

Non-canonical grammaticalisations of raising predicates across Arabic

There is considerable disagreement in the literature as to whether or not so-called raising predicates are attested in Arabic. This has mainly focussed on predicates such as *yabdū* ‘seem’, and other verbs of appropinquation in MSA, such as the inceptive verb *badaʔa* ‘start’, and the question of whether these verbs, which otherwise take a non-thematic SUBJ, also occur in a raising structures involving SUBJ-sharing between the matrix and embedded clauses (as in *Kim_i seems to e_i like Mary*). In this MSA-focussed literature, proponents such as Mohammad (2000) and Soltan (2007) (among others) take the view that such structures do not exist.

We reopen the question of raising in Arabic, but from a very different perspective. By primarily focusing on data from the domain of perceptual reports in vernacular varieties of Arabic we demonstrate that raising predicates do indeed exist. In doing so, we raise the issue as to how it seems that lexical raising predicates (i.e. predicates that are not merely functional, such as auxiliaries) in the vernaculars do not quite involve canonical verb-forms. While verb-forms such as *dher* ‘seem’ (and its phonological counterparts) are found in dialects ranging from Moroccan (Benmamoun, 2000) to Syrian (Farhat, 1991), the structures they appear in are prototypically ones that do not involve raising. We here argue for a morphosyntactic analysis which accounts for what formal changes have taken place in the grammaticalisation and formation of erstwhile non-verbal lexical raising predicates in these varieties.

We hypothesise two distinct diachronic paths that have led to the formation of raising predicates in Arabic:

1. A categorial change from P or N, to V, as in (1a)-(1b), resulting in the formation of a lexical pseudo-verb with raising properties;
2. A change involving more structural complexity: a P (typically meaning ‘like; as’ (Taine-Cheikh, 2004)) + Complementiser, which have fused morphophonologically, primarily as a result of procliticisation of the P onto the C, and have been (categorially) reanalysed as a V that then takes its own complement, as we hypothesise to be the case for data from Tunisian (2a), and Gulf (2b) (the latter involving a development from a structure parallel to *ka+ʔanna*, which otherwise functions as a fully-fledged complementiser in a number of other dialects, such as Egyptian and Palestinian).

- (1) a. *zei-na mberrd-în*
like-1PL.GEN cold-PL

We seem cold.

Djidjelli Algerian: Marçais (1954, 524)

- b. *šikil-ak ma haḍḍar-it-š malīh*
form-2SGM.GEN NEG prepare.PFV-2SGM-NEG well

You seem to not have prepared well (for the exam). Jordanian: Jarrah and Alshamari (2017, p. 32)

- (2) a. *kīf-əlli ma-t-ḥebb-š*
like-COMP NEG-2SG-want.IPFV-NEG

It seems that you don’t want. Takrouna Tunisian: Marçais and Guiga (1958, 3545)

b. ʕayun-əh ʕinn-ha šway əm-ħōmr-a
 eye.SGF-3SGM.GEN as if-3SGF.ACC a.little PASS.PTCP-blood.shot-SGF
 His eyes look/seem a little blood-shot. Baḥraini: Holes (2001, 177)

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