

Aspectual object marking in Libyan Arabic

Kersti Börjars, Khawla Ghadgoud & John Payne

The University of Manchester

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Libyan Arabic *fi*: distribution

In Libyan Arabic, direct objects can be either plain or preceded by the differential object marker *fi*

- (1) Ahmed kle el-kosksi
Ahmed eat.PST.3MSG DEF-couscous
'Ahmed ate couscous.'
- (2) Ahmed yakil fi el-kosksi
Ahmed eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous
'Ahmed is eating couscous.'

Note that we use *PST* for the form frequently referred to in literature on Modern Standard Arabic as 'perfective' and *NONT* for the form referred to as 'imperfective' (compare Ryding 2005).

(For an analysis of a similar use of *fi* in Cairo Arabic, see Woidich 2006 and in Tunisian Arabic, see Pallottino & Askri 2015.)

Libyan Arabic *fi*: distribution

fi occurs only with dynamic verbs

- (3) yakil fi el-kosksi
eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous
'He is eating couscous.'
- (4) yhibb (*fi) el-kosksi
like.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous
'He likes couscous.'
- (5) yibbi (*fi) el-kosksi
want.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous
'He wants couscous.'

Libyan Arabic *fi*: distribution

fi occurs only with non-tensed verb forms

- (6) Ahmed yakil fi el-kosksi.
Ahmed eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous
'Ahmed is eating couscous.'
- (7) Ahmed kle (*fi) el-kosksi
Ahmed eat.PST.3MSG FI DEF-couscous
'Ahmed ate the couscous.'

Libyan Arabic *fi*: aspectual properties

The resulting interpretation is

► progressive

- (8) Ahmed yakil fi el-kosksi tawwa.
Ahmed eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous now
'Ahmed is eating couscous now.'

► habitual

- (9) Ahmed yakil fi el-kosksi kol youm.
Ahmed eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous every day
'Ahmed eats couscous every day.'

Libyan Arabic *fi*: aspectual properties

When the interpretation is not progressive or habitual, *fi* is excluded

► generic

- (10) Ahmed yakil kosksi.
Ahmed eat.NONT.3MSG couscous
'Ahmed eats couscous.' (i.e. he is a couscous-eater)

► scheduled future

- (11) Fi rijimī godwa nakil kosksi.
in diet.1SG.PSS tomorrow eat.NONT.1SG couscous
'In my diet, tomorrow I eat couscous.'

► universal quantification over event tokens

- (12) Lamma nakil kosksi netfakker
when eat.NONT.1SG couscous remember.NONT.1SG
hinn-ai.
grandma-1SG.PSS
'When I eat couscous I remember my grandma.'

Libyan Arabic *fi*: aspectual properties

- ▶ *fi* contributes progressive or habitual aspect
- ▶ 'interior aspect' generalises over progressive and habitual (Stassen 1997: 252)
 - ▶ progressive aspect portrays an event as happening inside a short time-span
 - ▶ habitual aspect portrays an event as happening inside a longer time-span

Libyan Arabic *fi*: structural properties

- ▶ both prepositional and aspectual *fi* can be fronted with its noun-phrase complement or left behind with a resumptive pronoun
- (14) *fi* London Ahmed yoskun
in London Ahmed live.NONT.3MSG
- (15) London Ahmed yoskun *fi*-ha
London Ahmed live.NONT.3MSG in-3FSG.OBL
'It's in London that Ahmed lives.'
- (16) *fi* el-kosksi yakil kol youm
FI DEF-couscous eat.NONT.3MSG every day
- (17) el-kosksi yakil *fi*-h kol youm
DEF-couscous eat.NONT.3MSG FI-3MSG.OBL every day
'It's couscous that he eats every day.'

Libyan Arabic *fi*: analysis

- ▶ Libyan Arabic has a flat clause structure
 - ▶ no special features that could be associated with an I projection
 - ▶ no separate set of auxiliary verbs
- ▶ the phrase headed by *fi* is a PP
- ▶ but it maps onto OBJ
- ▶ inside-out functional designator allows *fi* to contribute aspectual information to the clause which contains it
- ▶ NON-TENSED verbs do not carry any tense or aspect features, hence they are unmarked for INTERIOR
- ▶ PAST verbs are marked as [INTERIOR -]
- ▶ stative verbs are lexically specified as [- INTERIOR]

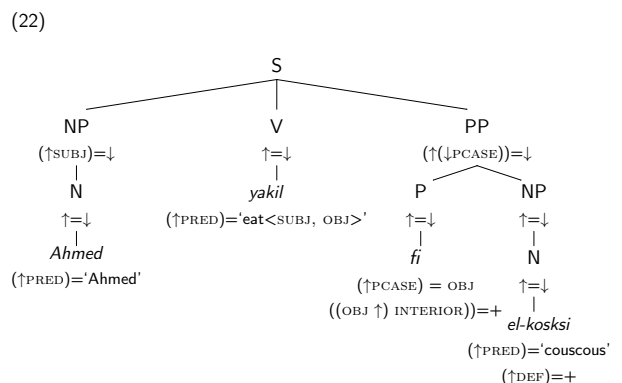
Libyan Arabic *fi*: structural properties

- ▶ *fi* has two other functions in Libyan Arabic, both illustrated in (13)
 - ▶ in existential sentences, parallel to English *there*
 - ▶ as a preposition meaning 'in'
- (13) *fi* ʕasīr *fi* et-ʕalaja
exist juice in DEF-fridge
'There is juice in the fridge.'
- ▶ aspectual *fi* and prepositional *fi* are conceptually 'interior' in nature
 - ▶ aspectual *fi* shares structural properties with prepositional *fi*

Libyan Arabic *fi*: structural properties

- ▶ both prepositional and aspectual *fi* can
 - ▶ take scope over coordinated noun phrases
 - ▶ or be repeated on each noun phrase
- (18) Ahmed yexdim *fi* Paris w London
Ahmed work.NONT.3MSG in Paris and London
- (19) Ahmed yexdim *fi* Paris w *fi* London
Ahmed work.NONT.3MSG in Paris and in London
'Ahmed works in Paris and London.'
- (20) Ahmed yakil *fi* el-kosksi w eṣ-ṣlata
Ahmed eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous and DEF-salad
- (21) Ahmed yakil *fi* el-kosksi w *fi* eṣ-ṣlata
Ahmed eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous and FI DEF-salad
'Ahmed eats/is eating couscous and salad.'

Libyan Arabic *fi*: analysis



Libyan Arabic *fi*: analysis

Giving the f-structure

- (23)
$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SUBJ} \quad \left[\text{PRED} \text{ 'Ahmed'} \right] \\ \text{PRED} \quad \text{'eat < SUBJ , OBJ >'} \\ \text{INTERIOR} \quad + \\ \text{OBJ} \quad \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PRED} \text{ 'couscous'} \\ \text{DEF} \quad + \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

Libyan Arabic *fi*: in complements of verbs

Lexical entry for *yibbi* 'want' in examples such as (26):

- yibbi* V (↑PRED) = 'want <SUBJ , XCOMP>'
 (↑SUBJ) = (↑XCOMP SUBJ)
 (−INTERIOR)
 (−XCOMP INTERIOR)

→ giving the tree in (27) for the ungrammatical version of (26)

Libyan Arabic *fi*: in complements of verbs

- ▶ when the clause containing *fi* is the complement of a higher lexical verb:
- if the complement can take a complementiser, the lower verb determines the presence or absence of *fi*

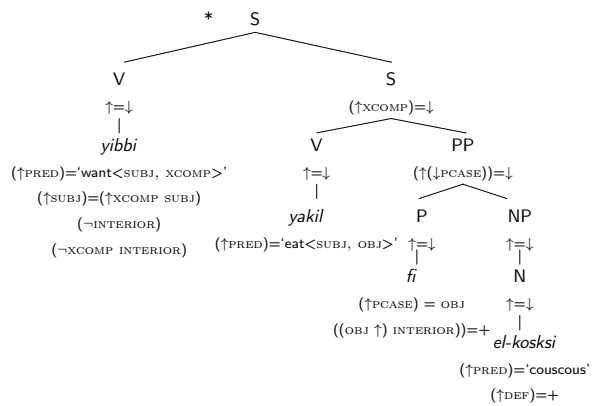
- (24) $\text{\textcircled{?}a\text{\textcircled{?}taqid}$ (annah) yakil fi el-kosksi
 think.NONT.1SG that eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous
 'I think that he is eating couscous.'

- (25) $\text{\textcircled{?}a\text{\textcircled{?}taqid}$ (annah) $\text{y\text{\textcircled{?}hib}$ el-kosksi
 think.NONT.1SG that like.NONT.3MSG DEF-couscous
 'I think that he likes couscous.'

→ if the complement cannot take a complementiser, the matrix verb determines the presence or absence of *fi*

- (26) yibbi yakil (* fi) el-kosksi
 want.NONT.3MSG eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous
 'He wants to eat couscous.'

(27)



Libyan Arabic *fi*: in complements of verbs

- ▶ when the clause containing *fi* is the complement of the auxiliary verb *kan* 'be.PST' the distribution is not affected

- (28) kan yakil fi el-kosksi amis .
 be.PST.3MSG eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous yesterday
 'He was eating couscous yesterday.'

- (29) kan yakil fi el-kosksi kol youm .
 be.PST.3MSG eat.NONT.3MSG FI DEF-couscous every day
 'He used to eat couscous every day.'

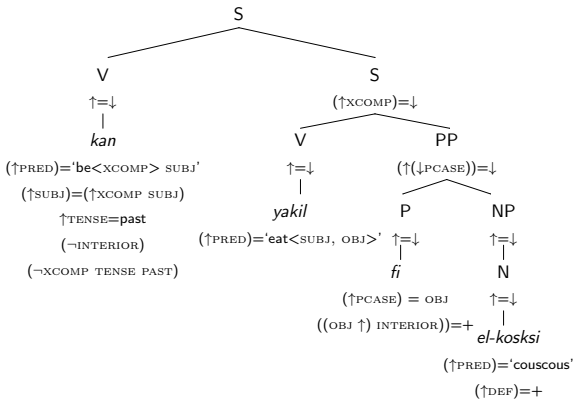
Libyan Arabic *fi*: in complements of verbs

- ▶ as a stative verb *kan* is [−INTERIOR]
- analysing *kan* as a functional co-head would conflict with the presence of *fi* in the complement
- we analyse *kan* as a matrix verb taking an XCOMP, giving the lexical entry in (30).

- (30) kan V (↑PRED) = 'be <XCOMP> SUBJ'
 (↑SUBJ) = (↑XCOMP SUBJ)
 (↑TENSE) = past
 (−XCOMP TENSE PAST)
 (−INTERIOR)

→ giving the tree in (31) for the sentence in (28)

(31)



Libyan Arabic *fi*: in complements of verbs

The behaviour of negation supports this bi-clausal analysis

(32) *ma kunt-iš ma nakil-iš fi el-kosksi*
 NEG be.PST.1SG-NEG NEG eat.NONT.1SG-NEG FI
 el-kosksi
 DEF-couscous
 'I wasn't not eating the couscous.'

Libyan Arabic *fi*: in complements of verbs

- ▶ when the clause containing *fi* is the complement of an auxiliary verb, which in turn is the complement of a higher non-dynamic lexical verb, the auxiliary "blocks" the effect of the non-dynamic verb

(33) *yibbi ykūn yakil fi el-kosksi*
 want.NONT.3MSG be.NONT.3MSG eat.NONT.3MSG FI
 el-kosksi
 DEF-couscous
 'He would like to be eating couscous.'

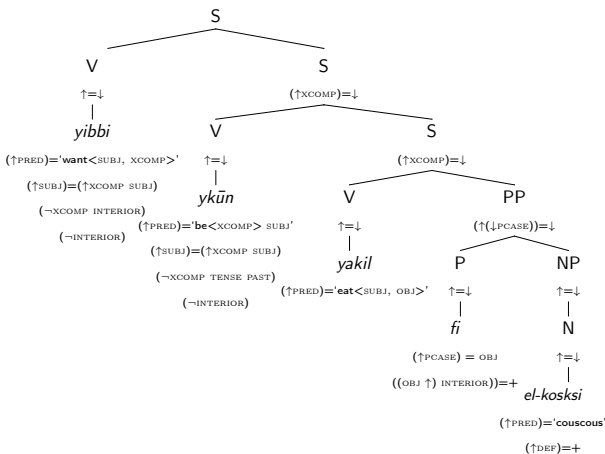
Libyan Arabic *fi*: in complements of verbs

Our analysis predicts that *ykūn* should have this blocking effect

Lexical entry for *ykūn* 'be' in examples such as (33):

ykūn V (↑PRED) = 'be <XCOMP> SUBJ'
 (↑SUBJ)=(↑XCOMP SUBJ)
 (¬ INTERIOR)
 (¬ XCOMP TENSE PAST)

→ giving the tree below for the sentence in (33)



References I

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