

On the Syntax of Tense and Aspect in Jordanian Arabic

The literature on the syntax of tense/aspect in Arabic supports the view that Arabic has distinct aspect and tense projections (Benmamoun 2000; Fassi Fehri 2000, 2004, 2012; Ouali & Fortin 2007; a.o.). At least two proposals exist for analyzing complex tense constructions involving the auxiliary *kwn* and a lexical verb: a biclausal analysis with two TPs, two AspPs, and two VPs (developed for Moroccan Arabic; schematized in (1)), and a monoclausal two-TP analysis (developed for Standard Arabic; schematized in (2)). This paper supports a biclausal analysis of Jordanian Arabic (JA) tense/aspect based on three facts: first, both the auxiliary *kwn* and the lexical verb can co-occur with the aspectual marker *b-* and the future marker *rah* (cf. (4)c, (7)(9)a); second, both verbs are inflected for agreement(4)c); third, both verbs can be negated (cf. (4)c). Under the analysis developed here, schematized in (3), both the matrix and embedded TPs can be associated with either \pm Past or \pm Perf (cf Fassi Fehri 2000/2004).

- (1) [TP [AspP [VP BE [TP [AspP [ν P [VP main verb]]]]]] (Ouali & Fortin 2007)
 (2) [T1 (\pm Past) [T2 (\pm Perf/Ant) [Asp (\pm Pfv/Term) [VP (\pm Telic)]]]] (Fassi Fehri 2000/2004)
 (3) [T1 (\pm Past) [T2 (\pm Perf) [AspP [VP BE [T1 (\pm Past) [T2 (\pm Perf) [AspP [ν P [VP main verb]]]]]]]]

In JA, imperfective verb forms in simple tense constructions are prefixed with *b-*, while perfective verb forms are not (cf. (4)a,b):

- (4) a. *(bi)-y-lʕab b. *(bi)-liʕib c. (maa) bi-y-kuun (maa) liʕib
 Asp-3M-play.IMPERF (*Asp)-play.PERF.3M neg Asp-3M-be.IMP neg neg play.PERF.3M
 ‘He plays/is playing.’ ‘He played.’ ‘He will not have played.’

This distribution suggests that *b-* is a marker of imperfective aspect rather than non-past tense; otherwise, we should expect *-b* to co-occur with the perfective verb to form a present perfect. In complex past-tense constructions with the perfective auxiliary *kaan*, *b-* is optional; its presence produces a past-progressive/habitual-past interpretation. The auxiliary *kaan* with a perfective verb gives a past-perfect reading.

- (5) a. kaan (bi)-y-lʕab b. kaan liʕib
 be.PERF.3M Asp-3M-play.IMPERF be.PERF.3M play.PERF.3M
 ‘He was playing/used to play.’ ‘He had played.’

- (6) a. [T1 (+Past) [AspP (+Pfv) \emptyset [VP *kaan* [T2 (-Perf) [AspP (-Pfv) *bi* [ν P *y-lʕab* [VP]]]]]] (Derivation for (5)a)
 b. [T1 (+Past) [AspP (+Pfv) \emptyset [VP *kaan* [T2 (+Perf) [AspP (-Pfv) \emptyset [ν P *liʕib* [VP]]]]]] (Derivation for (5)b)

JA also has a putative future marker *rah*, which is incompatible with aspectual *b-*. *rah* always co-occurs with the imperfective form of the lexical verb, as in (7)a, or the auxiliary, as in (7)b & (7)c. When *rah* combines with the auxiliary *y-kuun*, it can be followed by a perfective verb (resulting in a future-perfect reading: (7)b) or an imperfective verb prefixed with *b-* (resulting in a future-progressive reading with obligatory aspectual marker *ba-*: (7)c):

- (7) a. rah *(bi)-y-lʕab b. rah y-kuun liʕib c. rah y-kuun *(bi)-y-lʕab
 Future (*Asp)-3M-play.IMPERF Future 3M-be.IMP play.PERF.3M Future 3M-be.IMP Asp-3M-play.IMPERF
 ‘He will play.’ ‘He will have played.’ ‘He will be playing.’

rah's incompatibility with aspectual *b-* suggests that it is not truly a tense marker. If it were, nothing should block it from co-occurring with *b-* in (7)a to give a future-progressive reading. I therefore posit that *rah* is an imperfective aspect marker associated with future tense (Fut).

- (8) a. [T1 (-Past, Fut) [AspP (-Pfv) *rah* [ν P *y-lʕab* [VP]]]]] (Derivation for (8)a)
 b. [T1 (-Past, Fut) [AspP (-Pfv) *rah* [VP *y-kuun* [T2 (+Perf) [AspP (-Pfv) \emptyset [ν P *liʕib* [VP]]]]]] (Derivation for (8)b)
 c. [T1 (-Past, Fut) [AspP (-Pfv) *rah* [VP *y-kuun* [T2 (-Perf) [AspP (-Pfv) *bi* [ν P *y-lʕab* [VP]]]]]] (Derivation for (8)b)

When the aspectual marker *b-* combines with the imperfective form of the auxiliary *kwn*, we get the auxiliary *bi-y-kuun*, with a future-tense reading. The combination of *bi-y-kuun* and the *b-*prefixed imperfective verb results in a future-progressive reading similar to the one in (7)c. The combination of *bi-y-kuun* with *rah* and an imperfective verb results in a *future-in-the-future* reading (9)a, offering further support for the conclusion that *rah* is associated with a future-oriented imperfect tense. The combination of *bi-y-kuun* and the perfective verb gives the future-perfect reading in (9)b):

- (9) a. bi-y-kuun rah y-lʕab b. bi-y-kuun liʕib
 Asp-3M-be.IMP Future 3M-play.IMP Asp-3M-be.IMP play.PERF.3M
 ‘He will be about to play.’ ‘He will have played.’

- (10) a. [T1 (-Past) [AspP (-Pfv) *bi* [VP *y-kuun* [T2 (-Perf, Fut) [AspP (-Pfv) *rah* [ν P *y-lʕab* [VP]]]]]] (Derivation for (9)a)
 b. [T1 (-Past) [AspP (-Pfv) *bi* [VP *y-kuun* [T2 (+Perf) [AspP (-Pfv) \emptyset [ν P *liʕib* [VP]]]]]] (Derivation for (9)b)

The facts in (7)c and (9) suggest that each finite clause must have an aspectual marker (the imperfective aspect marker *b-* or the perfective aspect marker \emptyset). This requirement, in turn, lends credence to the proposal that complex tense constructions have two clauses. Further support for this biclausal analysis with two tense projections per clause comes from cases like the past-perfect-progressive reading available in (5)a. In addition to laying out the details of this proposal, I will also discuss the full distribution of the imperfective and perfective verb forms with respect to tense/aspect and negation and show how they derive from the configuration in (3).