

Complex Tenses, Agreement and Wh-extraction

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0. Introduction

In this paper we provide an analysis of the syntax of tense in Berber and investigate the interaction between complex tenses and the Anti-Agreement Effect (AAE), which was first discussed by Ouhalla (1993). Our analysis attempts to unify the tense system of Berber and make an accurate distinction between tense and aspect in this language. In our analysis of complex tenses we propose that complex tense clauses are bi-clausal, i.e. their structure consists of two Tense projections, and show how that is compatible with the defectiveness of T in embedded domains. Our analysis provides empirical evidence for cyclic valuation/checking of Case (Chomsky 2000, 2001). We also present certain similarities between AAE in Berber and auxiliary raising/T-to-C in English, regarding cases of local wh-movement of subjects vs. objects. This paper is organized as follows: section 1 provides some background and offers an analysis of the tense system in Berber, section 2 analyzes complex tenses in this language, section 3 compares complex tense constructions to Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) constructions, section 4 discusses subject extraction and offers an analysis of AAE, and section 5 highlights the asymmetry between AAE in Berber and T-to-C raising in English.

1. Background

Berber verbs display different aspectual forms, namely perfective, imperfective and aorist (see e.g. Ouhalla 1988 for Tarifit; Guerssel and Hale 1987 and Ouali 1999, 2003 for Tamazight; Chaker 1995 for different dialects). Each of these aspectual forms, except for the perfective, combines with an overt auxiliary/morpheme to convey temporal-aspectual information. Both the future auxiliary *da* and the non-finite morpheme *ad* combine with the aorist verb form in (1) and (2). In (3) the present tense auxiliary combines with the imperfective verb form. In (4), although the perfective verb form does not combine with an overt tense morpheme, we argue that there is a null tense morpheme that selects the perfective verb.

- (1) da-dux gher-Rbath aska
Fut-goAOR.1s to-Rabat tomorrow
'I will go to Rabat tomorrow.'
- (2) rix ad-ruhax
want.1s to-go.AOR.1s
'I want to go.'
- (3) la tetex aghrum
Pres eat.1s.IMP bread
'I am eating bread (now).' or 'I eat bread (every day).'
- (4) Ø yuri tabrat
Past 3ms. write. PERF letter
'He wrote the letter.'

In what follows we summarize the basic facts about the tense system in Berber:

(5) Tense System in Berber

	Tense Auxiliaries			
Verbal Aspectual Forms	la	da	ad	Ø
Perfective	*	*	*	Simple Past tense
Imperfective	Progressive or Habitual Present	*	*	*
Aorist	*	Future tense	Future (Non-finite) tense	*

Aspect in Berber is expressed through a vocalic alternation in the consonantal root. It has been assumed since Ouhalla (1988) that Tense (T) and Aspect (Asp) correspond to different projections in the syntactic structure of Berber as shown in (6). We adopt this structure as background and argue contra Ouhalla that *la* is not an aspect marker but a tense marker occupying T, similar to the future marker *da* and the non-finite marker *ad*. To complete the paradigm we argue that past tense is morphologically marked by a null morpheme which also occupies T and selects a perfective aspectual verb form. In sum, we argue that Berber has a complete paradigm of tense morphemes that occupy a syntactic projection different from the aspectual verb forms.

presence of two separate overt tense auxiliaries, one preceding BE and the other one preceding the main verb, as in (11).

- (11) [TP da [AspP illin_i [VP t_i [TP la [AspP teddun_i [vP t_i [VP t_i]]]]]]]
 Fut BE-AOR.3p Pres go-IMP.3p
 ‘They will be leaving.’

The interpretation of the second tense head is dependent on the matrix tense. We assume that the ungrammaticality of the Tarifit example in (10) is due not to the presence of a second T head in the embedded domain, but to selectional restrictions. The non-finite auxiliary *ad* does not select a verb in the perfective aspectual form.

To summarize, complex tense is expressed by using both a tense affix and the copula BE together with another tense affix and the main verb. The examples in (12) show the different complex tenses that are generated with two different specifications for matrix tense, combined with the required aspectual form of the copula ‘be’ and with the embedded TP: i) future tense+be.AORIST+embedded TP (12a-c); ii) past tense+be.PERFECTIVE+embedded TP (12d-f). The embedded TP itself can occur in all three combinations of (finite) tense+aspect. In sum, our analysis provides a precise account of how the different complex tenses are syntactically generated in Berber:

- (12) a. dad ilin la teddun aday naweth
 Fut BE-AOR.3p Pres go-IMP.3p when arrive.1p
 ‘They will be leaving when we arrive.’ *Future Progressive*
- b. dad illin Ø dan wasa
 Fut BE-AOR.3p Past leave-PERF.3p now
 ‘They will have left now/by now.’ *Future Perfective*
- c. dad ilin da theddun
 Fut BE-AOR.3p Fut leave-AOR.3p
 ‘They will be about to leave...’ *Future in the Future*
- d. Ø lan la teddun
 Past BE-PERF.3p Pres leave-IMP.3p
 ‘They were leaving/had been leaving...’ *Past Progressive*
- e. Ø lan Ø dan
 Past BE-PERF.3p Past leave-PERF.3p
 ‘They had left.’ *Past Perfective*
- f. Ø lan da theddun
 Past BE-PERF.3p Fut leave-AOR.3p
 ‘They were about to leave.’ *Future in the Past*

Having argued that complex tense sentences are bi-clausal, we show next what sets them apart from other bi-clausal sentences such as ECM constructions.

3. Complex Tenses vs. Want-type Clauses

In ECM constructions (“want”-type clauses), two different overt subjects are licensed as shown in (13).

- (13) da diri Ali ad teddu Fatima
 Fut want-AOR.3sm Ali to go-AOR.3sf Fatima
 ‘Ali will want Fatima to leave.’

On the other hand, the copula *ila* in BE clauses can only license one subject, as shown in (14) vs. (15).

- (14) Ø ila Ali da thiddu
 Past BE-PERF.3sm Ali Fut go-AOR.3sm
 ‘Ali was going to leave.’
- (15) *Ø ila Ali da teddu Fatima
 Past BE-PERF.3sm Ali Fut go-AOR.3sf Fatima

We argue that want-type verbs assign/value the case of the embedded subject as shown by *clitic climbing* in (16), where the subject of the embedded clause is assigned accusative case and is attached to the matrix auxiliary.

- (16) da-t iri Ali ad teddu
 Fut-her want-PERF.3sm Ali to go-AOR.3sf
 ‘Ali will want her to go.’

The copula *ila* ‘be’ cannot assign accusative case to the embedded subject, as in (17).

- (17) Ø Ila nta/*as dad iddu
 Past BE-PERF.3sm he/*him Fut go-AOR.3sm
 ‘He was going to leave.’

We argue that the structure of BE clauses, as represented in (18), involves a *vP* in the embedded domain (predication domain of the main verb), and a *VP* in the matrix domain (the auxiliary domain which does not project an independent external argument).

- (18) [TP da [AspP illin [VP illin [TP la [AspP teddun [vP teddun [VP teddun
 Fut BE-AOR.3p BE Pres go-IMP.3p ge ge
 ‘They will be going.’

An important question arises. Given that both T heads in BE clauses are specified for tense and agreement, which of these two values the Case of the subject in (19).

- (19) da illin la teddun lwashun
 Fut BE-AOR.3p Pres go-IMP.3p children
 ‘The children will be leaving.’

We propose that the subject in these contexts enters into multiple AGREE (Chomsky 2001) relations, first with the embedded T which values its Case, and since this TP is not a *phase* (Chomsky 2000) the valued case is not deleted and remains visible to the higher (probe) T, as represented in (20).¹

- (20) [TP da [AspP illin [VP ~~illin~~ [TP la [AspP teddun [vP lwashun ~~teddun~~ [VP ~~teddun~~]]]]]]
-

In ECM constructions as in (13), represented in (21) below, the same happens except that the embedded subject’s case does not get valued by the embedded tense, arguably because T is “defective” (as shown by the fact that only non-finite auxiliary *ad* occurs in embedded ECM complement clauses). The embedded subject gets case valued by the matrix *v*, hence this subject is always marked for accusative in these contexts.

- (21) [TP da [AspP diri [vP Ali diri [vP diri [TP ad [AspP teddu [vP Fatima teddu [VP...]]]]]]]
-

In contrast to ECM clauses, embedded T in BE clauses is always a finite/non-defective head (pres *la*, fut *da*, or past \emptyset) and never the non-finite marker *ad*, which further supports the argument that the subject is always marked for Nominative in complex tense sentences.

4. Subject Extraction

One of the characteristics of Berber syntax is that subject extraction yields an alteration in the verb agreement morphology, an alteration that has been referred to since Ouhalla (1993) as Anti-Agreement Effect (AAE). When we compare sentences like (22) with sentences like (23) we see that in the former the verb is marked for full subject-verb agreement whereas in the latter this agreement is altered yielding a neutral (Neu) form of agreement (AAE).

- (22) ydda Ali
 leave-IMP.3sm
 ‘Ali left.’

¹ See also Fernandez-Salgueiro (2004) and references therein for related phenomena.

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- (23) Ali ag dan
Ali that leave.IMP.Neu
'It was Ali that left.'

Interestingly, AAE occurs only if the subject extraction is local, i.e. within the same clause as in (23), as opposed to when the extraction is long, i.e. across an embedded clause as shown in (24), in which AAE does not occur.

- (24) Ali ay thenna Miriam yedda
Ali that say.PERF.3sf Miriam leave.PERF.3sm
'It was Ali that Miriam said left.'

This phenomenon provides another piece of evidence that complex tense sentences are bi-clausal because only the higher tense (corresponding to the most local clause) in these constructions gets affected by A'-movement and Anti-Agreement as shown in (25).

- (25) Ali ag ilan yedda
Ali that BE.PERF.Neu go.PERF.3sm
'It was Ali who had left.'

AAE shows up in three different contexts of local subject extraction, namely clefts as in (23), subject-relative clauses as in (26), and Wh-Clauses as in (27).

- (26) tharbat ag rbhen thugh thaddarth
girl who win.PERF.Neu buy.PERF.3sf house
'the girl who won bought a house'
- (27) ma ag dan
who leave. PERF.Neu
'Who left?'

In the next section we will focus mainly on wh-extraction. We lay out the syntax of AAE in regular embedded clauses, complex tense sentences and ECM constructions (see Ouhalla 1993, 2005 for an alternative analysis of the Anti-Agreement Effect/AAE; see also Ouali and Pires 2005).

4.1. Wh-extraction and Anti-Agreement Effect

As mentioned in the previous section local subject extraction always yields AAE. (28) is another example of local subject wh-extraction.

- (28) ma ag nnan idda Ali
who that say.Perf.Neu leave.Perf.3sm Ali
'Who said that Ali left?' *Local wh-movement/Anti-agreement Effect*

The same effect is observed in complex tense constructions, and we show this by comparing (29), which is a complex tense sentence with full subject-verb agreement marked (AGR) on both the main verb and the copula BE, and (30), which is a subject wh-extraction example where only the main verb still retains full subject-verb agreement (AGR) whereas the copula shows AAE.

- (29) dad illi Ali la-ytet
 Fut Be-Aor.3sm Ali Pres-eat.IMP.3sm
 ‘Ali will be eating’ *Ali will be-AGR leaving-AGR*
- (30) mar ad illin la-ytet
 who Fut Be-Aor.Neu Pres-eat.IMP.3sm (Neu: Anti-Agreement Effect)
 ‘who will be eating’ *Who will be-Neu leaving-AGR*

If we consider embedding contexts as in (31), we see that when the subject of the embedded sentence is locally extracted AAE is again observed.

- (31) isqsa-yi Ali ma ra ydun
 ask.PERF.3sm-me Ali who Fut leave.AOR Neu
 ‘Ali asked who will leave.’ *Embedded wh-movement*

The same pattern is seen in ECM constructions, as we show by comparing (32) and (33). In (32) no subject extraction has taken place hence the verbs are marked for full subject agreement. In (33) the subject of the main clause is *wh*-moved and the main verb shows AAE.

- (32) thra Maria ad iddu Ali
 want.IMP.3sf Maria to go.Aor.3sm Ali
 ‘Maria wants Ali to leave.’ *Exceptional Case Marking (ECM)*
- (33) ma ag ran Ali ad iddu
 who that want.IMP.Neu Maria to go.Aor.3sf
 ‘Who wants Maria to leave?’ *ECM: Local extraction –AAE*

Interestingly the AAE observed in all these cases disappears when the subject undergoes long-distance wh-extraction, in other words, when the subject of the embedded clause is moved all the way to [Spec, CP] of the main clause. (34) and (35) show lack of AAE with long-distance subject wh-extraction in ECM and complex tense constructions, respectively.

- ECM: long distance extraction–no AAE:
- (34) **ma** ay thra Maria ad-iddu ____
 who that want.PERF.3sf Maria to go.Aor.3sm ____
 ‘Who does Mary want ____ to leave-AGR?’

Complex Tense: long distance extraction–no AAE:

- (35) **ma** ay thenna Fatima dad illi ____ la-ytet
 who that say.PERF.3sf Fatima Fut Be-Aor.3sm ____ Pres-eat.IMP.3sm
 ‘Who did Fatima say ____ will be eating?’

4.2. The Syntax of Anti-Agreement

In this section we consider in more detail the syntax of AAE in complex tenses. We showed that complex tense clauses are bi-clausal and that the subject enters into two AGREE relations (cf. Probe-Goal approach of Chomsky 2000, 2001), one with the lower T/Asp complex and the second with the higher T/Asp complex as shown in (19)-(20).² In cases of wh-extraction, a third AGREE relation takes place between the wh-subject and C, which in this case is specified as [+wh]. Crucially, AAE arises only when the moved wh-phrase enters in an AGREE relation with C and also with the T/Asp complex that is immediately selected by C (although the AAE morphology is marked only on the verb-aspect form). It is crucial that the C head in question is the one that carries the feature (presumably [+wh]) that values the relevant features of the extracted wh-element, preventing any further AGREE operations involving this wh-element. The relevant double AGREE with C and with T/Asp happens in the case of wh-extraction in a simple clause (27), and also in other cases of local subject wh-extraction such as (28). We show that the same analysis applies to subject wh-extraction in complex tenses, as shown by (30), represented schematically in (36). The moved wh-subject enters into an AGREE relation with both T/Asp complexes, but it is the highest T/Asp complex that is affected by AAE, given that it is the one immediately selected by the [+wh] C head that values the [+wh] feature of the moved wh-element.

- (36) [_{CP} who C [_{TP} **T BE.Asp.AAE** [_{TP} T V.Asp.Agr **Who**]]]
-

The same conditions hold for local extraction in ECM clauses as represented in (37) (=33). The C⁰ that probes the wh-subject immediately selects the T/Asp complex that probes and AGREES with this wh-subject.

- (37) [_{CP} who C [_{TP} **T want.Asp.AAE** **Who** [_{TP} T go.Asp.Agr Maria]]]
-

² T/Asp complex is defined here as the local domain that includes both T_i and an AspP_i directly selected/subcategorized by T_i.

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- (44) ma ag yeɣla Ali ma?
who that see.PERF.3sm Ali whø
'Who did Ali see?'

This suggests that in local extraction, AAE in Berber correlates with the *absence* of T-to-C in English. If the lack of T-to-C in English reflects a special or defective type of agreement in cases of wh-movement, a similar effect may apply in Berber, with cases of wh-movement involving AAE.

In cases of long-distance subject wh-extraction, T-to-C holds in the matrix clause in English as in (45), and Berber lacks AAE as in (46). The same applies in cases of long-distance object extraction as shown in (47) for English and (48) for Berber.³

- (45) who did John say whø left?
(46) ma ay thenna Fatima yda?
who that say.PERF.3sf Fatima left.PERF.3sm
'Who did Fatima say left?'
(47) Who did John say Mary saw whø?
(48) ma ay thenna Fatima yeɣla Ali ma?
who that say.PERF.3sf Fatima see.PERF.3sm Ali
'Who did Fatima say Ali saw?'

6. Conclusion

We have shown evidence for the need for two tense projections in complex tenses in Berber. Despite the fact that complex tense clauses license only one subject, this subject involves multiple agreement on the Tense/Aspect domain. We explained these facts by appealing to the possibility of multiple Case/agreement checking/valuation within the same domain, allowing Case deletion to be delayed.

We have also shown that the Anti-Agreement Effect, restricted to local A-bar movement (e.g. wh-movement), affects only the inflectional domain that enters into an AGREE relation both with the moved wh-subject and with the C head that checks the wh-feature.

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³ However, the correlation in long-distance wh-extraction is restricted to the matrix clause, given that English does not show T-to-C in the embedded clause in these cases (see Pesetsky and Torrego 2001 and references therein for possible analyses and empirical problems specifically regarding the asymmetries in T-to-C found in English).

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