The Auxiliary Verb in Contemporary Jordanian Arabic: A Historical Descriptive Study
الفعل المساعد في اللغة العربية المعاصرة الأردنية: دراسة وصفية تاريخية

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Abstract:

Objectives: The present study proceeds from the idea that many of the contemporary Arabic phenomena that modern linguists experience are linguistic phenomena that existed in classical Arabic or ancient Semitic languages. This study, therefore, has argued that the hypothesis stating Arabic is different from Indo-European languages in not considering the auxiliary verb in its structure is inaccurate. Furthermore, the idea that syntactic structure contains auxiliary verbs as a native construction transmitted to Arabic through translation is hasty.

Methods: The study set itself an approach to prove this theory by describing the auxiliary verb in contemporary Arabic, focused on the Jordanian dialect and more specifically on the two auxiliary verbs ﻛاﻥ 'was' and قعد 'sit.' It also provided evidence from classical Arabic as Quran, poetry, and Semitic languages.

Conclusions: The study concluded that the two auxiliary verbs ﻛاﻥ 'was' and قعد 'sit' have their roots in classical Arabic and Semitic languages.

Keywords: auxiliary verbs; contemporary Arabic; semitic languages; classic.
1 Introduction

Unsurprisingly, each language has a particular compositional system that is different from the other languages, it is even possible to find a new dialect generated from a language. This newborn -the dialect- differs from the mother tongue in some of its combinations. For instance, the adjective comes after the noun it describes in Arabic, whereas it precedes the English noun. Likewise, relative pronouns occur after definite pronouns in Arabic, while in English, they come after indefinite pronouns (Azar 2002).

This system usually consists of sentences based on strict grounds that no one can avoid. If that happens, we find that there is no doubt that the grammatical rule is violated. It is also found that languages do not agree with the structure of their sentences. For example, there are two types of sentence structures in Arabic: اسمية/ nominal and فعلية/ verbal. The nominal sentence begins with a noun or pronoun and has two parts: مبتدأ/ subject and خبر/ xabar/ 'predicate' (Al- Gharababah 2008). Conversely, a verbal sentence begins with a verb and has the basic word order of VSO (Verb-Subject-Object) (Cuvalay 1994). It has been argued that Arabic does not need a helping verb to connect the two parts of the nominal sentence or alter the sentence tense from the past to the present or vice versa. Nevertheless, Hindu languages, in general, and English, in particular, need a helping verb to connect the two parts of the sentence or change the tense. These views have represented us in three directions.

First, this view has been embraced by many modern Arab linguists, so there is no room for discussion since it is one of the main basics of the Arabic language (Zaza 1990). Second, this view has been adopted by many who specialize in teaching Arabic to those who speak foreign languages. They argued that the Arabic teacher would never accept an expression like الحاو هو؟/aljawo hwa har/ ‘the weather is hot’ (with the double subjects) from an Arabic speaker. However, such a structure is acceptable for a student whose native language is English or French because his mother tongue’s syntactic system has an overt helping verb, as in (the weather is hot) (Ali and Dajani 2015; Al-Qudah and Omar 2015). Third, this view has been adopted by those working in the area of language evaluation and assessment. They consider most of these structures as incorrect because of the negative effect of a literal translation. For instance, the Arabic expression تم التوصيل /tama altawseel/ ‘has been deliver’ is incorrect because it is the literal translation of the helping verb in the English passive sentence in ‘has been reached’ (Ausfoor 2007 and Hasan 2016). Such a phenomenon obligates some of the websites’ bloggers to consider using the helping verb تم /tama/ ‘has been’ as the translation of the helping verb of the English passive sentence (i.e., a passive voice) as a ‘language crime’ (http://www.extranslation.com).

However, the contemporary deliberative reality of Arabic dialects reveals that speakers of Contemporary Arabic dialects employ auxiliary verbs in every speech. This employment has not been individually carried out as a sign of unacceptable arbitrary use. Instead, it is almost common in Arabic dialects. One example is that Jordanian use the auxiliary verb قاعد/ geçid/ ‘sitting’ as a helping verb, so we find them saying: هو قاعد بكألك/ he is eating and أنا قاعد أدرس/ I am studying. Likewise, Gulf dialects use an equivalent helping verb أبي /?abi/ ‘want’ as in the following expressions: أنا أبي أدرس /?an ?abi ?adrus/ ‘I want to study’ and the Egyptian dialect uses عاز/ /?ayiy ‘want’ as in: أنا عاز أتجوز/ناقاييزي ما العمر/ ‘I want to get married’. Most linguists are agreed that contemporary dialects are an extension of classical Arabic, and nobody has the right to say that they are not. Modern dialects “aroise due to a direct development in the Standard Arabic after it moved to new Islamic territories, and local languages influenced it in every region, and the modern dialect was created” (Ayoub 1986).

Many studies have tried to connect the linguistic levels of contemporary Arabic dialects with classical Arabic (Al-Gharababah 2008; Abu Nawas and Thawabih 2018). Especially with the existence of Jordanian Arabic helping verbs which might be confused with light or serial verbs (Yasin and Hussein 2021). The exact function of the auxiliary verbs is proposed by another Arabic dialect such as Najdi Arabic. The grammaticalization of auxiliary verbs in Najdi Arabic is purely instant syntactic operation in order to express grammatical functions (i.e. Tense and Aspect) (Al Qahtani and Al Artifi 2020). Many of these studies are even extended to investigate the effect of the
absence of the auxiliary verb in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) on English language learning. It was found that the absence of MSA has a negative effect on the learning of the English language (Al bondoq 2023).

On the other hand, many scholars connect the ancient Arabic dialects while using Arabic in the Semitic languages. For example, Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farabahidi said, “Kanaan bin Sam bin Noah, after whom the Canaanites were named, were speaking a language that is similar to Arabic” (Al-Khalil 1986). Thus, Wolfson (1980) argues that the different Semitic languages and dialects resulted from a unified indigenous language, and the spread of the Semitic languages in various regions was the reason for the variation of dialects. The correlation between contemporary Arabic dialects and Classical Arabic, on the one hand, and the relationship between Classical Arabic and its dialects and Semitic languages, on the other, led researchers in this study to the premise that the auxiliary verb has an extension in Arabic which expands to other Semitic languages.

As for previous studies that dealt with auxiliary verbs in Arabic, they merely speak of an auxiliary verb in contemporary Arabic, particularly the verb كان /kana/ ‘was’ (Elisabeth 2014; Alotaibi 2017 and Al-Khawalda 2012). It is clear that these studies have focused on the modal verbs such as كان /kana/ ‘was’, and صار /sara/ ‘it became’, in an attempt to prove that these verbs are merely supplements to the Arabic sentence. They are very close to auxiliary verbs, as proven through contemporary Arabic discourse. The descriptive-analytical approach adopted in this study does not mention all the forms of the helping verb كان /kana/ ‘was’ or attempt to detect the roots of this phenomenon in Classical Arabic or Semitic languages. Even though this study intersects with previous studies in aim and purpose, it differs from the adopted approach since it depends on the comparative historical approach. The study will use the descriptive analytical approach in contemporary Arabic dialects to demonstrate auxiliary verbs in Semitic and Classical languages.

This research is an attempt to explore and analyze the usage of auxiliary verbs in Contemporary Jordanian Arabic, with a specific focus on their historical evolution and current descriptive patterns. Regardless of the linguistic significance of auxiliary verbs in determining the structure of a language, there is a noticeable gap in the existing literature regarding their role and development in the context of Jordanian Arabic. This research seeks to address this gap by examining the historical roots of auxiliary verbs in Jordanian Arabic and providing a comprehensive descriptive analysis of their usage in contemporary spoken and written language. By exploring the intricacies of auxiliary verbs in this linguistic context, the study aims to contribute valuable insights to the understanding of the evolution and functioning of auxiliary verbs in Jordanian Arabic, offering a foundation for further research in the broader field of Arabic linguistics.

2 The Auxiliary Verb in Contemporary Jordanian Arabic and Dialect

Studies on auxiliary verbs in Arabic are divided into two sections: studies on the auxiliary verbs in contemporary Arabic (Fehri 1993; Ryding 2005; Aoun, Benmamoun, and Choueiri 2010; Alotaibi 2014 and Alotaibi 2017), besides studies on auxiliary verbs in Arabic dialects, whether Egyptian, Saudi, Syrian, Lebanese, or Kuwaiti (Jelinek 1981; Jelinek 1983; Eisele 1992; Ingham 1994; Brustad 2000 and Al-Hilal 2011). This study seeks to track the auxiliary verb in the Jordanian Arabic dialect because as far as the knowledge of the researchers is concerned there is no previous study concerning auxiliary verbs. The following are examples of Jordanian use of the auxiliary verb كان /kana/ ‘was’.

1. زيد كان أكل عندما جاء علي إلى البيت.

/Zajdun kæn ?akala ṣindama ẓæʔa ɢli ?la albajtì/ ‘Zayd had eaten when Ali came (to the) home.’

2. صلاح قد كان درس في أمريكا.

/Salah kæn ?asarà fi: ?merik. ‘Salah had studied in America.’
In sentence (1), there are two processes, one preceding the other. The auxiliary verb /kənə/ ‘was + past tense verb’ is used (Wright 1898; Fehri 1993; Brustad 2000; Ryding 2005 and Alotaibi 2017). Semantically speaking, such a structure usually reflects two successive past events, one preceding the other (Al-Samarrai 2000). The structure may also be used to denote the distant past event as in sentence (2). The auxiliary verb /kənə/ ‘was’ is used to confirm the remoteness of the event or the distant past as was referred to as (pluperfect) by Wright (1898). One example is the Arabic expression ...ما أعد الرشيد وكان خرجmata alrafid wa kən xaraca/ ‘Al-Rasheed died and he had gone out’ (Wright 1898; Al-Malakh 2009). These two structures have the significance of a past perfect in English (Azar 2002).

3. Zayd was eating yesterday.

The auxiliary verb /kənə/ ‘was + present tense verb’ is used to indicate that there were two events that continued before the moment of speech as in sentence (3) (Jelinek 1981; Patric 1998; Brustad 2000; Aoun, Benmamoun, and Choueiri 2010 and Alotaibi 2017). Al-Samarrai (1966) says, “The structure of /jafifecycle ‘do’ may be preceded by /kənə/ ‘was’ to indicate that he has been going on in the past.” This structure implies the meaning of the adverb of time أمﺲ /ʔams/ ‘yesterday’, which sometimes substitutes the use of the compositional structure mentioned earlier (Azar 2002).

4. Zayd had been playing for two hours.

The structure المضارعة الفعل + kən + qad /‘had + been + present tense verb’ is used to express an event that has been going on in the past for a long time and ended as in sentence (4). Contemporary studies have not tackled this compound time within the scope of our research.

5. Zayd is studying at this time.

Note that sentence (5) reflects events that have occurred and continue to the moment of speaking, and the auxiliary verb is used to express this complex time as in الفعل المضارع + يكون /jaku:nu+alfi:larul almudʕar/ ‘be + present tense verb’. It is also noted here that the role of the helping verb يكون /jaku:nu/ ‘be-present’ is emphasized. However, sentence (6) contains the present tense verb without يكون /jaku:nu/ ‘be-present’ and is used for the same purpose (Alotaibi 2017).

6. Zayd has written the article.

The verb يكون /jaku:nu/ ‘be’ is used together with the past tense verb to express a time that reflects the continuation of the event of a period of the past time and its closeness to the present as in sentence (7) (Alotaibi 2017). There is also another way to form this time structure, which is by using the device (been past participle) and then a past tense verb, such as: قد دُرس /qad duris/ ‘been studied’, or using قد يكون /jakunu qad/ ‘had been’ as passive. This structure indicates the present perfect in English (Azar 2002).

7. Zayd has been playing for four hours.

المجلة الدولية للدراسات اللغوية والأدبية العربية - المجلد6، العدد1، 2024، ص: 32-49
The structure of the zaman ẓarf + almadqar+ ẓarf alzaman/ ‘be+ present tense verb+ adverb of time’ indicates that the speaker often refers to an event that has begun but not yet ended during the period referred to (Sekhri 2008). Such a structure indicates the present perfect continuous tense in English. Sentence (8) indicates that Salah had been playing before the moment of talking and was still playing within a period of (4 hours) and was not finished.

9. (سوف/ زاًح/ س/ ه) يُكون الولد يكتب المقالة.

(/sawfa/-raḥ/-sa/-ha/-bi-) /jakunu alwaladu jktubu almaqala:
‘The boy will be writing the article?’

The structure /adat almustaqbal+jakunu+alfiḍ almadqar/ ‘future tense particle+ be+ present tense verb’ is used to indicate that the event will occur in the future and will be progressive (Brustad 2000 and Alotaibi 2014). Sentence (9) indicates that the writing will be progressive (unfinished), and this structure corresponds to the future perfect progressive in English.

However, the structure /adat almustaqbal+jakunu+alfiḍ almadqar/ ‘future tense particle + be + past tense verb + adverb’ is used to denote events that will occur and end in the future (Brustad 2000). On the other hand, sentence (10) showed that Zayd would finish writing the article in the future, which is called the future perfect time in English.

10. (سوف/ زاًح/ س/ ه) يُكون زيد درس أربع سنوات عندما يتحر.

(/sawfa/-raḥ/-sa/-ha/-bi-) /jakunu Zajdun darasa?arbaṣu sanawatin ẓinda jtaxarra3/ ‘Zayd will have been studying for two years when he graduates.’

The structure /adat almustaqbal+jakunu+alfiḍ almadqar/ ‘future tense particle+ be+ past tense verb + adverb’ reflects the cause/effect of something happening in the future (Sekhri 2008). This corresponds to the future perfect continuous time in English as the sentence of example (11) could not be found in Classical Arabic. Future tenses are shaped in Arabic only by various antecedents before the present tense.

Standard Arabic uses the bound morpheme (prefix) /sawfa/ ‘will’ for the near future and /sawfa/ ‘will’ for the far future. Nevertheless, in addition to the antecedents mentioned above, contemporary dialects also use new ones. For instance, Jordanian, Iraqi, Kuwaiti, and Syrian Arabic dialects employ free morpheme /raḥ/ ‘will as in راḥا/rah/ ‘he will get married.’ For example, Egyptian employs the bound morpheme (prefix) ج/ ḥ/ ‘will’.

such as in ج/ ḥ/arj ḥawawis/ ‘he will get married’. Likewise, Morocco Arabic uses the bound morpheme (prefix) غ/ ‘will as in غ/ ḥawawis/ ‘he will get married’. Omani Arabic also uses bound morpheme (prefix) ب/ ‘will’ in ب/taṣrirs/ ‘he will get married’. However, Tunisian Arabic uses the bound morpheme (prefix) ش/ ب/ ‘will as in ب/taṣrirs/ to express the meaning of ‘He is getting married’ (https://ivar.york.ac.uk/).

11. سيكون زيد كتب المقالة.

/sajas jakunu zajdun kataba almaqala:
‘Zayd will have written the article.’

The structure /adat almustaqbal+jakunu+alfiḍ almadqar+alhaλ/ ‘future tense particle + be + past tense verb + adverb’ reflects the cause/effect of something happening in the future (Sekhri 2008). This corresponds to the future perfect continuous time in English as the sentence of example (11) could not be found in Classical Arabic. Future tenses are shaped in Arabic only by various antecedents before the present tense.

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12. زيد كان تاجر (ناجز).

/zajdun kana (taṣrīran)/
‘Zayd was a merchant.’

13. يكون زيد تاجر (ناجز).

/jakunu zajdun taṣrīran (taṣrīran)/
‘Zayd is a merchant.’

Zajdun (sawfa/-raḥ/-ha/-ba-) jakunu tajir (tajiran)/
‘Zayd will be a merchant.’

14. زيد (سواف/ زاًح/ س/ ه) يكون تاجر (ناجز).
It is noted in sentences (12), (13), and (14) that the auxiliary verb *كأَنَّ* /*kæn/ ‘was’ in all its forms intends to determine precisely when an utterance was said. If the speaker had deleted the auxiliary verb, the sentence would have become vague and lacked any tense. It is also noted that there is a variation in the name’s case that follows the auxiliary verb, one with nominative case ‘تَاجر’ /*taʒir/ ‘merchant’ and another with accusative case ‘تَاجرَان’ /*taʒiran/ ‘merchant’, which is due to diglossia. It should be noted that some Arabic speakers do not use the auxiliary verb *كأَنَّ* /*kæn/ ‘was’; instead, they use the auxiliary verb *صار* /*ṩar/ ‘become’ as the main verb, though it is considered one of *كأَنَّ* /*kæn/ ‘was’ sisters as illustrated in the sentence (15).

In sentence (16) above, *صار* /*ṩar/ ‘become’ is used to deny the event at present and that this helping verb could not only be regarded as a negative particle, but it also negates the present (Al-Khawalda 2012). Whereas in sentence (17), the negative particle *لَن* /*lan/ ‘not’ is used with the auxiliary verb *يَكُون* /*jaːku:n/ ‘be’ to negate the future event. In sentence (18), on the other hand, the prefix *لم* /*lam/ ‘not’ with the auxiliary verb *يَكُون* /*jaːku:n/ ‘be’ is used to negate past event.

Sentence (19) shows that the verb *قَامَ* //qama// /qama/ ‘stand’ indicates the content meaning of standing in the lexicon (Al-Khalil 1986). Whereas the same verb in sentences (20), (21), (22), and (23) does not contain any content meaning (i.e., semantically empty); instead, it has only one function, which is forming composite times, which varies from dialect to dialect. For example, the function of the auxiliary *قَامَ* //qama// /qama/ ‘stand’ is used differently by speakers of Arabic in Ta’if in Saudi Arabia and Deir al-Zour in Syria (Al-Hilal 2011 and Alotaibi 2014) (this is not within the scope of this study). It is clear, however, that the verb *كأَنَّ* /kæn/ ‘was’ is more suitable to form the compound times than the verb *قَامَ* /qama/ ‘stand’, perhaps because the former lacks any content lexicon meaning than...
the latter, which includes the meaning of ‘standing,’ which has limited its ability to form the composite times.

/zajdun qaṣada ẓala alkursi/  
‘Zayd sat on the chair.’

/zajdun (qaṣad, qaṣid) jadrus/  
‘Zayd is studying.’

/zajdun qaṣada darasa/  
‘Zayd had studied.’

/zajdun (bi-ha-/sawfa-/raḥ-/sa-) jaqūd jadrus/  
‘Zayd will be studying.’

In sentence (24), the verb قَعَد /qaṣada/ ‘sit’ is a content verb in the lexicon, which implies the meaning of sitting (Al-Khalil 1986). However, the same verb in (25), (26), and (27) does not contain any content lexicon meaning; instead, it carries the function of forming composite times. Therefore, it is clear that the lexicographic meaning of the verb قَعَد /qaṣada/ ‘sit’ limits its ability to form composite times, like in the case of the helping verb كَان /kæna/ ‘was.’

It was concluded that Jordanians use the verb كَان /kæna/ ‘was’ for one of two purposes: the first is to form composite times, and the second is to determine nominal sentence time. Jordanians may also use other helping verbs, such as قَام /qama/ ‘stand’ and قَعَد /qaṣada/ ‘sit’, but these are less capable of forming complex times than كَان /kæna/ ‘was’ does. It is probably due to its lexicographic meaning instead of the verb كَان /kæna/ ‘was,’ which hardly bears any content meaning.

3 The Auxiliary Verb in Classical Arabic

The written language discourse in Classical Arabic is abundant. Nationalism and Tribalism have preserved the Arabic poetry that represents this language. Likewise, the Holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad’s tradition are significant factors in this effect. Despite this abundance, modern linguists base their rejection of the existence of the auxiliary verb on the analysis of early linguists in shaping the theory of Arabic grammar. As shown before, some linguists are talking about some contemporary Arabic structures as if it is new structures that do not relate to Classical Arabic (Cuvalay 1994). However, following language sources, one would find the following.

3.1 The auxiliary verb كَان /kæna/ ‘was’ connecting to the subject الجَثَة /alʒuθaa/ ‘the body’

It is argued that there is a difference between what is wished to be expressed and how it is expressed through words and sentences. Such an idea reflects the difference between deep and surface structures respectively. It is argued that there is a deep structure for Arabic nominal. The term الجَثَة /alʒuθaa/ ‘the body’ was used in the linguistic literature of Arabic grammar by early grammarians to mean a concrete noun مَعْنِي in contrast with an abstract noun مجرد sentences, which consist of certain words that do not appear in the surface structure. The following are examples that illustrate the difference between deep and surface structures.

/xalidu ibnu alwali:di fi: ʒayʃ in liqurajʃ/  
‘Khalid ibn al-Walid in the Army of Quraysh.’ = Surface Structure.

/xalidu bini alwali:di mustaqirun fi: ʒaiʃ in liqurajʃ/  
‘Khalid ibn al-Walid is stable (exists) in Quraysh’s army.’ = Deep Structure.
Sentence (28) is a nominal sentence composed of two main components: subject خالد /xalidu/ ‘Khalid’ + adverb في جيش لقريش /fi: ʒaj liqurajʃ/ ‘in Quraysh’s army’. It is argued that there was a deep structure for such a type of sentence as in sentence (28). Therefore, it is believed that there is a deleted word which is either a name such as مستقر /mustaqirr/ ‘stabled’, functioning as an adjective (Ibn Jini 2009); or كائن /kaʔna/ ‘been’ (Al-Akbari 1999); or a verb such as يستقر /yostaqruru/ ‘stable’, يصلح /yahillu/ ‘take the place’ or يكون /yaku:nu/ ‘be’ (Al-Hazmi 2010).

31. زيد كائن عندك = بنية عميقة. (Al-Mubarrad 2000)

3.2 Explicit helping verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ to emphasize and determine tense

Unlike English, it is argued that Arabic tense does not have a well-defined grammatical system. Therefore, Arabic as well as other Semitic languages have been characterized as being “deficient” as long as tense is considered (Haywood and Nahmad 1962). The verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ is used in Arabic in three forms: The imperfect verb, the perfect verb, and the inflected verb (Wright 1898). Its function, however, is determined by its form in the structure. The following subsections are devoted to explaining each type with illustrative examples.

3.2.1 The verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ is used to denote absolute tense

In Arabic, the nominal and the predicate usually occur after the helping verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ as in sentence (32). The helping verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ comes bare of content, which indicates tense as opposing the perfect verb, which comes to denote time and event. When the helping verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ is added to a nominal sentence, it limits the nominal sentence to an assigned time. Therefore, the function of the helping verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ in sentences (32) and (33) specifies the time in the past. Likewise, the helping verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ in the sentence (34) functions to allocate the sentence in the present time, whereas the structure of يكون + س /sa-jaku:nu/ ‘will+ be’ in the sentence (35) intended to assign future time.

32. كان زيد منطلق (2000).
33. زيد كان منطلق (2000).
34. يكون زيدا منطلق (2000).
35. سيكون زيدا منطلق (2000).

Although some linguists reject the idea that the noun (Zaid) precedes كان /kæna/ ‘was’ in an Arabic sentence (Al-Akbari 1999), Arabic dictionaries and syntax books have transmitted to us...
sentences like (33) (Al-Serafi 1974; Ibn Al-Sirrj 1995 and Al-Jawhari 1987). Users of contemporary Arabic dialects, therefore, use this structure, which is reflected in sentences (12), (13), and (14).

3.2.2 The verbكان /kæna/ ‘was’ is used to emphasize and determine the tense

In Arabic, the helping verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ is inserted for one of these two purposes under certain conditions: to denote past tense or to add more emphasis. (Ibn Ya’ish 2001; Al- Ghalayini 1993 and Al-Samurai 2000).

/زائد كان قائم /zajdun kæna qa?mun /
‘Zaid was standing.’

‘I passed a man who was standing.’

In sentence (36), the helping verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ occurs between two main constituents, namely, the nominal and the predicate, making it an adjunct, functioning as the past tense marker (Ibn al-Warraq 1999). This structure is similar to what we find in contemporary Arabic, as in sentence (12). Likewise, كان /kæna/ ‘was’ in the sentence (37) is an adjunct and is located between the adjective and the noun being described to emphasize the past tense (Abu al-Sa’adat 2000). The insertion of كان /kæna/ ‘was’ in Arabic may be similar to the case of inserting the helping verb between the subject and the main verb in English for emphasis, as in the following sentence:

‘Salah does not write articles. ‘Yes, he does write the article; I saw his articles.’

3.2.3 The Verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ to Compose Time

Early linguists argued that the tense in Arabic comes in three different simple forms: past, present, and future. Contemporary linguists have agreed that it is so, though Quranic, poetic, and some prose texts have preserved different tense forms (Bergsträser 1980).

/قد كان شهد الجمل /qad kæna ʃahida al-ʒamal/
‘He had witnessed Al-Jamal [battle].’

It is noted that sentence (38) corresponds to sentences (1) and (2) in contemporary usage. Both express the distant past. It is evident that Classical Arabic uses كان /kæna/ ‘was’ to form the perfect past.

/وكان يأمر أهله بالصلاة /wa kæna ya?muru ?hlahu bilṣalati/
‘He used to order his people with prayer.’

In (39), the verb reflects an event that had happened and continued to happen in the past. Classical Arabic uses the auxiliary verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ to form past progressive tense, like the case in contemporary Arabic as illustrated in the sentence (3).

/يحبك كما قد كان يفعل /yuḥibbuka kama: qad kæna yafalu/
‘He loves you as he used to.’

Sentence (40) corresponds to sentence (4) since both express an event that happened in the past and lasted for a while then finished. Classical Arabic uses the auxiliary verb كان /kæna/ ‘was’ to form past perfect progressive.

/ما زال يؤمن من يأمرك بالغنى /ma:za:la juqinu man ya?ummuka bi-l-ɣina: /
‘He is still sure that he will get what he is asking for.’
It is worth noting that the connotative meaning of (41) corresponds to one of those of sentence (5). However, Classical Arabic uses زا:لما /ma:zala/ ‘still’ as a helping verb to the present progressive tense, whereas contemporary Arabic uses يكن/jakunu/ ‘be.’

42 تمّيّز أخيراً أن يكون أطاعني (1983).

'It is worth noting that the connotative meaning of (41) corresponds to one of those of sentence (5). However, Classical Arabic uses زا:لما /ma:zala/ ‘still’ as a helping verb to the present progressive tense, whereas contemporary Arabic uses يكن/jakunu/ ‘be.’

42. تمّيّز أخيراً أن يكون أطاعني (1983).

If the sentence (42) is closely examined, it is noted that it is compatible with the sentence (7) in meaning and structure. It is clear that the auxiliary verb يكن/jakunu/ ‘be’ is used in Classical Arabic to the present perfect tense.

43. ‘He finally wished he has obeyed me.’

43. ‘He finally wished he has obeyed me.’

‘He finally wished he has obeyed me.’

Note that sentence (43) corresponds to sentence (9) in meaning and structure, which is evident in Classical Arabic, the auxiliary verb signifying time of future progressive.

44. ‘Sixty years later, there will be progenies who will have abandoned the [prescribed] prayers.’

44. ‘Sixty years later, there will be progenies who will have abandoned the [prescribed] prayers.’

Note that sentence (44) corresponds to sentence (11) since both express events that will come to perfection in the future. This is another evidence of the use of the auxiliary verb (will+ be+ past tense) ﻷلﻤﺎﺿﻲ ﺍﻟﻔﻌﻞ+ﻳﮑﻮن+س in classical Arabic to shape the entire future.

45. ‘One of you brings all he possesses and says: his is charity, and then he keeps begging people.’

45. ‘One of you brings all he possesses and says: his is charity, and then he keeps begging people.’

In sentence (45), the verb قد/qaṣada/ ‘sit’ does not carry the content meaning of sitting; rather, it functions as an auxiliary verb that indicates past progressive. This is in line with the contemporary usage as in sentences (25), (26), and (27).

Therefore, it is clear that Classical Arabic, along with its linguistic forms, relies on the auxiliary verb كان/kaena/ ‘was’ and قد/qaṣada/ ‘sit’ for several functions. They are used to specify the tense of the nominal sentence to be as timeless as in كان الطالب نشيطاً/كان الطالب نشيطاً/ ‘the student was active’ and emphasize the tense in the sentence. Besides, they are used to compose composite tenses. It is worth mentioning that contemporary Arabic and English share these functions.

4 The Auxiliary Verb in Semitic Languages

The relationship between Arabic and Semitic languages is unique, and Arabic kept much of the original forms of the proto-language features. Nodlke (1963) argues that comparing the grammar of Semitic languages should start with Arabic. This relationship has limited Fischer (2005) to describing Arabic as the Semitic language of modern civilization. In addition, Semitic languages shared many standard features in phonology, morphology, and syntax. These common characteristics indicate the common origin for all these languages (Moskati 1993). One of these common characteristics is sentence building and structuring (Al-Barakawi 1994).

Semitic language has two kinds of sentences: nominal and verbal. However, specialists in Semitic languages believe that a nominal sentence is the underlying sentence structure and occurs before the verbal one. They continue arguing that the nominal sentence was simple and consisted of a subject and predicate. Then, it gradually develops into a verbal sentence consisting of the verb, subject, and object (Khalid 2000 and Akkad 2002). These compositional features are common in
almost all Semitic languages except for Akkadian, where the verb occurs at the end of the sentence due to the Sumerian effect (Richardson 2000).

Many specialists of Semitic Studies (Bergsträser 1994; Piston 1994; Lipiński 1997; Dillmann and Bezold 2005), argue that Semitic languages lack the helping verb. However, they maintain that Semitic languages use certain auxiliary verbs to connect the nominal and the predicate of a sentence or alter sentence tense. Brockleman (1957) advocates that Phoenicians used the auxiliary verb كان /kən/ ‘was’ before the past tense verb to denote pre-past events. This is quite similar to its uses in contemporary Arabic (2) and Classical Arabic, as in sentence (38).

However, Hebrew uses the auxiliary verb (נָהוּ), which corresponds to the helping verb (be) in English (Patrick, 1998), and is used to alter tense (Abdul Raouf 1971). The Hebrew nominal sentence formation sometimes consists of the following: (subject + auxiliary verb (was) + predicate), which is similar to the one found in contemporary Arabic as in sentence (11) and in Classical Arabic as in sentence (29).

Syriac language uses the auxiliary verb /hwā/, which corresponds to the English auxiliary verb ‘be’ (Bergsträser 1994), and it is used before or after the past tense verb to indicate that events precede it. Lipinski (1997) states that “authors generally assume that Syriac has created a pluperfect of the same type as Arabic by combining the auxiliary verb /hajwā/, ‘he was’ with the preceding perfect of another verb; e.g., /de’mrēt (ha)wēt fokon/, ‘which I had said to you.’”

The Mundi language uses the verb /ay/ ‘be’ to link the indefinite subject with its predicate and its definite subject (Hattab 2002). One example is their saying /عنسيه أي يهودي /شيمون هو هو يهودي /‘There are women here’. In Mundi, there is /إدا/ ‘been’, and it corresponds to the adjunct كان /kəna/ ‘was’ in Arabic (Drower 2006 and Ali 2016).

In Neo-Aramaic languages, the verb /pāiš/ ‘remaining’ is used to form passive constructions. Lipinski (1997) maintains: “There are only three stems in Neo-Aramaic: they parallel the basic stem, the D-stem, and the causative stem. Their conjugation is based on the corresponding participles and infinitives, with the addition of the imperative. The reflexive-passive stems with the t-affix and the passive voice of the basic stems are not encountered in Neo-Aramaic, which expresses the passive utilizing the auxiliary verb /pāiš/ ‘remaining’, the conjugated forms of which are followed by the invariable passive participle of the given verb in the emphatic state; e.g., /ki-pāiš škīla/, ‘he remains taken,’ i.e. ‘he is taken.’” (p. 432)

The Akkadian system is based on “a three-way aspectual contrast of imperfective, completive and perfect: /parras/ ‘he separates’ /prus/ ‘he separated’ and /pt-ras/ ‘he has separated’. The whole verbal system was based on three aspects in practical terms: the imperfective /parras/ meant not only ‘he separates’ but also ‘he will separate’, and the completive also functioned as the pluperfect ‘he had separated’” (Bubeník 2011).

Sabean language uses the verb /kyn kwn/ to change tense (Swiggers, Beeston, Ghul, Muller, Ryckmans 1984). In Sabean, a fluctuation between the semivowels /w/ and /y/ is sometimes seen also in medial and final positions such as in /kyn/ as opposing normal /kwn/, ‘to be’ (Lipiński 1997).

The abyssal language uses certain auxiliary verbs to express different time references, such as the perfect past and present tense. Among these helping verbs is /jalla, ala+ anja/ to indicate the perfect present tense as in the following (Bennett 1998).

46. nogus kabasa maso’ jalla.
   ‘The King of Kabasa has arrived.’

It also uses the form of /qetol/ with auxiliary verbs such as /anya/, /ala/ to denote the perfect past tense as shown in (47) (Bennett 1998).

47. rad’it lanowæy yælfæt ‘alu
   ‘The raid on the herd had passed by.’

Similar changes are evident in modern Ethiopian languages. Tigre uses compound tenses with the structure (participle + auxiliary /halla/, /ala/, or /sanha/) ‘to be’, to express the perfective aspect: present or past. The perfective present consists of the participle + /halla/: e.g., /ndgus Kabasa māsdl/
‘active participle’ /halla/, ‘the king of Kabasa has arrived’ and ‘he is present’; /hdta kdbb qobd’ lábst/ ‘fern, active participle’ /hallet/, ‘she has put on a round hat’ and ‘she is wearing it’. The perfective comprises the participle + /ala or sanha/ such as in /qadam hdzuh’ āmotāt ‘dt ‘dtyopya māsd/ ‘active participle’ /alko/, ‘many years ago I had come to Ethiopia’; /rad’it landwāy hālfat/ ‘fern, active participle’, /zl su sanhat/, ‘the raid on the cattle had passed him by’ (Lipiński 1997).

In Amharic, the auxiliary verb /alia/ ‘he is’ is employed to form the imperfect of the matrix sentence with the gerund to express the present perfect. In addition, Amharic developed a past progressive and a past perfect or pluperfect by /nabbāria/ ‘he was’, with the simple, imperfect, and gerund. Consequently, Amharic has five tenses in main positive clauses. The first tense is imperfect.

The simple, imperfect couriers present and future in matrix negative and subordinate clauses, affirmative and negative. The compound imperfect + the auxiliary /alia > al/ expresses present, future, and future perfect in matrix affirmative clauses: /ydnagr/ or /yanagdr/, /yanagral/ ‘he speaks, he is speaking, he will speak’, respectively. The second tense is perfect, which denotes typically past and may also express pluperfect. The perfect may express the present with certain verbs, primarily when the action occurs when speaking, such as /nāggara/ ‘he spoke, he has spoken, he had spoken’. The third tense is the past progressive. The simple imperfect with the frozen or the conjugated form /nabbār(a)/ denotes a progressive, durative, or habitual action in the past as in /ydnagdr nabbar(a)/ ‘he was speaking, he was used to speaking’. The fourth tense is the present perfect, which consists of a combination of a gerund + auxiliary /alia > al/ connecting past and present as in /nāgfall/ ‘he has spoken’. The fifth tense is the past perfect, which consists of a gerund with /nabbar(a)/ denoting pluperfect or past perfect as in /nagro nabbar(a)/ ‘he had spoken’ (Lipiński 1997). Ge’ez uses the word /nabara/, which carries the meaning of the verb ﻗﻌﺪ /qaqada/ ‘sit’ as an auxiliary verb (Bennett 1998 and Leslau 1957). That usage is close to the Jordanian dialect as in sentences (25) and (26). Assyrian uses the auxiliary verb to link two names, such as in the following example (Khoshaba 2003).

48. ēu iele mal pana.
‘He is a teacher.’

Or to link between a name and an adjective, such as in the example below.

49. Ay iela mrieta.
‘She is sick.’

Ethiopic and some other Semitic languages employ auxiliary verbs to express various times. In Ethiopian, we have something like: /konæ/, /honæ/, /hallæwæ/, /allo/, /allæ/, /næb(b)ææ/, /nore/, /alæ/. In Semitic languages, auxiliary verbs occur before main verbs, and in Ethiopian, however, they occur after them. The structure of the Tigrifia sentence /ye‡‡æwæt >allo ‘he is playing’ (/allo/ is the auxiliary verb) is valid in Ethiopian languages (Leslau, 2002).

5 Conclusion

Contemporary Arabic linguists argue that contemporary Arabic is devoid of auxiliary verbs, and they add that such verbs are merely an effect of translation basically from English, which are unacceptable structures. However, contemporary orientalists advocate for auxiliary verbs in contemporary Arabic. Both groups agreed that Classical Arabic is devoid of auxiliary verbs, for it offers only three times (past, present, and future). The findings of this study contradict previous opinions by evidence from contemporary, classical, and Semitic models, the most important of which are the following.

First, Jordanians use the verb ﻛﺎﻥ /kæna/ ‘was’ in Classical Arabic or spoken dialects to denote two functions: perfective and progressive tenses and simple tenses in nominal sentences in their everyday uses. The verb ﻛﺎﻥ /kæna/ ‘was’ is the most commonly used because it is semantically/lexically empty (Includes time but not event.) The verb ﻛﺎﻥ /kæna/ ‘was’ in contemporary uses is not lexical at all.
Second, Jordanians use قام /qa:ma/ ‘stand’ and قعد /qaçada/ ‘sit’ in spoken dialects to form progressive and perfective aspects but much fewer than the verb كان /kaena/ ‘was’, because the verbs قام /qa:ma/ ‘stand’ and قعد /qaçada/ ‘sit’ include lexical meanings (standing) and (sitting).

Third, the study proved that the verb كان /kaena/ ‘was’ is used in Classical Arabic as an auxiliary verb. This use is evident in the Qur'an, hadith, poetry, proverbs, and educational examples in grammar books. The verb كان /kaena/ ‘was’ is used for the following functions:

- Linking the subject to its adverbial predicator: Example, علي كان عندك /ali kana çindaka/ ‘Ali was with you.’
- Restricting the nominal sentence with a tense: past, present, or future. In this position, the verb كان /kaena/ ‘was’ is lexically empty;
- Confirming meaning. In this case كان /kaena/ ‘was’ is superfluous and should indicate the past tense and occur between two fundamental words; and
- Forming perfective and progressive tenses in classical linguistic uses.

Fourth, the study proved that Classical Arabic uses the verb قعد /qaçada/ ‘sit’ to form progressive and perfective tenses. However, this verb is less frequently used compared to the verb كان /kaena/ ‘was’, probably because the verb قعد /qaçada/ ‘sit’ contains a lexical meaning (not empty).

Fifth, the study extrapolated studies on auxiliary verbs in early Semitic languages and found that Phoenicians used the auxiliary verb to express the past tense. Hebrew used the auxiliary verb to change sentence tense and, like Mondain, linked the subject with its predicate. Syriac uses the auxiliary verb to express the past perfect tense, and Modern Aramaic uses the auxiliary verb to express passive voice. Acadians used the auxiliary verb to form perfective tenses, while Southern Arabic, the origin of Classical Arabic, used the auxiliary verb to change the sentence tense. The auxiliary verb is used in Abyssinia and Amharic to form perfective tenses.

By comparing the functions of the verb كان /kaena/ ‘was’ and قعد /qaçada/ ‘sit’ in Contemporary, Classical Arabic and early Semitic languages, the functions of auxiliary verbs are the same: determining the tense of the sentence, confirming the event, shaping the perfective and progressive tenses. Hence, we can say that the auxiliary verb in Contemporary Arabic and Jordanian dialects is an extension of the rules of Classical Arabic, which inherited its grammar rules from early Semitic languages.

The present study describes the auxiliary verb in contemporary Arabic, focused on the Jordanian dialect. Future research could involve the analysis of other texts in Modern Standard Arabic to investigate the differences between other Arabic varieties. In addition, the study depends only on a qualitative approach of analysis by presenting and analyzing examples in context. However, the mixed methods approach can be used in future Modern Standard Arabic corpora studies.

References:


The Auxiliary Verb in Contemporary Jordanian Arabic…


# List Of Phonetic Symbols

## Arabic Phonetic Symbols

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