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Research article

Grammaticalization of the future markers in Jordanian Arabic

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Received: 1 March 2009

Reviewing editor: Andrey G. Kirillov
Accepted: 15 May 2009

Published online: 1 June 2009

Abstract

This paper deals with the grammaticalization processes captured in Jordanian and Standard Arabic. The grammaticalization mechanisms, as well as approaches, are analyzed for both Standard and Jordanian Arabic. The issue of grammaticalization directionality is also discussed. We found that the future forms of the Jordanian Arabic *ba-*, *Ha-* and *ta-* have developed out of full lexical items *bad(di.)*, *ra(a)ha* and *Hatta* respectively and these forms are developed from Jordanian Arabic, not from Classical Arabic. We also found that the future forms in Jordanian Arabic and Standard Arabic have undergone two processes: desemanticization or bleaching and phonological reduction. Jordanian and Standard Arabic have in common the same mechanisms of change which are operative in the development of future elements: habituation and inference.

Keywords

grammaticalization; habituation; desemanticization; bleaching; decategorization;
conventionalization of implicature

For citation

Alshboul, Sabri, Yousef Al-Shaboul, and Sahail M. Asassfeh. 2009. "Grammaticalization of the future markers in Jordanian Arabic." *Language. Text. Society* 3 (1): e26-e37.



<https://ltsj.online/2009-03-1-alshboul-alshaboul-asassfeh>. (Journal title at the time of publication: *SamaraAltLinguo E-Journal*.)

INTRODUCTION

Future markers indicate “the situation described by the verb at a time subsequent to the moment of speech” (Bybee 1985, 156). According to Bybee (1985, 156), future inflections are found in 44% of the languages of the sample that she studied. She goes on to claim that “the presence of a present / past inflection in a language implies the presence of a future inflection, while the converse implication does not hold” (Bybee 1985, 157). Thus, languages like Navajo “have a future inflection but no present/past inflection” (Bybee 1985, 157). English has future markers whose “primary function appeared to express mood, but could also be used to express future time” (ibid.).

This paper uses an approach to grammaticalization that focuses on the development of grammatical elements from lexical items. It explores the sources of the simple future forms in Jordanian Arabic (JA), which is a form of Arabic spoken in Jordan and in Standard Arabic as well. It is important to know that this paper also sheds light on the processes and mechanisms that are involved in the occurrence of the future elements in Jordanian Arabic and in Standard Arabic (SA). In addition, the analysis of the data taken from Arabic brings about evidence that goes in the opposite direction of the claim that grammaticalization is unidirectional in nature.

The paper is composed of the following sections: Section (1) presents the framework of grammaticalization. Section (2) explores the pathways of development for the future morphemes in some languages (e.g. English). Section (3) deals with the future grammatical elements in Standard Arabic (SA). Grammaticalization and its processes in Jordanian Arabic (JA) are discussed in part (4) which sheds light on the source of future forms, the processes and the mechanisms of change that trigger their development. Finally, conclusions are displayed in part (5).

The Grammaticalization Framework

This section displays the following points: First it introduces the definition of grammaticalization. Second, it discusses the processes of grammaticalization (e.g. desemantization, phonological processes and morphosyntactic processes). And finally it presents the mechanisms of change (e.g. habituation and inference) in general.

The definition of Grammaticalization

There are two processes through which new grammatical forms come into play: the first form is through *analogy* whereby new paradigms come into being through formal resemblance to already established paradigms (Meillet 1912 in Harris 1997). The second way in which new grammatical forms come into being is through *grammaticalization*. According to Harris (1997), “Meillet’s sense of grammaticalization includes the process by which a word becomes a clitic, or a

cliticized affix". Heine and Reh (1984, 15) define grammaticalization "as an evolution whereby linguistic units lose in semantic complexity, pragmatic significance, syntactic freedom, and phonetic substance, respectively". Grammaticalization is also more simply characterized as "the processes whereby items become more grammatical through time" (Hopper and Traugott 1993, 2). Hopper and Traugott (1993, 50) and Trask (1996, 143-145) regard grammaticalization as a subset of changes involved in reanalysis. However, Heine and Reh (1984) discriminate between grammaticalization and reanalysis: the former involves the evolution of lexical or grammatical morphemes whereas the latter is concerned with the evolution of syntactic or pragmatic structures. Furthermore, researchers suggest that grammaticalization is essentially *uni-directional* in nature (cf. Heine and Reh 1984; Croft 1990; Hopper and Traugott 1993; Bybee 1994). More recently, researchers have come to realize that "Grammaticalization of lexical items takes place within particular constructions and, further, that grammaticalization is the creation of new constructions" (Bybee 1994).

Some Grammaticalization Processes

As has been previously pointed out, this study adopts an approach to grammaticalization whereby a lexical item becomes a grammatical element in the context of a particular construction. Grammaticalization involves the following processes (Bybee 1994; Trask 1996):

I. Desemanticization or Generalization:

In this process, the semantic content of the lexical item undergoing grammaticalization is reduced, i.e., it is bleached of its lexical meaning (Bybee 1994; Trask 1996). According to Bybee (1994), "specific, concrete meanings entering into this process become generalized and more abstract, and as a result, become appropriate in a growing range of contexts". Accordingly, generalization or bleaching of the meaning of a lexical item is caused by frequency.

II. Phonological processes

Here, the words or phrases undergoing grammaticalization are also subject to phonological processes such as erosion, assimilation or even loss (Trask 1996). Bybee and Pagliuca (1985, 76) state that "as the meaning generalizes and the range of uses widens, the frequency increases and this leads automatically to phonological reduction and perhaps fusion". All these processes lead to a critical reduction in the phonological form of the grammaticalizing words such that the produced forms "require less muscular effort" (Bybee et.al. 1994).

III. Morphosyntactic processes: Decategorization

After having its meaning generalized or bleached and its phonological form reduced, the word or phrase undergoing grammaticalization also undergoes a morphosyntactic process; i.e., decategorization. Decategorization "is applied to the set of processes by which a noun or verb loses its morphosyntactic properties in the process of becoming a grammatical element" (Trask



1996; Bybee et al. 1994). Sometimes both the grammatical morpheme and the lexical element from which it arose coexist in the language but in some cases the lexical item disappears from the language (Trask 1996; Bybee et al. 1994).

Some Realizations of Grammaticalization

Two mechanisms of change are presented in this section: *habituation* and *pragmatic inference*. First, habituation which is considered as an important mechanism of change in grammaticalization (Bybee, 1994). The force of a word or phrase that is repeated over and over is diminished. In other words, the more frequently a word or phrase is used, the more likely that it will undergo grammaticalization. Thus, habituation can cause a word or phrase to be bleached and, as a result, receive inferential meaning. Repetition can also trigger phonological reduction.

The second mechanism is *conventionalization of implicature* (pragmatic inference). In this type of change, if a particular pattern of inferences is realized in a grammatical construction, the hearer then comes to associate these inferences with the meaning of the construction. According to Bybee et al. (1994, 25), “a grammar that often occurs in an environment in which a certain inference may be made can come to be associated with that inference to such an extent that the inference becomes part of the explicit meaning of the grammar.” Hence, in English the intention meaning leads to the development of the future meaning: since the intentions are often realized in a period subsequent to the moment of speech, the hearer understands the future meaning in such constructions.

The “movement” pathway of Grammaticalization of the future markers: an example from English

In this section, I will discuss the *movement* pathway of development for the future markers in English. The fact that the future is marked in the same way in most world languages and that it develops the same shades of meanings suggest that there is a limited number of sources out of which the future can develop. According to Bybee et al. (1994, 159), future in the languages of the world most often develops from “constructions expressing obligation or necessity, desire, and movement or intention”. Also, Trask (1996, 144) discusses the verbs that develop into grammatical markers of futurity in the languages of the world: verbs meaning ‘go’, ‘come’, ‘want’, and ‘must’. In this section, reference is made to the discussion of the movement path of development that has been identified for the rise of future morphemes in the languages of the world. Bybee et al. (1994, 159) report that “the most frequent sources are movement verb constructions, with ten futures having their sources in constructions with ‘come’ and similar verbs and ten in constructions with ‘go’. Thus, in English the change of (be going to / be gonna) to future occurs only in purposive directional constructions. The change is made possible by the fact that there is an inference of futurity from purposiveness: If I am traveling in order to study, the act of study will be in the future (Trask 1996, 143).

Grammaticalization in Standard Arabic (SA)

In Standard Arabic¹, futurity is expressed by the prefix *sa-* or the particle *sawfa* meaning “will” (Hasan 1993, 60 and Abdel-Hafiz 1997). These forms occur before the imperfective verb stem:

- (1) ***sa-yaqra’-u ad-darsa***
Will-read –he the-lesson
“He will do read the lesson”
- (2) ***sawfa yaqra’ u ad-darsa***
will read-he the lesson
“He will read the lesson”

Some scholars of Arabic language (Wilkins 1980; Holes 1995) noticed no difference in meaning between the sentences containing *sawfa* or *sa-* before the verb as in (1 & 2). Thus, there is no difference between (*sa-yaqra’u* ‘he will read’) and (*sawfa yaqra’u* ‘he will read’). According to Al-Khawalda (2000, 75), “it seems that the selection of (*sawfa yaqra’u* ‘He will read’) and (*sa-yaqra’u* ‘He will read’) is arbitrary since it is difficult to find any semantic or syntactic reason for selecting one expression over the other to express futurity.” But other scholars (Hasan 1993, 60; Alkhuli 1997, 46; Khalil 1999, 19; Abdel-Hafiz 1997) claim that Arabs use “the particle *sawfa* ‘will’ plus the imperfect indicative form of the verb” in order to express remote future:

- (3) ***sawfa yazuurana ghadan.***
Will he –visit-us tomorrow
“He will visit us tomorrow”

But the particle *sa-* ‘will’ plus the imperfect indicative form of the verb is used to express near future time (Khalil 1999, 194):

- (4) ***Sa-yazuurana ghadan.***
Will-he-visit-us tomorrow
“He will visit us tomorrow”

Henceforth, the marker *sa-* ‘will’ seems to have developed from the word (*sawfa*), which is an independent marker of futurity. The fact that *sa-* is attached to the beginning of the imperfective verb stems indicates that it is derived from the word (*sawfa*), which is often placed before imperfective verb forms bearing the same meaning and function.

It seems obvious that some examples of (*sawfa* + the imperfective verb) form have undergone a phonological process and a morphosyntactic process: the phonological processes i.e. syllabic erosion has reduced the word (*sawfa*) to *sa-* as explained in the following configuration:

1 Standard Arabic (SA) is used nowadays in the religious and official contexts. In other words, it is the written form of the language, common to all educated Arabic speakers in the Arab world. It is used in the media, in the literature, and in the academic institutions (Ravid and Farah 1999).

(5)	Underlying Form	second syllable loss	coda deletion	surface form
	sawfa >	saw >	sa >	sa

Such a phonological reduction of the particle is motivated by the frequent use of such a sequence of words (*sawfa* +Verb). (*Sawfa*) ‘will’ has a high token frequency as, according to Abduh (1979), it occurs 107 times in Abduh’s list of the most common 3025 words. Similar examples occur in English: the sequence (*going to* +Verb) is reduced to ‘gonna’ as a result of the repeated use of this sequence of words. We can also note that the grammaticalized word has been decategorized as a dependent element which has to be attached to a verb stem. According to Bybee (1994), one important characteristic of grammaticalization is “a dramatic frequency increase”. This increase arises as a result of an increase in the number and types of contexts in which the grammatical morpheme is appropriate”. If this prediction is correct, the form (*sa*-“will”) is expected to be more frequent than the particle (*sawfa* “will”) from which it has developed. That this prediction holds can be seen in the study conducted by Al-Khawalda (2000) who has examined the token frequency of each of the future forms in Classical Arabic. The development of the future prefix *sa-* has not influenced the status of *sawfa*: both *sawfa* and *sa-* coexist (Al-Khawalda 2000, 20-21) but they are used in different contexts as has been previously pointed out. Accordingly, *sa-*, which is more grammaticalized than its cognate *sawfa*, must be the newer form and is probably going to outrank the source form. That this is in progress can be supported by referring to Al-Khawalda (2000, 72)’s study of futurity in the speech of the Jordanian Prime Minister. Al-Khawalda (2000, 72) states that the form with the prefix *sa-* occurs 67 times per 73 words, making a total of 91.7% whereas the form *sawfa* occurs four times, or 5.5% of the total.

Unidirectionality of Grammaticalization

The claim that the course of grammaticalization is unidirectional (Heine and Reh 1984, 74; Trask 1996; Bybee 1994) cannot be valid in such a situation. Bybee (1994) views unidirectionality as a situation whereby nouns and verbs lose their categorial status and become prepositions, auxiliaries and other grammatical forms. Free elements become more restricted and fuse with other elements. The reverse directions are rarely attested (Trask 1996).

Standard Arabic provides a counterexample to the unidirectionality hypothesis (Abdel-Hafiz 1997). It has just been noted that the future element *sawfa* has become *sa-*, which is attached to a verb stem. The particle *sawfa* has also been lexicalized as the verbs *sawwafa/yusawwif* ‘to postpone’. SA is not the only language with counterexamples to unidirectionality proposal (Abdel-Hafiz 1997). English and Basque also provide some counterexamples to unidirectionality. English has counterexamples involving the lexicalization of grammatical items. For instance, the suffix *-ism*, as in socialism has recently become an independent word *-ism* meaning “creed”. Similarly, the Basque bound morpheme *-tasun* ‘ness’, which is used in the formation of abstract nouns as in *-eder* ‘beautiful’ and *edertasun* ‘beauty’, has been turned into an independent word *tasun* ‘quality’ (Trask 1996, 147).

The Grammaticalization of the Future Markers in Jordanian Arabic (JA)

Jordanian Arabic displays the future tense. The future tense (futurity) can be realized by three prefixes: *b(a)-*, *Ha-* and *ta-* before the imperfective indicative verb:

- (6) *bukrah ba-shuufak fil-matar*
tomorrow shall –I-see –you- in –the- airport
“I shall see you tomorrow in the airport”
- (7) *bukrah ha-shuufak fi-l- mataar*
tomorrow shall –I-see –you in -the -airport
“I shall see you in the airport tomorrow”
- (8) *Xabbirni ilyawm ta-shoufak bukrah*
you-tell-me today to see-you tomorrow
“Just tell me today in order to see you tomorrow”

It is evident from the examples above that the future affixes *b(a)-*, *ha-* and *ta-* ‘will’ are attached to the beginning of the imperfective verb *shuuf* “see” to indicate futurity.

The Analysis

The form *ba* –VERB:

In Jordanian Arabic, futurity is expressed by the use of either the prefix *b(a)-* or the free particle (*badd+* subject clitic pronoun) before the imperfective indicative verb to indicate futurity as shown in examples (9 & 10):

- (9) *bukrah baddi-ashoufak- fil-mataar.*
tomorrow shall I-see -you in the airport
“I shall see you tomorrow in the airport”
- (10) *bukrah ba-ashoufak- fil-mataar.*
tomorrow shall I-see -you in the airport
“I shall see you tomorrow in the airport”

It seems obvious that there is no basic difference in meaning between the two forms in terms of future remoteness. I would claim that the future marker *b(a)-* seems to have developed from the lexical word *bad(di)* to indicate futurity. The evidence I propose is that both forms which are attached to the beginning of the verb have the same inflectional position within the word as represented in the following configuration:

ba (ddi).... person (subject).....verb..... object / clitic
OR (free morpheme)

Thus, the particle (*baddi*) and the reduced prefix (*ba-*) are similar in terms of their syntactic distribution i.e. they occur before of the verb. On the other hand, there is a basic difference between the two forms. The form *bad(di)* takes the subject pronoun as a clitic (e.g. *bad-di* ‘I shall’ *bad-du* ‘he will’ *bad-ha* ‘she will’ *bad-na* ‘we will’, etc.); and it is followed by the verb which also contains the same clitic pronoun (e.g. ***bad-di*** *?shrab* ‘I will drink’; ***bad-ha*** *tishrab* ‘She will drink’ ***bad-du*** *yishrab* ‘He will drink’ and ***bad-na*** *nishrab* ‘We will drink’). While the second form *ba-* does not take such a subject pronoun clitic rather it is only attached to the verb which originally bears that clitic (***b-****ashrab* ‘I will drink’ ***b-****tishrab* ‘She will drink’ ***b-****nishrab* ‘We will drink’)

The form Ha –verb

Jordanian Arabic also employs the prefix *Ha* – which occurs before the imperfective verb to indicate the future tense. This prefix has the same distribution of the prefix *ba-* explained in the previous section. I would also hypothesize that the future marker *Ha-* seems to have developed from the lexical word *ra(a)ha* ‘went’ and *rayih* ‘to go’ in indicate futurity. The evidence is that both forms are attached to the beginning of the verb and have the same inflectional position within the word as represented in the following configuration:

(ra)ha/ rah OR *rayih* 1st person (subject) verb
object / clitic OR (free morpheme)

It is necessary to mention that the two particles *ra (a)ha* and *rayih* have the same root but two different derivations. It seems clear that the prefix *Ha-* has developed from the particles *ra(a)ha* or *rayeh*.

- (11) ***Ha*** *-shoufak bukrah fi-l-mataar.*
shall-I-see –you tomorrow in the airport
“I shall see you tomorrow in the airport”
- (12) ***ra(ye)h*** *ashoufak fi-lmaTar*
shall-I-see –you tomorrow in the airport
“I shall see you tomorrow in the airport”

The form ta+ Verb

Futurity can also be expressed in the particle *Hatta* ‘to+ future form verb’ and its equivalent free particle *ta-* ‘to+ future form’ before the imperfective indicative verb as in (13 & 14):

- (13) *Xabbirni ilyawm Hatta ?shoufak bukrah*
you-tell-me today to see-you tomorrow
“Just tell me today in order to see you tomorrow.”

- (14) *Xabbirni ilyawm ta-shoufak bukrah*
you-tell-me today to see-you tomorrow
“Just tell me today in order to see you tomorrow”

According to the data above, there seem to be no difference between *Hatta* and *ta-* in terms of structure and meaning. Both forms are followed by imperfective indicative verbs and both indicate futurity, too. I would assume that the grammaticalized form *ta-* ‘to+ future form’ has developed from the lexical item *Hatta* ‘to+ future form’. This is supported by the phonological process which reduces the form *ta-* from the future particle *Hatta* and the decategorization process which renders the grammaticalized form meaningless separately.

Consequently, there are some processes that characterize the grammaticalization behaviour for the future markers in (JA) as shown below:

I. Desemanticization or Bleaching:

As a result of frequency of use (Bybee et.al 1994), the forms (*ra (a)ha*) ‘to go’, *bad(di-* ‘want to’ and *i* ‘to+ future form’ are desemanticized or bleached such that their semantic content is radically reduced: an intention meaning and a future meaning developed. Thus, the particle *Hatta*, for example, which indicates futurity has been bleached to just a prefix *ta-* (15):

- (15) *Hastanna ta-shoufak bukrah*
will wait-I to see-you tomorrow
“I will wait to see you tomorrow”

Furthermore, the verb (*ra(a)ha*) ‘go’ is desemanticized or bleached, part of its meaning gets lost: it now has nothing to do with movement or intention (e.g. *ha-ynaam bakkeer* ‘he will sleep early’); this form is associated only with future meaning. According to Bybee (1994), “the mechanism behind bleaching is habituation: a stimulus loses its impact if it occurs very frequently. But it is inference that is responsible for the rise of the future meaning in such constructions: the hearer infers that the intention is to be realized in the future. The repetition of this inference creates in the mind of the hearer a relationship between such constructions and the future meaning”.

II. Phonological Reduction:

This process refers to syllabic erosion which reduces the form of the lexical item as shown in the following:

A-The form (Badd (i)):

First, the second syllable of the word *bad(di)* gets truncated resulting in (*baddi>bad-*). Second, the coda of the syllable *bad(di)* is deleted resulting in (*b(a)-*).

B-The form (ra(a)ha)

This form also undergoes similar processes as shown in the following prose: First, the initial syllable *ra* is completely eroded; consequently, the form becomes (*ra(a)ha* > *ha*). Thus, the grammaticalized form, which has lost its original category as a verb in a particular construction, has come to be decategorized as a prefix. Thus the mechanism of change that is operative here is frequency.

It is important to notice that the verb (*raaha* 'to go') maintains its original meaning in some contexts of the language (i.e. it did not get exposed to bleaching or phonological reduction) in constructions where it is not followed by an imperfective verb form as in (16):

- (16) *?al-walad raah ?ddaar*
The -boy went to the home
"The boy went home"

C-The form Hat (ta):

The lexical form *Hat-ta* is composed of two syllables *Hat* and *ta* and I assume that the first syllable is completely eroded resulting in the grammaticalized form *ta-* as explained in the corresponding section above.

CONCLUSION

According to the above-stated arguments, we can come up with following findings. Standard Arabic and Jordanian Arabic have future markers. Both have a future prefix or particle that accompany the verb stem. Standard Arabic has two future markers: (*sawfa*) which is employed if reference is made to remote future time and (*sa-*), which is used to denote near future time and this form does not exist in Jordanian Arabic. Moreover, the future forms of the Jordanian Arabic *ba-*, *Ha-* and *ta-* have developed out of full lexical items *bad(di.)*, *ra(a)ha* and *Hatta* respectively and these forms are developed from Jordanian Arabic not from Classical Arabic.

As for the grammaticalization processes, the future forms in Jordanian Arabic and Standard Arabic have undergone two processes: desemanticization or bleaching and phonological reduction. Jordanian and Standard Arabic have in common the same mechanisms of change which are operative in the development of future elements: *habituation* and *inference*. Repetition has deprived a lexical item from parts of its meaning. Also, the lexical item is subject to phonological reduction. In the development of SA future forms, only habituation is involved. As the particle (*sawfa*) is repeated in constructions where it is followed by the imperfective verb form, it is, therefore, exposed to phonological reduction: syllabic loss (i.e. *sawfa* > *sa*).

To recapitulate, it has been noted that the lexical items that develop into future elements in Jordanian and Standard Arabic are subject to grammaticalization only in a particular construction, namely, the construction where the lexical item is preposed to a verb. But the lexical

items remain intact in other constructions: the lexical items coexist with the grammatical elements.

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Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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