Psychological Predicates and Verbal Complementation in Arabic

Yasir Alotaibi, Muhammad Alzaidi, Maris Camilleri, Shaimaa Elsadek and Louisa Sadler
(University of Essex)

Patterns of verbal complementation and argument realization are a much under-studied topic in Arabic, especially in connection to the vernaculars. This paper offers a contribution in this area. We focus on a group of psych verbs in three geographically diverse dialects (Hijazi, Egyptian and Maltese) and the standard written norm (Modern Standard), establishing the complementation patterns which they exhibit. The behaviour of this class of verbs when embedded under aspectual/phasal verbs (inceptives, continuatives), and indeed the various pseudo-verbs found in the vernaculars, raise further intriguing issues for the theories of control and raising in general.

Except where otherwise stated, our observations hold across the varieties we have investigated. We show that these verbs, exemplified in (1) and (2), map the experiencer as OBJ (occasionally dative OBJ or OBL) and the stimulus as SUBJ. Amongst relevant observations are: a pronominal experiencer is coded as an OBJ affix on the verb, the stimulus controls verbal agreement and the experiencer promotes to SUBJ under passivisation (4).[1] Fronted NP experiencers (which double pronominal affixes) correspond to discourse functions. (Note that inanimate plurals control 3FSG agreement in Arabic - see (3).)

(1) *(Marija) j-o-nqos-ha   erba kotba*
    Mary   3-FV-lack.IMPV.SGM-3SGF.ACC four books
    [MT] Mary/she needs four more books

(2) *elzalam   yirʕib   mona*
    DEF.darkness 3M-terrifies.IMPV-3MS Mona
    [HA] Darkness terrifies Mona

(3) *Mohammad btebset-o   elhadaaya*
    Mohammad 3SGF.please.IMPV- 3SM.ACC DEF.presents
    [EA] Presents make Mohammad pleased

(4) *Mohammad byetbeset   belhadaaya*
    Mohammad 3SM.IMPV.PASS.please by.DEF.presents
    [EA] Mohammad is pleased by presents

The stimulus may be propositional. Since the verb occurs in the default 3SGM form and Arabic makes very limited use of expletives, (5) could in principle correspond to an extraposition or impersonal structure (with the stimulus as e.g. COMP and a non-thematic SUBJ), or involve a propositional SUBJ and experiencer OBJ. A further structure is shown in (6) in which the SUBJ of the (propositional) stimulus argument is seen to control agreement on the psych verb: we present evidence that this is a case of SUBJ to SUBJ raising (SSR) in MT: further research is necessary to establish whether such structures exist in the other varieties. Note that Arabic has no morphologically nonfinite forms but uses imperfectives in tenseless complements.[2] Further structures such as (7) also occur in MT, in which the complementiser *li* is present in the XCOMP (see e.g. Landau (2004) for complementisers in control structures in Hebrew): we will provide discussion of their status in other dialects in the paper.

(5) *ya-ʕjib-ni   ʔin Muhammad ya-ḫroj   li-waḥd-uh*
    3-pleases.IMPV.SGM-1SG.ACC COMP Muhammad 3-go.out.IMPV.SGF PREP-alone-3SGM.ACC
    [HA] It pleases me that Muhammad goes out alone (Muhammad going out alone pleases me)

(6) *Huma għoġb-u-ni   j-a-għml-u   dax-xogħol*
    they   pleased.PV-3PL-1SG.ACC 3-FRM.VWL-do.IMPV-PL DEM.DEF-work
    [MT] They pleased me doing this work

(7) *Marija għoġb-it-ni   li   (*hi) ħarġ-et   weħid-ha*
    Mary   pleased.PV-3SGF-1SG.ACC COMP she went.out.PV-3SGF alone-3SGF.ACC
    [MT] Mary pleased me that she went out on her own

To summarize the observations above: we identify a class of two-place experiencer-object psych verbs - lexical experiencers which precede the verb are typically associated with discourse functions. A sentential stimulus may occur, with default verbal agreement. Maltese additionally permits SUBJ to SUBJ raising structures. Arabic raising and control structures are of interest as all verbforms are morphologically finite.

Having established the existence of a class of experiencer-OBJ psych verbs in Arabic, we also show that they show an interesting interaction with aspectual/phasal verbs (although we do not have space here, in the full paper we will demonstrate that these are verbs with their own PREDs, and that they might best be classified as raising (rather than control) verbs). First we establish the basic behaviour of the aspectual verbs, which typically may show agreement

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[1] Maltese experiencer OBJs are almost always required to be pronominal affixes.

[2] In MSA a dependent mood of the imperfective is found while in some dialects (e.g. EA) the imperfective verb loses its indicative prefix in such environments.

with the complement subject, or appear in default form, corresponding to the choice between a SSR (full agreement and XCOMP) and an impersonal with COMP.[3] (10) show the possible positions of an NP SUBJ (the initial position would not be possible with default agreement on the aspectual verb, and Maltese does not permit the intermediate position): although matters are complicated by the relative flexibility of word order abstracting away from discourse related 'movements' this is highly suggestive of the existence of backward raising (BR) in the dialects, but our concern here is not with the phenomenon of BR. (See Haddad (2012) for the claim that the MSA (11) involves BR: the verbs are SG for independent reasons: agreement is partial in VSO in MSA.)

(8) *badaʔ-u   ye-tʕib-u-ha*
   started.PV.3-PL 3-tire.IMPV-PL-3SGF.ACC
   [EA] They began to tire her.

(9) *badaʔ-a   (elwelaad) ye-tʕib-u-ha   (elwelaad)*
   started.PV.3-SG DEF.children 3-tire.IMPV-PL-3SGF.ACC DEF.children
   [EA] The children began to tire her.

(10) *(elwelaad) badaʔ-u   (elwelaad) ye-tʕib-u-ha   (elwelaad)*
   DEF.children started.PV.3-PL DEF.children 3-tire.IMPV-PL-3SGF.ACC DEF.children
   [EA] The children began to tire her

(11) *kāda   yu-ṣbiḥ-u   ʔawlād-u-na   ġāʻibīn fī ġābāti l-'ismant.*
   were.about-3MS 3M-become-S.IND children-NOM-our lost   in forests the-cement
   [MSA] Our children became almost lost in the forest of cement.   Haddad:70

Given the analysis of the aspectual verbs as SSR and the psych verbs under consideration as experiencer-OBJ verbs, (10) is as expected - but consider (12)-(14). In examples such as these the aspectual/phasal (raising) predicate shows agreement with the embedded experiencer OBJ (and in (14), the OBL OBJ) (this pattern is also possible in MT with some aspectual verbs). The experiencer is obligatorily expressed as a (non-subject) pronominal in the embedded clause.

(12) *Sawwad-uu   **l-malaamiḥ-a   l-ʕarabiiyat-a** wa-bad'a-at   ya-ġlib-u-**haa***
   blackened.PV.3-MPL DEF-features-ACC DEF-Arab-ACC and-started.PV-3SGF 3-overcome.SGM-INDIC-3SGF.ACC
   l-sawaad-u   l-kaaḥil
   DEF-blackness-NOM DEF-pitch
   [MSA] They tarnished the Arab face, and it (the Arab face) started to look pitch black

(13) *Baʔ-et   (elbaḥr) be-ye-rʕeb-**ha**   (elbaḥr)*
   become.PV-3SGF DEF.SEA IMPV-3-terrify.SGM-3SGF.ACC DEF-sea
   [EA] She became terrified of the sea

(14) **Muna** *bad-at   ya-ġlib   ʕalej-**ha**   an-nʕas*
   Muna started.PV-3SGF 3-overcome.IMPV.SGM for-3SGF.ACC DEF-sleepiness.SGM
   [HA] Muna started becoming overcome by sleepiness

The intriguing puzzle presented by this data is that (i) there is a control relationship between the SUBJ and the embedded OBJ, (ii) it is available just when the embedded predication is an experiencer-OBJ psych verb, and (iii) it involves obligatory pronominal resumption. Different aspects of the construction are partly reminiscent of different constructions. For example, missing object constructions (MOC) in Arabic also involve pronominal (resumptive) element rather than a gap, linked to the SUBJ of the dominating PRED. But MOC are introduced by a specific class of predicates (in the *tough* class), while here the lexical idiosyncracy really resides in the nature of the embedded (*psych* verb) predicate: this pattern *only* occurs with these verbs. In the paper we consider to what extent an adequate analysis of this construction may be given by adopting a variant of the analysis of copy raising developed in Asudeh and Toivonen (2012), which offers a resource management approach to the extra pronominal resource in this type of raising (and note that copy raising may target non-SUBJ embedded positions). Unlike English and Swedish copy raising, however, it is not plausible to argue that the complement is a prepositional phrase rather than an embedded clause. Consequently, it is less straightforward to maintain that there is a standard SSR relationship involved in these constructions.

References

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[3]There is some lexical variation here, which we address in the full paper: Maltese *beda* requires agreement but other verbs in this class do not.