# Aspect-marking Basic Verbs in Arabic

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Cognitive approaches to language assert that our earliest, primary bodily experiences with the world play a very crucial role in shaping linguistic structures (Lakoff, 1987). Basic Verbs, or lexical items encoding basic bodily events and states, such as COME, GO, SIT, STAND, LIE, EAT, DRINK, TAKE, GIVE, etc. (Newman, 2004), show a proliferation of uses across languages ranging from polysemous and idiomatic uses to patterns of grammaticalization and collocation. Cross-linguistically, verbs denoting GO, for instance, can assume numerous grammatical functions such as marking future tense, habitual and progressive aspects, purpose and change-of-state, etc. (Heine and Kuteva, 2002). A great deal of research has been dedicated to the investigation of the properties as well as uses of Basic Verbs in several languages, such as GO and COME (e.g. Fillmore, 1966; Radden, 1996; to name but a few), EAT and DRINK (Newman and Rice, 2006), SIT, STAND, and LIE (Newman and Rice, 2004), and GIVE (e.g. Newman, 1996). While the existing body of cross-linguistic research on Basic Verbs is growing, there is relatively little research that has been done on the variations in functions and behavior of Basic Verbs across standard and spoken varieties of Arabic.

This paper will discuss the lexico-syntactic properties of certain Basic Verbs in Arabic – more specifically, aspect-marking Basic Verbs – in standard and some non-standard varieties of Arabic. An online MSA corpus (www.arabicorpus.byu.edu) and a spoken corpus constructed by the author will be the main source for contextualized verb uses. Studies on grammaticalization in spoken Arabic have shown that the verb GO functions as a future marker in some spoken dialects (e.g. Fischer and Jastrow, 1980). In Modern Standard Arabic, on the other hand, GO (*rāḥ*) has evolved into mostly an inceptive or a durative marker: *rāḥa yunšidu* 'he started/went on singing'. Unsurprisingly, verbs denoting notions of body posture such as SIT and STAND in some varieties of Arabic have also acquired aspectual functions. For instance, the verb *qāma* (STAND) in spoken varieties denotes change of state, while *qaʿada* (SIT), has evolved into a progressive and durative marker.

Along with GO, SIT, and STAND, other Basic Verbs in MSA and some spoken varieties of Arabic can similarly mark progressive, durative, inceptive, inchoative and iterative aspects such as TAKE, MAKE, REMAIN/STAY, and RETURN. The MSA verbs, *rāḥ* (GO) and *axaḏa* (TAKE), can be used interchangeably in serial verb constructions to indicate the beginning of a new action; while both Bahraini Arabic verbs *qaʿada* (SIT), and *tamma* (REMAIN/STAY) can function as durative markers. Since real world bodily experiences of sitting, staying, going, taking, etc. strongly motivate such verb usage in language, and would necessarily bias our conceptualization of the temporal flow of an event, it is highly likely that these aspect-marking verbs would show selectional restrictions on the types of events they collocate with. I will, therefore, focus both on the collocational patterns of these verbs with other verbs in serial verb constructions, and the morpho-syntactic features that distinguish the use of Basic Verbs as aspectual markers in Arabic.

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