Moroccan Arabic Aspect in Conversation: Evolution of the Imperfective Through Use[1]

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Abstract

Dialectal Moroccan Arabic has two distinct morphological forms of the imperfective where Standard Arabic had one. Previous studies have claimed that the difference in function in the two imperfectives is one of mood. However, using naturally occurring conversation data this paper looks more closely at the use of the two imperfectives in Moroccan Arabic and comes to a different conclusion. Specifically, the older unmarked imperfective has been generalised as the "elsewhere" condition, following Dryer (1995), while the newer marked imperfective is being used in contexts to express progressive and habitual aspect. This paper examines the evolution of the imperfective aspect in one dialect of Arabic through the framework of Conversation Analysis (CA).

Keywords: Moroccan Arabic, Aspect, Conversation Analysis, Language change

1.　　Introduction

Dialectal Arabic is a rich resource for analysing morpho-syntactic change in that we can compare forms and constructions cross-dialectally and intra-dialectally. Furthermore, since most dialectal varieties of Arabic are not under heavy written or prescriptive grammar constraints, morpho-syntactic change can be observed. This study will examine use of the imperfective in one dialect of Moroccan Colloquial Arabic (MA, hereafter) and how it can be seen to have evolved down two separate pathways. Previous descriptions of the grammar of MA (Harrell, 1962; Brustad, 2000) have demonstrated that the two different forms of the imperfective function to distinguish mood in an utterance, the one form marking indicative and the other form marking subjunctive. I will assume that the previous analyses are accurate descriptions of their data.

However, the conversation data collected for this study shows a difference in the intentions of contemporary, (French-MA) bilingual speakers in the use of each of the imperfective forms. Specifically, the older unmarked imperfective will be analysed as having been generalised as the "elsewhere" condition, following Dryer (1995), while the newer marked imperfective is being used in contexts to express progressive and habitual aspect. Thus, it will be demonstrated that the use of the unmarked imperfective has taken two different

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functional pathways by contemporary, bilingual MA communities: one as a marker of mood and one has been generalised as the elsewhere condition.

The goal of this paper is two-fold. First, this study is intended to investigate the role of both the unmarked and the marked imperfective in MA conversation. As the data will show, the distribution of /ta-/ in speech does not match with the previous descriptions of /ta-/ by other studies. Essentially, it appears that different dialect communities of MA have developed different uses for the unmarked imperfective. Corollary to this will be to look at different ways aspect has evolved in other Semitic languages, namely Modern Hebrew and Iraqi Arabic. Finally, the evolution of the imperfective in MA will be discussed, including implications of the innovative use of the unmarked imperfective in terms of a theory of language change and common pathways of evolution. Additionally, the elsewhere condition as a non-traditional functional category and its implications for language change is discussed, with respect to the data examined here.

2. Data and Methodology

The conversation data used in this study was one digitally recorded phone conversation. The informants were two males, aged in their mid-30s. The informants for this study happened to be two brothers from the Salé (Central) region of Morocco, which is crucial as dialectal variation throughout Morocco is vast. The informants' first language was MA, the primary language spoken in the home, while both are fluent in French as they were raised and educated in France. One of the informants has spent a considerable amount of time in the United States attending graduate school and working, and is fluent in English.

The data was recorded over an approximately 10 minute session. The phone call was made over Skype™ and a digital voice recorder was connected through the computer in order to record the conversation. The conversation was transcribed into phonemic representations and using a dictionary of MA (Harrell et al., 1966) to standardise the data. Morphemes that could not be found in the dictionary were represented consistently throughout the data.

The informants were given instructions to have a conversation in MA. While the informants may, without intrusion, conduct a conversation among themselves in French, they are used to speaking with one another in MA during family gatherings or over the phone during a conference call with their parents.

Further instructions were given that, while they could begin the conversation in MA, they should continue however they feel most natural. In other words, in previous conversations, it has been observed that when speaking MA, the informants freely code-switched and code-mixed in French. Despite the fact that these extra instructions were given, it seemed that the informants were still consciously avoiding language mixing with French. The informants used lexical items from French freely, but on one specific occasion one of the informants, apparently at a loss to find a right expression in MA, paused for several seconds and says the phrase in French while laughing. The other informant responds to this by laughing, as well. In other words, despite explicit

instructions to proceed as "naturally" as possible, it seems that there is a pervasive stigma in this community against language mixing.

Finally, the use in this study of the terms 'marked' and 'unmarked' should be clarified. The term 'marked' refers only to the presence of more morphological information. The marked imperfective referred to in this study contains an extra (i.e. non-agreement) preverbal affix, /ta-/. On the other hand, the term 'unmarked' in this study refers to the form of the imperfective that does not have any extra preverbal affix.

3.   Evolution of Dialectal Imperfective: Comparison with Arabic Varieties

While Classical Arabic (CA, hereafter) makes use of only perfective and imperfective verbal stems, MA has three verbal distinctions: perfect, unmarked imperfective, and a marked imperfective with a prefix /ta-/or /ka-/. CA perfective verbs consist of a perfective verb stem and agreement suffixes, as shown in (1). CA imperfective verbs consist of an imperfective verb stem and agreement prefixes, as shown in (2).

(1) Perfective[2]
     daras-tu   CA
     study.PRF-1SG
     'I studied.'

(2) Imperfective
     ʔa-drus   CA
     1SG-IMPF.study
     I am studying

Meanwhile, in MA, perfective stems with suffix (3) and imperfective stems with prefix (4) are retained. However, a third form using the imperfective stem, prefix, and another prefix /ta-/ is used (5).

(3) Perfective
     ktəb-t   MA
     write.PRF-1SG
     I wrote

(4) Unmarked Imperfective
     nə-ktəb   MA
     1SG-IMPF.write
     'I write.'

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[2] Abbreviations used as follows: 1– First Person; 2 – Second Person; 3 – Third Person; SG – Singular; PL – Plural; F – Feminine; DEF – Definite Article; DEM – Demonstrative; PRF – Perfective; IMPF – Imperfective; NEG – Negative; TA/KA – Morpheme for the marked Imperfective.

(5) Marked Imperfective
    ta-nə-ktəb   MA
    TA-1SG-IMPF.write
    'I am writing.'

The prefix /ta-/ has been described by Heath (2002) as grammaticalised from an archaic form of "what" /wašta/. This form exists frozen as a preverbal interrogative only in the phrase /wašta d-der/ "what are you doing?". Some dialects have the form /ka-/ instead of /ta-/, which Heath says most likely grammaticalised in parallel to /ta-/ from some form of /kan/ "to be".

   While Moroccan Arabic diverges from Classical Arabic in the presence of two imperfective forms, it is necessary to examine other contemporary dialects for evidence of how the marked imperfective developed. For example, Heath (1997) makes it clear that Moroccan Arabic has evolved from more Nomadic dialects of Arabic spoken in the 11th century due to invasion of the area by these tribes, similar to other contemporary colloquial dialects as compared to the literary varieties (p. 205). Thus, looking at other contemporary dialects of Arabic may provide evidence of the evolution of the marked imperfective.

   The most closely related dialect to Moroccan Arabic, Algerian Arabic, does not have this marked imperfective. According to Bergman (2005), the "simple" (unmarked) imperfective "is the most usual or default form of the non-past verb" in Algerian Arabic (p. 28). In fact, the only contemporary dialects which have two distinct imperfective verb forms, besides Moroccan Arabic, are Egyptian and Syrian spoken Arabic[3] (Brustad, 2000, p. 233). Similar to Moroccan Arabic, Egyptian and Syrian both have an unmarked imperfective and a marked imperfective, however, the marked imperfective is indicated with a prefix /bi-/ or /b-/ for both varieties (p. 234). This morpheme does not appear to be cognate to the Moroccan /ta-/ or /ka-/ marked imperfective morpheme. Indeed, Brustad notes that there is great difference in the use and distribution of the Moroccan Arabic marked/unmarked imperfective distinction in comparison with the other dialects (p. 240). Thus, the evidence from the contemporary dialects makes it clear that the Moroccan Arabic marked imperfective has evolved independently from the other Arabic varieties and recently in the history of the language.

4.   Previous Descriptions of /ta-/

Studies of MA looking at monolingual speakers' use of the prefix /ta-/ have been consistent in describing its function. Harrell (1962) describes the function of /ka-/ as a durative marker, "indicating either an enduring state or a habitual or progressive action" (p. 176). As opposed to the unmarked imperfective which is used to refer to "potential action" (p. 174).

   Texts annotated by Harrell from that time indicate that this is the correct function for each of these stems. In her study of comparative spoken Arabic syntax, Kristen Brustad (2000) categorises the marked/unmarked imperfective in

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[3] And Iraqi Arabic (see Section 5, below).

MA as a mood distinction: namely, that /ta-/ is an "indicative" marker, while the bare imperfective marks "subjunctive" (p. 236). The data below are taken from Harrell (1962)[4]:

(6) Unmarked Imperfective – Potential Action

a. ʕaytu-li   **negles**   mʕahum   **nferrqu**
   'They shouted to me (that) **I should sit** with them and **we should chat**
   l-lɣa
   together.'

b. qalet-lha: "ṛ-ṛažel ma-ka-ixallini la- **nexṛož**   wal-la **nedṛež"**
   'She said to her: "My husband leaves and   **I can't leave** or   **even put**
   my foot out the door.'

(7) Marked Imperfective – Habitual/Progressive Action

a. l-ktir fihum   **ka-iħabbsu** ʕla umuṛ ed-din bħal l-qarwiyin w ž-
   žwamaʕ eṣ-ṣɣaṛ
   'Many among them **donate**   to religious causes, like the university
   and small groups.'

b. qalet-lha: "ṛ-ṛažel   **ma-ka-ixallini** la-nexṛož wal-la nedṛež"
   'She said to her: "My husband **leaves**   and I can't leave or even
   put my foot out the door.'

In Kristen Brustad's (2000) comparative study of spoken Arabic syntax, she claims that in MA the unmarked imperfective signals the subjunctive mood. The example she gives can be seen below in (8). Crucially, she has based her research on spoken data, either from conversations or from narratives from multiple dialect regions.

(8) Unmarked Imperfective as Subjunctive[5]
   t-šərbi atay   MA
   2SG-IMPF:drink.F tea
   'Would you (like to) drink tea? '

(Brustad, 2000, p. 236)

Essentially, previous studies of the marked/ unmarked imperfective in MA have attributed the distinction to mood. Moreover, the /ta-/ marked imperfective was described as a durative marker but generally occurring in indicative sentences. On the other hand, both Harrell and Brustad have described the main use of the unmarked imperfective as employing the Subjunctive Mood. However, the imperfective data gathered for this study do not conform to these categories.

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[4] While the data in (6 -7) from Harrell are taken from his grammar, the translations are mine. His grammar contains several stories transcribed by Louis Brunot from Rabat (the same geographic region as my informants) but do not have any glosses.
[5] Glosses mine.

5.   **Moroccan Arabic Aspect in Conversation Data**

When looking at conversation data gathered for this study, the use of the unmarked imperfective does not follow previous descriptions. It is evident, when looking at the conversation data collected for this study as a whole, that these speakers are not using the marked/unmarked imperfective as a mood distinction. There is no consistent subjunctive or potential action reading that can be found in all the unmarked imperfective examples.

This evidence has led to a different analysis of the use of the two imperfectives in the speech of the bilinguals used for this study. In Comrie's (1987) discussion of aspect he defines durative as habitual action or progressive. On the other hand, he defines the opposite of durative as punctuality whereby "the quality of the situation does not last in time" or the event "does not have duration" (p. 42). The data examined for this study, while limited, makes it clear that the mood distinctions, as outlined by Comrie, are not those being made bilingual MA speakers. Rather, it is suggested that speakers are making the distinction between the /ta-/ marked imperfective as the default form, while they are employing the unmarked imperfective as the "elsewhere" form. Dryer (1995) discussed this principle in looking at frequency and pragmatics of word order. Dryer discusses that "situations in which one word order is the order used when conditioning factors are neutralised is one type of situation in which a word order can be viewed as pragmatically unmarked" (p. 116). From the perspective of this study, it is the /ta-/ marked imperfective which is employed under the (marked) conditioning factors of present tense and progressive or habitual action, as it will be shown by the bilingual MA data. When these factors are neutralised, or pragmatically unmarked, namely time and durative action, then the unmarked imperfective is employed in MA. Note the relationship between the use of an unmarked form and pragmatically unmarked interpretations. Dryer further comments that situations of neutralisation can be viewed "as special instances of a more general type of situation in which one word order is the default order in the sense that the easiest ways to characterise the contexts in which that words order is used is to specify when other word orders are used and state that the word order in question is used *elsewhere"* (p. 116, emphasis original).

Crucially, Dryer notes that descriptions of the "marked word order are used with the understanding that the unmarked word order is elsewhere" (p. 116). This type of classification is practical for analysing the use of the different forms of the imperfective in the data for this study. The /ta-/ marked imperfective is clearly employed as a habitual and progressive, thus durative, marker, marking the event as occurring over a period of time. This is consistent with previous account of MA. On the other hand, the unmarked imperfective is not being used as a subjunctive marker in the conversation data, which is inconsistent with previous descriptions. The evidence shows that the speakers in this study are deliberately using the unmarked imperfective as the 'elsewhere' form, or in other words where the marked imperfective does not apply, serving the function to mark events as not structured in terms of time or aspect, thus

unmarked pragmatically as well as morphologically. This is illustrated by the following data:

(9)   Unmarked Imperfective – Excerpt 1
82 M: ta-yžibu   flushum   fe-l-mɣreb   ma-ta-yxuḷṣu-ši
        TA-3.bring.IMPF   money.3PL   in-DEF-Morocco NEG-TA-3.pay.PL-NEG
        les impots   l-xems   snin   l-luwwela,
        DEF taxes   DEF-five   year.PL   DEF-first
        'They are bringing their money to Morocco and they aren't even paying taxes for the first 5 years.'
83 M: imken l-ʕašr, l-ʕašer snin   l-luwwela ma-ta-yxuḷṣu-ši
        maybe DEF-ten   year.PL DEF-first   NEG-TA-3.pay.IMPF.PL-NEG
        les impots
        DEF taxes
        'Or maybe the ten, the first 10 years aren't even paying taxes.'
84 H: uh-yoy (inaud)
        Wow
85 M: zwena bezzaf, dak   š-ši   ʕleš daba l-nas   **iẑeyu**
        good   a lot   DEM   some   why   now DEF-people 3.come.IMPRF.PL
        l-mɣreb
        DEF-Morocco
        'Very good. That is why people now **come** to Morocco.'

The excerpt in (9) is one example from the conversation data where an interpretation of the unmarked imperfective expressing "subjunctive," or even "potential action," is not accurate. In this case, Speaker M in lines 82-83 is discussing the advantages that foreigners who move to Morocco enjoy, namely not having to pay taxes. In these utterances, the /ta-/ marked imperfective is being used, here to express progressive action. The phrase "*they aren't even paying their taxes for the first 5, or maybe the first 10 years*" implies progressive action. It is action occurring over a period of time, which is expressed, and habitual: each year there is not paying of taxes occurring. Thus, there is no doubt that progressive action is being intended to be expressed.

Then, M uses the unmarked imperfective in line 85. Crucially, no potential action or subjunctive reading of this line can be made because of the nature of the phrase "*that is why people now . . .*" This reading is reinforced by the previous discussion. Foreigners don't pay taxes, so now they come to Morocco. This event is not situated in any reference to time. In other words, coming to Morocco is not being expressed as occurring in the past, present, or future. The use of the unmarked imperfective here, in fact, is deliberate to this end. It is not crucial to express this event as existing in, or over, a point in time, thus the elsewhere condition is employed as the unmarked imperfective, as the factors that condition the marked imperfective are neutralised. This is illustrated by excerpt 2 below in (10).

(10) Excerpt 2
74 M: *dakši daba eh illi ta-yḏer, l-mɣreb, ta-yʕayat a* now
      that TA-3.do. IMPF DEF-Morocco TA-3.call.IMPF on
      la-nas DEM men-l-fransa w men-l-xariž
      DEF-people from-DEF-France and from-DEF-abroad
      'This one thing now, eh, that it is doing, Morocco, they are calling to people from France.'
75   baš **ižeyu** l-mɣreb **ysuknu** f-le-mɣreb
      for 3.come.IMPF.PL DEF-Morocco 3.live.IMPF.PL in-DEF-Morocco
      'Or overseas for them to **come** to Morocco and **live** in Morocco.'
76 H: (inaud) (fransawiyyan)
               French.PL
      (inaud) (the French)
77 M: italiyyan, te huma, inglaziy[yan,
      Itallian.PL even them English.PL
      'The Italians, them even, the Eng[lish.'
78 H: [iyeh
                            [yes
79 M: w daba ši **yderu** illa yžaw **isuknu**
      and now some 3.do.IMPF.PL that 3.come.IMPF.PL 3.live.IMPF.PL
      ow **yderu** l-adressa dyalhum fe-l, fe-l mɣreb
      and 3.do.IMPF.PL DEF-address of.them in-DEF-Morocco
      'And now what **they do** is **they come** and **live** and **make** their address in, in Morocco.'

The excerpt in (10) is another strong indication that a subjunctive interpretation of the simple imperfective is not the function for these speakers. In line 74-75, speaker M is discussing foreigners coming to Morocco. He used the /ta-/ marked imperfective as on-going habitual in like 74: "*one thing that it is doing . . . they are calling*." Then, in the same phrase, speaker M contrasts the action with the unmarked imperfective.

      The use of the unmarked imperfective in line 75 could be read in different ways, one with the subjunctive. However, when looking at the use of the same form in line 79, that could not be the interpretation. In line 79, speaker M continues to discuss how foreigners come to Morocco. The use of /daba ši / "*now what…*" before the verb in the unmarked imperfective gives no indication of subjunctive or potential action. This adverbial phrase is a strong indicator that the speaker is expressing factual information. With line 79 in conjunction with line 75, the unmarked imperfective cannot be read as subjunctive. Instead, there is some other contrast with the type of action being expressed with the /ta-/ marked imperfective and the unmarked imperfective. Similar to the example in (9), it is evident that the use of the simple imperfective here indicates that the conditioning of the marked imperfective, namely progressive or habitual action, has been neutralised. Thus, the use of the unmarked imperfective here is a deliberate utilisation on the part of the speaker of the elsewhere condition.

(11) Contrast within use of the same verb
a. Excerpt 3
63 M: ow   kaina   nas   fe-l-xariž   ta-ysuknu   fehum,
     and   is.PRF   people   in-DEF-abroad   TA-3.live.IMPF.PL   in.them
    dakši zwen   ʕandhum, eh?
    tha   good   at.them
    'and there are people from overseas who are living in them, those things
    that they have are great, right?'
64 H: eh, kain   ši-mašakil   **ta-ygolu**   ʕla dakši, ʕrafti
       is.PRF   some-problem.PL   TA-3.say.IMPF.PL   on   that   know.PRF.2SG
    'There are some problems, **they say**, on those things, you know.'

b. Excerpt 4
61 M: ehh… w   l-hadak l-dar,   haduk   l-dyur,   bildiyan
     and   DEF-DEM   DEF-house DEM.PL   DEF-house.PL   traditional.pl
    lli   **tegolhum**   riyad te   huma ylwu zweni,(inaud)zwenin
    that   2.say.IMPF.3PL   riad   even   them3. call.3PL   good   good
    'Uhh… and that house, those houses, traditional which **you call them** a
    riad, they became great, great.'

Crucially, the above examples demonstrate that the use of the marked and the
unmarked imperfective is neither lexically specific nor discourse topic
dependent. Instead, the examples in (11) a. and b. are two examples of how
speakers use the different /ta-/ marked imperfective and unmarked imperfective
forms to achieve different purposes with the same verb. In line 63, speaker M is
discussing the houses in Morocco bought by foreigners. Then, in line 64,
Speaker H uses the verb "*say*" /gol/ in the /ta-/ marked imperfective. The effect
is that there are problems with the houses and people are saying it continuously.
The conditioning factors are present for use of /ta-/.

    In contrast, speaker M is discussing the houses in line 61. Here, M uses
the same verb "*say*" /gol/ but with the unmarked imperfective. In this example,
similar to previous examples of this form, a "subjunctive" or "potential action"
reading is not accurate. These traditional houses are not potentially or possibly
called riads – they are called riads. Specifically, the verb phrase marked with /ta-
/ is deliberate expression of time and duration. On the other hand, there is no
need on the part of the speaker to express this information in the unmarked verb
phrase. Thus, the elsewhere condition is employed and the unmarked form is
utilised.

(12) Excerpt 5
107 H: ehh, **ta-tduwwez**   mzien
       TA-2SG.pass.time   good
    'Yeah, **spending time** (there) is good.'
108 M: eh, **ta-tduwwez**   mzien – ha   huwa, xeṣṣak
     TA-2SG.pass.time.IMPF   good   even   it   need.2P
    ta-yfaq   bekri   fe-s-sbaħ
    TA-3.get.up.IMPF   early   in-DEF-morning

'Yeah, **spending time** is good,- it's just that you have **to get up** early in the morning.'

109 M: [ow   **te-**
      and   2-
      [And **you-**

110 H: [ow   **tenʕas**   fe-l-ʕšiya (laughing)
      and   2.sleep.IMPF   in-DEF-afternoon
      [And **you sleep** in the afternoon (laughing)

111 M: voila, exactement
      there exactly
      'There you go, exactly.'

The excerpt in (12) also contrasts the use of the marked and the unmarked imperfective, but here the effect is for comedic purposes. In lines 107 and 108, both speakers are using the /ta-/ marked imperfective to express the actions as habitual. They are discussing vacationing in Marrakech and the effect is that they are saying that "*spending time*" habitually, every vacation is great. Also, in line 108, speaker M employs the marked imperfective when saying that one has to wake up early when in Marrakech. Here again, the action expressed is habitual. The reason is because Marrakech is so hot that you have to wake up early before the temperature is unbearable. Then, in line 109 and 110 both speakers begin to say, in the *unmarked* imperfective, that you sleep in the afternoon, with speaker H completing the phrase. First, this example is potent in that it shows both speakers simultaneously using the same form in the same situation. Secondly, the use of the unmarked imperfective in this line is specifically effecting a change in the type of action between this event and the previous two events expressed with /ta-/. The effect is that the action of sleeping in the afternoon is not seen as habitual. The intention, further, is not to view the action as progressive. Instead, the event is not conditioned and thus illustrative of the elsewhere principle.

Finally, speaker intuition was used to support the claim that the above utterances with the unmarked imperfective were not expressing subjunctive. As the subjunctive is prevalent in French, there would be no problem from the speakers to identify and utilise this mood in their utterances in MA. One speaker confirmed that the utterance with the unmarked imperfective were not expressing subjunctive moods, further supporting the translations and analysis made for that form.

Moreover, the possibility that the marked imperfective was expressing present progressive aspect while the unmarked imperfective was expressing habitual action was disproved based on eliciting phrases from speakers. Interestingly, both the progressive and the habitual were expressed with the /ta-/ marked imperfective. The speaker would distinguish present progressive and habitual based on supplemental phrases, such as "for ten years," or through context. Crucially, this intuition evidence supports the claim that there are specific conditions that need to be met for the speaker to use the marked

imperfective, namely progressive or habitual action. When these conditions are not met, the unmarked imperfective is used.

6.   Change of Aspect in Other Semitic Languages

There are previous cases of Semitic Aspect evolving through use in different communities. The first, Modern Hebrew, is an analogous to the community of MA speakers focused on in this paper because it involves a Semitic Language with the perfective/ imperfective structure being used by speakers who are also native speakers of Indo-European languages. A second documented example can be illustrated in Iraqi Arabic.

Biblical Hebrew, similar to Classical Arabic, has a perfective/ imperfective distinction in verb forms. When the language was revived in the 1880s and developed into Modern Hebrew, tense arose as past, present, and future. Even in an article discussing Neo-Aramaic, Olga Kapeliuc (1996, p.59) quotes another Semiticist in saying that Modern Hebrew is a "European language in transparent Hebrew clothing. Modern Hebrew employs Biblical perfective as past tense, Biblical imperfective as future, and a "benony[6]" form as a present tense" (Tsarfaty, 2004). The former distinction of perfective aspect versus imperfective aspect is no longer part of the Modern Hebrew system. Further, previous scholars have noted that Modern Hebrew "differs from [Standard] Arabic . . . in that the two verbal conjunctions are clearly and unambiguously associated with tense distinctions" (Shlonsky, 1997, p.11). In other words, similar to MA, speakers of Modern Hebrew have taken a system with strictly perfective and imperfective functions and transposed it onto a tense system with three main forms.

Another documented example of evolution of the purely perfective/ imperfective system in Semitic is found in Iraqi Arabic. In his grammar of Iraqi Arabic (IA, hereafter), Erwin (1963) briefly discussed a /da-/ prefix for imperfective verbs. He describes /da-/ as signaling "habitual and continuing action." Meanwhile, use of the "simple" imperfective denotes "recurrent, habitual, or *characteristic action, or to action which has not taken place yet*" (p. 337, emphasis mine). Examples of this are illustrated in (13) below.

(13) a.   Unmarked Imperfective[7]
            tumṭur ihwaaya hnaa   IA
            'It rains here a lot.'
     b.   /da-/ Marked Imperfective
            da-tumṭur   IA
            'It is raining.'

                                        (Erwin, 1963, p. 337)

While it is not clear what Erwin means by the quote describing the use of the "simple" imperfective, it is possible that the examples are somewhat parallel to

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[6] The Benony form is derived from the Biblical Active Participle (Shlonsky, 1997).
[7] Glosses not provided by Erwin.

the difference in meaning being achieved by the use of the different imperfectives in MA conversation data. It is clear that the Iraqi /da-/ prefix expresses habitual, or progressive action. On the other hand, from the examples given by Erwin, the simple imperfective appears to have a similar distribution based on the 'elsewhere' condition. Nevertheless, Erwin does not elaborate on the distinction, and thus, the same conclusions cannot be made for Iraqi at this time.

The above examples of change in the aspect systems in two different Semitic languages, along with this study on the use of the imperfective in MA, demonstrate the vast instances of morpho-syntactic change that can be viewed in dialectal Arabic and Hebrew. Potential pressures and motivations for the changes in the imperfective in MA will be discussed in the next section.

7. Emergent Function of /ta-/ in Conversation Data

In his article *Emergent Grammar*, Paul Hopper claims that "structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse in an ongoing process" (1987, p. 156). It is evident, by looking at the different uses of the unmarked imperfective that it does not fit into a pre-existing category innately available. Instead, it appears to have had two separate evolutions: first, from an originally imperfective (as opposed to perfective) function to the subjunctive, then, it became used in the elsewhere condition for some speakers. There is nothing structurally independent about this evolution. In effect, the unmarked imperfective has emerged as taking different functions through its use.

In order to understand how the 'elsewhere' use of the unmarked imperfective came about, we should consider the discourse needs of the speakers that lead to this function (Bybee and Hopper, 2001, p. 4). It is important, for this study, that we view the evolution of the unmarked imperfective as couched in the evolution of the imperfective, in general, in MA. The account based on the data found by Brustad finds the imperfective in MA to employ mood distinctions. In her analysis, the marked imperfective is used to express indicative mood, while the unmarked imperfective is used to express the subjunctive. All of this follows from her data.

Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994) investigate the evolution of tense and aspect cross-linguistically in their book *The Evolution of Grammar*. It follows from their discussion of cross-linguistic pathways of evolution that both a subjunctive and a punctual function could develop for the unmarked imperfective. On one hand, they discuss the change of an indicative to a subjunctive due to the rise of a new indicative form (1994, p. 235). This common pathway can be seen, as taken from Bybee et al, in (14).

(14) present indicative → present subjunctive

This is, most likely, the process that occurred in the MA community observed by Brustad and Harrell. First, there was grammaticalisation of the imperfective prefix /ta-/ as a progressive marker. Then, as /ta-/ marked imperfective became generalised to more contexts, it was reanalysed as marking simply indicative.

Finally, the unmarked imperfective form took on the function of the present subjunctive.

Meanwhile, regarding the dialect community from which the data for this study was taken, the same /ta-/ grammaticalised as a progressive marker. At this point, there were two grammatical morphemes that can be classified as marking present tense. The newer form usually takes over the functions of the older form, while the older form takes on a more "generic" meaning (p. 145). In other words, ". . . marginal uses . . . (generic statements for present) . . . can retain the older gram[8] long after the newer gram has taken over the central, focused functions" (p. 235) Cross-linguistic evidence, from Bybee et al, show that this is a common pathway of change, for example in "three out of four cases . . . this younger gram has developed from the progressive" (p. 144). It is evident that this is the pathway taken by speakers based on my data. In effect, a "generic" meaning can be applied to the concept of the elsewhere condition, where there are not specific parameters for when it is employed, simply when the other forms are not used.

Also, we need to take into account frequency factors that may affect use. Bybee and Hopper (2001, p. 3) note that any explanation of grammar must "take note of how frequency and repetition affect and, ultimately, bring about form in language". It is possible that a higher frequency of the marked imperfective caused a reanalysis of the function of the unmarked imperfective, in that speakers took the more frequent function being the more specific function of the imperfective. For example, within the seven minutes of conversation data transcribed for this study, the marked imperfective to unmarked imperfective occurred in a ratio of 3:2. If that has been the general distribution of these forms in spoken discourse, then it is possible that the aspect quality of the /ta-/ marked imperfective could be, through frequency, adduced by speakers as the quality of the unmarked imperfective and then contrast the function.

Finally, it is clear that the use of the unmarked imperfective as the "elsewhere condition" in the MA speech community examined here is not a functional syntactic category in the traditional sense. We have shown based on the limited data, first, that the use of the distinction between the marked and unmarked imperfective forms does not follow the previous descriptions of the language (c.f. Harrell, 1962; Brustad, 2000), and second, that the use patterns of the two forms of the imperfective fall into two basic categories: one functional and one as the "elsewhere" condition. Arguably, the data shows that there is a change in the use patterns of these two forms which has yet to be completed. In other words, it is possible that the pattern of the unmarked imperfective being used "elsewhere" reflects a change-in-progress in the function of this form.

8.   Conclusion
This study was intended to describe the function of the two forms of the imperfective in one dialect of Moroccan Arabic. Crucially, the use of the unmarked imperfective in conversation data did not conform to previous

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[8] "Gram" refers to grammaticalised morpheme by Bybee et al. (1994).

descriptions of the functions of this form. Analyses of other data concluded that the difference in both imperfective forms was basically mood: the /ta-/ marked imperfective marked generally indicative while the unmarked imperfective was employed to express subjunctive mood. This was not the case in the data recorded for this study.

Instead, it was shown that the unmarked imperfective is being employed by speakers in a different community to express punctuality, where the duration of the event was not relevant, thus not expressed. It was shown that the speakers employed the durative marked /ta-/ imperfective deliberately, yet when these conditions were neutralised the speakers employed the elsewhere condition producing the unmarked imperfective.

Finally, the implications of the two different uses of the unmarked imperfective in two different communities were discussed. In effect, cross-linguistic pathways of grammatical evolution demonstrated that both directions were possible. Motivating each change, however, were different pressures and cognitive needs present in each community. The distribution of the unmarked imperfective in MA is a potentially revealing example of emergence of grammar through use. Nevertheless, while it is clear that the data demonstrate a change in the use patterns of these forms, more data would be necessary to bolster the claims about the function of the imperfective in MA. Potentially, the use of the unmarked imperfective in MA as the elsewhere condition is a transitional (non-functional) category reflecting a shift in the syntactic functions in this language.

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