World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol:18, No:04, 2024

Aspectual Verbs in Modern Standard Arabic

Authors : Yasir Alotaibi

Abstract : The aim of this paper is to discuss the syntactic analysis of aspectual or phasal verbs in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Aspectual or phasal verbs refer to a class of verbs that require a verbal complement and denote the inception, duration, termination ...etc. of a state or event. This paper will discuss two groups of aspectual verbs in MSA. The first group includes verbs such as ǧacala, tafiqa, ?akhatha, ?ansha?a, sharaca and bada?a and these verbs are used to denote the inception of an event. The second group includes verbs such as ?awshaka, kaada and karaba and the meaning of these verbs is equivalent to be near/almost . The following examples illustrate the use of the verb bada?a 'begin' which is from the first group: a. saalim-un bada?a yuthaakiru. Salem-NOM begin.PFV.3SGM study.IPFV.3SGM 'Salem began to study' b.*saalim-un bada?a ?an yuthaakiru. Salem-NOM begin.PFV.3SGM COMP study.IPFV.3SGM 'Salem began to study' The example in (1a) is grammatical because the aspectual verb is used with a verbal complement that is not introduced by a complementizer. In contrast, example (1b) is not grammatical because the verbal complement is introduced by the complementizer ?an 'that'. In contrast, the following examples illustrate the use of the verb kaada 'be almost' which is from the second group. However, the two examples are grammatical and this means that the verbal complement of this verb can be without (as in example (2a)) or with (as in example (2b)) a complementizer. (2) a. saalim-un kaada yuthaakiru. Salem-NOM be.almost.PFV.3SGM study.IPFV.3SGM 'Salem was almost to study' b. saalim-un kaada ?an yuthaakiru. Salem-NOM be.almost.PFV.3SGM COMP study.IPFV.3SGM 'Salem was almost to study' The salient properties of this class of verbs are that they require a verbal complement, there is no a complementizer that can introduce the complement with the first group while it is possible with the second and the aspectual verb and the embedded verb share and agree with the same subject. To the best of knowledge, aspectual verbs in MSA are discussed in traditional grammar only and have not been studied in modern syntactic theories. This paper will consider the analysis of aspectual verbs in MSA within the Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG) framework. It will use some evidence such as modifier or negation to find out whether these verbs have PRED values and head their f-structures or they form complex predicates with their complements. If aspectual verbs show the properties of heads, then the paper will explore what kind of heads they are. In particular, they should be raising or control verbs. The paper will use some tests such as agreement, selectional restrictions...etc. to find out what kind of verbs they are.