Participles as Non-Verbal Predicates
Amani Makkawi

This research presents an analysis of participles in Makkan Arabic. These participles show verbal and nominal features but cannot be easily categorized either as nouns or verbs. Participles, like verbs (1), cannot combine with adjectives and determiners, but rather with adverbs, pattern with perfective and imperfective verbs, and take direct objects. Participles, like nouns and adjectives, partially agree with their subjects in number and gender but not person and are negated with the negation particle \textit{mu} or inflected \textit{ma}. Participles appear in constructions in which VSO order is not permissible nor is subject-drop.

1. a. ana \textit{ashtra-}\textit{yt/ashtri/shariy-a} al-kotob besorʕa
   1.sg buy.perf-1.sg/buy.imperf.1.sg/buy.sg.NMLZ-fem the-book.pl quickly
   ‘I bought/buy/have bought the books quickly.’

2. a. hya \textit{Horn-a (n)} \ Helw-a (adj) \ naym-a (Part)
   3.sg.fem woman.sg-fem \ beautiful.sg-fem \ sleep.NMLZ-3.fem.sg
   ‘She is a woman\beautiful\has slept’

I propose that without the functional projection \textit{vP}, bare VPs are not fully verbal. Thus when participles occur in a finite present-tense sentence containing a DP subject, they act like non-verbal predicates and the resulting copula construction conforms to Benmamoun’s (2008) framework of verbless sentences in Arabic which have a TP projection but no main verb.

I use Bowers’ predicate phrase (PredP) where the predicates are any lexical category, including VP and the specifier hosts the subject of predication. Analyzing participles as non-verbal predicates explains the word order of SVO and the obligatory subject because subjects must move to specifier of TP to satisfy tense in the absence of verbs. The existence of VP explains the verbal properties of participles, and the absence of vP explains the nominal ones. The lack of vP means lack of full agreement as structural subjects are generated in vP which gives access to the person feature (Baker 2011). It also explains the use of non-verbal negative particles with participles as uninflected \textit{ma} selects vP while \textit{mu} and inflected \textit{ma} select non-verbal predicates. Viewing participles as bare VPs is consistent with Croft’s (1991) de-verbalizing hierarchy which posits that verb types range from being fully finite to completely nominalized forms.

References


