A Syntactic Analysis of Futurity in Jordanian Arabic Compared to English: Raising, Modality and Grammaticalization

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Abstract

This paper investigates future forms in Jordanian Arabic (JA), particularly the temporal particles *raħ* and *ra:yiħ* as well as participle agentive NPs that appear to reveal universal characteristics in hinting at futurity while occurring in distinct syntactic and pragmatic contexts. The data consists of examples containing various future forms in JA given by the researchers and judged for their grammaticality by five faculty members. These examples were analyzed qualitatively relying on Chomsky's Minimalist Program and Government theory. Similarities and differences between JA and its Arabic H variety, Standard Arabic (SA), are exemplified as well as those found compared to English. The findings show that there are some similarities and differences between futurity in JA and English in terms of raising and modality. *raħ* and *ra:yiħ* represent the similar English case; *gonna* and *going* expressing futurity. These Arabic and English items (raħ '*gonna*', ra:yiħ '*going*') are lexically derived from the verb "go". They carry future tense, behave as a raising verb and c-select an infinitival clause. This paper shows that the particle *raħ* acts as a raising verb. It shows evidence that this particle underwent a grammaticalization process out of the participle NP *ra:yiħ* which shows identity in deep structure and similarity in its phonetic form. The study contributes to understanding the syntax of future in Arabic vernacular.

Keywords: futurity, grammaticalization, Jordanian Arabic, participle, particle, raising

1. Introduction

Jordanian Arabic (JA) is an Arabic dialect spoken by Jordanians within the Levantine region in the Middle East. There has been a humble number of studies investigating the linguistic components of this dialect (Abushihab, 2016; Al-Aqarbeh, 2011; Algazo, Clark, Swaie, &Alghazo, 2025; Al-Momani, 2011; Al-Raba'a & Malawi, 2021; Al-Shahwan, 2024; Alsharif & Khasawneh, 2025; Ammari, Al-Mahameed, Al Bataineh, & Al Ahmad 2024; Farghal, 1992; Jarrah & Abu-Salim, 2021; Yasin & Hussein, 2021). However, there remain many unexplored linguistic issues and a scarcity in investigating in depth the descriptive grammar of Arabic dialects compared specifically to the H variety Standard Arabic (SA) (Al-Kahtany, 1997; Al-Wer, 1997; Zughoul, 1980), which stands as the primary source of language for religion, history, writing, media, and other formal contexts (Alenazy, Almahameed, Tawalbeh, & Abu-Elrob , 2024; Kaye, 2001). Just recently, Arab linguists have started to pay more attention to vernacular grammar instead of solely adopting the medium of the prescriptive grammar of SA called *Al-Fusha* (AL-Shawashreh, 2016; Bouamor et al., 2018; Farghal & Shakir, 1994; Farghal, 2020; Jaradat, 2021; Jarrah & Abusalim, 2021; Omari, 2011; Salem, 2015; Younes et al., 2017).

One aspect addressed in this paper is future forms in JA and how far the paper can dwell on revealing unexplored aspects and examples of future expressions not dealt with in the literature, as there are only a few typical cases that have been discussed within the scope of a comparative study to the H variety (Al-Khawalda, 2000; Al-Saidat & Al-Momani, 2010; Alshammari, 2021; S. Alshboul, Y. Al Shaboul, & Asassfeh , 2010; Amer, 2004; Atawneh, 2001; Jarad, 2013; Persson, 2008). Based on judgments by native speakers, evaluating variations or discrepancies in the use of the target items, JA adopts the following forms that seem to express future time:

1. The particle *raħ* (i.e., a similar function to the English *will*)
2. The raising participle NP *ra:yiħ* (i.e., meaning *going*)
3. The prefix *ħa*
4. Agentive Participle NPs (*msa:fir* 'travelling')
5. The particle *la*
6. The particle *ta* (i.e., a similar function to the English *until*)

7. Suggestive imperative such as: *xalli-na* (*let's*), *maʃy-na* (*let's walk*), *gum-na* (*let's stand*), *sary-na* (*let's move*) (i.e., a similar function to the English imperative phrase *let's* + infinitive verb)
8. *bid*-clitic such as *bidd-j* (*I-want*), *bid-ha* (*she-want*), *bed-na* (we-want) (i.e., similar meaning to *want*)
9. Present simple (*ba*-prefixation)

Since these different forms carry different linguistic complexities, the paper would not be able to investigate all of them in detail. This paper addresses forms (1) *raħ* and (2) *ra:yiħ* in detail. The remaining future forms can be an interesting area of examination in future research.

Futurity has been discussed thoroughly in literature, particularly morphologically and syntactically. Traditionally, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) argue that it is preferable to follow grammarians who treat a tense as a category realized by verb inflection. This is not always the case in colloquial Arabic or English, as futurity is expressed periphrastically. This inflectional condition entails that a language such as English has only two tenses as being purely morphological: past and present. However, this condition might not hold strong, as French inflects the future but not the past, which would strangely entail that the past is not tense in this language. Also, languages such as Navaho have future inflection but no present/past inflection (Bybee & Pagliuca, 1987). Therefore, Comrie (1985) does not assume that tense is only inflectional. Additionally, due to grammaticalization and historical evolution, there remains ambiguity in capturing clear-cut distinctions between morphological and periphrastic constructions (Declerck, 1991). Bybee and Dahl (1989) applied a quantitative study of tense and aspect cross-linguistically and found that 56% of the languages they studied use periphrastic expressions for future tense. JA is among those languages that use both bound and periphrastic expressions. They are even periphrastic expressions that seem to undergo historical transformation into morphologically bound morphemes (Abdel-Hafiz, 2005; Alshboul et al., 2010; Eifan, 2017; Jarad, 2013, 2014). For instance, a particle such as *ta* is assumed to be derived from the conjunction *ħatta:* (a particle from a functional item), which carries temporal future function in certain contexts (Alshboul et al., 2010):

(1)

(a) ma: raħ arawwiħ ta-aʃu:f il-mudi:r
not FUT leave-IMP until-see-IMP the-manager
(b) ma: raħ arawwiħ ħatta: aʃu:f il-mudi:r
not FUT leave-IMP until see-IMP the-manager
"I will not leave until I see the manager."

Sometimes, a bound morpheme might have been transformed out of two consecutive processes. For example, Alshboul et al. (2010) assume that the lexical item (*ra:yiħ*) went through a grammaticalization process, turning it into a shortened particle (*raħ*), and the particle then turned into a prefix (*ħa-*):

(2)

(a) ra:yiħ ana:m bakki:r
PART-FUT sleep-IMP early
(b) raħ ana:m bakki:r
FUT sleep-IMP early
(c) ħa-na:m bakki:r
FUT-sleep early
"I am going to/will sleep early."

The paper mainly discusses the following instances in detail, syntactically and morphologically, in which each expresses futurity:

(3)

(a) Mariam raħ tsa:fir bukrah *raħ*-FUT
Mariam FUT travel-IMP tomorrow
(b) Mariam ra:jħah tsa:fir bukrah *rajiħ*-FUT
Mariam go-PART-FUT travel-IMP tomorrow
(c) Mariam msa:frah bukrah PARTICIPLE NPs
Mariam travel-PART-FUT tomorrow

Alshboul et al. (2010) propose a grammaticalization analysis of JA future forms emphasizing that the diversity of vernacular forms shows phonological shortening (*raħ*, *ħa*, *ta*, etc.) and linguistic similarity. Al-Saidat and Al-Momani (2010) analyzed future markers in Jordanian vernacular compared to those found in SA and emphasized that JA has a unique marker system for futurity that is distinct from SA. Abuamsha (2016) discusses the variation of future expressions in Palestinian Arabic (PA) and how native speakers' choice of expression is influenced by extra-linguistic factors such as age, gender, and other factors that might relate to the 'intended remoteness' of futurity. Jarad (2014) also proposes a grammaticalization theory of the future verb *raħ* as developed historically from Classical Arabic, which resulted in a morphological, phonological, and semantic shift. There remains a need for more studies to shed light on the future markers in Arabic dialects, particularly JA in terms of syntactic behavior, semantic makeup, and grammaticalization.

1.1 Significance of the Study

This paper contributes to the literature on futurity in Arabic, particularly future expressions in JA. It provides an extensive linguistic

analysis of these colloquial expressions and encourages researchers to pay more attention to the spoken vernacular without veiling its constructions through subjective analysis of the prescriptive grammar of the H variety; *Al-Fusha*. Moreover, laying out different forms of the vernacular might be of significance for teachers who teach Arabic courses for the descriptive grammar of JA.

1.2 Objective of the Study

This paper primarily explores the future forms: *raħ* and *ra:yiħ* (morphological and periphrastic) of JA and their linguistic behavior, particularly in grammatical contexts. The study aims to contribute to the analysis of futurity in Jordanian vernacular by focusing on the particle *raħ* in Jordanian Arabic in terms of modality, raising and grammaticalization.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the grammatical similarities and differences between *raħ* and modal expressions?

2. Why is *raħ* considered a raising future particle?

3. How did *raħ* undergo grammaticalization from the nominal agentive participle *ra:yiħ*?

2. Methodology

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the Minimalist Program (MP) (Chomsky, 1995) which has aimed at minimizing syntactic structures to the principle of economy in which feature-checking operations drive them. This paper proposes that the temporal particle *raħ* resides in the T-head position; however, it seems to have several raising characteristics similar to English raising. Expanding also on the Government and Binding (GB) (Chomsky, 1981), the particle is temporal with raising function sharing properties with modality on the one hand and on the other hand showing similar syntactic dependency to temporal particles in other languages in terms of theta assignment, EPP requirement, and subject-head agreement relation.

To explain the relationship between *ra:yiħ* and *raħ*, the researchers adopt the concept of grammaticalization as defined by Heine and Reh (1984), who use this term to refer to linguistic evolution "whereby linguistic units lose in semantic complexity, pragmatic significance, syntactic freedom, and phonetic substance" (p. 15). Kuteva et al. (2019) match Heine and Reh's classification of the grammaticalization process; they assert that this process includes extension (usage in new context), desemanticization (bleaching), decategorialization (morphosyntactic loss) and erosion (phonetic loss).

2.2 Sample of the Study

The researchers provide examples (see Section 3) wherein *raħ* and *ra:yiħ* are used in JA. Five faculty members, who are native speakers of JA, provided the grammatical judgment of the given examples. They all confirmed the grammaticality of most examples, while those considered ungrammatical are preceded by an asterisk. The native dialect of the researchers is the northern dialect while the faculty members' native dialect belongs to Amman City. The grammatical judgment of the faculty members matches the researchers' judgment. Therefore, there are no dialect differences that affect the grammatical judgment.

2.3 Procedures of Analysis

The researchers discussed the way of expressing futurity in Jordanian vernacular. Since the researchers are linguists and L1 speakers of Arabic, they contributed to controlling any linguistic bias or fallacy due to diglossia-related perceptions that pose a challenge in extracting relevant utterances naturally rather than prospectively. As mentioned above, five faculty members provided their grammatical judgments of the given examples containing future forms. Five judgments showing bias were excluded from the data. The data was subjected to qualitative analysis investigating their grammatical behavior. The examples are transcribed and translated. The syntactic features in the examples are abbreviated in the gloss and the denotation of the abbreviation is given in the appendix.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Verbal Particle raħ

This section answers the first question of the study: What are the grammatical similarities and differences between raħ and modality?

This particle always precedes the verb and seems to have a similar syntactic position to the English modal verb *will*. In example (1) below, the particle *raħ* precedes the verb, but cannot succeed it at all:

(1)

(a) Mariam raħ tsa:fir bukrah
Mariam raħ travel-INF tomorrow
"Mariam will travel tomorrow."

(b) *Mariam tsa:fir raħ bukrah
Mariam travel-INF will tomorrow
"*Mariam travel will tomorrow."

It has been generally observed in Arabic that particles indicating temporality, as well as modal-like items, are usually followed by imperfective verbs (Aoun, Benmamoun, & Choueiri, 2009; Benmamoun, 1999) in which tense is assumed to be base-generated in the node

T while only default present-simple features appear on the verb to show agreement (Al-Shboul, 2007). Observing these temporal particles (*la:zim*, *mumkin*, etc.) including *raħ*, the following examples show this syntactic unity:

(2)

(a) raħ ysa:fir
raħ-FUT travel-INF
"he will travel"

(b) la:zim ysa:fir
must travel-INF
"he must travel"

(c) mumkin ysa:fir
possible travel-INF
"he might travel"

(d) biddu: ysa:fir
want-3SM travel-INF
"he wants to travel"

In JA, the perfective present verb is prefixed with *ba* while, as in the examples above, the verb obligatorily adopts an imperfective form using the prefix *ja* after such particles.

Therefore, the following sentence is ungrammatical as expected as *raħ* cannot host a perfective verb:

(3)

*Mariam raħ bitsa:fir
Mariam raħ-FUT travel-PRES
"Mariam will travel."

Also, the particle does not carry agreement features, which indicate the absence of *Agree* feature due to its syntactic status position inaccessible to *Agree* (Chomsky, 2014), similar to English *will*.

3.1.1 The Particle raħ: Similarities with Modality

Following the Minimalist Program, there are several shared prominent characteristics between the particle *raħ* and modals, as addressed below.

Base generation in T

raħ seems to function as a T-head element positioned in the Tense Phrase (TP), particularly since T-heads control inflectional properties such as tense and agreement. This is intelligible when assigning infinitival-like features to the following verb. The interaction between the particle and the aspectual verbal morphology can be presented as follows:

$TP \rightarrow \{T^0 : raħ\} \rightarrow VP$

The particle is strongly linked to the verb in terms of the c-commanding relation, following Chomsky's Government theory in which the T head c-commands the verb. This is evident in the following example, where the verb cannot precede *raħ*:

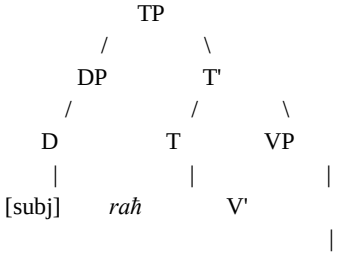
(4)

*Mariam tsa:fir raħ.
Mariam travel-INF raħ-FUT
"*Mariam travel will."

Based on MP, (Chomsky, 2014), this c-commanding and the ungrammaticality of verbal *precedence* show together that this particle controls feature-checking of the verb resulting in an infinitival-like aspect.

Absence of subject-head agreement

Under the Minimalist framework, tense is checked at T while the verb should check its features through V-to-T movement. As *raħ* lacks agreement features, it does not assign a theta role to the specifier, supporting that the particle acts as a raising auxiliary, meeting the requirement of a T-carrier and making it inaccessible to Agree match in the specifier-head relation between T and the subject as occurring in finite verbs. The following tree shows a simple syntactic representation where the particle is positioned in T in relation to the specifier and the verb.



V

[imperfective verb]

Theta role-assignment: English vs. JA

Based on GB theory, raising verbs do not assign theta role to their subjects, indicating that the verb has moved out of its embedded clause. Many studies have examined the raising characteristic as well in the case of modals in which they appear to behave similarly to raising contexts (Homer, 2015; Hsu, 2024; Wurmbrand, 1999). The following examples in English show how modals seem to be able to host an expletive or indicate A-movement in raising-like complex structures:

(1) It will be a great event tomorrow.
(2) There will be a meeting tomorrow.
(3) It will be John who will lead the team.

Similarly, the particle *raħ* does not carry any agreement features and does not hold any thematic unitary with its specifier enabling it to host an expletive as well:

(5)

raħ yuku:n fi: ħaflih bukrah
raħ-FUT be-PRES-3SM in party tomorrow
"There will be a party tomorrow."

The example above reveals that raħ controls and is linked to the default verb juku:n which has default masculine features agreeing with an implicit pro-dropped expletive. This is further confirmed by the fact that the subject in-situ is ħaflih which has feminine features and does not enter into agreement with the head verb juku:n. Therefore, raħ stands as a T-carrier of the first clause having an expletive that is in agreement with the verb juku:n. This entails that raħ can host an expletive as head and has an underlying agreement relation with its specifier.

The particle in a nutshell seems to have a modal-like behavior in terms of being T-carrier, expletive hosting, theta assignment, and absence of agreement.

3.1.2 The Particle raħ: Differences from Modality

Modals have limitations in being fully-edged raising verbs as they may fail in various syntactic tests related to idiomatic extraposition, scope ambiguity, and movement restrictions (Carnie, 2021; Kratzer, 1981; Thr âinsson, 2019).

Grammaticality of Ellipsis between English and JA

This future particle seems to be different from modality items in JA as the particle cannot stand alone in any elliptical context. For example, the verb *raħ* cannot be elliptical as in (b) while allowed by modal-like items in (c):

(6)

(a) Speaker A: ra:yiħ ʕal-su:g bukrah?
go-PART the-downtown tomorrow
"Are you going to downtown tomorrow?"

(b) Speaker B: *raħ.
"I will".

However,

(c) Speaker B: la:zim/mumkin/beddi
"I must/I might/I want to"

Even in ellipsis in conjunction, the particle *raħ* standing by itself crashes the structure. The following is a comparison between Arabic modals and English modals as a sample of modals' behavior compared to *raħ*.

(6) (d)

1. Mariam will quit and John will too.
2. Mariam mumkin tistaGi:l o Ahmad mumkin kaman.
Mariam may resign and Ahmad may also
3. *Mariam raħ tistaGi:l o Ahmad raħ kaman.
Maraim will resign and Ahmad will also.

The inability of the particle *raħ* to stand by itself in elided forms of Yes/No questions or in conjunction indicates a feature-checking requirement that is inherent and distinct from being only a complement requirement of predicates. MP states that syntactic dependencies are governed by feature-checking. The future particle necessitates checking its features against the verb's aspect and tense. Behaving as a tense marker, it identifies the future tense and aspectual features of the verb; in other words, the tense and aspectual features must be checked and interpreted by the verb in Aspect Phrase (Asp). The particle is inherently dependent on feature-checking of the aspect and tense of the verb and interacts directly with the aspect compared to modals.

[CP [TP Mariam [T' *raħ* [AspP [vP tistaGi:l]]]]]
[CP [TP Ahmad [T' *raħ* [AspP [vP ∅]]]] → Ungrammatical

Although modals also feature-check the features of the verb as to be in infinitival/infinitival-like forms, whether in English or Arabic, this requirement is less rigid as they carry semantic modal content such as future possibility, necessity, and ability rather than being itself as tense or aspect. They project Tense Phrase (TP) or Modal Phrase (ModP) while the verb abides by its 'infinitival' features that the modal checks. The tense and aspect features seem to be more independent of the modals themselves, and the semantic abstraction of modals does not require verbal overtness enabling ellipsis.

[TP Mariam [T' will [VP quit]]]
[TP John [T' will [VP ∅]]] → Grammatical

Semantically, modals are interpreted as quantifiers over possible worlds in which there can be alternative truths that would be dependent on epistemic, denotic, or dynamic semantic aspects of modals. Being beyond the tense and aspect of the verb, modals are context-sensitive because of their semantic quantifying complexity standing as a force by itself independent from the time reference of the verbal complement.

This perception of modals can be formally represented as follows:

$\text{Mod(will)(p)} = \forall w' [w' \in \text{FUT}(w) \rightarrow p(w')]$

In which:

- w = the actual world
- w' = a possible world
- FUT(w) = the set of possible future worlds accessible from the actual world w.
- p = the proposition expressed by the verb (in this case, "*John quits*")

Therefore, the interpretation of *John will quit* is as follows:

$\forall w' [w' \in \textbf{FUT}(w) \rightarrow \text{quit(John)}(w')]$

This indicates that in all possible futures, John quits**.**

However, the particle *raħ* must mark the tense and aspect of the verb as it is fixed relatively in the future tense. It must project a temporal relation through the realization of the event; the verb. Therefore, the truth-conditional of the particle cannot be realized without the overtness of the verb's temporal and aspectual properties, as there is no assertion of truth in the particle itself and it does not refer to any epistemological or semantic reference besides marking the future reference of its direct complement.

The particle can also be formally represented below differently from modals, as it is dependent on the future checking features of the verb at the time of speaking:

$\text{T}(raħ)(p) = \exists t' [t' > t_0 \wedge p(t')]$

In which:

- t_0 = the utterance time
- t' = a time in the future of t_0
- p = the proposition expressed by the verb (in this case, *John quits*)

Therefore, the interpretation of the sentence *aħmad raħ yistaGi:l* (Ahmad will quit) is as follows*:*

$\exists t' [t' > t_0 \wedge \text{work(John)}(t')]$

This indicates that *there exists a future time t'* after the utterance time t_0, at which *John will quit*.

Overall, this syntactic and formal dependency of the particle entails that this item is different from the syntactic behavior of modals despite many similarities. This paper argues, based on this requirement, that *raħ* is not modal strictly speaking, and behaves more like a tense marker that fills a syntactic position and seems to carry no semantic content except for futurity. The question remains what are other characteristics that this particle has in addition to this dependency on feature-checking? The paper delves more into applying similar tests to other particles that have similar syntactic dependencies.

For example, as discussed by Aoun et al. (2009), SA uses temporal particles precedent to the verb in which the particle carries the tense while the verb is in imperfective mode similar to *raħ* construction, as in 7 (a) below where *lam* carrying past, (b) *lan* carrying future, or as in (c) using the Lebanese progressive particle ʕam:

(7)

(a) lam yadrus al-ʔms
not study-INF the-yesterday
"He did not study yesterday"

(b) lan yadrus ɣadan

not-FUT study-INF tomorrow
"He will not study tomorrow."

(c) ʕam yudrus halla:
PROG study-INF now
"He is studying now."

The analysis of SA shows that tense and negation are fused in the particles *lam* (past) and *lan* (future), and thus, analyzed as encoded under the *Neg* node while the tense of the imperfective verb is an abstract null morpheme (which is the default present simple in this case); however, *raħ* is simply a future particle and does not have such fusion.

3.2 raħ as a Raising Verb

This section answers the second question of this study: Why is *raħ* considered a raising future particle?

It is possible to have the subject preceded directly by the future particle while it is not tenable to have it in the case of SA or Lebanese fused particles. Consider the following examples in which (d) stands as grammatical:

(8)

(a) *lam Ahmad yudrus al- ʔms
not Ahmad study-INF the-yesterday
"Ahmad did not study yesterday."

(b) *lan Ahmad yudrus ɣadan
not Ahmad study-INF tomorrow
"Ahmad will not study tomorrow."

(c) *ʕam Ahmad yudrus halla:
PROG Ahmad study-INF now
"Ahmad is studying now."

(d) raħ Ahmad yudrus bukrah
raħ-FUT Ahmad study-INF tomorrow
"Ahmad will study tomorrow."

In Minimalist terms, the requirement of feature-checking accounts for this disparity, as the particle merges directly in the T position triggering the A-movement of the subject, and thus satisfying the Extended Projection Principle (EPP). The example in 8 (d) shows that the particle *raħ* moves to the left in the fashion of V-to-T movement while having the subject in-situ (or presumably raised to the left, but not to the far left), confirming the subjecthood relation. Even if the particle is assumed to move to C instead as a T-to-C movement since the particle merges earlier in the T position and not in the V position, the particle can undergo A-movement across an A-position compared to SA particles.

In the case of SA particles, they function as markers of both negation and tense. This results in having a 'merged' projection whether interpreted as NegP or more probably in the CP. This projection stands as a barrier to any intervening A positions, indicating that these particles prevent subject raising. The particle raħ is the only one which can be raised to the left or the right of the subject without crashing:

(9)

(a) sawfa yadrus Ahmad
will study Ahmad
"Ahmad will study."

(b) *sawfa Ahmad yadrus ɣadan
will Ahmad study tomorrow
"Ahmad will study tomorrow."

(c) sayadrus Ahmad ɣadan
will study Ahmad tomorrow
"Ahmad will study tomorrow."

(d) *sa Ahamd yadrus ɣadan
will Ahmad study tomorrow
"Ahmad will study tomorrow."

This further confirms that these SA particles reside in C as in *sawfa* or *sa* or merge with negation *lam* or *lan* while the JA particle *raħ* crosses the intermediate A-position revealing that it resides in a similar position to an aspectual verb and has subjecthood relation with its Spec. The fact that all of them reject hosting the subject to the right as in the above group validates the assumption that the DP Ahmad stands as a subject to the future particle *raħ* rather than an in-situ position to the embedded verb nor a topicalized position if moved to the left of the clause unless stressed similarly to other particles.

In addition to this difference, even if the DP is moved to the left of the SA particles, they are topicalized rather than raised while the DP movement displaced left to *raħ* is ambiguous between being topicalized or raised. This ambiguity between raising and topicalization in

such sensitive structures is common since Arabic is inherently a topicalized language and DP's left position can reflect subjecthood or topicalization depending on the interpretation and phonological differences. Consider the following examples:

(10)

(a) Ahmad, lam yadrus al-ʔms
Ahmad, not study-INF the-yesterday

(b) Ahmad, lan yadrus ɣadan
Ahmad, not-FUT study-INF tomorrow

(c) Ahmad, ʕam yudrus halla:
Ahmad, PROG study-INF now

(d) Ahmad raħ yudrus bukrah
Ahmad *raħ*-FUT study-INF tomorrow

The difference between (a), (b), (c) and the example of (d) can be revealed by expletive hosting as the former cannot host expletives indicating that the only DP that can move to its left must be topicalized. On the other hand, *raħ* can host an expletive to its left indicating a case of subjecthood as expletives cannot be topicalized (Holmberg & Nikanne 2002).

In JA, the expletive is *fi:* while in SA, the expletive is *hunaalika*. The following shows how *raħ* hosts the expletive without crashing while with all SA particles, the sentence crashes, and the way to save the crash if the locative pronoun *hunaalika* is interpreted as referential, while the structure breaks if it is interpreted as a dummy expletive pronoun. Therefore, this creates a minimal contrast in which expletive hosting is possible in JA as in (a) and untenable in SA as in (b), (c), and (d):

(11)

(a) fi: raħ yudrus Ahmad
in will study Ahmad
"Ahmad will study"

(b) *hunaalika lam yadrus Ahmad
There not study Ahmad
"Ahmad will study"

(c) *hunaalika lan yadrus Ahmad
There not study Ahmad
"Ahmad will not study

(d) *hunaalika sawfa yadrus Ahmad
There will study Ahmad
"Ahmad will study"

Therefore, the paper emphasizes two generalizations so far:

1. The particle cannot be a modal as it does not carry any semantic meaning that is dependent on the temporal relation realized in feature-checking with the verb.
2. The particle is not a C-positioned temporal/negation particle as in the case of SA particles, as it shows more dynamic behavior in movement and binding indicating that this particle originates from underlying inherent behavior similar to raising and relevant to A-movement.

3.2.1 Expletive Raising

Only the particle *raħ* has the ability to host subject to its right. Another evidence of the raising status of *raħ* and its distinction from other temporal particles in Arabic is its hosting of expletive subjects. Only does hosting the expletive *fi:* (there) stands as sound with *raħ* compared to other particles where the standard expletive *hunalika* (there) turns ungrammatical:

(12)

(a) raħ yuku:n fi: dawrah bil-masraħ
raħ-FUT be-INF there seminar in-the-hall

(b) fi:$_i$ raħ yuku:n t_i dawrah bil-masraħ
there raħ-FUT seminar in-the-hall
"There will be a seminar in the hall."

(c) lan yaku:n huna:lika dawrah bil-masraħ
not-FUT be-INF there seminar in-the-hall

(d) *huna:lika lan yaku:n dawrah bil-masraħ

there not-FUT be-INF seminar in-the-hall

(e) lam yaku:n huna:lika dawrah bil-masraħ
not-PAST be-INF there seminar in-the-hall

(f) *huna:lika lam yaku:n dawrah bil-masraħ
There not-FUT be-INF seminar in-the-hall
"There will not be a seminar in the hall."

Therefore, even though this particle seems to be rootless (i.e., it does not seem to be derived directly from a lexical verb as in the case of the English *will* denoting volition) in surface structure and behaves as a temporal carrier similar to other temporal particles in other Arab dialects in Levantine (Hallman, 2011; Jarad, 2014) and Gulf regions (Alshamari, 2022), it has a distinct syntactic behavior and acts similarly to modals (i.e., will, may, can, etc.), specifically modals supporting raising interpretation (Wurmbrand, 1999).

3.2.2 Reconstruction

Reconstruction of indefinite DPs can be employed as valid testing for raising, especially if the ambiguous interpretation is triggered. One example is when an indefinite DP is preceded by a locative expletive subject positioned in a higher clause but can be interpreted in the embedded clause. In (13), the DP *tˁa:lib* (a student) in-situ position has a generic interpretation in which 'there will be one student regardless of who they are will fail tomorrow".

(13) raħ yursub tˁa:lib bukra
raħ-FUT fail-INF student tomorrow
"Some student will fail tomorrow."

However, when the DP *tˁa:lib* (a student) is raised to the left of the particle *raħ* as in (14), the sentence turns ambiguous triggering two interpretations:

I. *Non-generic* in which a specific student will fail tomorrow
II. *generic* interpretation in which some student will fail tomorrow

The availability of generic interpretation indicates that the DP *tˁa:lib* was at one level of derivation in the embedded clause and then moved to its surface left position.

(14) fi: tˁa:lib raħ yursub bukrah
there student raħ-FUT fail-INF tomorrow
"Some student will fail tomorrow"

Another example is when there is an indefinite DP in a higher clause that is c-commanded at LF by a quantifying expression in the embedded clause.

(15) fi: tˁa:lib raħ yiɣi:b kol yo:m
there student raħ-FUT get-absent-INF every day
"There will be a student who will get absent every day."

The first reading is:

I. *tˁa:lib > kol yo:m*
"A specific student will be absent everyday."

The second reading is:

II. *kol jo:m > tˁa:lib*
"Everyday, there will be one absent student."

The fact that the DP *tˁa:lib* can reconstruct into the embedded clause and receive the second reading in which the quantifying expression c-commands it at LF supports that DP underwent raising before spell-out (Barss, 2001; Boeckx, 2001; Manzini & Roussou, 2000).

3.3 raħ *vs. ra:yiħ*

This final section answers the third question of the present research: How did raħ undergo a grammaticalization process out of the nominal agentive participle *ra:yiħ*?

Alshboul et al. (2009, 2010) propose that the future particle *raħ* underwent a grammaticalization process out of the nominal agentive participle *ra:yiħ* as both indicate futurity in the same linguistic context. They further assert that the nominal DP *ra:yiħ* was phonologically shortened to the particle *raħ*. (a) and (b) in (16) show how both occur interchangeably in different examples:

(16)

(a) Mariam raħ tsa:fir bukrah
Mariam *raħ* -FUT travel-INF tomorrow

(b) Mariam ra:jħa tsa:fir bukrah
Mariam *ra:jħa*-FUT travel-INF tomorrow
"Mariam will travel tomorrow."

It can be said that there is a grammaticalization process wherein the lexical item *ra:yiħ* develops into a grammatical marker *raħ*, as there is a phonetic change from *ra:yiħ* to *raħ.* A possible explanation of this change is erosion, which is a process that includes a reduction of the phonological substance of a morpheme (Heine & Reh 1984). The *a:* morpheme (denoting the *doer) in ra:yiħ* is removed affecting its

phonetic form and turning it into *raħ*, which also seems to be reduced into another future marker named 'ħ', as in 'حالعب' 'ħalʕab will play'. Another process affecting *ra:yiħ* is cliticization, as classified by Heine and Reh under the morphosyntactic process of grammaticalization. Cliticization, as defined by these researchers, is a process by which a full word becomes syntactically- and frequently also phonologically - dependent on other words. This applies to *raħ* as it cannot stand alone (for further clarification, see example 6 above). Changing *ra:yiħ,* which is in its own a full word, to *raħ* makes it behave just like a bound root.

Another evidence of grammaticalization in which *ra:yiħ* underwent is the weakening of the semantics of motion conveyed by *ra:yiħ* (Heine and Reh 1984) or 'semantic bleaching' (Kuteva et al., 2019). The lexical meaning of *ra:yiħ (going)* seems to be weakened and has acquired the grammatical function of futurity in using *raħ* . However, it can be argued that there is no loss in pragmatic significance, as claimed by Heine and Reh. Instead, the change from *ra:yiħ* to *raħ* shows pragmatic strengthening of futurity. This argument is supported by Traugott's (1995) proposal of the occurrence of pragmatic strengthening rather than weakening during grammaticalization. Traugott's example is when the go-verbs, which are semantically similar to *ra:yiħ,* become grammatical markers of future (just like *raħ*), their intention and futurity implicatures are strengthened.

Still, Alshboul et al. emphasize that the nominal DP carries agreement features whereas the grammaticalization of the DP ended up with null-agreement features realized as *raħ*. Also, both items require their verbs to be in imperfective mode in which the default (SA) present features are selected as an abstract null morpheme.

Although Alshboul et al. do not bring strong evidence for a process of grammaticalization, the assumption remains plausible as this phonological and functional similarity stands with other particles such as *ta* with the conjunction *ħatta:* and the present-simple prefix *ba* with the complex verb *bed* + clitic (Jarad, 2013).

In Arabic, the morphology of the participle DP *ra:yiħ* follows a morphological prototype as '*fa:ʕil*', which is equivalent to the meaning of the word 'doer' indicating that the NP is in participle form and carries the semantic feature of agency. While if the NP is derived from a root that exceeds the three-consonantal forms such as di-consonantal, the prototypical pattern is *mufa:ʕil* (JA: *mfaʕil*) in which a prefix 'm' is attached to the verb with specific vowel change, indicating the same type of agentive features. Consider the table in which the Arabic paradigm is manifested according to a three-consonantal root system.

Table 1. Arabic morphology of participle DPs

Three-consonantal	Arabic form	Morphological pattern: /fa:ʕil/	Arabic form	Exceeding three-consonantal	Arabic form	Morphological pattern: /mfa:ʕil/	Arabic form
ra:ħ	راح	ra:yiħ	رايِح	sa:far	سافر	msa:fir	مْسَافِر
fataħ	فتح	fa:tiħ	فاتِح	rawwaħ	رَوَّح	Mrawwiħ	مْرَوِّح
katab	كتب	ka:tib	كاتِب	sakkar	سَكَّر	Msakkir	مْسَكِّر
sa:g	ساق	sa:yig	سايِق	ʕatˁtˁal	عَطَّل	mʕatˁtˁil	مْعَطِّل
na:m	نام	na:yim	نايِم	kassar	كَسَّر	mkassir	مْكَسِّر
libis	لِبِس	la:bis	لابِس	naðˁðˁaf	نَظَّف	mnaðˁðˁif	مْنَظِّف
ʃa:f	شاف	ʃa:jif	شايِف	wassax	وَسَّخ	Mwassix	مْوَسِّخ
nawa:	نَوَى	na:wi	ناوي	ʃaɣɣal	شَغَّل	mʃaɣɣil	مْشَغِّل
ɣa:b	غاب	ɣa:yib	غايِب	dagag	دَقَّق	mdagig	مْدَقِّق
ʔiʒa:	اِجا	ʒa:y	جايّ	sˁallaħ	صَلَّح	msˁalliħ	مْصَلِّح

All of these NP forms whether derived from a tri-consonantal root or quadr-consonantal show that the NP is in participle aspect and indicates the agentive semantic feature of a 'doer'. These participle forms carry ambiguity in terms of tense, and the NP *ra:yiħ* in 17 (a) is an instance of this functional ambiguity. In (a) (the tense of the sentence is present progressive while (b) expresses futurity. The ambiguity is unveiled through the placement of adverbial expressions:

(17)

(a) Ahmad ra:yiħ yudrus bil-maktabih hassa *present progressive*
Ahmad *ra:jih*-FUT study-INF in-the-library now
"Ahmad is going to study in the library now."

(b) Ahmad ra:yiħ yudrus bil-maktabih bukrah *future*
Ahmad *ra:yiħ* -FUT study-INF in-the-library tomorrow
"Ahmad is going to study in the library tomorrow."

This temporal ambiguity appears in most of these nominal NPs:

(18)

(a) Ahmad na:yim hassa bil-mazraʕah *present progressive*
Ahmad sleep-PART now the-farmhouse
"Ahmad is sleeping now in the farmhouse."

(b) Ahmad na:yim bukra bil-mazraʕah *future*
Ahmad sleep-PART tomorrow the-farmhouse
"Ahmad is sleeping tomorrow in the farmhouse."

However, this ambiguity between present and future is contingent on the transitivity and non-transitivity of the derivation of these NPs. For instance, *msa:fir* (travelling), *mrawwiħ* (going), *mʕatˁtˁil* (taking vacation), *na:yim* (sleeping), *ɣa:yib* (being absent), and others are NPs derived from non-transitive verbs. Therefore, they do not exclude the action of the verb to have happened in the past without potential temporality for futurity or present time. All the following verbs carry temporal ambiguity between past, present, and future:

(19) Ahmad msa:fir/na:yim/ɣa:yib/mrawwiħ (mba:riħ/hassa/bukrah)
Ahmad travel/sleep/get absent/leave –PART (yesterday/now/tomorrow)

By contrast, in the case of participle NPs derived from transitive verbs, they appear to act as past verbs, as they affirm the completion of the action in the past such as *mdaqiq* (editing), *msˁalliħ* (fixing), *mkassir* (breaking), *mnaðˁðˁif* (cleaning), *mwassix* (dirting), and others. This is evident in the following example in which the adverbial *bukrah* (tomorrow) is prohibited, as each participle DP can host an object DP:

(20)

(a) Ahmad mkassir il-vasa mba:riħ/*bukra
Ahamd break-PART the-vessel yesterday/tomorrow
"Ahmad broke the vessel yesterday."

(b) Ahmad mnaðˁðˁif il-ɣurfah mba:riħ/*bukrah
Ahmad clean-PART the-room yesterday/tomorrow
"Ahmad cleaned the room yesterday."

(c) Ahmad mdaqiq il-malaf mba:riħ /*bukrah
Ahmad edit-PART the-file yesterday/*tomorrow
"Ahmad edited the file yesterday."

Even if progressive adverbial expression *hassa* is inserted with these transitive-derived NPs, the interpretation of the adverbial receives association with past rather than present progressive, having a similar meaning to *just*.

(21)

Ahmad mnaðˁðˁif il-ɣurfah hassa
Ahmad clean-PART the-room now

Interpretation:

I. Ahmad just cleaned the room
II. *Ahmad is cleaning the room now

This distinction is significant in understanding how futurity is expressed in JA in connection to the grammatical notion of non-transitivity as being associated with action that is potentially in progress or to be completed in the future, whereas transitivity confirms completion and association with past tense.

Going back to the participle NP *ra:yiħ*, it is clear now how this item belongs to a morphological system of participle NPs in Arabic and their connection to tense. However, this particular NP is the only one that requires hosting an imperfective verb compared to other NPs. Consider the following distinction in which *ra:yiħ* hosts an expletive while it crashes with other participle NPs:

Before movement:

(22)

(a) fi: walad ra:yiħ yudrus bil-maktabih
there boy go-PART-FUT study-INF in-the-library

(b) fi: walad fa:tiħ il-maħal hassa
there boy open-PART the-store now

(c) fi: ʃab mkassir il-vaza hassa
there man break-PART the-vessel now

After movement:

(d) fi: ra:yiħ walad yudrus bil-maktabih
there go-PART boy study in-the-library

(e) *fi: fa:tiħ walad il-maħal hassa
there open-PART boy the-store now

(f) *fi: mkassir ʃab il-vaza hassa

there break-PART man the-vessel now

This leaves out *ra:yiħ* as having similar functional status of 'going to' where the participle NP does not assign theta role to the subject DP, but rather hosts an embedded clause that stands in connection with the higher subject. This non-thematic status of *ra:yiħ* strongly stands in favor of the grammaticalization assumption that *ra:yiħ* and *raħ* are etymologically connected. Therefore, *ra:yiħ* should be considered a raising verb the same as the particle *raħ*. The prediction is borne out as this NP confirms to raising tests. (23) shows how *ra:yiħ* allows hosting the locative expletive *fi:*:

(23) fi: ra:yiħ walad yudrus bil-maktabih
there go-PART-FUT boy study-INF in-the-library

Since also *ra:yiħ* as a participle NP shows agreement features, the indefinite NP in the embedded clause should not affect its agreement features with the agreement of the expletive, which is default third-person masculine in JA (Harbert & Bahloul, 2002; Rouillier, 2023). This means that *ra:yiħ* will maintain its default masculine features with the expletive rather than agreeing with a feminine indefinite NP or plural NP in the embedded clause. This turns out to be true, confirming the raising status of *ra:yiħ* as the same as the particle *raħ* exactly:

(24)

(a) fi: ra:yiħ binit tudrus bil-maktabih
there go-PART-FUT-3SM girl study-INF-3SF in-the-library
"there is a girl who will study in the library"

(b) *fi: ra:yħa binit tudrus bil-maktabih
there go-PART-FUT-3SF girl study-INF-3SF in-the-library

(c) fi: ra:yiħ awlaad jidursu: bil-maktabih
there go-PART-FUT-3SM boys study-INF-3MPL in-the-library
"there are boys who will study in the library"

(d) *fi: ra:yhi:n awlaad yidursu: bil-maktabih
there go-PART-FUT-3MPL boys study-INF-3MPL in-the-library

This section shows evidence that *ra:yiħ* is a raising NP, and the assumption that *raħ* underwent a grammaticalizaiton process out of *ra:yiħ* is strongly plausible, as the participle *ra:yiħ* stands as the only NP that has the characteristic of a raising verb compared to other participle NPs despite its visibility of agreement features in contrast to the null-agreement of the particle raħ.

4. Conclusion

The paper primarily investigates two future forms: *raħ* and *ra:yiħ*, which are used commonly among JA speakers. By examining the data qualitatively, the findings show that *raħ* is a raising future particle that is derived through the grammaticalization process from the nominal NP *ra:yiħ*. This assumption is supported by the fact that *ra:yiħ* manifests raising behavior differently from other NP nominals that only express futurity by the insertion of an adverbial expression. The empirical data reveals that simple future in JA is syntactically distinct from the standard variety as the particle *raħ* shows raising movement underlying capabilities in reconstruction, expletive hosting, and ellipsis compared to SA particles that seem to be more constrained with the verb.

raħ seems to be the English equivalent "going to", expressing futurity, acting like a modal while simultaneously functioning as a raising verb. This situation may differ from English, as English modals are not raising verbs base-generated in ModalP, while English raising verbs are not usually T-carrier. However, this discussion of raising and modality is also unclear cross-linguistically, resulting in analyzing even modal verbs as "raising verbs" carrying higher node in the underlying structure than subject. Since modality and raising are found intersected cross-linguistically, the particle *raħ* functions as a modal semantically, but it carries verbal features and may have agreement with the subject in its lengthened pre-grammaticalized form *ra:yiħ*. This hints at *ra:yiħ* is more of a raising verb carrying agreement features while the shortened form *raħ* is more like a modal. On the contrary, the findings show that *raħ* is actually a raising verb revealing raising sensitives and movement features, affirming that raising verbs are dominantly filling the role of the T-carrier of futurity in Arabic. Different from English, the dominantly adopted form in JA is *raħ*; the equivalent of "going to", which is not the case in English as it uses other common forms as "will" or present simple or continuous. The dependency on "going to" and its grammaticalized forms can be explained by the derivational nature of Arabic being a three-consonantal root language that prefers the choice of a form that is derivational (going from go/ *raħ* from *ra:yiħ*) rather than using a non-derivational particle such as (will/ no Arabic equivalent). Despite the infusion of modality and raising as syntactic concepts, Arabic differs from English in extending modality features to raising verbs unlike English, which characterizes Arabic raising as distinct from English in relation to temporal concept. Nonetheless, English raising verbs such as "seem" or "likely" may hint at futurity, but they are not dominantly selected as future forms used in natural conversation. In JA, the raising particle *raħ* is the dominant future form, characterizing the expression of futurity with its syntactic distinctions.

This study contributes to the examination of futurity in JA and sheds light on syntactic contrasts with both English and SA. It provides insights into the evolution of JA, particularly how people talk about their future intentions, and into the development of grammatical categories. Studying future forms would show how people signal their identity and their belonging to one group in the Jordanian society rather than another. In addition, this study is likely to contribute to the descriptive grammar of Jordanian Arabic. It suggests conducting future related research investigating other future forms, such as the verbal prefix *la*.

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Authors' contributions

Dr. Ahmad Tawalbeh and Mr. Tariq Farghal contributed to conceptualizing the study, designing the methodology, and analyzing the data. Mr. Tariq also drafted the initial manuscript. Dr. Rula was responsible for reviewing and synthesizing the literature. She also finalized the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Appendix

1SF: first singular feminine

1SM: first singular masculine

2SF: second singular feminine

2SM: second singular masculine

3SF: third singular feminine

3SM: third singular masculine

F: Feminine

FPL: feminine plural

FUT: future

INF: infinitive

M: Masculine

MPL: masculine plural

PART: participle

PASS: passive

PAST: past

PRES: present

PROG: progressive

S: Singular