Aspect-marking Basic Verbs in Arabic

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Basic Verbs

- Lexical items encoding basic bodily events and states, such as COME, GO, SIT, STAND, LIE, EAT, DRINK, TAKE, GIVE, etc.

- "[O]ur common experiences of such things as eating, drinking, seeing, hearing, etc. can be the basis for conceptualizing other more complex events" (Newman, 2004:196)

- Proliferation of uses across languages ranging from **polysemous** and **idiomatic** uses to patterns of **grammaticalization** and **collocation**

Basic Verbs – earlier studies

- GO and COME (Fillmore, 1966, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972; Wilkins & Hill, 1995; Radden, 1996; Botne, 2005, 2006; etc.)

- EAT and DRINK (Newman, 1997; Newman and Rice, 2006; etc.)

- SIT, STAND, and LIE (Serra Borneto, 1996; Newman and Rice, 2004)

- GIVE and TAKE (Newman, 1996, 1998; etc.)

- sense-perception (Sweetser, 1990; etc.)

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- *rāḥa* 'go'

- *maḍā* 'go'

- *ẓalla* 'remain',

- *baqiya* 'remain'

- *qaʿada* 'sit'

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Modern Standard Arabic

- *qaʿada* 'sit'

Vernacular Arabic

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INCEPTIVE aspect

('start doing', 'begin doing')

CONTINUOUS or **DURATIVE aspect**

('be doing', 'keep on doing')

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GO.PERF   *TALK*.IMPF
(data from arabiCorpus.byu.edu)

الصحف الأمريكية راحت تتحدث بتشاؤم عن العلاقات المتوترة

al=ṣuḥf	al=amrikiyya	**rāḥat**	**tataḥaddat**	bi=tašāʾum
ART=newspapers	ART=American	*GO*.PERF.3SG.F	*talk*.IMPF.3SG.F	INST=pessimism
the newspapers	the American	went	talking	with pessimism

ʾan	al=ʿilaqāt	al=mutawattira
about	ART=relations	ART=aggravated
about	the relations	the aggravated

'The American newspapers went on talking pessimistically about the aggravated relations'

فمضى يتحدث عن أمور لا علاقة لها بسؤالي

fa=maḍā	yataḥaddat	ʾan	umūr	lā	ʿilāqa	lahā	bi=suʾālī
CONJ=GO.PERF.3SG.M	*talk*.IMPF.3SG.M	about	topics	NEG	relation	POSS.3S.F	INST=my.question
so went	talking	about	topics	no	relation	to it	with my question

'So he went on talking about topics that are irrelevant to my question'

REMAIN.PERF   *TALK*.IMPF
(data from arabiCorpus.byu.edu)

ظَل يتحدث معي عن المسرح

ẓalla	yataḥaddaṯ	maʿī	ʿan	al=masraḥ
REMAIN.PERF.3SG.M	*talk*.IMPF.3SG.M	COM	about	ART=theatre
remained	talking	with me	about	the theatre

'He kept talking to me about theatre'

لكن بوش بقي يتحدث عن النصر

lākinna	buš	baqiya	yataḥaddaṯ	ʿan	al=naṣr
CONJ	Bush	REMAIN.PERF.3SG.M	*talk*.IMPF.3SG.M	about	ART=victory
but	Bush	remained	talking	about	the victory

'But Bush kept talking about victory'

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GO verbs
in Modern standard Arabic

Three verbs can refer to GO motion event in MSA

- *ḏahaba*

- *maḍā*

- *rāḥa*

GO verbs
in Modern standard Arabic

Three verbs can refer to GO motion event in MSA

- *ḏahaba*   - not grammaticalized

- *maḍā*

- *rāḥa*

GO verbs
in Modern standard Arabic

Three verbs can refer to GO motion event in MSA

- *ḏahaba*   - not grammaticalized

- *maḍā*   - partially grammaticalized

- *rāḥa*

GO verbs
in Modern standard Arabic

Three verbs can refer to GO motion event in MSA

- *ḏahaba*   - not grammaticalized

- *maḍā*   - partially grammaticalized

- *rāḥa*   - almost fully grammaticalized

maḍā and *rāḥa*
in Modern standard Arabic

- Data
  - ArabiCorpus.byu.edu (Dilworth Parkinson)
    - untagged
    - 90% newspaper genre

  - 500 corpus returns of each *maḍā* and *rāḥa*

maḍā and *rāḥa*
in Modern standard Arabic

rāḥa

- Aspect marking accounts for **82%** of the verb usage in the 500 corpus returns

- Remaining uses can depict physical or metaphorical motion

maḍā

- Grammatical usage is less frequent than that of *rāḥa* (around **12%** of verb usage in the 500 corpus returns)

- Ungrammaticalized uses can signal physical or figurative motion. It is most frequently used to talk about the **passage of time**

Grammaticalized uses of *maḍā* and *rāḥa*

rāḥa

- GO.PERFECTIVE   V$_2$.IMPERFECTIVE

maḍā

- GO.PERFECTIVE   V$_2$.IMPERFECTIVE

- GO.PERFECTIVE   V$_2$.ACTIVE_PARTICIPLE

Grammaticalized uses of *maḍā* and *rāḥa*

rāḥa

- **GO.PERFECTIVE   V$_2$.IMPERFECTIVE**

maḍā

- **GO.PERFECTIVE   V$_2$.IMPERFECTIVE**

- GO.PERFECTIVE   V$_2$.ACTIVE_PARTICIPLE

*rāḥa.*PERF   V₂.IMPF
('went on doing something')

- V2 collocates
  - A **wide range** of verbs (can be telic or atelic)

*rāḥa.*PERF   V$_2$.IMPF
('went on doing something')

- V2 collocates
  - A **wide range** of verbs (can be telic or atelic)

وراحت منذ ذلك الحين تضيق الخناق عليه اكثر واكثر

wa=rāḥat		munḏu	ḏālika	al=ḥīn	tuḍayyiq	al=ḥināq	ʿalayh
CONJ=*rāḥa.*PERF.3SG.FEM		ADV	DEM	ART=time	tighten.IMPF.3SG.FEM	ART=grip	LOC.CL.3S.M
and went		since	that	the time	tightening	the grip	on him

akṯar	wa=akṯar
more	CONJ=more
more	and more

'And since then it [i.e. Washington] kept tightening the grip on him more and more'

rāḥa.PERF   V$_2$.IMPF
('went on doing something')

- V2 collocates
  - A **wide range** of verbs (can be telic or atelic)

وراحت المعارك المتفرقة تنشب عند حدودها مع سورية والأردن

wa=rāḥat	al=maʿārik	al=mutafarriqa	tanšab	ʿinda	ḥudūdiha
CONJ=*rāḥa*.PERF.3SG.FEM	ART=battles	ART=separate	erupt.IMPF.3SG.FEM	LOC	its.borders
and went	the battles	the separate	erupting	at	its borders

maʿa	sūriya	wa=l=ʾurdun
COM	Syria	CONJ=ART=Jordan
with	Syria	and the Jordan

'And separate battles kept erupting at the borders it [i.e. Israel] shares with Syria and Lebanon'

maḍā.PERF V_2.IMPF
('went on doing something')

- V2 collocates
  - In 26 (out of of 38) sentences :**SAY**

$ma\dot{d}\bar{a}$.PERF   V$_2$.IMPF
('went on doing something')

- V2 collocates
  - In 26 (out of of 38) sentences : **SAY**

ومضى الحريري يقول بعد اجتماعه مع وفد برلماني فرنسي

wa=maḏā	alḥarīri	yaqūl	baʿda	iǧtimāʿih	maʿa
CONJ=maḏā.PERF.3SG.FEM	Al Hariri	say.IMPF.3SG.M	ADV	his.meeting	COM
and went	Al Hariri	saying	after	his.meeting	with

wafd	barlamāni	faransi
delegate	parliamentary	French
delegate	parliamentary	French

'And Al Hariri went on saying/to say after his meeting with a French parliamentary delegate...'

maḍā.PERF   V$_2$.IMPF
('went on doing something')

- V2 collocates
  - In 26 (out of of 38) sentences :**SAY**
  - In the remaining sentences: **perception verbs, noise-making verbs, physical activity verbs**

ومضيت أنظر إليهما من وراء وهما يشربان ويتبادلان الحديث

wa=maḍaytu	anẓuru	ilayhimā	min	warā'	wa=humā
CONJ=*maḍā*.PERF.1SG	look.IMPF.1SG	ALL.CL.3DUAL.M	ABL	behind	CONJ=PP
and went	looking	at them	from	behind	and they

yašrabān	wa=yatabādalān	al=ḥadīṯ
drink.IMPF.3DUAL.M	CONJ=exchange.IMPF.3DUAL.M	ART=conversation
drinking	and exchanging	the conversation

'And I went on looking at them as they were drinking and having a conversation'

Conclusion

- Basic Verbs in Arabic which have undergone grammaticalization need to be properly analyzed through
  - moving away from prescriptivist accounts of grammatical structures in Arabic and examining *actual corpus data* of standard and vernacular varieties of Arabic
  - looking at *frequency data*, i.e. the distribution of grammatical uses versus non-grammatical uses
  - examining *collocational patterns*
  - *experimental methods* that tap into speakers' intuition about subtle differences in usage of grammaticalized verbs
  - ...

Thank you!

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