to be a severely endangered language where the language is spoken only by grandparents and older generations, and they do not speak it to young children any more (Moseley, 2012, p. 4). Since Soqotri is regarded as a severely endangered language, it is of utmost importance that it be described and documented.

The main purpose of undertaking this study is to document the key syntactic features of Soqotri. I presented the salient aspects of Soqotri, including basic word order, noun classes, verbs, prepositions, and clausal relations. I also explored the distribution of certain lexical items in Soqotri and their relationship with two linguistic phenomena: negative concord and negative polarity. Investigating the distribution of these two linguistic phenomena is very important, because there is not a single study that deals with these phenomena in Soqotri.

This study was carried out by interviewing a Soqotri native speaker consultant, who also speaks Arabic, and by examining published data gathered by other scholars in past years. The study will also contribute to typological and historical studies of Semitic languages in the Middle East. Furthermore, I hope this grammatical sketch will act as a springboard for other researchers who are interested in documenting Soqotri. This thesis also might fill the gap and give insights into the distribution of the negative concord and negative polarity phenomena.

**Related topic:** Syntax, morphology, Semantics, Typology, language endangerment and documentation