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Finiteness, logophors, and double access construal in Arabic

In Arabic language varieties, verbs are always morphologically finite. They necessarily inflect for tense/mood and subject/agreement features. There are no real infinitives, no participles, and expressions which name non-finite events are clearly nominal (e.g. *masdar*s). Finite forms are then *bi-functional:* they are used in contexts where non-finite forms would occur in Indo-European, in addition to finite contexts. In Indo-European, for example, the finite/non-finite verb inflection is a reliable indicator of the distinction between absolute and relative tenses found in independent and dependent contexts, respectively (Comrie 1985, Eide 2007). It is less so for Nominative case of the Subject. In Arabic (and Semitic), such inflectional distinctions on verbs are not found, and they are hardly relevant for licensing Subject case or agreement. But other syntactic or distributional criteria can be used to identify a finite domain (see (1)-(4)).

Finiteness has played a prominent role in explaining the occurrences of overt subjects, expletives, pro, and PRO. The distribution of referential, pronominal, and anaphoric expressions depends on the occurrence of both Subject and Tense, which make a finite clause opaque, or 'complete' (Chomsky 2008). Finiteness gives rise to specific interpretation effects (e.g. with respect to anchoring of the clause in terms of time and participant features; Platzack 1996, Sigurdsson 2004, Giorgi 2010). It is distinct from tense, although it may be a prerequisite for tense (and mood). There are non-tensed finite verbs (e.g. the imperative) as well as non-finite tensed verbs (e.g. past participles). More importantly, finite verbs in Arabic/Semitic are not always syntactically or semantically finite. In Rizzi's (1997) cartography, Fin(iteness) has been postulated as a syntactic node. It is higher than T and Agr, which can occur lower in the clause, with uninterpretable features which are divorced from its interpretable features (in conformity with (5)).

If Fin is the 'logophoric centre' of the clause for both participant and event features (Bianchi 2003), then the interpretation of pronouns and that of tenses can receive a unified syntactic treatment, which accounts for pronominal and anaphoric common behaviours. We will show how finite verbs in Arabic/Semitic can be interpreted as temporal pronouns or anaphors, subject to principles of Binding Theory, depending on whether they are found in a finite or a non-finite domain. Event temporality and adverb temporality are then made parallel. Likewise, logophoric pronouns and double access contrual of tenses are found in the same domain of interpretation, and they exhibit parallel characteristics (Giorgi 2006, Fassi Fehri 2007). Forms of syntactic non-finiteness in Arabic/Semitic are cases of *truncation* at TP or VP. In control, raising, ECM, infinitival questions, etc., 'infinitive' means a negative (under)specification of T/Agr, or truncation at the level of IP/VP. Fin bears uninterpretable features for Tense and Agr, responsible for Subject licensing and its Case in Indo-European, but not Semitic. When C is removed, the clause is truncated at TP or VP (Adger 2007, Landau 2004), paving the way to non-finite interpretation (see (6)-(8)).

Examples

(1) kun-tu katab-tu   r-risaalat-a
    was-I   wrote-I   the-letter-acc
    I had written the letter. Literally: 'I WAS I WROTE the letter'

 (2) kaada   r-rajul-u   ʔan   y-aktub-a   r-risaalat-a
     was.about the-man-nom that/to 3-write-subj the-letter-acc
     The man was about to write the letter.

 (3) ḥasib-tu   zayd-an   daxala l-qaaʕat-a
     thought-I   Zayd-acc   entered the-room-acc
     I thought Zayd entered the room.

 (4) kawn-u   zayd-in   saqat-a ʔaqlaqa-nii
     fact-nom Zayd-gen fell   made.nervous-me
     The fact that Zayd fell made me nervous.

(5) C (if complete) introduces interpretable T and interpretable Person.

(6) qaala-t l-ii   l-fataat-u   ʔinna-n-ii ʔ-uḥibb-u-ka
    said-f to-me the-girl-nom that-I   I-like-indic-you
    The girl said to that she likes me.

 (7) qaala-t l-fataat-u   ʔamsi   ʔinna-haa t-aʕtii   ġadan
     said-f   the-girl-nom yesterday that-her   f-come   tomorrow
      The girl said yesterday that she comes tomow.

(8) naada-t ʔan (i)dxul
    called-f that come.in
    She called: "come in".

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