The expression of progressivity in Tunisian Arabic: A study of progressive markers in oral retellings of simultaneous situations

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L'expression de la progressivité en arabe tunisien: étude des marqueurs de progressivité dans des récits de situations simultanées

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Abstract

This study investigates the expression of progressivity in Tunisian Arabic oral retellings of simultaneous situations, i.e., sharing a value on the time axis (Acsu-Koç & Von Stutterheim 1994). Research into the Tunisian Arabic language in general, and the expression of progressivity in particular is very limited and inconclusive. This study seeks to fill in this gap by analyzing the different ways of expressing that a situation is in progress at a certain reference time. It shows that many lexical means are available to Tunisian speakers to express progressivity. Two of those means are undergoing a process of grammaticalization. These are the preverbal marker *qa:'id* and the post verbal marker *fi*. The article gives special attention to those two markers especially *fi* which has completely been ignored in research into progressivity in Tunisian Arabic. It also aims to show the role that lexical aspect plays in the use of each form in the discourse of simultaneous situations.

Résumé

Cette étude porte sur l'expression de la progressivité en arabe tunisien dans des récits de situations simultanées; c'est à dire partageant une valeur sur l'axe du temps (Acsu-Koç & Von Stutterheim 1994). La littérature sur l'arabe tunisien en général et sur comment l'aspect progressif s'y exprime est très succincte et très peu concluante. Cette étude se propose donc de d'analyser les différents marqueurs de progressivité dans des récits de fiction. Elle montre qu'il existe plusieurs moyens lexicaux possibles en arabe tunisien pour exprimer qu'une situation est en déroulement. Elle se focalise cependant sur les deux marqueurs aspectuels du progressif: le marqueur préverbal *qa :'id* et le marqueur post verbal *fi*. L'étude tente aussi d'examiner le rôle que joue l'aspect lexical dans l'expression de la progressivité et dans le choix de ces deux marqueurs dans les récits de situations simultanées.

1. Introduction

Any investigation of the notion of progressivity or progressivity of a situation, i.e. a process or an event, has to firmly distinguish between the semantic notion, i.e. of a situation in progress at a certain reference time, and its formal manifestation, that is to say, the linguistic devices employed to express it (designated henceforth by PRG markers). In fact, while the semantic progressivity is a universal concept; its expression differs from language to language. It is not necessarily overtly marked by a distinct morphology or form. Only few languages have the PRG category, as reported in the survey of Dahl (1985). Many others do not code PRG on the verb, but have lexical

entities expressing the semantic notion of progressivity, e.g. French with '*en train de*' (Bertinetto et al. 2000; Carrol et al. 2004).

The present study investigates the expression of progressivity in Tunisian Arabic (TA) in the context of retelling simultaneous situations. It focuses on the constructions that are most frequently found to be used to express progressivity in the oral productions. These constructions can be represented as follows (+ indicate concatenation and the ( ) indicate the optional character.

$$(qa:'id +) \text{ PV } (+fi)$$

We distinguish therefore between four constructions displayed below:

	Construction				Example			
1)		**PV**			*yi-ktib*			
					PS3M -write			
					He is writing			
2)		**PV**	**+**	**fi**	*yi-ktib*	*fi*		*jweb*
					PS3M-write	PRG		letter
					He is writing a letter			
3)	**qa:'id**	**+**	**PV**		*qa:'id*	*yi-ktib*		
					PRG	PS3M -write		
					He is writing			
4)	**qa:'id**	**+**	**PV**	**+ fi**	*qa:'id*	*yi-ktib*	*fi*	*jweb*
					PRG	PS3M -write	PRG	letter
					He is writing a letter			

We are interested in examining how each one of the four constructions is used in the different retellings of simultaneous situations as we hope to reach an understanding of their systematicity and the context of their use. We also aim at examining if the lexical aspect plays a role in determining the use of each predicate form for expressing progressivity, as it is well established in the literature that the type of lexical content plays a role in the use of PRG devices or not.

1.1.   The expression of progressivity in language

Progressivity can be expressed through fully grammaticalized means, and the well known example is the English language with the *V–ing* predicate (Bardovi-Harlig 2008; Leclercq 2007). It is also possibly conveyed through other means such as morphosyntactic means, use of simple tenses, adverbials (Bertinetto et al. 2000, p.520). Among the morphosyntactic; we find verb phrases with a copula as auxiliary: e.g., 'e*star* + Gerund' in Spanish and '*stare* + Gerondif' in Italian; verb phrases with a motion or postural verb as auxiliary e.g., 'walk'; 'go around' in some Germanic languages; verb phrases with a special progressive auxiliary verb, such as 'hold' (*hålla*) in Swedish; and many other means word order as a syntactic device that expresses progressivity, e.g. Hungarian (Bertinetto et al. 2000, pp.521-523).

When the tools used are the only ones available to express the notion of progressivity, we speak of devices that reached a status of complete grammaticalization (e.g., English, Icelandic, Maltese) (Bertinetto et al. 2000, p.527). Grammaticalized forms are grammatical morphemes which "gradually develop out of lexical constructions in an ever-expanding range of contexts" (Schmiedtová & Flecken 2008, p.5). According to Bybee & Dahl (1989), the progressive, "usually" has "a periphrasic expression" in languages. It is "less grammaticized" and therefore shows "less grammaticization of form" compared to the imperfective or perfective aspects (Bybee & Dahl 1989, p.56). When the PRG markers are not fully grammaticalized, there exist

more than one lexicalized devices or constructions which compete in linguistic usage; such as the case of French and Albanian (Bertinetto et al. 2000).

Due to its different realizations in different languages, the question of whether PRG has to be considered an aspect on its own right has also been asked (Bertinetto et al. 2000, p.517). For example, comparing the progressive in English and in French, Vetters (1996) considers PRG as an aspect in English due to its obligatory character, as it cannot be replaced by any other form; while in French it belongs to the lexical domain as its use is optional and can be replaced, for instance by the *imparfait*.

1.2.   Lexical aspect and the progressive

Predicate type and the inherent temporal properties of the lexical content in an utterance play a significant role in the use and meaning of the progressive form (Bardovi-Harlig 2008; Vendler 1967). Vendler's (1967) description of predicate types shows how the English progressive can occur with certain lexical contents only. In fact, his description of the continuous meaning in English verbs, expressed by the progressive form *V-ing* in comparison to non-continuous meaning, highlights the notion of phases of an ongoing process and the progressive form highlights one of those phases. He proposes that stative verbs such as *love* and *know* do not have progressive forms because of the "internal contradiction between the stativity of the verb and the non-stativity which is an essential feature of the progressive". The progressive is said to be predominantly associated with the verbs belonging to the Vendlerian classes[1] of activities and accomplishments (Bardovi-Harlig 2008). Whether the class of achievement verbs can admit the progressive or not is a subject of disagreement. According to Dowty (1979)[2], achievement verbs force a repeated meaning and they are separated from the verbs that admit the progressive. Binnick (1991) as well as Klein (1994) attest the possibility of the occurrence of PRG with achievement verbs. In fact, using a different terminology and a different aspectual analysis framework, Klein (1994, pp.34-35) shows the compatibility of durative adverbials such as *for five minutes* with an utterance like *he opened the window*. This adverbial, of course, gives an iterative reading to the content *<open the window>*.

Many verb classifications have raised problems when applied to different temporal systems (See Binnick 1991 for an overview). The innovation of Klein's (1994) theoretical framework with relation to lexical aspect is that it accounts for the role of the temporal properties of all the entities included in the predicate, not only those inherent to the verb. As such, his framework accounts for the difference between *to write* and *write a letter*, *to eat* and *to eat an apple*.

He applies "a single basic criterion" that he believes, is necessary for the analysis of tense and aspect: "the behavior of a lexical content with regard to its linking to some topic time" (Klein 1994, p.80). Lexical contents are understood to be related to the Topic Time (TT); i.e. the time for which a claim is made in three different ways (Klein 1994, p.81):

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[1] Vendler (1967) classifies English verbs into four main classes:
a. Activity verbs, such as 'run', walk;
b. State verbs, such as 'desire', 'love', 'have'
c. Accomplishment verbs, such as, 'paint a picture', 'make a chair'
d. Achievement verbs, such as 'win the race', 'recognize somebody'
[2] Cited in (Bardovi-Harlig 2008).

0-State contents: are lexical contents that are linked to a particular TT, and at the same time, automatically linked to any other TT. They present « no TT-contrast » (Klein 1994, p.101). In

(1) The book is in Russian,

the assertion will hold true for the TT the clause is linked to, and also for **any** other TT.

1-State contents: they involve **one** TT-contrast. The situation described is not necessarily confined to TT, but does not cover before or after that TT (Klein 1994, p.102). In

(2) John was in Poland

the assertion holds true for one contrast between < not be in Poland> vs. <be in Poland>

2-State contents: They involve two TT- contrasts, e.g.,

(3) John opened the window,

The assertion holds true for two different contrasts < to be closed> vs. <to open>, <to open> vs. <to be open>. 2-state contents include a "source" and a "target state". The TT may be the source or the target state or includes part of both.

Klein's (1994) definition of the progressive accounts for its relation to the lexical aspect, for it is based on the notion of state, and change of state. He states for the English language that

> « With the progressive form, the TT is properly contained in the first state
> of the situation (which is the only one for 1-state situations and which has
> no TT-contrast for 0-state situations) ».

It may help to schematize the use of the progressive aspect by the following examples to illustrate its relation to the lexical aspect (the square brackets [.] represent the topic time, --- represents the source state, +++ the target state, and === the only state of situations)

Paul was opening the window   -----[------]----+++++++++

Paul was running   ====[===]=====

1.3. The expression of progressivity in Tunisian Arabic

The expression of progressivity in spoken Arabic languages[3] has not been very enthusiastically addressed. Some research studies have nevertheless informed about the existence of emergent not fully grammaticalized PRG markers in many spoken Arabic languages (e.g., Cuvalay 1991, Al Nasser 1991). Those PRG markers are found to compete with other lexical markers used for the same aspectual value, namely with a bare prefixed form of the verb (PV). Consider for example, the PRG affixal markers *bi-* in Egyptian Arabic (Mitchell 1962), *ka-* in the "spoken dialect" of

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[3] We investigate here the language that is spoken in Tunisia. We reject the "dialect" categorization. Accounts about the similarities that exist in the Arabic spoken varieties exist (e.g. Farghali 2004), but are not conclusive. Tunisian Arabic is in fact the spoken language in every day communication in Tunisia. It co-exists with Modern standard Arabic which is taught at school and used only in formal contexts. The discussion of whether Tunisian Arabic is to be considered as a language or a "dialect" is beyond the scope of this paper.

Fes, and the preverbal markers *qa:'id* in the "spoken dialect of Tunis" (Cuvalay 1991, p.143) and *gaa'id* in Kuwaiti Arabic (Al Nasser 1991).

Descriptions of the Tunisian Arabic temporal system in general and of the progressive in particular are very limited. To our knowledge no investigation of progressivity in spoken Arabic languages is based on a corpus-based analysis. An insightful contribution based on examples taken from different oral and written sources is made by Cuvalay (1991) who compares PRG markers in four Arabic languages spoken in four cities: Fes, Tunis, Damascus and Cairo. For the spoken Arabic of the city of Tunis, she summarises the progressive expression as follows (our added explanations are put between [.]):

> «The preverbal progressive marker *qa:'id* in the dialect of Tunis is not obligatory, in the sense that its use is required only in the absence of time adverbials or a specific context to indicate unambiguously that reference is made to an ongoing action (Singer 1984:301). With verbs belonging to the special verbs [of motion and attitude], progressive aspect is designated by the AP [Active participle[4]]. For all the values that are not expressed by the SF [suffixed verb form], the AP, or the PF [the prefixed verb form] with the future marker, the PF is used in its 'bare' form, i.e. without additional PM [Preverbal Marker].» (Cuvalay 1991, p.148)

2.   The present study

This study aims at filling a gap in the literature about progressivity in TA. It proposes an investigation of its expression in context in order to provide a clearer picture of the predicate forms used and what can eventually be considered as PRG markers in TA.

We look at the expression of progressivity in oral retellings of simultaneous situations by 19 Tunisian native speakers aged between 24 and 40 years old. We define simultaneity relation after Acsu-Koç & Von Stutterheim (1994) as any type of overlap or inclusion between two situations (processes, events or states). In fact;

> "Two events, processes or states are simultaneous if they share one value on the time axis. their boundaries need not coincide" (Acsu-Koç & Von Stutterheim 1994, p.397)

The retellings of simultaneous situations have proved to be an effective tool for eliciting the use of PRG markers as the research studies of Schmiedtová (2004) and of Leclercq (2007; 2008) show.

2.1.   Method

The informants were presented with eight short video scenes in the same order on a computer screen. Each scene was presented as many times as they needed. After making sure they had watched the scene enough times to do the task, the video was stopped, and the informants were asked to retell what happened in each scene. They were all asked the same question in the past

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[4] An AP is derived from a verb. It literally means 'doer' of an activity. As its name in the traditional grammars of Standard Arabic denotes; "*ism al fa:'il*", it refers to 'the name of the actant'. For example, the AP derived from the verb *ktib* (he wrote) is *ka:tib* (writer).

tense: "*shnuwa sa:r fil mashhad hedha*?" (What happened in this scene?). The narratives were recorded using a digital recorder and a microphone.

Concerning the visual stimuli used, they all include two simultaneous situations related to two different entities which we call participants.

Table 1. Visual stimuli

Type	Video	Illustration
Perfect simultaneity between S1 and S2	*Breakfast*	S1 --------------------------------- S2 ---------------------------------
	Earthsea, Birds	S1 --------------------------------- S2 |-----------------------------
Inclusion of S2 in S1	*Kabaret, Wakeup, Fire, Soup, Salmon*	S1 -------------------------------- S2 |-----| |-----| |-----|

The videos used are listed in Table 1. All of S1 situations in all the videos are durative. S2 are different. While in *Breakfast* it is perfectly parallel to S1, in *Earthsea* and *Birds*, S2 slightly starts after S1. In the second type of simultaneity, S2 is composed of short sub-situations which are interlocked in the time in which S1 takes place.

2.2. Data Analysis

The video retellings were transcribed using the CHAT format on the CHILDES programme, and coded using CLAN. The retellings were organized into utterances (an utterance being an eventuality containing a verb or not)[5]. Every predicate form was coded for the situation they describe in relation to the visual stimuli. The aspectual relation expressed in each predicate was also coded. This report focuses only on the progressive constructions. All verb forms, as well as the lexical content of each predicate, were coded using the 3-class categorization of Klein (1994).

2.2.1. The different forms expressing progressivity

The several different forms found to express that a situation is in progress are listed in detail in Table 2 according to the frequency of their occurrence. Out of a total of 1180 utterances, there are 335 progressive predicates; 319 in the present tense and 16 in the past. As Table 2 shows, the forms that are most used to express progressivity are the prefixed verb form (PV) that we will call the unmarked form **PV** (25%) [6], The prefixed verb followed by the locative preposition *fi* (in)

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[5] In TA it is possible to have utterances with no explicit verbs. They are generally called verb-less clauses.

[6] In TA, as well as in all spoken Arabic languages, there are only two possible inflected verb forms the suffixed form and the prefixed form (Benmamoun 2003; Cuvalay 1991; Cuvalay-Haak 1997; Farghali 2004; Fleisch 1975; Grand' Henry 1978; Mitchell 1962). These forms are often equated with an aspectual opposition: completed / incomplete (*accompli / inaccompli*); pefective, imperfective.

making up the construction **PV + *fi*** (33%). This latter can be preceded by the preverbal marker *qa:'id* making up the periphrasis ***qa:'id* + PV + *fi*** (14%). This periphrasis is also used at a rate of 20% without the preposition *fi* (***qa:'id* + PV**).

Table 2. The different forms expressing progressivity

	Breakfast	*Earthsea*	*Birds*	*Soup*	*Salmon*	*Kabaret*	*Fire*	*Wakeup*	**Total**
%	17%	16%	14%	16%	13%	12%	7%	5%	335
Present: 95% (n=319)									
PV +*fi*	35%	22%	15%	38%	40%	56%	24%	29%	**33%**
PV	28%	35%	46%	23%	14%	8%	24%	-	**25%**
***qa:'id* + PV**	11%	20%	38%	19%	19%	5%	44%	6%	**20%**
qa:'id* + PV +*fi	26%	15%	-	17%	28%	10%	4%	-	**14%**
AP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47%	2%
***qa:'id* + AP**	-	2%	-	-	-	-	-	6%	1%
'amma:l + PV	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1%
ykammal$_{(PV)}$ + PV	-	2%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	1%
Past: 5% (n=16)									
q'ad$_{(SV)}$ + PV	-	2%	-	-	-	15%	4%	-	**2%**
q'ad$_{(SV)}$ + AP	-	2%	-	2%	-	-	-	12%	**1%**
Bqa$_{(SV)}$ + PV	-	-	-	2%	-	-	-	-	**0.3%**

The video retellings are classified in Table 2 according to the use of the progressive in them. The progressive aspect is highly used in most of the video retellings. The forms which express progressivity can be classified into the following 3 types:

1) Simple entities such as the active participle (AP) or the prefixed verb form (PV);

2) Periphrases that are only used to encode progressivity, *qa:'id* + PV, *qa:'id* + PV +*fi* and PV + *fi,* due to the presence of the aspectual PRG markers *qa:'d* and/or *fi*;

3) Combined predicates composed of preverbs or "coverbs"[7]. The progressive aspect is expressed in these predicates by those preverbs due to their lexical semantics, e.g *bqa* (he stayed) and *kammal* (he finished).

This article focuses on the forms encircled in the table above and gives special attention to the two PRG markers in TA namely; *qa:'id* and *fi*.

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[7]A term used by Wilmet (1998, pp.318-21) to designate verbs and auxiliaries in French that are combined to an infinitive in a predicate such as "*commencer* à" or "*venir de*".

2.2.2. The markers of progressivity in Tunisian Arabic

2.2.2.1. The preverbal marker *qa:'id*:

Qa:'id is the masculine singular active participle (AP) derived from the verb *q'ad*[8] (*q'ad* being possibly translatable into 'he sat' or 'he stayed'). The AP *qa:'id* can be used alone in a predicate (4):

(4) Qa:'id   fi(j)jarda
     sit&AP&PS3M9   in-the-garden
     He is sitting in the garden

In a preverbal position, *qa:'id* is a PRG marker. It is inflected for number and gender as the example (5) and shows.

(5) A4, Soup
     Weḥid qa:'id   ye-kol
     One   PRG   PS3M-eat
     Somebody is eating.

It generally precedes a PV and possibly another AP. This use is very rare in our data there are only two instances of "*qa:'id* + AP" which are limited to the verb *rqad* (he slept). We illustrate this by example (6) (the sound /g/ is an allophone of the sound /q/ produced in some regions in Tunisia).

(6) A11, Wakeup
     ra:jil   ga:'id   ra:gid .
     man   PRG   sleep&AP&PS3M
     A man is sleeping

We hypothesize that the PM cannot PV precede the PVs conveying a static position such as *rqad* (he slept). It is rather the AP that is used instead.

As such we cannot say

(7) *qa:'id   yo-rqod
     PRG   PS3M-sleep
     He is sleeping

To sum up, *qa:'id* plays a purely aspectual role in progressive contexts. It is a preverbal PRG marker that is in a process of grammaticalization as it did not completely lose its semantic value and it is still inflected for gender and number, contrary to Cuvalay's (1991) remark. Furthermore,

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[8] There is no infinitive in Tunisian Arabic. The root is generally believed to be the three consonants making up the inflected forms (Bulos & Carroll 1965; Fleisch 1975; Mitchell 1962). The consonantal root serves as a tool to make entries in the dictionaries of Modern Standard Arabic for example. In the case of *q'ad* (he sat), the consonantal root is composed of the three letters q,' and d. Given the absence of the infinitive the masculine singular suffixed form of verbs generally stand for the entry of any verb in the dictionaries. It is therefore translated in this paper as inflected in the masculine singular in the past tense.

[9] The '&'symbol in glosses is used to indicate that the affixes merge with the root of the word, '-' is used when they can be separated.

it is not systematically used when a situation is described as ongoing at a certain time. Its lexical source is a verb of posture (to sit). Therefore, the formation of this PRG marker in TA is not unusual; it is also the case of PRG markers of Italian and Spanish languages.

2.2.2.2. The post verbal marker *fi*

The PRG marker *fi* is originally a preposition of location which means (in). *Fi* obligatorily follows a verb which needs a direct object complement in an utterance that expresses that a situation is in progress (see (8)). *Fi* is exclusively used to express progressivity. Its use in contexts expressing a different aspectual value makes the utterance unacceptable (consider example (9) which describes a bounded finished event with the use of the suffixed verb form *kla* (he ate)).

In example (8) below, *fi* is employed together with the Preverbal PRG marker *qa:'id*. When this latter is removed, the utterance preserves its progressive reading (see (10)). But when *fi* is removed, the utterance becomes unacceptable (Example (11)). When *fi* is the only PRG marker in an utterance, removing it changes the progressive value to another aspectual one. In example (12) where we have a narrative sequence, the use of the PV *yekol* conveys a bounded event.

    (8)   A9, *Soup*
          E(l)-ra:jil   qa:'id ye-kil   fi   ftu:r e(l)-ṣbeḥ.
          The-man   PRG PS3M-eat   PRG   meal the-morning
          The man is having breakfast

    (9)   * E(l)-ra:jil   kla-Ø   fi   ṭu:r e(l)-ṣbeḥ.
          The-man   eat-PS3M   PRG meal the-morning

    (10) E(l)-ra:jil   ye-kil   *fi*   ftu:r e(l)-ṣbeḥ.
          The-man   PS3M-eat   PRG   meal the-morning
          The man is having breakfast

    (11) *E(l)-ra:jil   qa:'id ye-kil   ftu:r e(l)-ṣbeḥ.
          The-man   PRG PS3M-eat   meal the-morning

    (12) E(l)-ra:jil   ye-kil   ftu:r e(s)sbeḥ.
          The-man   PS3M-eat   meal the-morning

          Min   ba'd yi-mshi   yi-xdim.
          from   then PS3M-go   PS3M-work
          The man eats breakfast then he goes to work.

    To conclude, *fi* is obligatorily used when the situation is viewed in progress and when the utterance contains a direct complement. The use of the preverbal PRG marker *qa:'id* shows more optionality as with certain verbs, removing it from the utterance does not change its progressive reading. Yet in spite of this apparent free variation of the use of the different forms *qa:'id* + PV / PV and

the equivalent predicates that require complements *qa:'id* + PV + *fi* / PV + *fi,* we believe that there should be a possible systematic description of each one. In order to examine this systematicity, we investigate the lexical contents selected with each construction in retelling the simultaneous situations.

2.2.3. Lexical aspect

Based on the three-class categorization of lexical contents by Klein (1994), the lexical contents selected with the four most used constructions are analyzed and displayed in Table 3 (the percentage of the lexical content used with each form is calculated and put in brackets). We examine whether there is a relation of dependence between the type of lexical content selected and the use of one construction or the other.

Table 3. Lexical contents

	0S		1S		2S		Total (100%)
PV + *fi*	0	0%	59	54%	50	46%	109
PV	0	0%	78	96%	3	4%	81
***qa:'id* + PV**	0	0%	51	75%	17	25%	68
qa:'id* + PV + *fi	0	0%	18	38%	29	62%	47

The lexical contents used with a progressive aspectual value are of two types: Predicates which present only one TT contrast, 1-State lexical contents(1S); called "activities" in other theoretical frameworks, and predicates that present two contrasts TT contrasts creating a change from a source state to a target state (2S).

Table 3 shows that the progressive aspect is predominantly expressed using 1-State lexical contents, i.e. with activity verbs. In fact, the frequencies and rates of use show that PV forms used alone to express the PRG aspect tend to select almost only 1-State contents. The 2-State contents selected for the same form are very limited in number and represent only 4% of the total PVs used to express the progressive.

We can clearly notice that the presence of the PRG markers *qa:'id* and *fi* allows expressing progressivity when the verbs used present two state contents. In order to test the null hypothesis of independence between the type of lexical content used and the use of the aspectual marker *qa:'id*, we did a standard χ^2 test (see Table 4 below).

Our null hypothesis (H_0) postulates that there is no significant relationship between the use of the preverbal PRG marker *qa:'id* and type of lexical content. We examined the difference between the observed and the expected frequencies of each predicate form (with *qa:'id* and predicate forms without *qa:'id*) with 1-S and 2-S lexical contents.

Table 4. Role of lexical content in the use of *qa:'id*

	Observed frequencies			Expected frequencies	
	1S	2S	Row total	1S	2S
Progressive predicates without *qa:'id*	137	53	190	128.1107	61.88925
Progressive predicates with *qa:'id*	70	47	117	78.88925	38.11075

Column total	207	100	307	$\chi^2 = 2.58\%$

Our calculated value of chi square is 2.58%. It indicates that there is less than 5% probability that the relationship we have stated is random. This allows us to reject the null hypothesis of independence at the standard 5% significance level.

We furthermore tested the hypothesis (H_0) of independence between the predicate form chosen to express the progressive and the type of lexical content chosen in an utterance (see Table 5). A χ^2 was also conducted with each of the 5 predicate forms listed in the following table:

Table 5. Role of lexical content in the choice of constructions

	Observed frequencies			Expected frequencies	
	1S	2S	Row total	1S	2S
PV + *fi*	59	50	109	74.52396166	34.47604
PV	78	3	81	55.38019169	25.61981
qa:'id + PV	51	17	68	46.49201278	21.50799
qa:'id + PV + *fi*	18	29	47	32.1341853	14.86581
				$\chi^2 = 0.000000000\%$	
Column total	214	99	313		

H_0 is yet again strongly rejected given the chi square value obtained.

In conclusion, we postulate that progressivity in Tunisian Arabic has more affinities with lexical contents which present an activity (1-State contents). The PV form alone used with 1-State contents, unless explicitly marked otherwise by an adverbial for example, expresses unambiguously the progressive aspect. Lexical contents which present a source state and a target state however, employed with PV form with no progressive markers take a different aspectual value, for e.g., the imperfective value, and in our data it takes the value of the narrative present (13)).

(13) A13, Kabaret

a.   n-shu:f-u: mra .
     PP1-see-PP1   woman
     We see a woman

b.   Taqra   fi(j)jari:da .
     PS3F   PRG-the-newspaper
     Reading the newspaper

c.   W   rajil   yo-dxol
     And   man   PS3M-enter
     A man enters

d.   Yo-q'od   hd^{h}e-ha
     PS3M-sit   near-her
     He sits close to her

In (13) b. *Taqra fi(j)jari:da* (she is reading the newspaper) expresses the progressive aspect while c. and d. contain punctual 2-S verbs which denote bounded events in a sequence.

2.4. Discussion and conclusions

By analyzing retellings of simultaneous situations, we could examine the linguistic encoding of progressivity in Tunisian Arabic. Two PRG markers are found: *qa:'id* (originally the masculine singular active participle of the verb *q'ad*, 'he sat' / 'he stayed') and *fi* (originally means 'in'). Both of them are locative entities, which are developing into grammatical markers. The process of grammaticalization of lexical markers is a natural process that happens as a result of the weakening of their lexical content by a process of generalization (Bybee & Dahl 1989).

Qa:'id is a postural verb acting as an auxiliary and is very similar to many Germanic languages allowing postural verbs with the finite form of the main verb, such as Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish (Bertinetto et al. 2000, p.523). Given the semantics of *qa:'id*; the periphrasis *qa:'id* + PV (+ *fi*) recalls the PRG devices in languages where verb phrases include a copula as an auxiliary; such as Spanish or Italian (Bertinetto et al. 2000, p.521).

In many other Arabic spoken languages, progressive markers are found to be developing and undergoing a process of grammaticalization; for example, *ga:'id* is found to have developed into a PRG marker in Kuwaiti Arabic (Al Nasser 1991). Its grammaticalization is accompanied by a phonological reduction "already in process" as it occurs "interchangeably with its shorter form *ga'*" (Al Nasser 1991, p.669). Other spoken Arabic languages have developed different affixal progressive markers; e.g. *ka-* in Moroccan Arabic, *bi-* in Egypt and *'am-* in Syria (Cuvalay 1991).

The preverbal PRG marker *qa:'id* in TA has received some attention in some research studies, e.g., (Cuvalay 1991). She has examined the status of *qa:'id* in the TA that is spoken in the city of Tunis. However, she postulates based on the examples she investigates that as a preverbal marker, *qa:'id* is no longer inflected for number or gender, and that a more reduced affixal form of it; *qa-* is used as a preverbal marker in the Jewish Arabic spoken in Tunis (Cuvalay 1991,

p.146). In our data, the locative participle *qa:'id* is found to be inflected for person, number and gender, and no instance of *qa-* is found.

While the status of *qa:'id* as a PRG marker is recognized by some studies, nothing can be found about the PRG marker *fi*. Even though its post verbal position seems uncommon compared to PRG markers in other languages; its lexical source is not that rare. In fact, the Irish copula *ag* preceding a verbal noun originates from the locative preposition (at) (Bybee & Dahl 1989). Moreover, the affix *bi-* in Syrian spoken Arabic is originally a preposition of location *meaning (in)* (Cuvalay 1991).

The post verbal PRG marker *fi* seems to penetrate the Time of the situation in such a way that it is possible to focus on one of its internal phases to focus it as a situation in progress. This is possible as its original semantics conveys being inside some temporal interval or space. In the same way, *fi* can make a real world situation which is perceived as punctual, e.g. <understand somebody> be perceived in progress and focus a possible internal phase. We illustrate this by the following example (14) (the translation sounds unacceptable in English where the type of verb does not really accommodate the progressive marking:

(14) ni-fhim   fi:-k
      PS1-understand   PRG-you
      I (am understanding) you

Concerning the role of lexical aspect, the expression of progressivity in TA has close affinities with 1-state dynamic contents. The bare PV used for the progressive aspect is unambiguous as to its aspectual value with this category of lexical contents. The use of PRG markers appears to disambiguate the progressive reading with the prefixed form of 2-S verbs while they are still possibly used with 1-S lexical aspects.

We hope that we could shed some light into the expression of progressivity and the PRG markers in TA. We believe, however, that more analyses are needed ion order to have a better understanding of the use of the non fully grammaticalized PRG marker *qa:'id* in context, such as the investigation of the use of adverbials.

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