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

- 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.)
Basic Verbs in Arabic (standard and vernacular)

- axaḍa ‘take’
- rāḥa ‘go’
- maḍā ‘go’
- ẓalla ‘remain’,
- baqiya ‘remain’
- qaʿada ‘sit’
Basic Verbs in Arabic (standard and vernacular)

- **Modern Standard Arabic**
  - *axaḍa* ‘take’
  - *rāḥa* ‘go’
  - *maḍā* ‘go’
  - *ẓalla* ‘remain’
  - *baqiya* ‘remain’

- **Vernacular Arabic**
  - *qaʿada* ‘sit’
Basic Verbs in Arabic (standard and vernacular)

- **INCEPTIVE** aspect
- **CONTINUOUS** or **DURATIVE** aspect

- *axaḍa* ‘take’
- *rāḥa* ‘go’
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- *qaʿada* ‘sit’
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(standard and vernacular)

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- **q̄a‘ada** ‘sit’

**INCEPTIVE aspect**
(‘start doing’, ‘begin doing’)

**CONTINUOUS or DURATIVE aspect**
(‘be doing’, ‘keep on doing’)

Basic Verbs in Arabic (standard and vernacular)

- **Inceptive aspect** ('start doing', 'begin doing')
  - **axaḍa** 'take'
  - **rāḥa** 'go'
  - **maḍā** 'go'
  - **ẓalla** 'remain'
  - **baqiya** 'remain'
  - **qa'ada** 'sit'

- **Continuous or Durative aspect** ('be doing', 'keep on doing')
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('start doing', 'begin doing')

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('be doing', 'keep on doing')
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**INCEPTIVE aspect**
(‘start doing’, ‘begin doing’)

**CONTINUOUS** or **DURATIVE aspect**
(‘be doing’, ‘keep on doing’)

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*[Image of ancient papyrus with handwritten notes]*

In Arabic, verbs can be categorized based on the aspect they convey. Two main aspects are typically discussed: the inceptive aspect, which marks the beginning of an action, and the continuous or durative aspect, which indicates that an action is ongoing. Common inceptive verbs include *axaḍa* (‘to take’) and *rāḥa* (‘to go’), while *maḍā* (‘to go’), *ẓalla* (‘to remain’), *baqiya* (‘to remain’), and *qa‘ada* (‘to sit’) are examples of verbs with a continuous or durative aspect.
الصحف الأمريكية راحت تتحدث بتشاؤم عن العلاقات المتوترة

al=ṣuḥf    al=amrikiyya   rāḥat    tataḥaddat    bi=tasā’um
ART=newspapers    ART=American    went    talk.IMPF.3SG.F    INST=pessimism
the newspapers    the American    with pessimism

‘The American newspapers went on talking pessimistically about the aggravated relations’

فمضى يتحدث عن أمور لا علاقة لها بسؤال

fa=maḍā    yataḥaddat    ‘an    umūr   lā    ‘ilāqa    lahā    bi=su’alī
CONJ=GO.PERF.3SG.M    talk.IMPF.3SG.M    about    topics    NEG    relation    POSS.3S.F
so went    talking    about    topics    no    relation    to it

‘So he went on talking about topics that are irrelevant to my question’
REMAIN.PERF   TALK.IMPF
(data from arabiCorpus.byu.edu)

ظل يتحدث معي عن المسرح

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{žalla}} & \quad \text{yataḥaddaṭ} & \quad \text{ma’ī} & \quad \text{‘an} & \quad \text{al}=	ext{masraḥ} \\
\text{REMAIN.PERF.3SG.M} & \quad \text{talk.IMPF.3SG.M} & \quad \text{COM} & \quad \text{about} & \quad \text{ART=theatre} \\
\text{remained} & \quad \text{talking} & \quad \text{with me} & \quad \text{about} & \quad \text{the theatre}
\end{align*}
\]

‘He kept talking to me about theatre’

لكن بوش بقي يتحدث عن النصر

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lākinna} & \quad \text{buš} & \quad \text{baqiya} & \quad \text{yataḥaddaṭ} & \quad \text{‘an} & \quad \text{al}=	ext{naṣr} \\
\text{CONJ} & \quad \text{Bush} & \quad \text{REMAIN.PERF.3SG.M} & \quad \text{talk.IMPF.3SG.M} & \quad \text{about} & \quad \text{ART=victory} \\
\text{but} & \quad \text{Bush} & \quad \text{remained} & \quad \text{talking} & \quad \text{about} & \quad \text{the victory}
\end{align*}
\]

‘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

- َدَاهِبَا - not grammaticalized
- َمَدَّا
- َرَحَا
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

- *daḥaba* - not grammaticalized
- *maḍā* - partially grammaticalized
- *rāḥa* - almost fully grammaticalized
**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 V₂.IMPERFECTIVE

*maḍā*
- GO.PERFECTIVE V₂.IMPERFECTIVE
- GO.PERFECTIVE V₂.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 $V_2$.IMPF
(‘went on doing something’)

- $V_2$ collocates
  - A **wide range** of verbs (can be telic or atelic)
\textit{rāḥa}. PERF \textit{V}_2. IMPF
('went on doing something')

- \textit{V}_2 collocates
  - A \textbf{wide range} of verbs (can be telic or atelic)

And since then it [i.e. Washington] kept tightening the grip on him more and more”
\[ \text{rāḥa}. \text{PERF} \quad V_2. \text{IMPF} \]

(‘went on doing something’)

- \( V_2 \) collocates
  - A wide range of verbs (can be telic or atelic)

\[ \text{wa}=\text{rāḥat} \quad \text{al}=\text{maʿānik} \quad \text{al}=\text{mutafarīqa} \quad \text{tanšab} \]
\[ \text{CONJ}=\text{rāḥa}. \text{PERF.3SG.FEM} \quad \text{ART}=\text{battles} \quad \text{ART}=\text{separate} \quad \text{erupt.IMPF.3SG.FEM} \]
\[ \text{and went} \quad \text{the battles} \quad \text{the separate} \quad \text{erupting} \]
\[ \text{inda} \quad \text{ḥudūdiha} \quad \text{LOC} \quad \text{its.borders} \]
\[ \text{maʿa} \quad \text{sūriya} \quad \text{wa}=\text{ʾurdu} \quad \text{COM} \quad \text{Syria} \quad \text{CONJ}=\text{ART}=\text{Jordan} \]
\[ \text{with} \quad \text{Syria} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{the Jordan} \]

‘And separate battles kept erupting at the borders it [i.e. Israel] shares with Syria and Lebanon’
maḏā. PERF  V₂. IMPF
(‘went on doing something’)

▪ V₂ collocates
  ▪ In 26 (out of of 38) sentences : SAY
maḍā. PERF  V₂. IMPF
('went on doing something')

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

And Al Hariri went on saying/to say after his meeting with a French parliamentary delegate...
maḍā. PERF  V₂. IMPF
(‘went on doing something’)

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

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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