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A Lexical-Functional Grammar Account of Aspectual and Complementation Structures of Phasal Verbs in Southern Saudi Dialects

Dr. Fatima Modaf Al-Harthy *

fharthey@ub.edu.sa

Abstract

This paper investigated the syntactic, semantic, and functional behavior of *phasal verbs* in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA)- a southern Saudi dialect that has received limited formal description in modern linguistic research. Phasal verbs, or aspectual predicates, denote the temporal stages of an event—its inception, continuation, or termination. The present study applies Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) to describe how Bisha Arabic encodes these aspectual meanings through specific lexical verbs and complement structures. Based on an analyzed dataset and corroborated by native speaker judgments, the study identified and analyzed core phasal verbs: *bada* 'begin', *ʕād* 'resume', *istamar* 'continue', *waqaf* 'stop', *xallaṣ* 'finish', and *ʔinḥā* 'end'. The analysis revealed that Bisha Arabic phasal verbs form a cohesive subclass of semi-auxiliary predicates selecting *non-finite imperfective complements* that share their subject with the matrix clause—modeled formally as *XCOMP* structures in LFG. The verbs *bada*, *ʕād*, and *istamar* display raising-like properties, while *waqaf*, *xallaṣ*, and *ʔinḥā* exhibit control-like behavior. These findings align Bisha Arabic with general Arabic aspectual typology yet highlight dialectal innovations, particularly in verbs such as *rajʕ* ('return/resume'), *baʕad* ('still/continue'), and *ʕawad* ('resume again'), which have developed new grammaticalized phasal meanings. Through a detailed LFG analysis, including c-structure and f-structure diagrams, this paper demonstrates that phasal verbs in Bisha Arabic encode event phases through a functionally governed syntactic strategy. The results contribute to broader typological and theoretical debates concerning the representation of aspect and the auxiliaryhood continuum in Arabic dialectology.

Keywords: Phasal verbs, Aspectual predicates, Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA), Saudi Arabic dialects, Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG).

* Assistant Professor of Grammar and Morphology, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts and Humanities, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia.

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تحليلٌ في إطار النحو الوظيفي المعجمي للبُنى الجانبية وبُنى التعدية للأفعال المرحلية في لهجات جنوب السعودية

د. فاطمة مظف الحارثي*
fharthey@ub.edu.sa

ملخص

تبحث هذه الورقة في السلوك النحوي والدلالي والوظيفي للأفعال المرحلية في اللهجة البشية العامية، وهي لهجة جنوبية سعودية لم تحظَ بدراسة أكاديمية كافية في البحوث اللغوية الحديثة. تدل الأفعال الطورية، أو المسندات الجانبية، على المراحل الزمنية للحدث - بدايته، أو استمراره، أو نهايته. تطبق هذه الدراسة النحوية الوظيفية المعجمية لوصف كيفية استخدام اللهجة البشية العامية لهذه المعاني الجانبية من خلال أفعال معجمية محددة وبنى تكملة. استنادًا إلى مجموعة بيانات مُحلَّلة، مدعومة بتقييمات متحدثين أصليين، يحدد هذا البحث ويحلل أفعالًا مرحلية أساسية: بدأ، استأنف، استمر، توقف، أنهِ، وانتهى. يكشف التحليل أن الأفعال المرحلية في لهجة بيشة تُشكل فئة فرعية متماسكة من المسندات شبه المساعدة التي تختار مكملات غير تامة غير تامة تشترك في فاعلها مع الجملة الرئيسية - والتي تم نمذجتها رسميًا كبنى XCOMP في LFG. تُظهر الأفعال بدأ، استأنف، واستأنف خصائص شبيهة بالرفع، بينما تُظهر الأفعال توقف، أنهِ، وانتهى سلوكًا شبيهًا بالتحكم. تُوَحِّد هذه النتائج بين اللهجة البشاوية والتصنيف العام للجوانب في اللغة العربية، مع تسليط الضوء على الابتكارات اللهجية، لا سيما في أفعال مثل رَجْع (يعود/يستأنف)، وبَعَد (يستمر/يواصل)، وعَوَد (يستأنف مرة أخرى)، والتي اكتسبت معانيَ مرحلية نحوية جديدة. ومن خلال تحليل مفصل لقواعد اللغة الوظيفية، بما في ذلك مخططات البنية الوظيفية والبنية النحوية، تُبَيِّن هذه الورقة أن الأفعال المرحلية في اللهجة البشاوية تُشفِّر مراحل الحدث من خلال استراتيجية نحوية مُحَكَّمة وظيفيًا. تُسهم هذه النتائج في نقاشات تصنيفية ونظرية أوسع نطاقًا تتعلق بتمثيل الجوانب وتدرج الأفعال المساعدة في علم اللهجات العربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأفعال المرحلية، المسندات الجانبية، لهجة بيشة العامية، اللهجات العربية السعودية، النحو الوظيفي المعجمي (LFG).

* أستاذ النحو والصرف المساعد، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها، كلية الآداب والفنون، جامعة بيشة، المملكة العربية السعودية.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview and Motivation

Arabic provides a rich domain for the study of *aspectual and phasal verbs*, which grammatically encode the stages of event development—beginning, ongoing progression, or termination. Understanding these verbs allows us to explore how temporal structure interacts with syntax and meaning across different varieties of Arabic. While Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) offers a relatively fixed system, spoken dialects such as Bisha Arabic (BCA) demonstrate ongoing grammatical evolution. Bisha Arabic, spoken in southwestern Saudi Arabia, displays a range of aspectual phenomena that differ subtly yet significantly from those in Hijazi, Najdi, or Gulf Arabic. However, despite its socio-linguistic vitality, Bisha Colloquial Arabic remains under-researched, especially in theoretical frameworks such as Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG).

This paper addresses this gap by investigating how Bisha Arabic phasal verbs—such as *bada* ('begin'), *ʕād* ('resume'), *istamar* ('continue'), and *waqaf* ('stop')—structure event phasing and complementation. Through this analysis, the paper aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Bisha Arabic grammatically encode the inception, continuation, and termination of events?
2. Do phasal verbs in BCA exhibit raising or control properties?
3. What structural configurations best represent their complementation patterns under LFG?
4. How does the Bisha system compare to other Saudi dialects and Modern Standard Arabic?

1.2 Theoretical Significance

This study's theoretical contribution lies in applying LFG (Bresnan, 2001; Dalrymple, 2001) to Arabic dialectal data, providing a functionally explicit account of phasal verb constructions. Unlike generative syntax, LFG distinguishes constituent structure (c-structure) from functional structure (f-structure), allowing more precise modeling of subject sharing and complement relations—key properties of aspectual verbs. Phasal verbs are cross-linguistically significant because they challenge the boundaries between *lexical verbs* and *auxiliaries*, often representing intermediate or "semi-auxiliary" stages in grammaticalization (Heine, 1993; Eisele, 1992). Understanding how they behave in Arabic dialects like Bisha sheds light on the *evolution of aspectual systems* and the syntax-semantics interface.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Phasal verbs-often referred to as *aspectual verbs*, *aspectualizers*, or *begin-class verbs*—encode distinct phases within an event: its initiation, continuation, or termination. They are central to understanding how languages represent event structure, aspectual composition, and the syntax–semantics interface. In

Arabic, these verbs form a well-defined class that interacts with verbal aspect and syntactic complement selection in ways that provide deep insights into clause structure and argument mapping. Arabic dialects, including those of Saudi Arabia, exhibit a particularly rich inventory of phasal verbs. These verbs often operate at the intersection of *lexical semantics* and *grammatical aspect*, functioning as semi-auxiliary elements that structure event progression. While phasal verbs have been explored in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and a few spoken dialects (Eisele, 1992; Nagy, 2009; Ryding, 2005), detailed analyses of southern Saudi dialects—such as Bisha Arabic and al-Baha Arabic-remain scarce. Recent descriptive and theoretical work, notably by ElSadek (2013) and Alghamdi (2022), provides an important foundation for extending phasal verb analysis to these underrepresented varieties. ElSadek's (2013) study (LFG13 Proceedings) offers a rigorous Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) approach to Arabic verbal complementation, focusing on the structural behavior of *psychological* verbs. Her framework is directly applicable to phasal verbs, given the shared syntactic phenomena—particularly subject raising, control, and the use of XCOMP complements (non-finite clauses with shared subjects). Similarly, Alghamdi (2022) in her work on, demonstrates the complex interplay between syntactic structure, thematic roles, and dialectal variation, providing comparative insight into how southern dialects, including Bisha Arabic, treat predicate-complement relations.

This review synthesizes these foundational studies, examining definitions, classifications, and syntactic behavior of phasal verbs across Arabic dialects. It then focuses on Saudi Arabic, especially southern dialects, situating Bisha Colloquial Arabic within this broader typological and theoretical context.

2.2 Definitions and Conceptual Scope

The term *phasal verb* denotes a verb that specifies a temporal phase of another event-its beginning, middle, or end-without describing the event itself (Noonan, 2007, p 139). These verbs are semantically parasitic on the lexical predicate they modify, and their interpretation depends on the event's internal temporal contour. In English, canonical examples include *begin, continue,* and *stop*; in Arabic, parallel verbs include:

- **Inceptive:** *badaʔa* 'begin', *ibtadaʔa* 'start', *šaraʕa* 'set about'
- **Continuative:** *istamarra* 'continue', *ẓalla* 'remain', *baqiya* 'keep on', *ʕād* 'resume'
- **Terminative:** *intaḥā* 'end', *waqafa* 'stop', *xallaṣa* 'finish', *ʔinḥā* 'terminate'

As Newmeyer (1975) classically defined, these verbs are "begin-class" predicates that predicate the (non)occurrence of a proposition with respect to time, meaning that their argument is not an entity but a *proposition*-the event itself. Thus, their complements are typically verbal (VP or non-finite clauses), not nominal.

Phasal verbs therefore bridge *lexical and grammatical aspect:* while the embedded verb carries lexical meaning (*read, work, run*), the matrix phasal verb specifies the temporal *phase* of that meaning (*start reading,*

keep running, stop working). The result is a complex predicate in which both verbs co-determine the event structure.

2.3 Phasal Verbs in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

In MSA, phasal verbs exhibit predictable *syntactic and semantic behavior*. Their complements are almost always *imperfective*, expressing ongoing or unbounded events, and they often occur without overt complementizers (Eisele, 1992; Ryding, 2005). The complementizer *ʔan* is optional and typically used for stylistic or clarity purposes, as in:

(1) *badaʔa (ʔan) yaqraʔa l-kitāba* 'He began (to) read the book.'

This pattern indicates that the complement is not a full CP but an open clause (XCOMP) lacking independent tense. Within the LFG framework, this is captured by the functional equation:

(↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)

Ryding (2005) further observes that verbs like *badaʔa*, *šaraʕa*, and *ṭafiqa* never take nominal complements, reinforcing their status as *functional aspectual operators* rather than fully lexical verbs. Their semantics are sensitive to the *aktionsart* of their complements (Vendler, 1967): *badaʔa* selects activities or accomplishments, *intaḥā* selects telic predicates, and *ẓalla* selects atelic predicates.

2.4 Dialectal Variations in Phasal Verbs

2.4.1 Egyptian Arabic

Eisele (1992) provides the most comprehensive analysis of phasal verbs in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA), describing them as aspectualizers that form compound verb phrases. He identifies verbs such as *badaʔ*, *ʔibtada*, *baṭṭal*, *faḍil*, *ʕād*, and *baʔa*, which express inceptive, continuative, and terminative phases. Eisele argues that these verbs occupy the highest verbal position in the clause, carrying deictic tense reference, while the embedded verb contributes the *lexical event.* This makes them structurally analogous to auxiliaries like *kān*. Subject coreference between matrix and embedded verbs is obligatory, and the embedded verb lacks independent tense—properties consistent with *raising constructions*. His analysis anticipates later LFG treatments of similar predicates (Sadler et al., 2013; ElSadek, 2013).

2.4.2 Levantine Arabic

In Levantine Arabic, *ballaš* 'begin', *ḍall* 'continue', and *xallaṣ* 'finish' are frequently used in periphrastic constructions with bare imperfective verbs, e.g., *ballaš yiktib* 'he started writing'. Nagy (2009) notes that these verbs have undergone significant grammaticalization, functioning as *semi-auxiliaries* rather than full lexical verbs. They are phonologically reduced, syntactically lighter, and semantically bleached-consistent with cross-linguistic patterns of auxiliary development (Heine, 1993).

2.4.3 Gulf Arabic

In Gulf varieties such as Kuwaiti and Qatari Arabic, verbs like *bada*, *ḥaṣal*, *xallaṣ*, and *ʕād* similarly mark phases of events. *ʕād* in particular is used as a *resumptive aspect marker*, e.g., *ʕād yiḥāwil* 'he went back to trying'. These dialects often lack overt complementizers, relying on *juxtaposition* to signal subordination, and phasal verbs carry *functional tense* similar to MSA *kān*.

2.4.4 Saudi Arabic Dialects: Northern, Central, and Western

Saudi dialects collectively maintain a strong inventory of phasal verbs but differ in how these verbs interact with tense and aspect morphology. In Najdi Arabic, verbs like *bidaʔ*, *waqaf*, *ʕād*, *ṣār*, and *baṭṭal* are common. Najdi speakers often omit the complementizer and use non-finite imperfective complements. *ṣār* ('become') frequently serves as an aspectual operator rather than a stative change-of-state verb, as in *ṣār yitkallam bi-l-fuṣḥa* 'He began speaking in Standard Arabic' (Alotaibi, 2016). Hijazi Arabic exhibits similar behavior but favors *ʕād* and *ṣār* for resumptive and inceptive readings, respectively. Sadler et al. (2013), in their LFG analysis of Arabic complement structures, classify these verbs as raising predicates selecting XCOMP complements with shared subjects.

2.5 Phasal Verbs in Southern Saudi Dialects: Al-Baha and Bisha Arabic

The southern dialects of Saudi Arabia—particularly those of al-Baha, Asir, and Bisha—constitute an under-explored yet linguistically rich area for aspectual research. These dialects combine conservative Classical Arabic features with innovative syntactic and lexical developments (Alghamdi, 2022).

2.5.1 Al-Baha Arabic (Alghamdi, 2022)

In her 2022 doctoral dissertation., Alghamdi provides crucial insights into how southern dialects handle *verbal complementation and argument structure.* Although her study centers on psychological verbs, her analysis reveals parallel mechanisms in aspectual and phasal predicates:

- Both verb types allow non-finite imperfective complements.
- Both exhibit subject coreference between the matrix and embedded clauses.
- The matrix predicate often carries temporal or aspectual interpretation, while the embedded verb carries lexical content.

Alghamdi (2022) also observes that verbs like *bada*, *ʕād*, and *waqaf* are prevalent in al-Baha Arabic with similar meanings to other Saudi dialects, though often accompanied by distinct phonological realizations (e.g., *bida*, *ʕād*, *waʔaf*). Her analysis, though primarily descriptive, supports the view that southern dialects employ *syntactic subordination* rather than coordination to express aspectual relationships. These findings have direct implications for the study of Bisha Arabic, which shares geographical proximity, sociolinguistic

characteristics, and lexical overlap with al-Baha Arabic. Both dialects exhibit a pattern of auxiliarization where certain phasal verbs—especially *ʕād* and *ṣār*—function as near-auxiliaries introducing aspectual phases.

2.5.2 Theoretical Integration: Insights from ElSadek (2013)

ElSadek's (2013) study, *Psychological Predicates and Verbal Complementation in Arabic*, provides a foundational LFG account of Arabic complementation patterns. Though focused on psychological predicates (e.g., *ʕajaba* 'please', *xaafa* 'fear'), her framework is equally applicable to phasal verbs because both verb types show similar syntactic dependencies:

1. **Complement Type Variation:** ElSadek distinguishes between XCOMP and COMP complements in Arabic:
    - *XCOMP* (open complement): lacks tense and has a subject shared with the matrix verb.
    - *COMP* (closed complement): has independent tense and can introduce a complementizer (*ʔanna*, *ʔan*).

    Phasal verbs like *bada*, *ʕād*, and *waqaf* clearly pattern with *XCOMP* complements, confirming that their embedded verbs are non-finite and subject-dependent.
2. **Functional Equation in LFG:** ElSadek formalizes this dependency as:

    (↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)

    indicating shared subjecthood between the two predicates—a hallmark of raising structures.
3. **Argument Structure and θ-Roles:** Just as psychological verbs may or may not assign an external θ-role, phasal verbs vary:
    - *bada* and *ʕād* do **not** assign an independent agentive role ⟶ **raising-like**
    - *waqaf*, *xallaṣ*, *ʔinḥā* do ⟶ **control-like**
4. **Dialectal Variation:**

ElSadek's corpus included Egyptian, Gulf, and Hijazi data, showing that dialects vary in the degree to which they grammaticalize phasal and psychological predicates. Her model accommodates this variation by allowing different mappings between a-structure and f-structure, a principle that equally explains Bisha Arabic's patterns.

By extending ElSadek's (2013) LFG model to phasal verbs, we obtain a unified account of how southern Saudi dialects (al-Baha, Bisha) syntactically encode aspectual relations-through non-finite complementation, subject sharing, and raising or control configurations.

2.5.3 Comparative Overview: Al-Baha vs. Bisha Arabic

Table (1)

Aspectual verb classes and LFG structures in Al-Baha and Bisha Arabic

Aspectual Class	Al-Baha Arabic (Alghamdi, 2022)	Bisha Arabic (Current Study)	Structural Pattern
Inceptive	*bida, ṣār*	*bada, ṣār*	Raising (XCOMP)
Continuative	*ʕād, istamar*	*ʕād, istamar, baʕad*	Raising (XCOMP)
Terminative	*waʔaf, xallaṣ, ʔinḥā*	*waqaf, xallaṣ, ʔinḥā*	Control (XCOMP)

Both dialects share identical functional architecture. The complement clause lacks tense, and the subject of the embedded verb is obligatorily coreferential with the matrix subject. What differs is the lexical range: Bisha adds *baʕad* and *ʕawad* as productive aspectualizers.

2.6 Theoretical Context: LFG and Aspectual Predication

Lexical-Functional Grammar (Bresnan, 2001; Dalrymple, 2001; Falk, 2001) provides an ideal framework for analyzing Arabic phasal verbs because it distinguishes between *c-structure* (syntactic form) and *f-structure* (grammatical relations). This distinction allows a precise account of how raising and control predicates behave differently even when their surface forms are similar.

In LFG terms:

- *Raising verbs* (e.g., *bada, ʕād, istamar*) have inherited subjects.
- *Control verbs* (e.g., *waqaf, xallaṣ, ʔinḥā*) assign **new θ-roles** to their subjects.

This difference is captured in their **a-structure** representations:

- Raising: < XCOMP >
- Control: < SUBJ, XCOMP >

and their corresponding functional equations:

Raising: (↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)

Control: (↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ) but SUBJ bears a distinct θ-role

ElSadek (2013) demonstrates how these mappings explain variation across Arabic verb classes, a principle that extends naturally to phasal verbs.

2.7 Cross-Dialectal Summary

1. **Complementation Type:**
   All Arabic dialects prefer *non-finite imperfective* complements for phasal verbs, consistent with XCOMP analysis.
2. **Subject Coreference:**
   Obligatory across all varieties; encoded via (↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ).
3. **Auxiliarization:**
   Egyptian and Southern dialects show stronger auxiliary drift than Najdi or Gulf dialects, especially with *ʕād* and *ṣār*.
4. **Lexical Diversity**
   Southern dialects (Bisha, al-Baha) preserve Classical forms (*bada*, *waqaʔ*) but innovate with *baʕad* and *ʕawad* as continuative verbs.
5. **Theoretical Parity**
   The same LFG machinery that accounts for *psychological predicates* (ElSadek, 2013) applies to *phasal verbs*, showing that both involve shared-subject complementation and event-structural subordination.

2.8 Summary

This review demonstrates that phasal verbs in Arabic dialects-and particularly in southern Saudi varieties such as Bisha and al-Baha Arabic-are best understood through a functional-syntactic lens**.** Drawing on ElSadek's (2013) LFG model of complementation and Alghamdi's (2022) detailed field data from al-Baha, we can characterize Bisha Arabic as employing a *tripartite aspectual system* expressed through raising and control configurations. By extending the theoretical apparatus developed for *psychological predicates* to *phasal verbs*, the current study bridges two domains of predicate–complement structure in Arabic, offering a unified framework for understanding how southern Saudi dialects encode event phases syntactically and semantically.

3. Data Selection and Description in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA)

3.1 Data and Methodology

A systematically constructed database of authentic Bisha Arabic was developed from naturally occurring conversational data, recorded interactions in syntax classrooms, and contextualized social media discourse. Data were transcribed, morphologically annotated, and cross-checked by native speakers for acceptability and phasal interpretation. The Bisha Arabic Dataset was constructed and validated according to the standards of empirical adequacy and theoretical consistency required for formal linguistic modeling

within the LFG framework. The dataset comprises a diverse range of naturally occurring spoken materials representing BCA, collected from spontaneous conversational exchanges, recorded classroom interactions in syntax courses, and contextualized social communication. This triangulation of speech sources ensures that the dataset captures authentic syntactic and semantic variation across both informal and semi-formal registers of the dialect. The author, being a native speaker of Arabic and an experienced user of the Bisha variety, played a central role in curating, transcribing, and interpreting the data, ensuring internal linguistic validity and pragmatic authenticity. Each text sample was orthographically transcribed and morphosyntactically annotated in accordance with a customized Arabic LFG schema that identifies grammatical relations (SUBJ, OBJ, XCOMP) and aspectual operators (inceptive, continuative, terminative). Validation of the dataset employed a multi-level strategy integrating native speaker review, expert linguistic consultation, and theoretical evaluation within the LFG model. Randomized samples were reviewed by native speakers of Bisha Arabic to assess syntactic naturalness and phasal interpretation, yielding a high level of inter-rater consistency. Moreover, two senior academics—one in theoretical linguistics and another in Arabic linguistics—examined the dataset for structural coherence, dialectal authenticity, and consistency with known patterns of Arabic aspectual syntax. Their evaluations confirmed that the dataset accurately reflects Bisha Arabic's functional dependencies, especially in constructions involving phasal verbs and non-finite complementation. Consequently, the dataset satisfies the dual criteria of descriptive adequacy, by providing empirically valid representations of Bisha Arabic structures, and theoretical adequacy, by offering reliable evidence for analyzing the syntax–semantics interface of aspectual and phasal verb constructions within the LFG framework.

3.2 Selection of Verbs

Through comparative analysis, the following Bisha Arabic verbs were confirmed as phasal:

Table (2)

Phasal verb classes and functions in Bisha Colloquial Arabic.

Phase	Verb	Gloss	Function
Inceptive	*Bada*	Begin	Marks initiation
	ṣār	Become	Introduces new activity/state
Continuative	*ʕād, rajʕ, istamar, baʕad, ʕawad*	resume, return, continue, still, resume	Persistence or repetition
Terminative	*waqaf, xallaṣ, intaha*	stop, finish, end	Completion or cessation

3.3 Phasal vs Lexical Distinctions

Bisha Arabic verbs alternate between lexical and phasal meanings:

(1) *ʕād ʕala al-bēt* ⟶ "He returned home." (Lexical)

(2) *ʕād yidḥak* ⟶ "He started laughing again." (Phasal)

(3) *waqaf yidakhin* ⟶ "He stopped smoking." (Phasal)

Only verbal complementation tokens were retained for syntactic analysis.

4. LFG Analysis of Phasal Verbs in Bisha Colloquial Arabic

4.1 Overview of the LFG Model

In Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), phasal verbs are modeled as functional heads that govern **open complements (XCOMP)**—clauses lacking independent tense and whose subjects are obligatorily shared with the matrix predicate. The functional dependency between the two predicates is expressed by the canonical LFG equation:

(↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)

This equation encodes subject sharing, a defining property of *raising* and *control* verbs across languages.

In **Bisha Colloquial Arabic,** all phasal verbs conform to this pattern, forming aspectual complexes that mark distinct **event phases** (inceptive, continuative, and terminative).

4.4.2 Lexical and Functional Overview

Table (3)

LFG classification of Bisha Arabic phasal verbs by aspect, type, and subject relation.

Verb	Type	Aspect	Complement	Subject Role	LFG Relation
bada	Raising	Inceptive	XCOMP	Inherited	(↑XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑SUBJ)
ʕād, istamar	Raising	Continuative	XCOMP	Inherited	(↑XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑SUBJ)
waqaf, xallaṣ, ʔinḥā	Control	Terminative	XCOMP	Assigned	(↑XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑SUBJ)

Raising-type phasal verbs (*bada*, *ʕād*, *istamar*) do not assign an independent thematic role (θ-role) to their subject; rather, the subject is semantically inherited from the embedded predicate.

Control-type verbs (*waqaf, xallaṣ, ʔinḥa*) assign an additional agentive θ-role, indicating volitional involvement in the initiation or cessation of the embedded action.

4.4.3 Raising Verbs

A. بدا (*bada*) – "begin"

Example

(1) *bada yishtighil fī al-maṣnaʕ*

begin.PFV.3SG.M work.IPFV.3SG.M in the-factory

'He began working in the factory.'

Syntactic Interpretation

- *bada* introduces an **inceptive** aspect.
- The embedded predicate *yishtighil* 'work' is **non-finite** (lacks tense).
- The subject (*huwa*, implied) is semantically the agent of *yishtighil*, not *bada*.

a-Structure and Functional Mapping

Function	**θ-Role**	**Mapping**
SUBJ	Agent (inherited from embedded clause)	shared
XCOMP	Event	selected

Functional equation:

(↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)

C-Structure

S

├──── NP (huwa)

└──── VP

├──── V bada

└──── VP (XCOMP)

├──── V yishtighil

└──── PP fī al-maṣnaʕ

F-Structure

[PRED 'bada <XCOMP>'

SUBJ [PRED 'huwa']

XCOMP [PRED 'yishtighil <SUBJ, OBLloc>'

SUBJ ↑SUBJ

OBLloc [PRED 'fī al-maṣnaʕ']]

TENSE PAST

ASPECT INCEPTIVE]

B. عاد (*ʕād*) – "resume, start again"

Example

(2) *ʕād yiḍḥak baʕd as-sukūt*

resume.PFV.3SG.M laugh.IPFV.3SG.M after the-silence

'He started laughing again after being silent.'

Analysis

- The matrix verb *ʕād* marks a **resumptive phase** of a previously interrupted event.
- *ʕād* does not assign a new θ-role; it inherits the agentivity from the embedded verb *yiḍḥak*.

C-Structure

S

├──── NP (huwa)

└──── VP

├──── V ʕād

└──── VP (XCOMP)

├──── V yiḍḥak

└──── PP baʕd as-sukūt

F-Structure

[PRED 'ʕād <XCOMP>'

SUBJ [PRED 'huwa']

XCOMP [PRED 'yiḍḥak <SUBJ>'

SUBJ ↑SUBJ]

ADJUNCT [PRED 'baʕd as-sukūt']

ASPECT RESUMPTIVE

TENSE PAST]

Functional Equation:

(↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)

C. استمر (*istamar*) – "continue"

Example

(3) *istamar yitkallam ḥattā al-layl*

continue.PFV.3SG.M talk.IPFV.3SG.M until the-night

'He kept talking until night.'

Analysis

- *istamar* denotes **continuative aspect**—the ongoing phase of an activity.
- The embedded clause lacks tense, confirming its XCOMP status.
- The subject (*huwa*) is shared between the two predicates.

C-Structure

S

├──── NP (huwa)

└──── VP

├──── V istamar

└──── VP (XCOMP)

├──── V yitkallam

└──── PP ḥattā al-layl

F-Structure

[PRED 'istamar <XCOMP>'

SUBJ [PRED 'huwa']

XCOMP [PRED 'yitkallam <SUBJ>'

SUBJ ↑SUBJ

ADJUNCT [PRED 'ḥattā al-layl']]

TENSE PAST

ASPECT CONTINUATIVE]

4.4.4 Control Verbs

Control verbs differ from raising verbs in that the matrix subject is an **intentional initiator** or **terminator** of the embedded event. They therefore assign an **independent agentive θ-role** in addition to the inherited one.

A. وقف (*waqqaf*) – "stop doing"

Example

(4) *waqaf yidakhin*

stop.PFV.3SG.M smoke.IPFV.3SG.M

'He stopped smoking.'

Analysis

- *waqaf* encodes **terminative phase**, marking cessation.
- The subject *huwa* is both the actor of *waqaf* (volitionally ceasing) and *yidakhin* (smoking).
- This dual role indicates **control**, not pure raising.

C-Structure

S

├──── NP (huwa)

└──── VP

├──── V waqaf

└──── VP (XCOMP)

└──── V yidakhin

F-Structure

[PRED 'waqaf <SUBJ, XCOMP>'

SUBJ [PRED 'huwa']

XCOMP [PRED 'yidakhin <SUBJ>'

SUBJ ↑SUBJ]

ASPECT TERMINATIVE

TENSE PAST

SEM [PHASE 'cessation']]

Functional equations:

(↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)

SUBJ = AGENT(waqaf) = AGENT(yidakhin)

B. خلّص (*xallaṣ*) – "finish (doing something)"

Example

(5) *xallaṣ yiktib ar-risālah*

finish.PFV.3SG.M write.IPFV.3SG.M the-thesis

'He finished writing the thesis.'

Analysis

- *xallaṣ* expresses event culmination and completion.
- The subject controls the embedded predicate; the complement is XCOMP.

C-Structure

S

├──── NP (huwa)

└──── VP

├──── V xallaṣ

└──── VP (XCOMP)

├──── V yiktib

└──── NP ar-risālah

F-Structure

[PRED 'xallaṣ <SUBJ, XCOMP>'

SUBJ [PRED 'huwa']

XCOMP [PRED 'yiktib <SUBJ, OBJ>'

SUBJ ↑SUBJ

OBJ [PRED 'ar-risālah']]

TENSE PAST

ASPECT TERMINATIVE

SEM [PHASE 'completion']]

C. أنهى (*inha)* – "end / terminate"

Example

(6) *ʔinḥā yitkallam*

end.PFV.3SG. M talk.IPFV. 3SG.M

'He finished talking.'

C-Structure

S

├──── NP (huwa)

└──── VP

├──── V ʔinḥā
└──── VP (XCOMP)
└──── V yitkallam

F-Structure

[PRED 'ʔinḥā <SUBJ, XCOMP>'
SUBJ [PRED 'huwa']
XCOMP [PRED 'yitkallam <SUBJ>'
SUBJ ↑SUBJ]
ASPECT TERMINATIVE
TENSE PAST
SEM [PHASE 'termination']]

4.4.5 Comparative Summary

Table (4)

Aspectual classification and functional relations of phasal verbs in Bisha Arabic (LFG analysis).

Verb	Aspect Type	LFG Type	Subject Role	Complement	Functional Relation	Phase Semantics
Bada	Inceptive	Raising	Inherited	XCOMP	(↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)	Onset
ʕād, istamar	Continuative	Raising	Inherited	XCOMP	(↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)	Continuation
waqaf, xallaṣ, ʔinḥā	Terminative	Control	Assigned	XCOMP	(↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)	

5. Findings

5.1 Overview

The study reveals a structured, three-phase system of aspectual representation in Bisha Arabic: Inceptive (*bada*, *ṣār*), Continuative (*ʕād*, *istamar*), and Terminative (*waqaf*, *xallaṣ*, *ʔinḥā*). All verbs select non-finite imperfective complements and demonstrate subject coreference, consistent with an LFG *XCOMP* configuration.

5.2 Semantic Regularities

Phasal verbs in Bisha Colloquial Arabic (BCA) follow universal aspectual constraints, consistent with the cross-linguistic typology of situation aspect proposed by Vendler (1967) and elaborated by Smith (1991). Within this framework, aspectual predicates interact with the internal temporal structure of events—classified as states, activities, accomplishments, or achievements—based on features such as telicity, dynamism, and duration.

Accordingly, the Bisha Arabic data exhibit the following distribution:

• *bada, ʕād* ⟶ activities / accomplishments

• *waqaf, xallaṣ* ⟶ telic events (achievements)

• *istamar, baʕad* ⟶ states / activities

This classification confirms that Bisha Arabic phasal verbs systematically encode event phasing in alignment with universal aspectual patterns, where the matrix predicate contributes temporal delimitation and the embedded predicate contributes lexical aspect. As in Smith's (1991) aspectual model, these verbs operate as compositional devices that integrate the temporal contour of the embedded event into the larger clause, marking inception, continuation, or termination without morphological aspect marking.

5.3 Raising vs Control Diagnostics

Raising verbs lack independent θ-roles, while control verbs assign them. In Bisha Arabic,

• *bada, ʕād, istamar* = Raising

• *waqaf, xallaṣ, ʔinḥā* = Control

This distinction corresponds to the typology proposed by Davies and Dubinsky (2004), who argue that raising predicates do not assign an external thematic role to their subject, while control verbs introduce an additional agentive role. The same diagnostic tests applied cross-linguistically—such as negation scope, coordination, and subject interpretation—confirm the raising or control status of Bisha Arabic phasal verbs.

For example:

ma bada yiktib ('He didn't start writing') negates the entire phasal event, indicating raising, whereas *waqaf yidakhin* ('He stopped smoking') entails volitional control by the subject.

5.4 Grammaticalization and Auxiliaryhood

Verbs like *ʕād* and *rajʕ* show gradual auxiliarization, losing lexical meaning ('to return') and adopting aspectual meanings ('to resume').

Bisha Arabic thus mirrors the auxiliary continuum:

Lexical ⟶ Semi-auxiliary ⟶ Auxiliary

5.5 Cross-Dialectal Comparison

Compared to Hijazi and Najdi Arabic, Bisha Arabic exhibits:

1. Greater lexical variety in continuative verbs (*ʕād*, *baʃad*, *istamar*).
2. Preference for imperfective complements.
3. Stronger subject dependency (no overt complementizer).

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that phasal verbs in Bisha Colloquial Arabic form a distinct, semantically motivated, and syntactically coherent system of aspectual expression. Applying LFG reveals a consistent structural principle across all phasal subclasses: the embedded predicate functions as an *XCOMP*, sharing its subject with the matrix predicate.

The key conclusions are as follows:

1. **Tripartite Aspectual Structure:** Bisha Arabic encodes initiation, continuation, and termination through specialized verbs.
2. **Raising-Control Distinction:** *bada*, *ʕād*, and *istamar* are raising; *waqaf*, *xallaṣ*, and *ʔinḥā* are control verbs.
3. **Structural Economy:** The complement clause is non-finite, lacking tense and complementizer, indicating a tight syntactic bond.
4. **Dialectal Uniqueness:** Bisha Arabic introduces regional innovations (*baʃad*, *ʕawad*) extending aspectual meanings.
5. **Grammaticalization Path:** The dialect illustrates ongoing drift from lexical verbs to auxiliary-like aspectualizers.

Theoretical Implications

Within the LFG framework, these findings reinforce the model's capacity to systematically represent functional dependencies in non-finite complementation structures**,** particularly through the mechanism of functional control and subject sharing encoded by the equation *(↑ XCOMP SUBJ) = (↑ SUBJ)*. The observed behavior of phasal verbs in Bisha and related Saudi dialects substantiates LFG's claim that grammatical relations—rather than surface syntactic configurations—govern clause integration**.** In this context, phasal predicates operate as functional heads that select open complements (XCOMPs) lacking independent tense, thereby creating tightly bound predicate complexes in which the matrix verb contributes aspectual interpretation while the embedded verb retains lexical content. Crucially, these results contribute to the typology of Arabic aspectual predicates by demonstrating that Arabic dialects encode event phasing primarily through syntactic mechanisms, rather than overt morphological marking. Whereas many languages employ

aspectual affixes or auxiliary morphology to signal the initiation, continuation, or termination of an event, Arabic achieves the same semantic distinctions through clausal configuration and argument structure alignment**.** This syntactic encoding of aspectuality—via phasal verbs that function as semi-auxiliaries—highlights a broader cross-linguistic pattern in which *syntax-driven aspectual composition* compensates for limited morphological aspectual marking. Accordingly, the LFG representation of Arabic phasal verbs not only captures the functional dependency between matrix and embedded predicates**,** but also provides a theoretically elegant explanation of how *event structure and grammatical function interact* in the absence of overt morphological cues.

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