

### A fine-grained speech acts layer for a congested periphery in Tunisian Arabic (TA)

A speaker of TA makes use of several sentence-initial discourse particles to express distinct speech acts and voice different attitudes. Consider (1).

- (1) a. **ti** qa: bil-t-u:!  
prt meet-prf-3sm  
“I DID meet him!”
- b. **maw** qa: bil-t-u:  
prt meet-prf-3sm  
“Know that I met him.”
- c. **ra:k** qa: bil-t-u:  
prt meet-prf-3sm  
“I bet you met him.”
- d. **ʃa:d** qa: bil-t-u:  
prt meet-prf-3sm  
“You should have met him”

In (1a), the speaker uses *ti* to urge the hearer to diverge the conversation to more relevant issues given the redundancy of the ongoing one. Conversationally, the import of *ti* is of a tacitly firm request that, if otherwise, might turn into an injunction. The speaker shows commitment to the propositional content of his utterance and articulates some authority. Less firm and tense than the case with *ti*, *maw* in (1b) acts as a reminder to the hearer to keep to the common ground according to the speaker’s information of which the hearer might be unaware. Conversationally, the effect of *maw* is of attention/knowledge drawer with a less-committed and less authoritarian speaker, compared to (1a). The particle in (1c) is a mood particle in TA. The speaker is testing-out some conclusion about the hearer teasing the truth out of him. This makes of *ra:* an evaluative particle without any speaker’s commitment or power claim. *ʃa:d* in (1d) oscillates in TA, in view of its sentence position, between aspectual and discourse roles. A modal here, it signals an authoritarian speaker blaming the hearer for a miss, hence its necessitative conversational import. More interesting, utterances in TA as in (2a) can be preceded by all the discourse particles used in (1), to mark the development of some momentum in the conversation.

- (2) a. **ti maw ra:k ʃa:d** qa: bil-t-u:  
prt prt prt-you prt meet-prf-3sm  
“I bet you have met him.”
- b. **\*maw ti ra:k ʃa:d** qa: bil-t-u:  
prt prt prt-you prt meet-prf-3sm

Setting out (2) with *ti*, the speaker sounds tense, committed and authoritarian in order to utter an injunction instead of the mere firm request of (1a). Compositionally, *ti* with the rest of particles, stands for an injunction which loosens towards *maw* that weakens commitment, reaching *ra:* where commitment is completely lost to ultimately end with the necessitative *ʃa:d* whose impact fades away as the hearer’s memory remains stuck at the effect of the initial injunction of *ti*. This ordering reflects that the lower in the clause, the less momentum tension gains. Bottom-up, however, the blame out of the necessitative *ʃa:d* is reinforced by the higher evaluative *ra:* that marks the speaker’s conclusive unshakable blame. The speaker’s authority and commitment soar with the even higher *maw* which, compounded with the highest *ti*, builds up tension and ascertains the speaker’s authoritarian, doubtful, evaluative, conclusive, blameful attitude. Thus, the higher in the clause, the more momentum tension gains and more committed the speaker becomes to the propositional content of his utterance. Any ordering other than (2a) would not bear the interpretive effects of (2a), hence (2b) is ruled-out. Focusing on the position linking the propositional content of the root clause to its discourse structure, the left periphery, two disparate research lines are distinctive of the literature. Discourse studies (Grice 1975, Sadock & Zwicky 1985 and Krifka 2014) investigate the pragmatic effects of these markers in terms of their force and conversational import to the utterance; syntactic studies (Rizzi 1994; Cinque 1999) expand the left periphery with discourse projections that are motivated only if constituents bear the related discourse features; topic or focus. The emerging third line is the one ‘syntactizing’ discourse seeking the interface between discourse and syntax (Speas & Tenny 2003; Munaro & Poletto 2009; Haegeman 2014). Following Speas and Tenny’s (2003) encoding of the discourse set-up in a speech act layer, this talk elaborates for TA a four-tiered speech act domain as in (3) selecting ForceP in order to map the conversational import of (2a).

- (3) [<sub>saP1</sub> **ti**... [<sub>saP2</sub> **maw**... [<sub>saP3</sub> **ra:**... [<sub>saP4</sub> **ʃa:d**... [ForceP...]]]]]

With four speech acts Phrases (saPs), (3) is very much finer-grained a structure than Zimmerman’s (2008) confining of a German discourse particle *wohl* to ForceP as in [<sub>ForceP</sub> **wohl** decl<sub>speaker</sub> [<sub>TopP</sub>.]]. Much finer-grained it is than Hill’s (2007) mapping of the particle *hai* in West Flemish (WF) as in [<sub>saP</sub> **hai** [ForceP]], and finer-grained than Haegeman’s (2014) two-tiered structure of WF discourse particles as in [<sub>saP1</sub> **né** [<sub>saP2</sub> **wè** [ForceP...]]]. (3) enables the four strictly ordered co-occurring discourse particles in TA to project separately in a domain where syntax interfaces with discourse. The lower *saP4* syntactizes the speaker’s weak commitment to the content of his utterance. The higher *saP3* encodes the building up of tension and commitment of the speaker reaching the highest *saP1* syntactizing an authoritarian and uncompromising speaker’s attitude. Top-down, however, the four layers tightly match tension gradually losing momentum. On top of this, what at first seemed a congested left periphery of Arabic has turned out to be a richly-articulated structure that motivates an elegant syntactic analysis of the left periphery. By syntactising the discourse particles in TA, the talk seeks to partake with crosslinguistic evidence from Arabic the ongoing endeavour of examining the viability of syntactic analysis of pragmatic markers.