# Semantic Shift in Moroccan Arabic
## The Cases of Verbs of Movement, *yemken* and *yeqDer*[1]

**Mohamed ZNIBER**
Faculty of Letters and Humanities
University Ibn Zohr – Agadir, Morocco

**Abstract**
This paper seeks to examine the status of verbs of movement in Moroccan Arabic (MA) as well as the forms *yemken* and *yeqDer*. Generally speaking, these expressions have failed to obey the laws governing the use of auxiliaries. These verb forms will be studied in relation to their polysemous aspect. It is only when there is a second meaning that the relation of auxiliation[2] might be said to occur. Furthermore, some instances within this verb subclass involving the imperative mode are considered as semi-auxiliaries[3]. As far as the forms *yemken* and *yeqDer* are concerned, they have achieved an advanced level to become frozen structures.

*KeyWords*: Moroccan Arabic, polysemy, semi auxiliaries, verbs of movement

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**Introduction**
Verb +Verb structures in Moroccan Arabic (MA) display various degrees of formal freezing and semantic transfer, that clearly illustrates their auxiliating function. Auxiliaries (Aux) constitute one of the grammatical categories in which the action of the dynamic synchrony is actively at work, renovating he collocational patterns and lexical stock of the language. The M.A. Aux are not directly involved in the making of "compound tenses" as this is the case, for example, with English be and have or French être and avoir used respectively for the passive and the perfect. Referred to sometimes as Semi- auxiliaries (S-Aux) -and again, unlike English or French in which the number of Aux has been circumscribed long ago and their patterning clearly defined-, MA candidate forms display idiosyncratic features. They primarily express miscellaneous semantic values. In this paper, we will focus particularly on the different uses of those forms initiating movement and possibility, notably *yemken and yeqDer*.

**Verbs of movement**
In MA certain verbs of movement are characteristically idiosyncratic as, e.g. they may be "neutralized" in relation to the notion of time. Verbs like m*$i* "go", *ji* "come" *qeRReb* "get near,"*, lHeg/wSel* "arrive at", etc., can function as nuclear HV with a clause predicate function as the optional subordinating conjunctions, between square brackets, can show in :

1 (a)- *m$a-t     [ba$]   t-jib    ma-ta-kul*
go (perf.) [so that] she bring (perf.) what she eat (perf.)
She went to buy the medicine from the pharmacy.

1 (b)- *ja_u       [ha$J          y-bark-u          li-na   Dar-na j-jdida*
come (perf .) [so that] they they congratulate (imperf.) to us house our the new
They have come to congratulate us for our new house.

The quasi-totality of the forms inventoried, as verbs of movement are not strictly confined to these uses. They cannot only function as head verbs, but as semi- auxiliaries as well. The list of verbs of movement delimited for this study is presented as follows:

| The form | The gloss |
| --- | --- |
| *ji* | To come |
| *m$i* | To go |
| *sir* | to go |
| *zid* | To approach |
| *duz* | To go through,  to   pass. |
| *Jerri* | To run |
| *NuD* | To rise |
| *TiH* | To fall |
| *RuH* | To come back |
| *Dur* | To turn |
| *Zreb* | To hurry-up |
| *xleT* | To pass by |
| *ugef/wgef* | To stand up |
| *gçed* | To sit down |

| | |
|---|---|
| *gles* | To sit down |
| *brek* | To sit down |
| *hBeT/nzel* | To descend |
| *xrej* | To go out |
| *dxel* | To enter |
| *tbeç* | To follow |
| *Tleç* | To ascend |
| *Safer* | To travel |

The reference to polysemy (i.e. The possibility for one form to have more than one meaning) in this context has outstandingly differentiated those verbs of movement as semi-auxiliaries.

As S-Aux, these verbs undergo relative aspectual constraint (they co-occur also with lmperf. forms only) and semantic shift which will result in substantial notional distance with, the regular, lexical meaning. Thus *m$i:* "to go", for example, a. verb of movement, is also a S-Aux that modifies a HV by defining its process as one that, while it was imminent or on the verge happening, eventually does not occur. Thus

1 (c)- *m$a-t t-dir ksid-a dak n-nhar*
go (perf.) she she do (imperf.) accident that the day.
The other day, she nearly got involved in an accident.

A closer examination of the contexts in which verbs of movement occur (and which may generally involve coordination or subordination), reveals that they lose this movement feature for the rather attitudinal value bearing on the PVP. This morpho-syntactic and lexico-semantic, polysemic behavior (i.e. the possibility for one form to be governed by grammatical constraints and to have more than one meaning) are all criteria that determine their status as S-Aux. Within this list, only the following verbs have displayed this feature. *m$i* : "be about to" *ji* : "decide, think ", *nuD* : " make up one's mind". The following examples illustrate this further:

2- *ji-t         n-m$i buHd-i  ma     kain-a          meçna*
decide (perf.) I I go (imperf.) alone me (neg.mod.) existing meaning
Were I to go alone it wouldn't be a smart thing to do.

3- *naD-u       dewwr-u        li-h      t-  tilifun  Hit ma-bqa-$*
*ta-y-ban*
decide (perf.) they dial (perf.) they to him the phone as (neg.) remain (perf.) he (repet.) he show up (imperf.) . .
They decided to phone him since he hadn't shown up (in long time). :

4- *mel li $Reb          duk l-ç$ub            m$a y-mut.*
when drink (perf.) he those the herbs be about (perf.) he he die (imperf.)
When he took those herbs, he nearly died.

Interestingly enough, sometimes, the verb could simply correlate to a conjunction as it is

the case with *ji*: « if » as illustrated in the following example:

5- *ji-ti*          *t-xaSem mça-h*                    *&adi*            *t-XSer*
decide (perf.) you you quarrel (imperf.) with him (fut. mod) you   lose (imperf.)
If you quarrel with him, you will be the loser.

This is a clear instance to show how the ongoing process these verb forms undergo to become of frozen structures

**yemken and yeqDer:**
These forms, obviously have achieved what may be considered as total freezing in the 3rd person singular of the Imperf. They are quite distinct from the rest of the verbs in terms of their syntax as well as in their semantics. Consider the following examples:

6- *nta weHd-ek*          *lli yemken t-xelleS-ni  men had*          *l-werTa*
you alone who can you release .<impef.) me from this the problem
You alone can get me out of this predicament.

7- *yeqDer        y-tçeTTel*
may he be late (imperf.)
He may be late.

In fact, *yemken* and *yeqDer* are widely employed to express possibility; probability, and polite/tentative requests. The fact that they function as S-Aux 'is still maintained since their deletion and also their substitution with adverbial or prepositional elements is feasible.

From a pragmatic standpoint, the use of a S-Aux m polite request can be explained differently. It may be said to reflect the speaker's concern to make his utterance as explicit as possible, and/or it may also be used to indicate the hierarchical, status ruled relationship between interlocutors The forms *yemken* and *yeqDer* stand as the best candidates to mark this aspect as it is exemplified in what follows:

8- *wa$  yemken  n-sewl-ek      çla n-nata?ij*
is it possible I ask (imperf.) you about the results
May I ask you about the results?

9- *n-qeDr-u              n-$uf-u                    $i Hell          munasih*
we can (imperf.) we see (imperf.) some solution appropriate·
We may (perhaps) think of a convenient solution.

Once again, the optional character of these structures, which reveals their Aux-status, is attested since they can be replaced by adverbial elements, prepositional syntagms, or by zero. What is more, new members have found their way to this subclass such as *yestaHil* "it is impossible", and the more classicizing *yuHtamal* "it is probable", etc.

## Conclusion

To sum up, it has become obvious by now that most of the verb forms that have acquired the status of Aux or S-Aux in MA have done so after undergoing notable grammatical shifts and semantic, metaphorical alterations. But is this not exactly what happened in many languages, beginning with English, for example, where most of the modal Aux are the result of exactly these phenomena in a matter of hardily five centuries. What has taken place in the dialects of Arabic in general, and in MA in particular is simply a tremendous reshuffling of the verbal system.

### Endnotes

[1] The ad-hoc phonic notation used in this paper is: /S, Z, T, D, R/: the so-called emphatic or inflated consonants of Moroccan Arabic; /$/: voiceless palato-alveolar fricative as in "she", /j/: its voiced counterpart as in "rouge"; /ç/: and /H/: respectively, voiced and voiceless pharyngal fricatives; /&/ voiced velar fricative. Gemination and vowel length of Literal Arabic are indicated by doubling the letters. The other letters indicate their IPA values.

[2] For the sake of clarity, we use the neologisms *auxiliation* and *auxiliating,* which, while referring specifically to the process involved, permit the ease and economy of formulation.

[3] The concept of S-Aux is discussed with regard to its current definition as a verb with a dual behaviour, i.e. a verb form that normally functions both as head verb (HV) and as Aux. In its Aux- like function, it is considered an optional element that primarily contributes to introduce certain semantic values such as those usually expressed in modals and moods.

### About the Author:

**Mohamed ZNIBER** is a professor of Linguistics at Faculty of Letters and Humanities, University Ibn Zohr, Morocco. He is member of the TESOL and Moroccan Association of Teachers of English' (MATE). His research areas include: Sociolinguistics, dialectology, applied linguistics, computational linguistics and testing.

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