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Zero-marked Nouns in Moroccan Arabic: Depictives or Adverbials?

ABSTRACT The major issue that is raised in this paper is how to delimit depictive secondary predicates from adverbials in Moroccan Arabic (henceforth MA). In syntactic description, depictives and adverbials are both adjuncts and hence are non-obligatory elements in sentences. A basic contrast between the two, however, is ‘their different semantic orientation within the event-internal modification’ (Schroeder 2008: 340). Depictive constructions are adjuncts that add a second predication to one of the participants involved in the main predication, while adverbials are event-oriented in that they add information about manner, time or place to the meaning of a verb. Cross-linguistic research has shown that while it is easy to make a distinction between depictives and adverbials in some languages such as English because they have different morpho-syntactic correlates, in other languages ‘the distinction between participant- and event-orientation is often difficult to draw, and languages abound with constructions which straddle the line between the two’ (Reinöhl and Himmelmann 2011: 131). Much of the research that has examined this issue of how to delimit depictives from other adjuncts such as adverbials was carried out on European languages. The goal of this paper is twofold. First, it provides data from MA, a typologically different language where in some cases depictives converge formally with adverbials and hence the need to find criteria that help distinguish between the two arises. Second, it analyses a special category of depictives that are realised by zero-marked nouns and that are under-resourced compared to the prototypical depictives, which occur in the form of adjectives.

KEYWORDS depictives, secondary predicates, adverbials, adjuncts, zero-marked nouns, Moroccan Arabic

1 Introduction

Depictives are described as a kind of predicates that add a second predication to one of the participants involved in the main predication. They occur in constructions where ‘a single clause contains two predicative constituents, which do not form a complex predicate in the way serial verbs or periphrastic predicates do’ (Schultze-Berndt and Himmelmann 2004: 59). A depictive describes a physical or a psychological state or condition, and it can be semantically oriented to any one of the participants or what is also referred to as a controller; it can be subject-oriented as in (1), where the adjective *ṣəyyan* ‘tired’ describes the state of the subject, or object-oriented as in (2), where *barəd* ‘cold’ describes the state of the direct object.

- (1) *kla* *ḅda-h* *ṣəyyan* (subject-oriented)
 eat.PRF.3MSG lunch-3MSG tired
 ‘he ate his lunch tired’
- (2) *ṣrəb* *l-ḥlib* *barəd* (object-oriented)
 drink.PRF.3MSG DEF-milk cold
 ‘he drank the milk cold’

One of the basic properties of depictives is temporal overlap. In his seminal paper, Halliday (1967: 63) defined a depictive as ‘an attribute which characterises the attribuant (i.e. the direct object) in relation to the process, but as a concomitant, not a result, of the process.’ As in (2), the depictive describes a state of affairs which holds at the same time as the eventuality encoded by the main predicate unfolds. The state denoted by the depictive *barəd* ‘cold’ is linked to the temporal frame set by the main predicate in that it holds during the process of drinking; that is, while the event unfolds. Temporal overlap is also what distinguishes depictives from other secondary predicates such as resultatives as in (3).

- (3) *səbḅ-at* *ḍar-ha* *biḍ-a*
 paint.PRF-3FSG house-3FSG white-FSG
 ‘she painted her house white’

The object-oriented depictive *barəd* ‘cold’ in (2) and the resultative secondary predicate *biḍ-a* ‘white’ in (3) are not to be distinguished in terms of their syntactic structures. They rather differ as to the way they fit in the temporal frame set by the main predicate. As opposed to a depictive, the resultative *biḍ-a* ‘white’ designates ‘the state of an argument resulting from the action determined by the main verb’ (Asada 2012: 54).

Adverbials are entities which refer to the manner, place or time of an action. They may also modify an adjective or another adverb. The adverbs which are examined

in this paper are manner adverbs. A sentence such as ‘John walked slowly,’ with the manner adverb ‘slowly,’ ‘makes the claim that there was a leaving event of which John was the agent and which was slow’ (Katz 2003: 457). Furthermore, as in (4), they are VP-adverbs because they modify the predicate as opposed to S-adverbs, which are described as propositional modifiers (Jackendoff 1972). Another feature that characterises adverbs is that they occur with an eventive verb as opposed to a stative verb, which denotes a state predicate.

- (4) *dəff-u* *b-ʒ-ʒəhd*
 push.PRF-3MSG by-DEF-force
 ‘he pushed him by force’

One basic contrast between depictives and manner adverbials is their semantic orientation within the event-internal modification. Depictives have a participant orientation while manner adverbials have a process or action orientation (Schroeder 2008). Depictive constructions, which are secondary predicates, add a second predication to one of the participants involved in the main predication, and they can be subject-oriented or object-oriented as in (1) and (2). Adverbials, on the other hand, are event-oriented, and they add information about manner, time or place to the meaning of a verb or a clause as in (4), where the adverb *b-ʒ-ʒəhd* ‘by force’ modifies the main predication rather than assigns a specific property to one of the participants.

In syntactic description, however, both depictives and adverbials are characterised by optionality. They are both adjuncts and hence are non-obligatory elements in sentences; they are free supplements. A depictive can be omitted ‘without rendering the remaining string ungrammatical or changing the structural relationship among the remaining constituents’ (Schultze-Berndt and Himmelmann 2004: 65). The adjective *ʕəyyan-a* ‘tired’ is optional in *kla-t ʕda-ha ʕəyyan-a* ‘she ate her lunch tired’ because it can be omitted as in *kla-t ʕda-ha* ‘she ate her lunch’ without affecting the remaining structure of the sentence. Yet, it is non-optional in (5), where it constitutes a basic entity in the argument frame of the main predicate rather than an adjunction.

- (5) *ka-t-ban* *ʕəyyan-a*
 IND-3FSG-look.IMPRF tired-FSG
 ‘she looks tired’

The same optionality holds true for adverbials. In (6), the adverb *b-z-zərb-a* ‘quickly’ presents an instance of adjunction and hence can be omitted without having any impact on the structural relationship that holds between the remaining entities, namely the subject and the verb.

- (6) *xrəʒ* *b-z-zərb-a*
 leave.PRF.3MSG with-DEF-quickness
 ‘he left quickly’

Cross-linguistic research has shown that while in some languages such as English it is easy to make a distinction between depictives and adverbials given their different morpho-syntactic correlates, in other languages ‘the difference between depictives and adverbials is much less clear-cut, both in formal and semantic terms, than is often assumed’ (Schultze-Berndt and Himmelmann 2004: 59). Much of the research that has examined this issue of how to delimit depictives from other adjuncts such as adverbials was carried out on European languages. The major goal of this paper is to provide data from MA, a typologically different language where adjuncts functioning as adverbials and as depictives are sometimes morpho-syntactically similar. An attempt will be made to see on what grounds the line between the two can be drawn and what criteria can be used to delineate the extent to which these two constructions can be delimited.

2 Data

The data which informs the present study is twofold. It was elicited from native speakers of MA, and it was also drawn from Maas’ corpus.

Typological surveys of secondary predicates have shown ‘a high heterogeneity of coding devices for secondary predicates both intra- and inter-linguistically’ (Schroeder et al. 2008: i). Many constructions are candidates for secondary predication, and there is a variety of formal means to express depictives across languages. MA, as other languages, also makes use of a range of formal means to express secondary predication. MA speakers resort to both nominal and verbal strategies to express depictive meaning (Maas 2008). Prototypical depictives, which are very common in many languages as shown by cross linguistic research, are those that occur in the form of adjectives as ‘raw’ in ‘he ate the meat raw’ in English or *sxun* ‘hot’ in *ʃrəb l-ħlib sxun* ‘he drank the milk hot’ in MA.

This paper examines another category of depictives that are realised by zero-marked nouns as in (7) because they are under-resourced compared to prototypical depictives.

- (7) *ʃrəb-t* *l-ħrir-a* *təlʒ*
 drink.PRF-1SG DEF-soup-FSG snow
 ‘I drank the soup very cold’

The zero-marked noun *təlʒ* ‘snow’ is an adjunct that adds a second predication to the direct object *l-ħrir-a* ‘the soup,’ one of the arguments involved in the main predication. Its basic property is that it is a metaphor that is employed instead of ‘very cold,’ an

adjective modified by an adverb of degree to show the intensity of something. Nouns similar to *təlɜ* ‘snow’ in MA are *ʃsəl* ‘honey’ to describe something very sweet or *ħədɜ-a* ‘bitter melon’ to describe something very sour. *ʃsəl* ‘honey’ and ‘very sweet,’ for instance, lead to one another through their similarity according to the metaphorical way. *ʃsəl* ‘honey’ is used outside its conventional meaning to express a concept that is similar to it, hence indicating ‘mappings across conceptual domains’ (Lakoff 1993). Building on the contemporary theory of metaphor, Lakoff (1993) made the strong claim that a metaphor is not only part of ‘the realm of poetic language’; it is also part of the ordinary system of thought and language. This is why everyday language is loaded with metaphors.

In MA, zero-marked nouns can also occur in the same position in the structure of the sentence as in (8), where the substantive *ɖulm* ‘injustice’ is also an adjunct, but is event-oriented rather than participant-oriented and hence an adverb.

- (8) *dda-ha* *ɖulm*
 take.PRF-3FSG injustice
 ‘he took it [the land]¹ unjustly’ (Maas’ corpus, J-93-1)

This suggests that, from a formal point of view, entities such as *təlɜ* ‘snow’ in (7) and *ɖulm* ‘injustice’ in (8) cannot be assigned to depictive or adverbial expressions on the basis of their morpho-syntactic properties.

3 Findings

3.1 Formal properties

Nouns such as *təlɜ* ‘snow’ and *ɖulm* ‘injustice’ exhibit formal overlap because they share many morpho-syntactic properties. First, they both allow syntagmatic expansion to the left because they can be both morphologically specified for definiteness as in (9) and (10).

- (9) *ɖ-ɖulm* *dya* *l-ʃaʔil-a* *xayb*
 DEF-injustice of DEF-family-FSG bad
 ‘the injustice of the family [is] bad’

- (10) *dab* *t-təlɜ* *lli* *taħ* *b-z-zərb-a*
 melt.PRF.3MSG DEF-snow which fall.PRF.3MSG with-DEF-quickness
 ‘the snow which had fallen melted quickly’

1 ‘it’ refers to a piece of land.

posited a functional framework that includes seven concomitants, namely partner, companion, vehicle, tool, material, manner and circumstance.²

Manner is a concomitant that applies to the whole situation. In ‘Linda opened the door by force,’ ‘force’ applies to the situation core (‘the opening was by force’) (Lehmaan and Shin 2005). The examined zero-marked noun *ḡulm* ‘injustice,’ as illustrated in (14), can be preceded by the relator *b-* ‘by’ and hence functions as a manner concomitant, which asserts its status as an adverbial.

- (14) *dda* *l-ḡarḡ* *b-ḡ-ḡulm*
 take.PRF.3MSG DEF-land by-DEF-injustice
 ‘he took the land by injustice [unjustly]’

b-ḡ-ḡulm ‘by injustice’ (that is, unjustly) applies semantically to the taking of the land, and the concomitant *ḡulm* ‘injustice’ can be conceptualised as an abstract [– concrete] instrument.

Nominal forms such as *təḷz* ‘snow,’ on the other hand, cannot be used with *b-* ‘by’ and express manner, which stresses their status as object-oriented depictives.

- (15) ? *ḡrəb-t* *l-ḡrir-a* *b-t-təḷz*
 drink.PRF-1SG DEF-soup-FSG with/by-DEF-snow
 ? ‘I drank the soup with/by snow’

ḡrəb-t l-ḡrir-a b-t-təḷz ‘I drank the soup with/by snow’ is a possible proposition, but it conveys a different meaning where *b-t-təḷz* ‘with/by snow’ is no longer a depictive.

3.2.2 The similitive marker *bḡhal* ‘like’

Another criterion that was found to delimit *ḡulm* ‘injustice,’ as an adverbial, from *təḷz* ‘snow,’ as a depictive, is the similitive marker *bḡhal* ‘like.’ The noun *təḷz* ‘snow’ can be preceded by the similitive marker ‘*bḡhal*’ as in (16).

- (16) *ḡrəb-t* *l-ḡrir-a* *bḡhal* *t-təḷz*
 drink.PRF-1SG DEF-soup-FSG like DEF-snow
 ‘I drank the soup like snow’ [that is, I drank the soup very cold]

By contrast, *ḡ-ḡulm* ‘injustice’ cannot occur with it, which betokens its status as an event-modifying entity.

2 A detailed description and discussion of the different types of concomitants in Moroccan Arabic is beyond the scope of this paper.

The zero-marked noun *muḥami-a* ‘a lawyer’ in (19), as opposed to *l-muḥami-a* ‘the lawyer’ in (18), does not have a definite referent. It rather activates a lexical concept and hence has a predicative function. This function also holds in nominative sentences in MA as in (20), where the basic function of the nominal predicate *muḥami-a* ‘a lawyer’ is to activate a lexical concept.

- (20) *ana* *muḥami-a*
 PRN.1SG INDEF.lawyer-FSG
 [- REF]
 ‘I am a lawyer’

The investigated nouns *ḍulm* ‘injustice’ and *təʕz* ‘snow’ are also [- REF]; they both have a predicative use.

From a formal point of view, [+ REF] has been associated with the definite article and [- REF] with the indefinite one. There is not, however, a one-to-one relation between referentiality and the concept of definiteness. Previous work that examined determination in MA (Harrell 1962; Marçais 1977; Youssi 1992; Caubet 1993) has been very biased by the European school tradition, and hence has contrasted the definite article /l-/ (as associated with [+ REF]) with the indefinite articles /ʃi-/ , /waḥəd l-/ and zero morpheme (Ø) (as associated with [- REF]). Maas (2011) asserted that determination in MA is more complex than this. For instance, he pointed out that the marker /l-/ ‘the,’ which is conventionally labeled as a definite article, is also used for indefinite referents as shown below.

- (21) *ma-bʕa-u-ha-f* *ḥit* *ma-ʃənd-ha-f* *l-wəʕd*
 NEG-like.PRF-3PL-3FSG-NEG because NEG-have-3FSG-NEG DEF-boy
 ‘they didn’t want of her because she does not have the boy’

In (21), the noun *wəʕd* ‘boy’ is marked with the determiner /l-/ ‘the,’ but it is [- REF]. It does not point to an existing entity, and it does not have an identified referent; no definite boy is denoted. This shows that there is an asymmetrical relation between referentiality and definiteness and that MA, a typologically different language, displays a different system of determination marking.

The examined zero-marked nouns *təʕz* ‘snow’ and *ḍulm* ‘injustice’ behave syntactically and semantically in a different way depending on the referentiality of the direct object of the sentence, that is, the second argument of the main predicate. The nominal form *ḍulm* ‘injustice,’ as (22) and (23) show, expresses adverb content whether the second argument *ʔəʕd* ‘land’ is [- REF] or [+ REF], which proves that it adds specific information to the verb and not to the argument.

criterion that was found to distinguish between the two is concomitance. Nouns that express adverbial modification can be used as manner concomitants preceded by the MA relator *b-* ‘by.’ However, nouns that express depictive secondary predication cannot fulfill this participant role in the domain of concomitance. A second criterion that also delimits *ḍulm* ‘injustice’ as an adverbial from *təlʒ* ‘snow’ as a depictive is the similitive marker *bħal* ‘like.’ The depictive *təlʒ* ‘snow’ can be preceded by the similitive marker *bħal* as in *fṛəb-t l-ħrir-a bħal t-təlʒ* ‘I drank the soup like snow’ (that is, I drank the soup very cold), but *ḍulm* ‘injustice’ cannot as in **dda l-ʔəṛḍ bħal ḍ-ḍulm* ‘he took the land like injustice.’ The last criterion that was also found to delimit zero-marked nouns that are adverbials from those that are depictives is referentiality. Nominal forms such as *ḍulm* ‘injustice’ are unrestricted with respect to referentiality; they express adverb content whether the second argument of the main predicate is [– REF] or [+ REF], which proves that they add specific information to the verb and not to the object argument. A noun such as *təlʒ* ‘snow,’ however, is sensitive to the referentiality of the second argument. For it to be a depictive, it has to be [– REF] and the second argument has to be [+ REF].

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