

A TOPICALITY CONDITION FOR ARABIC CLAUSES

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR MOTHER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	x
Chapter	
1 RESEARCH BASICS	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Cartography of Syntactic Structures	2
1.3 Information Structure	6
1.3.1 Focus.....	6
1.3.2 Topic.....	8
1.4 Targeted Languages.....	10
1.4.1 Modern Standard Arabic	10
1.4.2 Saudi Southern Dialect	12
1.4.3 Case Marking.....	13
1.4.4 Basic Word Order.....	13
1.5 Organization of the Dissertation.....	15
2 TOPIC-FOCUS SYSTEM IN ARABIC	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 Fronted Objects	17
2.3 Syntactic Analysis of Focus/Topic in Arabic	21
2.3.1 Focus.....	21
2.3.2 Topic.....	27
2.3.3 A comparison with Italian	31
2.4 Contrastive Topics:.....	32
2.4.1 What are CTs?.....	32
2.4.2 Contrastive Topics in Arabic.....	34

2.4.3	A Hypothesis on CTs Formation.....	35
2.4.4	Defending the Current Hypothesis	36
2.5	Interim Conclusion	42
3	PREVERBAL SUBJECTS.....	44
3.1	Introduction	44
3.2	Subjects or topics?.....	45
3.3	Topicalized Preverbal Subjects	48
3.3.1	No Indefinite Preverbal Subjects.....	48
3.3.2	VOS Word Order.....	49
3.3.3	Verbal Clitics.....	49
3.3.4	Agreement	51
3.3.5	Topical Reading.....	52
3.3.6	Passing Island Tests.....	53
3.4	Focalized Preverbal Subjects.....	54
4	ARABIC CLAUSE ANALYSIS.....	58
4.1	Introduction	58
4.2	Predicates in Arabic.....	59
4.2.1	Verbless Sentences	59
4.2.2	Copular Sentences	61
4.2.3	Equative Sentences	63
4.2.4	Main Verb.....	64
4.3	Challenges for Earlier Analyses	65
4.3.1	Subject Asymmetry	65
4.3.2	<i>kana</i> Subject.	66
4.4	Recent Work on Arabic predicates.....	67
4.4.1	Alblushi (2011;2013).....	67
4.4.2	Alaqrabeh (2015); Alaqrabeh & Alsarayreh (2017).....	69
4.5	Topicality and Arabic Clausal Structure	72
4.5.1	Topical Reading.....	73
4.6	Analyzing VECCs	75

4.6.1	Equative Constructions.....	79
4.6.2	Copular Constructions.....	81
4.7	Satisfying the Topicality Condition.....	85
4.7.1	Optional <i>Kana</i> Agreement.....	90
4.7.2	Equation and the Topicality Condition.....	94
4.8	Two Types of Topics.....	100
4.9	Preverbal Subjects Refined.....	104
4.10	Topics and Resumption.....	107
4.11	Minimality Effects.....	109
4.12	Conclusion.....	111
5	ROOT-EMBEDDED (A)SYMETERY.....	114
5.1	Introduction.....	114
5.2	Types of Arabic Complementizers.....	114
5.2.1	V-initial Complementizers.....	115
5.2.2	Flexible Complementizers.....	116
5.2.3	Banning Embedded V-initial Clauses.....	118
5.3	The Embedded Clause Phenomena.....	119
5.3.1	Shlonsky (2000).....	123
5.3.2	Al-Asbahi (2013).....	125
5.4	Analyzing The EmCP.....	128
	REFERENCES.....	137

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the relation between left-peripheral topics and the structure of Arabic clauses. It first introduces the Arabic topic-focus system following Rizzi's (1997) cartographic framework and utilizing the notion of Information Structure. The study suggests a hypothesis on the formation of Contrastive Topics (CTs). Arabic CTs are topics generated within the left periphery and moved to focus position. The next part reviews preverbal subjects. The listed arguments assert that preverbal subjects are aligned with topics, which strengthens the status of VSO as the basic word order. The main part of the dissertation presents an analysis of some highly controversial constructions, which include verbless, equative and copular constructions (VECCs). The study suggests that VECCs must satisfy a proposed topicality condition. The fulfillment of the Topicality Condition follows certain processes in accordance with a proposed hierarchy. Equative sentences, for example, represent a special form of verbless constructions where both the subject and the predicate may equally satisfy the Topicality Condition. The analysis of VECCs extends to the preverbal topicalized arguments to show that they originate as subjects of Predicate Phrases which are then moved to a topic position. The study categorizes Arabic topics into predicative, which are obtained by fulfilling the Topicality Condition, and free topics, which are not related to the Topicality Condition. Predicative topics are selected by a functional projection

(FP) which also hosts copular verbs but, F⁰ nature is not fully clear. Finally, the study examines what I called “embedded clause phenomena” where main clauses behave as if they are embedded. The research shows that (FP) could be responsible for these phenomena by checking peripheral particles leading to the embedding effects such as the emphatic *inna* particle.

Chapter 1

RESEARCH BASICS

1.1 Introduction

There have been many attempts in the field of linguistics to explore the components of the clausal edge that is labeled the CP region. A representative proposal is introduced by the theory of Syntactic Cartography as discussed in Rizzi (1997, 2015), Rizzi & Cinque (2015) and Cinque & Rizzi (2008, 2010). An important aspect of the cartographic enterprise is eliminating the concept of adjunction¹, which implies more detailed hierarchal syntactic representations with more functional projections.

The left periphery is, according to Ryding (2014), the most debatable area for Arabic syntax in recent years. Topic phrases are major components of the left periphery and they have been targets for many studies. This research is an extension in this direction. It asserts the major role of topics in the structure of certain Arabic clauses where topicality is crucial for their well-formedness.

Since the left periphery of CPs is the locus of major interfaces between syntax, semantics and pragmatics, an ideal outcome should satisfy the requirements of all these

¹ There were earlier studies that argues against adjunction such as Brody (1990), Culicover (1992), Muller & Sternefeld (1993) and Shlonsky (1994).

components. To obtain such an outcome, the notion of Information Structure is particularly relevant, as it addresses such issues as focus and topic, which are syntactically represented by the cartographic schema.

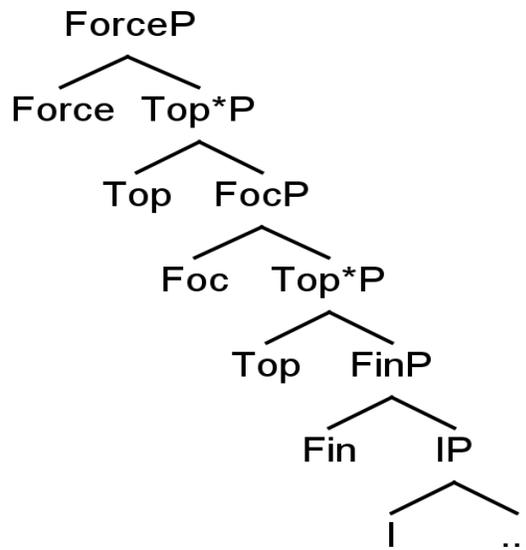
1.2 Cartography of Syntactic Structures

Syntactic cartography was officially introduced by Rizzi (1997). In this paper, Rizzi argues that all syntactic representations can efficiently be reduced to fundamental X-bar units that are hierarchically structured with no adjunction. Chomsky (1986) had already taken the first steps in this direction by extending X-bar schema to include functional projections such as IPs and CPs. However, the key inspirational move for cartography is the split of IP into TP and AgrP by Pollock (1989). Rizzi believes that more syntactic components could be defined in similar splitting processes.

As Rizzi (1997) explains, functional projections, which may have concrete or abstract morphological realizations, attract lexical items for the purpose of adding certain specifications required by the context, such as specifying verbs' tense, aspect and mood. He postulates two versions of syntactic cartography: the strong version which suggests that a functional head evident in a language is added to functional inventory for all other languages; and a weaker view, in which a language selects functional elements it includes in its own inventory.

Functional layers are typically higher in hierarchy than the lexical function of the elements they attract, so the directionality of movement, when it occurs, is upward

which is crucial for principles such as binding. Thus, the domain of functional heads is within the left periphery of its specified XP. There have been attempts to explore the left periphery of different XPs but what is relevant here is the expansion of CPs. Rizzi (1997) suggests the following architecture for a CP:



*** Topic phrases are recursive**

The notion of CP force has been earlier introduced in Chomsky (1995). It internally interacts with IP's finiteness to express certain selection relations. Force also provides external information on the sentence type, such as being a declarative, a question...etc. It also constitutes the upper limit of the clause.

As a general characterization, topics refer to already indicated information in the discourse (Rizzi, 1997) and also show little or no contrast (Lee, 1999). On the other

hand, foci usually highlight new information and give rise to the presence of other alternatives (Krifka, 2007). Rizzi (1997) postulates only one FocP in the CP left periphery because the complement of Foc⁰ is seen as a presupposition for the focal element which will not be compatible with another focal element within the CP's left periphery². The complement of Top⁰, in contrast, constitutes a comment for the topical element. The comment itself can consist of a topical element and another comment without any interpretive clash; TopP is recursive³.

The examples below from Rizzi (1997) show how the Foc/Top system works in Italian.

Topic: (Rizzi, 1997: 15)

(1) a. *Il tuo libro, lo ho comprato*

your book It I buy.past

“Your book, I bought (it)”

b. **Il tuo libro, ho comprato*

your book I buy.past

“Your book, I bought”

In (1), the object “your book” is in a topic position. This topical fronted object is accompanied by a resumptive pronoun (RP), *lo* “it”, which appears in the object's

2 The uniqueness of focus only applies to the fronted focus. Another instance of focus is in the IP region.

3 Based on data from Romance languages.

canonical position as a V complement (1a). The RP is obligatory as its absence yields an ungrammatical sentence, as in (1b).

Focus: (Rizzi, 1997: 16)

(2) a. *II TUO LIBRO, lo ho comprato

your book It I buy.past

“YOUR BOOK, I bought (it)” (not mine)

b. II TUO LIBRO, ho comprato

“YOUR BOOK, I bought” (not mine)

Focus, on the other hand, has the opposite conditions. The fronted object “your book” is being focalized in (2). The resumed object may not be focused (2a)⁴. Thus, a fronted focused object is possible without an RP (2b). Unlike topics, foci should receive focal stress.

The attempts to integrate focus/topic elements into syntactic representations by the cartographic theory have resulted in placing foci and topics in specifier positions of the relevant phrases (FocP and TopP respectively) which dominate the IP. Based on Romance languages, only one focus phrase is allowed within the CP’s left periphery. Topics, by contrast, can be in multiple positions preceding or following the focus phrase. RPs, also in Romance, are obligatory with fronted topics.

⁴ I think Rizzi’s judgment here is based on pure focus. This sentence is, however, grammatical, if it is taken to be a contrastive topic (Bianchi and Frascarelli 2010, for instance).

1.3 Information Structure

The notion of information structure (IS) was noticed well before modern times by medieval Arab grammarians (Fery & Krifka, 2008). A modern view of IS is traced back to the 19th century through the Prague School (Sgall *et. al.*, 1986). More recently, Chafe (1976) defined IS as the way in which information is packaged to satisfy interlocutors' communicative needs at the time of producing utterances. IS provides implicit directions on how the hearer may process the speech (Matic, 2015). In other words, IS takes advantage of certain contextual factors to construct propositions in a way that reflects their conceptual state of affairs (Dalrymple and Nikolaeva, 2011). Stalnaker (1999) suggests that the main goal of IS is to reduce knowledge discrepancy among interlocutors by increasing what he calls the common ground (CG). Stalnaker limited the input of the CG to elements related to the knowledge that has already been provided. Krifka (2007) differentiated between CG content and CG management. The former dimension relates to truth conditional components of the CG while the latter refers to pragmatic aspects of the CG that does not add new information such as questions. There is some controversy regarding IS categories but in any case they should include at least topic and focus (Matic, 2015).

1.3.1 Focus

Focus is the informative part of the propositional content of a sentence which differentiates between the assertion and the presupposition (Lambrecht, 1994). However, the analysis of focus in this research adopts the Alternative Semantics

framework (cf. Rooth, 1992). The central claim of this theory suggests that focus gives rise to the presence of alternatives when interpreting a focused expression (Krifka, 2008). Krifka asserts that the nature of the alternatives determines the type of focus, whether pragmatic or semantic.

Pragmatic focus corresponds to CG management to highlight, for instance, answers of wh-questions, corrections and confirmations. Parallel focusing of more than one constituent happens when foci share the same set of alternatives (2'a). Focus may also put limits on the interpretation of the presupposition (2'b). Presentational focus is another pragmatic use of focus like in (2'c).

(2') a. a SAUDI engineer met an AMERICAN engineer.

b. In MY opinion, JOHN stole the cookies. (Krifka & Musan, 2012: 17b)

c. ...And then something strange happened. [A MEterorite fell down]_F. (ibid: 14a)

On the other hand, semantic focus affects the truth value of a proposition, hence, it is a CG content component. A clear example of semantic focus is its association with focus-sensitive particles such as *only* and *even*. For example, the truth value of the sentences in (3) is different only because of focus location although they have the same word order. (3a) means that the only person who went to the market today is Saeed (he may have gone to other places today) while (3b) mean that the only thing Saeed did today was going to the market (may be with his friends).

(3) a. SAEED faqat thahab li-al-sooq al-yum.

Saeed only go.past.3sg.ms. to-the-market the-day

“Only SAEED went to the market today”

b. Saeed faqat THAHAB li-al-sooq al-yum

“Saeed only WENT to the market today”

In sum, focus function is semantically and pragmatically the same; the generation of alternatives. The truth conditional effect comes from the fact that some operators use the alternatives as the domain restriction in its truth conditional meaning, while others use them for pragmatic effects. Focus in this study is used in the pragmatic sense.

1.3.2 Topic

Topics are at the heart of this study’s subject matter. It might be disappointing to know that there is no consensus on the definition of this category. Buring (2014) believes that there are no sufficient or necessary properties to classify constituents among topics. Moreover, topichood tests are not consistently valid cross-linguistically (Jacobs, 2001). There are no clear lines that draw the limits of topics; especially, how they are distinct from subjects (Krifka, 2008).

However, there have been attempts to conceptualize topics. Heim (1982) presented a communication model (based on idea from Karttunen, 1976) that incorporates topics into IS. According to this view, topics are file card entities under which new information is added.

(4) a. [The Minister]_{Topic} [convened with the committee]_{Comment}.

b. [The committee]_{Topic} [convened with the minister]_{Comment}.

While the two sentences in (4) share the same truth condition, the propositions are organized differently. The update of CG content in (4a) is stored under the entity “the minister”, while it is subsumed under “the committee” in (4b).

The attempts to classify topics resulted in putting topics into two major kinds. The first is thematic topics, also known as aboutness topics. They include topicalized arguments, as in (4), and some other NPs. Reinhart (1981) suggested a test for this type via pragmatic assertion where the second part of a sentence tells some kind of property about the first, i.e. the topic. The other topic type is the frame-setting (cf. Chafe, 1976; Jacobs, 2001). Frame-setting topics limit the interpretation of the comment within a certain domain as in (4', 4'')

(4') A: How is John?

B: [Healthwise]_{Frame}, he is [FINE]_F.

(4'') A: How is business going for Daimler-Chrysler?

B: [In GERmany]_{Frame} the prospects are [GOOD]_F, but [in AMERica]_{Frame} they are [losing MOney]_F.

(Krifka & Musan, 2012:50; 51)

In (4'), the frame-setting topic restricts the attribute of *fine* to John's health condition but not to other domains such as financial status. Likewise, in (4''), the comments are only valid to the countries determined by the frame-setting topics. Eventually, I will suggest a new parameter for categorizing topics, which is based on the proposed topicality condition.

In this study, I will adopt a broad view of topics depending on three main criteria. The first is the pragmatic effect of whether a constituent has a topical reading or not. For example, *John met Mary* and *Mary met John* are the same under certain circumstances, but the former would be more felicitous if it is an answer for *what about John?* In this case *John* receives a topical reading. Second is definiteness/specificity effects. Facts in chapter 2 will confirm that definiteness/ specificity is a requirement for topicalization in Arabic. Third is familiarity as formulated by Gundel (1985):

Topic-Familiarity Condition

An entity, E, can successfully serve as a topic, T, iff, both speaker and addressee have previous knowledge of or familiarity with E.

My intuition about topicality is that it is a pragmatic notion spreading over different syntactic categories and imposes certain restrictions such as definiteness. This may explain the diversity among hypothesized topic types. I believe, however, that all topicalized constituents must be checked at the specifier of a topic phrase.

1.4 Targeted Languages

1.4.1 Modern Standard Arabic

The main language examined in this research is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). A critical fact about MSA is that it does not have native speakers. This may

raise concerns about the grammatical judgments of MSA sentences. To eliminate these concerns, I would break the issue into two levels corresponding to the following questions:

- *Is MSA a well-established language?*
- *How is this language learned/acquired?*

The answer to the first question stems from the history of Arabic language. Woodward (2008) thinks that Arabic, which is a Semitic language, dates back to the 5th century BC. In the 7th century, Arabic gained a special status as the sole language of the Islam's Holy Book, the Quran, and the main language for other Islamic texts. The Islamic Empire expansion to non-Arabic territories requires a standardized version of Arabic which lead to the emergence of *Classical Arabic* (Aoun *et al.* 2010). The efforts started with an extensive work on describing Arabic grammar. Two main schools have been founded in the 8th century, *Basri* and *Kufi*. MSA is a modern attempt not only to standardize the language but also to preserve the Classical Arabic. The reason is that Arab speakers tend to prefer local dialects over Classical Arabic in their daily exchange (Aoun *et al.* 2010). I believe that MSA is not a unique form of Arabic but a normal output of a continuous evolving process. The idea behind MSA is to maintain a formal form of Arabic that is directly linked to Classical Arabic. Although native speakers of formal Arabic have been reduced to non, Arab intellectual have never discontinued using formal Arabic in their literacy work. Hence, MSA, as a manifestation of older Arabic, is a well-established language.

The processes of learning/acquiring Arabic is similar to that of any other language. All Arabic-based school materials are written in MSA. Starting at grade 4, students in Saudi Arabia study poetry, prose and the grammar of MSA. It is also enforced by formal speech in media (Aoun *et al.* 2010).

The grammatical judgments of MSA examples in this study is based on my own intuition as I have 16 years of formal education where MSA was the only variety for teaching Arabic courses. I also report examples of MSA from other linguistic sources along with their grammatical evaluations. However, this type of internalized grammar is also an important factor in languages with native speakers. Consequently, the concerns around MSA intuitive judgments is within the limit of any other language.

1.4.2 Saudi Southern Dialect

However, MSA is contrasted with another Arabic dialect to reach a better understanding of the problems investigated in this research. The other variety is the Saudi Southern Arabic (SSA). There are many sub-dialects in this large swath of the Saudi Kingdom but this study is concerned with the dialect spoken in Albaha province. Local Arabic dialects are seen by many Arab linguists as “deformed” colloquial versions of Standard or Classical Arabic. However, SSA preserves some old forms of Arabic; Aljaser (1971) believes that SSA is the closest dialect to Classical Arabic. This choice was made primarily due to the fact that introspective judgments are easily obtained; there are several native speakers of this dialect, myself included, who provided reliable judgments.

1.4.3 Case Marking

One major difference between MSA and almost all spoken varieties of Arabic, including SSA, is that the former, but not the latter, employs structural case marking on NP arguments.

(5) a. hall-a al-talib al-wajeb fi al-fasl. (SSA)

Do.past.3sg. the-student the-assignment in the-class

“The student did the assignment in the school”

b. hall-a al-talib-u al-wajeb-a fi al-fasl-i.(MSA)

Do.past.3sg. the-student-Nom the-assignment-Acc in the-class-Gen

“The student did the assignment in the school”

While no NPs in (5a) are case-marked, each NP in (5b) is marked differently; “u” for nominative, “a” for accusative and “i” marks genitive NPs. This study will examine the interaction between case marking and processes involving the left periphery.

1.4.4 Basic Word Order

It is widely accepted throughout the literature that MSA is basically a VSO language. Bakir (1979) provided some facts which support this view. First, when

examining the syntactic environments of MSA structures, the prominent word order is VSO. Constructions like nominalization and clauses of subjunctive mood may only be expressed in VSO which is also true for SSA. Furthermore, when NPs in MSA do not bear overt case markers (because they end in a vowel) a sentence consisting of V-NP-NP is spontaneously interpreted as VSO in contrast with VOS as in (6).

(6) ra'at Salma Najwa.

See.past.3sg.fm Salma Najwa

“Salma saw Najwa” / “# Najwa saw Salma”

Moreover, typological properties of MSA/SSA coincide with those of VO rather than OV languages which support the original post-verbal position for objects. Dryer (2007) cited major tendencies that are linked to the verb position with respect to the object for more than 600 languages. VO languages (which include VSO) tend, for instance, to have prepositions, noun-genitive, verb-manner adverb, aux-verb, noun-RC and initial question particle, which are all true for Arabic.

However, the criteria for determining a basic word order in this study is pragmatically motivated. Such a basic word order will be essential to understand the information structural permutations in the left periphery. The structure that shows none or the least pragmatic effects would be considered the basic word order. The pragmatic effects include focalization and topicalization. The former is easily detected as it has a clear marker, i.e. the focal accent. Topics have also identification properties such as definiteness/specificity and the topical reading. There is a consensus among Arab

linguists that the preverbal/pre-subject objects are pragmatically marked. This eliminates OVS, OSV, SOV and VOS permutations and limits the debate over the basic word order to VSO and VOS. The deliberations in the coming chapters, particularly chapter 3, would strengthen the assumption that Arabic is actually a VSO language.

1.5 Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 paves the way for understanding the focus-topic system in Arabic. The illustration of this system is based on fronted objects whose syntactic and pragmatic effects are less debatable than subjects. Moreover, the chapter suggests a hypothesis on contrastive topic formation in Arabic. After highlighting aspects of focalization and topicalization, chapter 3 tackles issues related to the controversial status of preverbal subjects. I adopt the position of treating preverbal subjects as topics. However, there are still challenging arguments that the study needs to accommodate in order for a stronger position on this matter to be advocated. Chapter 4 presents a new analysis of Arabic clausal structure. Evidence indicates that the verbless predicate is a key component in understanding the functional domain of Arabic. Predication is a requirement for topicalizing arguments and other resumed constituents. Interestingly, topicalization in verbless and some other constructions is essential. Thus, the study proposed a Topicality Condition for those clauses. Finally, the study examines what I called “embedded clause phenomena” where main clauses behave as if they are embedded. The research shows that (FP) could be responsible for these phenomena by checking peripheral particles leading to the embedding effects such as the emphatic *inna* particle.

Chapter 2

TOPIC-FOCUS SYSTEM IN ARABIC

2.1 Introduction

The discussion on Arabic word order in section (1.4.2) provides strong hints that VSO is the unmarked basic word order. Thus, I may assume that pre-VP clausal elements are left-peripheral⁵. However, the concentration in this chapter will be on left-dislocated objects. Because the main aim of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with the Arabic topic-focus system, fronted objects offer clearer, less-arguable instances of topicalization and focalization. The second section provides examples of fronting different types of objects which show that pragmatic effects are still the same regardless of the object type. Therefore, subsequent examples rely only on objects of monotransitive verbs. The syntactic analysis of these phenomena is approached in section 3. Cartography is the main tool of investigation, and Arabic is comparatively analyzed with Italian. It will become clear that both languages show similar behavioral patterns, which renders good support of the cartographic approach. Section 4 presents

⁵ At this stage of the study, it is just a matter of picking a word order to examine the hypotheses against; VSO is the best candidate.

an analysis of contrastive topics in Arabic, a subject matter which has not attracted much attention in the literature.

2.2 Fronted Objects

Object fronting presents itself as a rich domain for studying the focus-topic system. This section provides detailed descriptions of grammatical objects that appear in non-canonical preverbal positions and determines the resultant pragmatic effects. These phenomena will be categorized according to the presence/absence of three factors: focal accent, resumptive pronouns and overt case markers. A complete paradigm of all combinations has been thoroughly checked but, due to brevity, provided examples are limited to the most crucial aspects of the study. Let us first consider moved object structures in SSA, where the object is not overtly case-marked.

A- SSA:

(7) a. AL-BAIT/*al-bait eshtr-a Ali.

the-house Buy.Past-3rd.sg.mas Ali

“The house, Ali bought.”

b. al-bait eshtra-h Ali.

the-house Buy. Past-3rd.sg.mas-it Ali

“The house, Ali bought (it)”

c. *BAIT /*bait eshtra-h Ali. (indefinite O - topic)

house Buy. Past-3rd.sg.mas-it Ali

“A house, Ali bought (it)”

d. BAIT/*bait eshtra Ali. (indefinite O – focus, if accented)

house Buy. Past.3rd.mas Ali

“A house, Ali bought”

In all the (7) sentences, the object appears in an initial position. (7a) is an instance of a fronted object without a resumptive pronoun (RP). In this case, the object may or may not receive a focal accent. The focally stressed object has a focus feature which is marked with intonation (capitalized words). This displacement of the focused object is grammatical, but when the focus mark is absent, i.e. unaccented, the sentence is not acceptable. Sentence (7b) also shows an unaccented fronted object but it is grammatical. The crucial difference is that (7b) has an RP that co-refers with the fronted object. The pragmatic effect is also different; the fronted object can be construed as a topic expression, whose denotation is what the sentence is about. The sentences in (7c,d) demonstrate that indefinite objects can only be fronted to a focus position. These objects cannot be topical (7c) due to lack of definiteness/specificity. I conclude that SSA allows fronted objects without RPs only if they are focused whether definite or not. Unaccented topical objects, on the other hand, are permitted but should be definite. Now we will examine object fronting cases in MSA, which has overt structural case marking, and make a comparison with SSA.

B- MSA:

(8) a. AL-BAIT-A/ al-bait-a eshtr-a Ali-un.

the-house-Acc Buy. Past-3rd.sg.mas Ali-Nom

“The house, Ali bought”

b. al-bait-u eshtra-h Ali-un.

the-house-Nom Buy. Past-3rd.sg.mas-it Ali-Nom

“The house, Ali bought (it)”

c. *BAIT/*bait-un eshtra-h Ali-un. (indefinite O - topic)

house-Nom Buy. Past-3rd.sg.mas-it Ali-Nom

“A house, Ali bought (it)”

d. BAIT /bait-an eshtra Ali-un. (indefinite O – focus, if accented)

house-Acc Buy. Past-3rd.sg.mas Ali-Nom

“A house, Ali bought”

The pattern in (8) indicates that, unlike SSA, objects in MSA can be fronted without focal accent (8a). While the stressed object is focused, the pragmatic effect of its unstressed counterpart is not completely clear⁶. Topical objects with RPs follow the same pattern in both dialects (8b,c). MSA adds an extra layer of complexity with object fronting. While fronted focused objects maintain the accusative marker (8a), sentence

⁶ It could be an example of scrambling.

(8b) shows that the fronted topical NPs with a RP should bear nominative case. Unaccented indefinite nouns are also allowed preverbally where they are not allowed in SSA (8d, 7d), and it is consistent with the unaccented fronting without a RP in (8a). It might be possible that the fronting of an unaccented NP is an instance of scrambling, a movement that is neither focus- nor topic-driven, so it will not be discussed.

To sum up, preverbal objects in MSA follow a systematic pattern regardless of their position with respect to the subject. SSA, on the other hand, has a pattern that is slightly different. The only difference is that MSA allows preverbal unaccented objects without RPs while SSA does not. Such a distinction may stem from other phenomena, for instance scrambling. However, if this effect is isolated, we can confidently say that both Arabic varieties share the basic principles of Foc/Top system which are related to: (i) word order, (ii) focal accent, and (iii) presence of RPs. In the case of focalization, fronted objects must receive a focal accent and the NP's definiteness does not matter. On the other hand, topical fronted objects must be definite. RPs are in a complementary distribution regarding these two pragmatic effects as they only (compulsorily) accompany topics. A final remark, which is not included in the data above, is that stressed fronted topical NPs are also possible, but talk about this type of topics is delayed to section (2.4).

2.3 Syntactic Analysis of Focus/Topic in Arabic

The cartographic theory of syntax does not presuppose particular syntactic processes for its left peripheral topical or focalized NPs; it simply suggests that they occupy either Spec-TopP or Spec-FocP respectively. I will follow this frame and provide a simple analysis here. Still, topics will receive a deeper analysis in the subsequent chapters.

2.3.1 Focus

The cartographic representation of preverbal focused and topical elements of Italian, as suggested by Rizzi (1997), are shown in (9a) and (9b) respectively.

(9) a. [_{ForceP} [_{TopP} [_{FocP1} [FOCUSED ELEMENT] Foc^0] [_{TopP2} [_{IP} [_{VP}]

b. [_{ForceP} [_{TopP} ([Topical Element]) $Top1^0$] [_{FocP1} [_{TopP2} ([Topical Element]) $Top2^0$] [_{IP} [_{VP} ...]

The fronted focused element in (9a) occupies the position of Spec-FocP, so it will be checked for [+focus] feature. In (9b) the fronted topical element is checked for [+topic] feature in Spec-TopP position, which can be either higher than FocP (i.e. Spec-TopP1) or lower (Spec-TopP2). I will assume that the same representation of focus/topic is valid for Arabic and construct the syntactic analysis below accordingly.

The representation in (9a) leads to at least two possible syntactic analyses. The first possibility assumes that focalized preverbal objects are base-generated in a Spec-FocP position. The other hypothesis is that the object moves from its canonical position as the complement of V to the CP's peripheral Spec-FocP position. A reliable method of deciding between these two proposals is to conduct an island test; the former but not the latter should pass the test.

I will take advantage of two island types in Arabic: complex NPs and adjunct islands. The extraction of wh-phrases out of a relative clause is subject to the island effect:

- (10) a. *Matha₁ ra'aetu al-talib-a althi istara t₁. (MSA)
 what see.pres.1st.sg the-student-Nom who borrow.past.3rs.sg.mas.
 “*What₁ do I see the student who borrowed t₁?”
- b. *Ayesh shoft al-talib alli istara. (SSA)
 what see.pres.1st.sg the-student who borrow.past.3rs.sg.mas.

The object of the main clause (“the student”) in (10) is modified by the RC (“who borrowed t₁”). The sentence-initial wh-phrase is moved from its base position as a complement for (“borrow”) inside the RC. This type of movement is banned since it violates Complex NP Island condition in both Arabic varieties.

Similarly, adjuncts constitute syntactic islands in Arabic. The sentences in (11) illustrate this fact where wh-phrases are extracted out of the subordinate clause.

- (11) a. *matha₁ Ahmed-un hathaf al-madh-a li-anna al-doctor-a
 what Ahmed-Nom drop.past.3rd the-course-Acc because the professor-Acc
 agar *t₁*. (MSA)
 assign.Past.3rd.fm.sg
 “*what₁ did Ahmed dropped the course because the doctor assigned (it₁)”
- b. *ayesh Ahmed hathaf al-madh li-anna al-doctor
 what Ahmed drop.past.3rd.ms.sg the-course because the professor
 agar *t₁*. (SSA)
 assign.Past.3rd.fm.sg

In (11), the wh-phrase (“what”) has started as a V complement within the adjunct clause. This type of extraction is banned in Arabic, which explains the ungrammaticality of the sentences in (11). Thus, adjunct clauses are indeed islands in MSA (11a) and SSA (11b).

Now, I will apply the island tests above to the fronted focused objects in both Arabic dialects. If the resultant sentences are grammatical then the targeted movement (V-complement to Spec-FocP) has not happened.

A- Complex NP Island:

- (12) a. *KITAB-AN ra’aetu al-talib-a althi istaar. (MSA)
 Book-Acc (I) see.pres.1st.sg the-student-Nom who borrow.past.3^{rs}.sg.mas.
 “A book, I saw the student who bought (it)”

b. *KITAB shoft al-talib al-li istaar. (SSA)

Book (I) see.pres.1st.sg the-student who borrow.past.3rd.sg.mas.

B- Adjunct Clause:

(13) a. * HATHA AL-KITAB-A Ahmed-un hathaf al-madh-at li-anna

This book-Acc Ahmed-Nom borrow.past.3rd the-course-Acc because

al-doctor-a agar t_I (MSA)

the professor-Acc assign.Past.3rd.fm.sg

“This book, Ahmed dropped the course because the doctor assigned (it)”

b. *HATHA AL-KITAB Ahmed hathaf al-madh li-anna

This book Ahmed drop.past.3rd the-course because

al-doctor agar t_I . (SSA)

the professor assign.Past.3rd.fm.sg

The examples in (12,13) show that the targeted focus movement is actually sensitive to islands. In (12), the fronted focused objects violate the island condition by moving out of the complex NP, while in (13) they violate the adjunct island condition. This suggests that a fronted focused object is obtained by moving this object from its original position as a complement of the verb to Spec-FocP in the left periphery. Further evidence of movement is that Foci bear accusative case which was assigned by the verb as they are head-governed in their base position.

Rizzi (1997) asserts that Italian has only one focus position within the CP's left periphery; the same is true of Arabic. Aoun et. al. (2010) claimed that MSA cannot

contain more than one focused element within the CP's left periphery. They based their argument on sentences such as the following:

- (14) a. *ayna Salim-an qabala Khalid-un
where Salim-Acc meet.past.3ms Khalid-Nom
- b. * Salim-an ayna qabala Khalid-un
Salim-Acc where meet.past.3ms Khalid-Nom

(Aoun *et .al*, 2010: 211)

Aoun and colleagues explained the ungrammaticality of sentences (14a,b) by suggesting that the fronted Wh-phrase “where” and the fronted focused object “Salim” are targeting the same position, which is Spec-FocP. The inability to accommodate these two NPs within the left periphery is seen to be evidence for the presence of no more than one FocP in the left periphery. This is also true for SSA as the sentences in (15) show.

- (15) a. *wain SALWA qabal Khalid.
Where Salwa meet.3ms.sg Khalid
“Where did SALWA meet Khalid”
- b. * SALWA wain qabal Khalid.
Salwa where meet.3ms.sg Khalid
“SALWA, Where did meet Khalid”

- c. *AL-SYYARH, MIN JEDDAH, Ali ishtara
the-car from Jeddah Ali buy.past.3sg.ms
“The CAR, from JEDDAH, Ali bought”
- d. * MIN JEDDAH, AL-SYYARH, Ali ishtara
from Jeddah the-car Ali buy.past.3sg.ms

Sentences (15a,b) show that left peripheral focused elements, the fronted object in this case, may not co-occur with the moved wh-phrase which is [+focus]. The uniqueness of the left peripheral FocP is also imposed on non-wh-phrases (15c,d); the fronted adjunct and the fronted argument cannot be focalized simultaneously.

Both Arabic varieties allow in-situ focused elements. Any sentence in (16) is acceptable as an answer to the question: What did Ahmed eat? In (16a,b), the object “dates” is focused in-situ while it’s displaced to the left periphery in (16c,d).

- (16) a. akal Ahmad-un TAMR-AN. (MSA)
Eat.past.3rdms.sg. Ahmed-Nom date.pl-Acc
“Ahmed ate DATES.”
- b. akal Ahmad TAMR. (SSA)
Eat.past.3rdms.sg. Ahmed date.pl
“Ahmed ate DATES.”
- c. TAMR-AN akal Ahmad-un. (MSA)
date.pl-Acc Eat.past.3rdms.sg. Ahmed-Nom
“DATES Ahmed ate.”

d. TAMR akal Ahmad. (SSA)

date.pl eat.past.3rdms.sg. Ahmed

However, the substitutions between the two types of focus are not always available. If (16) is a corrective response for a previous sentence in the discourse such as “Ahmed ate bananas”, then sentences (20c,d) are felicitous but (20a,b) are not.

The discussion on fronted focalized objects in Arabic concludes that these NPs are not base-generated in Spec-FocP position. The plausible analysis is that they are moved from the canonical object position to the CP’s left periphery. The evidence for this comes from the island tests which the extracted object fails to pass. Both Arabic dialects follow Rizzi’s assumption that the left periphery cannot contain more than one focus position. However, moving focused NPs to the beginning of the clause is optional; in-situ foci are allowed.

2.3.2 Topic

I will lay out the same assumptions for topics, that they are derived via movement, and apply island tests on the very same sentences. The fronted objects are topicalized (using RPs’ definite NP and no focal accent) instead of being focalized.

A- Complex NP Island:

(17) a. al-kitab-u₁ ra'aetu al-talib-a althi

The-Book-Nom see.pres.1st.sg the-student-Nom who

istaar-h₁. (MSA)

borrow.past.3^{rs}.sg.mas-it.

“The book, I saw the student who bought it”

b. al-kitab₁ shoft al-talib al-li istaar-h₁. (SSA)

the-Book (I) see.pres.1st.sg the-student who borrow.past.3^{rs}.sg.mas.

B- Adjunct Clause:

(18) a. hatha al-kitab-u Ahmed-un hathaf al-madh-at

This book-Nom Ahmed-Nom drop.past.3rd the-course

li-anna al-doctor-a agar-h (MSA)

because the professor-Acc assign.Past.3rd.fm.sg-it

“This book, Ahmed borrowed because the doctor assigned it”

b. hatha al-kitab Ahmed istalaf li-anna

This book Ahmed borrow.past.3rd.ms.sg because

al-doctor-a agar-h (SSA)

the professor-a assign.Past.3rd.fm.sg-it

Topics have passed the island tests; it strongly supports them being base-generated in Spec-TopP. Furthermore, the thematic relation between the verb and the object is present at the location of the RP.

The basic cartographic CP structure in Italian permits more than one topic position (Rizzi, 1997). To examine how Arabic accords with this principle, I posit the examples in (19).

(19) a. ataa Khalid-un Hanan-an al-kitab-a. (MSA)

give.past.3ms.sg Khalid-Non Hanan-Acc the-book-Acc

“Khalid gave Hanan the book”

b. Hanan-un₂ al-kitab-u₁ ataa-h₁ Khalid-un la-ha₂ . (MSA)

Hanan-Nom the-book-Nom give.past.3ms.sg-it Khalid-Non to-her

“Hanan, the book, Khalid gave (it) to her”

c. Hanan₂ al-kitab₁ ataa-h₁ Khalid la-ha₂ . (SSA)

Sentence (19a) shows all phrases in-situ. Sentences (19b,c), however, confirm that more than one element can be topicalized in both Arabic dialects; the indirect object “Hanan” and the direct object “the book” now appear in the CP’s left periphery as topics.

The data description at the beginning of this section shows that indefinite NPs are banned from being topics. In fact, this is a cross-linguistic tendency which is related to the nature of topics that is mentioned in section (2.2) above. As Rizzi (1997) indicated, topics refer to information that is already available. Indefinite NPs introduce

new discourse referents so, by definition, they cannot be topics (Erteschik-Shir, 2013). However, Erteschik-Shir confirms that modified indefinite NPs can be topics if they are understood to have a specific referent. The Arabic examples in (20) show how this modification works.

(20) a. *bait-un₁ ishtra-h₁ Saeed-un. (MSA)

House-Nom buy.past.3ms.sg-it Saeed-Nom

“A house Saeed bought (it)”

b. bait-u₁ Ali-in ishtra-h₁ Saeed-un. (MSA)

House-Nom Ali-Gen buy.past.3ms.sg-it Saeed-Nom

“Ali’s house Saeed bought (it)”

c. bait₁ min al-teraz al-gadeem ishtra-h₁ Saeed. (SSA)

House from the-style the-old buy.past.3ms.sg-it Saeed

“A house, of an old style, Saeed bought (it)”

Sentence (20a) is ungrammatical because the topic “a house” is indefinite. Nevertheless, indefinite topics are tolerated in (20b,c). In the former, the topic “house” is part of the possessive construction “Ali’s house” which has a restrictive function; the house is being associated with a definite NP, namely “Ali”. In the latter, the indefinite topic is modified by a restrictive relative clause that adds a high degree of uniqueness to its head NP. Still, the fact about Arabic is that bare unmodified NPs can never be topics.

Unlike foci, fronted topical NPs are immune to islands which supports them being base-generated. Arabic tolerates more than one topic within the CP's periphery. Basically, indefinite NPs cannot be topics in Arabic; however, this restriction may be evaded if the indefinites are contextually specified.

2.3.3 A comparison with Italian

We have already seen in section (2.2) that Italian Top/Foc system of the CP's left periphery is generally characterized by the following:

- (21) i. RPs must accompany topics.
- ii. Fronted focused NPs are possible without RPs.
- iii. Focus is marked with intonation; focal stress.
- iv. Non contrastive topics do not receive focal prominence.

Amazingly, those properties of focus and topic in Italian are also valid for Arabic, although both languages belong to different families. The mechanisms by which the two languages express focus and topic are fundamentally the same. This similarity may imply obedience to the same syntactic conditions for deriving focalized/topical elements, but this is not necessarily the case. Deeper studies of the distribution of foci/topics across various syntactic environments could reveal significant differences between the two languages. So, the list in (21) could expand to include items that are not valid for Arabic. However, this similar syntactic behavior of focus/topic in the

targeted environment could stem from other shared typological properties such as the flexibility of NPs' resumption.

2.4 Contrastive Topics:

The data above provides an illustration of focus and topic in Arabic. Yet, when they cooperate with each other an important pragmatic effect arises: "Contrastive Topic (CT)". This section presents a brief explanation of CTs and how they are expressed in Arabic.

2.4.1 What are CTs?

The interaction between the notions of topicality and contrastiveness was noticed early in the literature. The term "Contrastive Topic" was introduced in (Kuno, 1973), as cited in (Tomioka, 2009). They are largely studied in the context of *Information Structure*. CTs are mainly used when the speaker highlights new information within a frame of already mentioned, old information (Lee, 1999). Lee explains that contrast in CTs is limited to a set of alternatives in the speaker's mind imposed by the discourse. Krifka (2007) considers a CT to "consist of an aboutness topic that contains a focus, which is doing what focus always does, namely indicating an alternative ..., in this case alternative topics". Consider this example from Krifka (2007):

(22) A: Where were you (at the time of the murder)?

B: [[I]_{Focus}]_{Topic} [was [at HOME]_{Focus}]_{Comment}

(Krifka,2007: 45)

Assume that the pronoun “you” in question (A) is plural where it refers to a group of people. The common ground is that both interlocutors are aware of the members of that group. Logically, the hearer himself is a member of the group. Answer (B) asserts that one member, the respondent, is the topic for the comment “*at home*”. Focalization of this topic indicates the presence of other possible topics; in this case, the rest of the suspects’ group. Thus, the answer in (B) can be restated: “*as far as I’m concerned, I (but not the other members of the group) was at HOME (not at the crime scene or anywhere else)*”. Thus, “I” is being treated as a Contrastive Topic which stands in contrast with the other members of the suspects regarding the validity of the comment; it is certainly valid for “I” but no confirmation for the others. “HOME” is being in-situ focalized as a specified locus among unspecified alternatives.

Cross-linguistically, CTs are expressed in the majority of languages by utilizing strategies that may include intonational, morphological and/or syntactic cues (Lee *et.*

al., 2007). For example, “B-accent” is associated with CTs in English as an intonational marker (Molnar, 2002)⁷.

2.4.2 Contrastive Topics in Arabic.

As the definition above shows, CTs should demonstrate properties of both focus and topic. As we will see below, Arabic data demonstrates these features of CTs.

A good way to obtain CTs is to create scenarios where the pragmatic effects of CTs are needed. Imagine this scenario: you meet a friend who is carrying several books for his brother (represented by the set M):

M= {math, history, biology, philosophy}

Then you ask him: *Where did your brother get these books from?* And the answer is:

(23) a. [KITABU AL-AHIA-I₁]_{CT} [ashtra-h₁ min Amazon]_{COMMENT}. (MSA)

Book-Nom the-biology-Gen buy.past.2nd-it from Amazon

“THE BIOLOGY BOOK, he bought (it) from Amazon”

⁷ It is important to mention here that the linguistic processes (syntactic, morphological, pragmatic....) involved in the derivation of CTs are not uniformed across languages. In Japanese, for example, they can be relevant to new information; just like foci (Tomioka, 2010).

b. [KITABU AL-AHIA₁]_{CT} [ashtra-h₁ min Amazon]_{COMMENT}. (SSA)

Book the-biology (he) buy.past.3rd-it from Amazon

The answer in (23) is partial given that the respondent referred to only one of the four books, yet, it is fully accepted. The clause consists of a topic (“the biology book”) and a comment (“bought it from Amazon”). The key point here is that the topic part of the clause is being focused since it is marked with focal stress which gives rise to the presence of other alternatives. Therefore, this type of topic is called a Contrastive Topic. Here the CT “the biology book” is in contrast with the other members of M. It is important to notice that no other member of M may satisfy the comment in (23); the hearer anticipates that only “the biology book” is bought from Amazon.

It seems that both Arabic varieties, MSA in (23a) and SSA in (23b), adopt the same strategy in deriving CTs. In either dialect, CTs must have a topical feature of being fronted and resumed with an RP in the base position of the targeted object. CTs also bear a focus attribute which is the focal accent. MSA (23a) adds another significant topic marker which is the overt nominative case marker on the fronted NP.

2.4.3 A Hypothesis on CTs Formation.

The accumulated facts on Foci, Topics and CTs show that CTs share at least two topic features: resumption and bearing nominative case marking. They also overlap with

focus in having focal accent. The combination of these features indicates that deriving CTs must be checked by both heads: Top^0 and Foc^0 . Based on these facts, this paper claims that a Contrastive Topic has started as a base-generated topic in Spec-TopP position where it is related to a RP in the corresponding object position and then moved to a focus position (Spec-FocP) where it picks up the focal accent. As (24) shows, the formation of CTs happens entirely within the left periphery.



Section 5 lays the syntactic foundation for deriving focalized and topical objects in Arabic. Depending on the properties of focus and topic, three arguments in favor of this hypothesis are introduced below.

2.4.4 Defending the Current Hypothesis

As section 3.2.1. shows, Arabic assigns only one focus position within the CP's left periphery. To take advantage of this property, I will combine it with: (i) the widely-accepted assumption that a fronted wh-phrase is in a focus position (Aoun et. al. 2010) and (ii) fronted focused adjuncts.

i. Fronted Wh-Phrase:

(25) a. *Min* al-banat qabal-hum. (SSA)

Who the-girls kiss.past.mas.3rd.sg-them

“Who was the girl he kissed?”

b. Ali AL-BANAT qabal-hum.

Ali the-girls kissed-them

“Ali, the girls he kissed (them)”

c. **Min* AL-BANAT qabal-hum.

Who the-girls kiss.past.mas.3rd.sg-them

“Who THE GIRLS kissed (them)?”

In (25a), *Min* “who”, which correspond to the subject, is in a focus position while the object, “the girls”, is topical. In (25b), the object is in a contrastive topic position where the elements appear in an SOV word order. The current hypothesis claims that a contrastive topic occupies a focus position. Consequently, contrastive topics may not co-occur with a wh-phrase that occupies a left peripheral focus position. In fact, the hypothesis makes the right prediction. The ungrammaticality of (25c) is a result of having two focused elements in the left periphery, the object as a contrastive topic and the wh-subject-phrase as a focus.

ii. Focalized Fronted Adjunct:

(26) a. Najwa shaf-at al-tair ala al-satih.

Najwa see.past.-2nd.fm.sg. the-bird on the-roof

“Najwa saw the bird on the roof”

b. [ALA AL-SATIH]_{Foc} Najwa shaf-at al-tair.

on the-roof Najwa see.past.-2nd.fm.sg. the-bird

“ON THE ROOF Najwa saw the bird”

c. *[AL-TAIR₁]_{CT} [ALA AL-SATIH]_{Foc} Najwa shaf-at-uh₁.

the-bird on the-roof Najwa see.past.-2nd.fm.sg-it

“THE BIRD, ON THE ROOF, Najwa saw (it)”

d. [AL-TAIR₁]_{CT} [ala al-satih]_{Top} Najwa shaf-at-uh₁.

the-bird on the-roof Najwa see.past.-2nd.fm.sg-it

“THE BIRD, on the roof, Najwa saw (it)”

e. ?[ala al-satih]_{Top} [AL-TAIR₁]_{CT} Najwa shaf-at-uh₁.

on the-roof the-bird Najwa see.past.-2nd.fm.sg-it

“On the roof, THE BIRD, Najwa saw (it)”

f. *[AL-TAIR₁]_{CT1} [AL-SATIH₂]_{CT2} Najwa shaf-at-uh₁ ala-ih₂.

the-bird on the-roof Najwa see.past.-2nd.fm.sg on-it

“THE BIRD, ON THE ROOF, Najwa saw (it)”

In (26a), both the adjunct and the object are in-situ. On the other hand, the adjunct is focalized within the CP’s left periphery in (26b). The hypothesis suggests that

the occupation of the unique Spec-FocP in the left periphery by the focalized fronted adjunct will block the formation of the CT; Spec-TopP to Spec-FocP movement will not be available. This actually turns out to be true, which explains the ungrammaticality of (26c) and supports the current position. I have already shown in section (2.3.2) that Arabic allows multiple topics within the CP's left periphery. Consequently, CTs may co-occur with other topics within the left periphery; however, the order matters. The preference is that the CT precedes the topical phrase as in (26d). The reverse order, (26e), is also grammatical and accepted but not preferred. Along the lines of this argument, a clause may not have more than one CT within the left periphery; they would be competing for the unique Spec-FocP position. Sentence (26f) shows that this is true. Apart from the object, the adjunct is also contrastively focused. Here, the adjunct appears as a bare NP which is accented and resumed by a RP within the PP in the base position.

Argument A of this section has proven that, in CT constructions, the unique peripheral Spec-FocP position is occupied by either the CT or its trace, given that a Foc-phrase is sandwiched between two Top-phrases (Rizzi, 1997). Accordingly, we would have the two proposals shown in (27).

(27) a. [_{ForceP} [_{TopP1} .. CT_{1..}][_{FocP.. t₁'..}][_{TopP2}]...[IP...t_{1..}]]

b. [_{ForceP1} [_{TopP1}]][_{Foc} CT_{1..}][_{TopP2 ..t₁...}]...[IP ...]] (the current proposal)

We have already established in section 3 that left peripheral Foc-phrases are sensitive to islands because they are derived by movement which is represented by the lower movement in (26a); t_1 -to- t_1' . In this first proposal, CTs require a further Spec-FocP to Spec-TopP₍₁₎ movement. On the other hand, (27b) illustrates that CTs are generated in Spec-TopP, then displaced to Spec-FocP by only one movement which totally occurs in the CP's left periphery. The current paper argues for the latter proposal. If my hypothesis (27b) is on the right path, CTs should be immune to islands effects while (27a) suggests the opposite.

Complex NP Island:

Imagine this scenario: a policeman is questioning a man who had a number of his belongings stolen on different occasions. The policeman asked him: *Do you suspect anybody?* The man gave the answer in (28).

(28) AL-MAHMOOL₁ arif al-rajal althi saraq-h₁. (SSA)

The-laptop (I) know.pres.1st.sg the-man who steal.past.3rs.sg.mas-it.

“THE LAPTOP₁, I know the man who stole it₁”

Adjunct Clause:

(29) AL-ULUM₁, bi-tekon moshkilah etha Saeed ma adda-ha₁.

The-science (it) will-be problem if Saeed not pass.past.3rd.sg.mas-it

“SCIENCE₁, it will be a problem if Saeed didn’t pass it₁.” (not the other subjects)

As sentences (28, 29) show, CTs have passed the indicated island tests. This gives credit for the current hypothesis (27b) as it predicts the grammaticality of such sentences.

According to the facts in section 4, topics in Arabic are incompatible with indefinite nouns. Since CTs have started as topics, the prediction is that indefinite CTs are banned in Arabic.

(30) a. AL-WALAD Ali be-shaf-h fi Jeddah

The-boy Ali future-see.3rd.sg-him in Jeddah.

“The boy, Ali will see (him) in Jeddah”

b. *WALAD Ali be-shaf-h fi Jeddah. (SSA)

boy Ali future-see.3rd.sg-him in Jeddah.

“A boy, Ali will see (him) in Jeddah”

c. *WALAD-AN Ali-un sawfa yara-h fi Jeddah. (MSA)

boy Ali-Nom future see.3rd.sg-him in Jeddah.

“A boy, Ali will see in Jeddah”

As expected, the grammatical sentence with the CT (30a) becomes unacceptable as the NP in the CT position is substituted with its indefinite counterpart in SSA (30b) and in MSA (30c)⁸.

This section proves that Arabic CTs have started as base-generated topics in the CP's left periphery and then moved to the unique peripheral focus position. Evidence first comes from CTs' immunity to island tests as they are originated within the CP's periphery. Moreover, CTs may not co-occur with a peripheral focused element. Finally, indefinite NPs are banned from being CTs, which supports the idea that CTs have originated as topics.

2.5 Interim Conclusion

This chapter has briefly introduced the Focus/Topic system in two Arabic dialects (SSA, MSA) following Rizzi's (1997) analysis. Both varieties follow the same

⁸ We have seen that indefinite NPs can be topical if specified. On the other hand specified indefinite CTs are not clearly accepted:

- (i) #BAIT₁ min al-teraz al-gadeem ishtra-h₁ Saeed. (SSA)
House from-the-style the-old buy.past.3ms.sg-it Saeed
“A HOUSE, of an old style, Saeed bought (it)”

principles in expressing topics and foci which actually are very similar to Romance languages. Topics must be dislocated to the left periphery and accompanied by RPs. Foci, on the other hand, receive focal accent and are not accompanied by RPs if moved to the left periphery of the CP. Indefinite NPs may not be topical unless restrictively modified.

I also presented a proposal on CT formation where CTs are base-generated in a Spec-TopP position and then moved to Spec-FocP. The interaction between focus and topic characteristics in Arabic that appears in CTs actually adds to the current proposal. The belief that Arabic CTs are focalized topics implies the presence of all topic properties without excluding the possibilities of picking up more features as the topics move to other positions. This is evidenced by: having RPs, banning indefinite NPs and changing the case marker.

Since both varieties, MSA and SSA, did not show a significantly different behavior, I would adopt only MSA for the rest of the arguments in this research. However, I will use the term “Arabic”. Moreover, the syntactic account of topics in this chapter is initial and performed in correspondence to Rizzi (1997). Although Rizzi’s analysis is too simplistic, it can be used as a base for a deeper exploration of these topics. Chapter 4 will assert the proposal that topics are left peripheral elements but with more in-depth details.

Chapter 3

PREVERBAL SUBJECTS

3.1 Introduction

As mentioned in section (1.4.2), many studies show that the unmarked word order for Arabic is VSO. In principle, all logical V-S-O permutations are possible as in (1)⁹.

(1) a. eshtara Ali-un al-baut-a

Buy.past.3ms Ali-Nom the-house-Acc

“Ali bought a house.”

b. eshtara al-baut-a Ali-un

Buy.past.3ms the-house-Acc Ali-Nom

c. Ali-un eshtara al-baut-a

Ali-Nom buy.past.3ms the-house-Acc

d. Ali-un al-baut-a eshtara

Ali-Nom the-house-Acc buy.past.3ms

⁹ I provided the English translation for (1a) only because the aim is just to show that the permutations are possible.

e. al-baut-a eshtara Ali-un
 the-house-Acc buy.past.3ms Ali-Nom

f. al-baut-a Ali-un eshtara
 the-house-Acc Ali-Nom buy.past.3ms

The Arabic literature indicates that the debate over the unmarked word order is narrowed to the most frequently used VSO (1a) and SVO (1c) permutations. Consequently, settling the issue over preverbal subject would be decisive in determining the basic word order. I am sided in this paper with the position that VSO is the unmarked order. I will list several arguments in section (3.3) confirming that pre- and postverbal subjects are distinguished. The latter is a genuine subject while the former is on par with topicalized constituents. Section (3.4) indicates that focal preverbal subjects are still problematic, as they are not allowed without resumptive pronouns.

3.2 Subjects or topics?

There have been many analyses for preverbal subjects in the literature. Aoun *et al.* (2010) reviewed two main views of preverbal subjects which are sketched in (2b,c):

(2) a. Reem-un akalat al-moaz-a.

 Reem-Nom eat.past.3rd.fm.sg the-banana-Acc

 “Reem ate the banana”

b. [IP [NP Reem_i] [akalat_j] [VP t_i [t_j] [DP al-moaza]]]

c. [TopP [NP Reem_i]]+ [IP [akalat_j] [VP RP_i [t_j] [DP al-moaza]]]

Both proposals suggest that the subject *Reem* is base-generated in Spec-VP while the verb is raised to the head of IP. In (2b), the subject is optionally moved to Spec-IP; this movement is optional to account for pre- and post-verbal subjects. The crucial issue here is that both positions are genuine A-positions. In (2c), the NP *Reem* is moved to the CP's left periphery as a topic and leaves a resumptive pronoun (RP) at its base position. The movement is triggered by the need to check the [+Top] feature.

As I am adopting the analysis in (2c), it is crucial to show that the topicalized preverbal subject is co-indexed with a clause-internal RP. It is claimed that Arabic allows pro-drop on the condition of having full subject-verb agreement that includes person, gender and, more importantly, number (Kenstowicz, 1989). I believe there are two misconceptions here. First, the term “pro-drop” is misused since there is no subject drop in Arabic, as I will explain. Second, all cases of subject-verb agreement in perfective form include only person and gender but not number. The sentences in (3) illustrate the cliticization of the subject.

(3) a. yahduru al-tulab-u al-mohadarat-a.

Attend.pres.3ms the-students-Nom the-lecture-Acc

“The students are attending the lecture”

b. yahduru-na al-mohadarat-a.

Attend.pres.3ms-they the-lecture-Acc

“They are attending the lecture”

The subject in (3a) is overtly realized as the R-expression “the students”; the verb agrees with the subject in person and gender only. On the other hand, (3b) is traditionally claimed to have a subject drop where the verb has an additional number agreement. I believe, however, that number agreement is actually realized on a cliticized pronominal subject, which may also function as an RP for the topicalized subject. One support for this position is that number agreement is realized through a suffix, “-na” in (3b). This bound morpheme shows a clitic behavior similar to the object RP. It is cliticized verb-finally and has its own system of agreement with the referent; the discussions in this chapter support this position. Thus, what is believed to be a verb-subject number agreement is, in fact, a pronominal-referent agreement.

Medieval Arab linguists have already proposed this analysis. They treated preverbal subjects as topics co-indexed with resumptive verbal clitics which they called non-separated pronouns (in contrast with separated pronouns such as *nahn* “we”); below are the clitics for perfective forms¹⁰.

¹⁰ The imperfective form of the verb have both a number agreement and an RP. The former is expressed by a prefix in the case of first person only (*aa-* “I”; *na-* “we”) and the latter is cliticized verb-finally.

Number	Singular		Dual		Plural	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F
1 st Person	-tu	-tu	-na	-na	-na	-na
2 nd Person	-ta	-ti	-tuma	-tuma	-tum	-tun
3 rd Person	_____	_____	-a	-ata	-u	-n

3.3 Topicalized Preverbal Subjects

There is accumulated evidence supporting the opinion that preverbal subjects are topics. Below are listed a number of facts illustrating that preverbal subjects not only differ from postverbal subjects but also how they are aligned with topics. However, the next chapter would show that not all preverbal subjects are topicalized.

3.3.1 No Indefinite Preverbal Subjects

Indefinite bare NPs are allowed as postverbal subjects (4a), while the same sentence would be ungrammatical as SV (4b). Thus, they might be topics; taking into

account that being definite/specified is a condition for NPs to be topics in Arabic as explained in chapter 2.

- (4) a. jaa walad-un
 came.past.3ms boy-Nom.indef
 ‘A boy came.’
- b. *walad-un jaa
 boy-Nom.indef came.past.3ms

(Aoun *et.al*, 2010: 3-38)

3.3.2 VOS Word Order

The subject in SOV, which is a possible word order (5), cannot be within the A-domain since it appears before a preverbal object which, itself, is in A'-domain (Aoun *et.al*, 2010).

- (5) Omar-u al-tofatat-u akal-ha
 Omar-Nom the-apple-Nom eat.past.3ms-it
 “Omar, the apple, he ate (it).”

3.3.3 Verbal Clitics

Further evidence is that nominal post-verbal subjects may not co-occur with clitic subjects (6) which is also the case with the uncontroversial clitic objects (6b). This

co-occurrence is ungrammatical since, according to the adopted analysis, more than one NP occupies the subject position.

(6) a. yahduru-(*na₁) al-tulab₁-u al-mohadarat-a.

Attend.pres.3ms.(-they) the-students-Nom the-lecture-Acc

“The students are attending (they) the lecture.”

b. yahduru-(*ha₁) al-tulab-u al-mohadarat₁-a.

Attend.pres.3ms(-it) the-students-Nom the-lecture-Acc

“The students are attending (*-it) the lecture.”

On the other hand, topicalized arguments must co-occur with pronominal clitics whether in the case of topical objects (7a) or, as I argue, topical subjects (7b).

(7) a. al-mohadarat₁-u yahduru-*(ha₁) al-tulab₁-u .

the-lecture-Nom Attend.pres.3ms-it the-students-Nom

“The lecture, the students are attending (-it).”

b. al-tulab₁-u yahduru-*(na₁) al-mohadarat-a.

the-students-Nom Attend.pres.3ms the-lecture-Acc

“The students are attending (-they) the lecture”

3.3.4 Agreement

I would also take an advantage of a unique Arabic subject-verb agreement pattern. When the subject is a conjoined NP, the verb agrees only with the first conjunct as in (8).

(8) a. thahab-at al-banat-u wa anta ela al-suq.

Go.past.3.fm the-girl.pl-Nom and you to the-market

“The girls and you went to the market”

b. thahabt-a anta wa al-banat-u ela al-suq.

Go.past.2.ms you and the-girl.pl-Nom to the-market

“You and the girls went to the market”

The verb in (8a) shows person and gender agreement only with the first NP “the girls” but not with the other conjoined subject “you”. Likewise, the verb in (8b) agrees only with the first conjoined subject even if the two NPs are swapped. However, conjoined preverbal subjects do not trigger such differences as in (9).

(9) a. al-banat-u wa anta thahabt-um ela al-suq.

the-girl.pl-Nom and you Go.past.2ms-you.pl to the-market

“The girls and you went to the market”

b. anta wa al-banat-u thahabt-um ela al-suq.

you and the-girl.pl-Nom Go.past.2ms-you.pl to the-market

“You and the girls went to the market”

Both preverbal conjuncts in (9) triggers the same morpheme [-um] which stands for a plural referent. This is exactly the type of RP needed to topicalize the preverbal conjuncts. The morpheme [-um] is actually a pronominal subject choosing the right referent which is a process that does not impose any restrictions on the order of the represented conjuncts.

Regardless of any independent analysis of this subject agreement phenomenon, it indicates that pre- and post-verbal subjects are fundamentally different and highly possible that they belong to different categories bearing different relations to the verb; in the adopted view, these categories are subjects and topics.

3.3.5 Topical Reading

Preverbal subjects are strongly realized as topics when the discourse prefers topical subjects. In a response to a question like *what are the students doing?* sentence (10a) with a preverbal subject, is favored over VSO (10b).

- (10) a. al-tulab-u yugadir-un al-binayat-a
The-students-Nom leave.pres.3ms-they the-building-Acc
“As for the students, they are leaving the building.”
- b. #yugadir al-tulab-u al-binayat-a
leave.pres.3ms the-students-Nom the-building-Acc
“The students are leaving the building.”

In the meanwhile, sentences in (10') indicates that the felicitousness is switch if the question is *what is happening?* which neutralizes the topicality of any arguments.

- (10') a. #al-tulab-u yugadir-un al-binayat-a
 The-students-Nom leave.pres.3ms-they the-building-Acc
 “As for the students, they are leaving the building.”
- b. yugadir al-tulab-u al-binayat-a
 leave.pres.3ms the-students-Nom the-building-Acc
 “The students are leaving the building.”

3.3.6 Passing Island Tests

Section (2.3.2) demonstrates that topicalized objects are base-generated within the left periphery as they successfully passed the island tests. If preverbal subjects receive the same analysis, they should pass the island tests.

- (11) a. al-banat₁-u yarifu Ali-un al-kitab₂-a althi yufadil-
 The-girls-Nom know.pres.3ms Ali-Nom the-book-Acc that prefer.pres.3-
 na₁-hu₂
 they.fm-it
 “(As for) the girls, Ali knows the book they like (it).”
- b. al-ommal₁-u aghlaqat Hind-un al-nafithat-a li-anna
 the-workers-Nom close.past.3fm Hind-Nom the-window-Acc because
 al-tifl₂-a azaj-u₁-hu₂

the-baby-Acc disturb.past-they-him

“(As for) the workers, Hind closed the window because they disturbed the baby.”

The sentences in (11) show that preverbal subjects have passed the island tests; they are indeed peripheral constituents. In (11a), the preverbal subject “the girls” is related to the verb “prefer” that is enclosed within a complex NP island. The adjunct island in (11b) shows that the sentence-initial topical subject “the workers” can be related to the verb of “because” clause.

3.4 Focalized Preverbal Subjects

The position I adopt suggests that plural morphology on the verb stands for a subject RP. If we compare subjects with objects, we find the following pattern. In statements, focused objects can be fronted without an RP (12b) but focused fronted subjects cannot (12c). Hence, fronted subjects do behave differently from fronted objects. The strange thing is that interrogating subjects (13a), where the question phrase is focused, are grammatical without RPs; a *wh*-phrase extraction that leaves a trace. This is normal for focal objects because they can leave traces (13b). sentence (12d) indicates that subjects may be focalized in-situ.

- (12) a. qaraa al-tulab-u al-qisat-a
 Read.past.3rd the-students-Nom the-story-Acc
 “The students read the story”
 b. AL-QISAT₁-A qaraa al-tulab-u *t*₁.

the-story-Acc read.past.3rd the-students-Num.

“THE STORY, the student read”

c. AL-TULAB₁-U qaraa*(-u₁) al-qisat-a.

the-students-Nom read.past.3ms(-they) the-story-Acc

“The STUDENTS read the story.”

d. qaraa AL-TULAB-U al-qisat-a

Read.past.3 the-students-Nom the-story-Acc

“The STUDENTS read the story”

(13) a. min₁ qaraa *t_l* al-qisat-a?

who read.past.3rd.ms the-story-Acc

“who read the story?”

b. matha₁ qaraa al-tulab-u *t_l*?

what read.past.3ms the-students-Nom

“What did the students read?”

The other puzzle is regarding the ban on fronted focused indefinite subjects. If the fronted subject is unfocused and indefinite, the sentence is also ungrammatical (14c). Indefinite focused objects, however, can be fronted (14b). Indefinite subjects can be focalized in-situ (14d).

(14) a. ishtarar bint-un qalam-an

Buy.past.3.fm girl-Nom pen-Acc

“A girl bought a pen”

b. QALAMA₁-AN ishtarat bint-un *t*₁

pen-Acc buy.past.fm girl-Nom

“A PEN, a girl bought.”

c. *BINT₁-UN ishtarat *t*₁ qalam-an

“A GIRL bought a pen.”

d. ishtarat BINT-UN qalam-an

“A GIRL bought a pen”

I think the three issues in (12-14) are strongly related. For the subject/object asymmetry in (12), it is well established cross-linguistically that subjects resist extraction more than objects (Rizzi & Shlonsky, 2007). Nevertheless, the degree of subject resistance is not compelling enough to cancel the extraction requirement of the *wh*-phrase as in (13a).

The obligatory presence of subject RPs in statements leads to the phenomenon in (14). The RP enforces a topical reading for the preverbal subject, which explains the ungrammaticality of (14c). It also explains why definite preverbal subjects, as in the grammatical version of (12c), have a contrastive topic reading; they are topics which have moved to Spec-FocP. Therefore, speakers tend to focalize subjects in-situ, as in (12d), if a contrastive topic reading is not needed.

As a conclusion, this chapter has presented with enough evidence that preverbal subjects are actually topics. There are still mysteries regarding focalized

preverbal subjects where I tried to offer an initial analysis. However, focus issues are not central to the main argument of this study as much as the topicality status of preverbal subjects.

Chapter 4

ARABIC CLAUSE ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The deliberations in this chapter will show the crucial role topics play in certain Arabic clauses. This new analysis suggests that left peripheral elements may have more interaction with central constituents than previously thought. Earlier chapters have introduced the notion of topicality regarding subjects and objects. However, a full understanding of topicalized arguments will not be obtained without examining the structure of verbless, copulative and equative sentences.

There are four parts in this chapter. The first views predicate types in Arabic and their mainstream analyses. The second highlights some gaps in those analyses that are left without satisfactory answers. The third examines some recent work to bridge the gaps in the earlier studies. However, these attempts have their own challenges so, in the final part of the chapter, I propose a new hypothesis on Arabic clausal structures based on an understanding of the left periphery of the clause. A topicality condition for Arabic clauses is, eventually, introduced. It will divide topics into predicative and free topics. Only the first type, which includes topicalized arguments, can satisfy the topicality condition.

4.2 Predicates in Arabic

There are four constructions in which predicate relations can basically be expressed in Arabic. They include the verbless, equative, copulative and regular verb predicates. There are also complex constructions that will be brought up later in the discussion. Arab grammarians¹¹ have traditionally categorized these constructions into either nominal or verbal sentences. Generally, verbal sentences are V-initial, while nominal sentences correspond to what they call *mubtada-khabar* that, to some degree, are similar to topic-comment constructions. Consequently, copulative and regular verb predicates are verbal clauses while verbless and equative predicates are nominal. Below is a detailed description of each type along with some of their earlier syntactic accounts.

4.2.1 Verbless Sentences

As the name of this predicate type suggests, it does not have an overt verbal element. A controversy over a covert/deleted verb has been extensively debated through

¹¹ Here I am referring to the linguists of the medieval ages (5th-15th centuries) including, among many others,:

- a. Sibawayh (died 796)
- b. Alfarahidi (died 786)
- c. Ibn Jinni (died 1002)
- d. Inb Malik (died 1274)

Arabic grammar is relatively settled for the last 6 centuries. People usually do not refer directly to the work of those scholars but to later grammar books that elicited and summarized earlier deliberations; see (Michael, 1973) for the significance of Sibawayh's contributions.

the literature. The subject and the predicate of this construction are both marked with nominative case (1).

(1) a. al-sairat-u bait-u-hu

The-car-Nom house-Nom-his

“The car is his house”

b. al-jaw-u jamil-un

the-weather-Non nice-Nom

“The weather is nice”

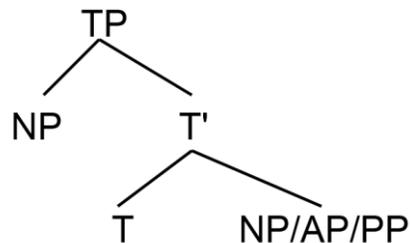
c. al-kitab-u ala al-tawilat-i

the-book-Nom on the-table-Gen

“The book is on the table”

A sentence of this type consists of a subject and a predicate that can be an NP (1a), an AP (1b) or a PP (1c). The majority of linguists (Bakir 1980, Ayoub 1981, Doron 1986, Shlonsky 1997, Benmamoun 2000, Aoun et.al. 2010 and many others) believe that sentences like (1) are actually verbless; they do not project VP. Their main argument is based on the absence of the accusative case marker on the predicate that verbs discharge on their NP complements. Benmamoun (2008) suggests the clausal structure in (2) for verbless sentences.

(2) Benmamoun (2008: 110):



4.2.2 Copular Sentences

Copular sentences, like verbless sentences, involve a subject and a predicate but they are linked by a copulative verb. The NP/AP¹² predicate, unlike verbless sentences, receives accusative case as in (3a,b). Another important difference between verbless and copular sentences is that the former is understood to be in present tense while the latter may indicate past (3a) or future (3b). The copular verb, like other verbs, agrees with the subject in gender and person. The subject can also be realized as a pronominal clitic (3c).

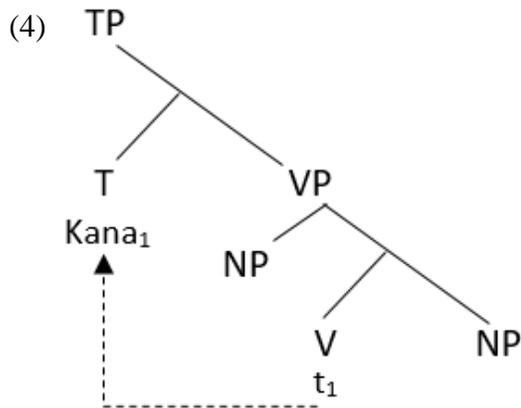
- (3) a. kanat al-sairat-u bait-a-hu
 Be.past.3fm The-car-Nom house-Acc-his
 “The car was his house”

¹² PPs are also possible as copular verb complements but they do not receive case markers.

b. sayakun al-jaw-u jamil-an
 be.fut.3ms the-weather-Non nice-Acc
 “The weather is nice”

c. kun-na fi al-maktab-i
 be.past.1-we at the-office-Gen
 “We were at the office”

The dominant view on the syntactic structure of copular sentences is that they are identical to regular verbs as illustrated in (4). *Kana* is base generated at V^0 then it moves to T^0 for tense morphology.

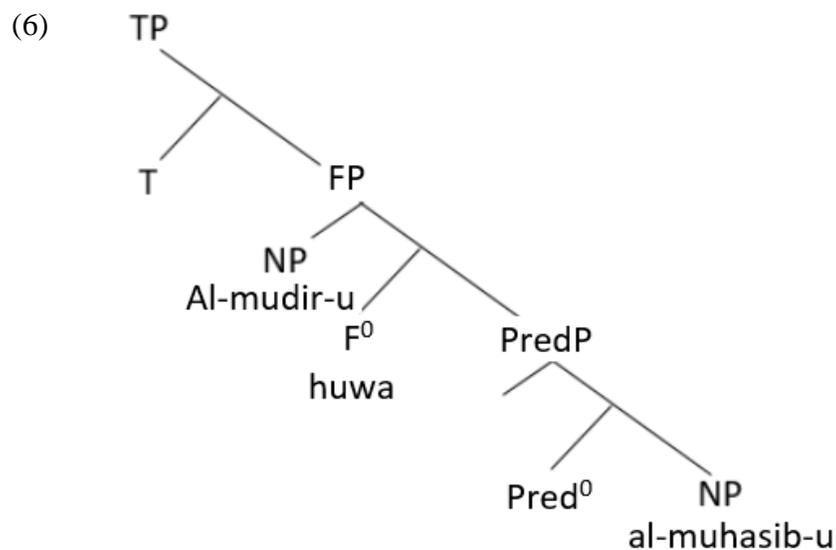


4.2.3 Equative Sentences

In this construction, both the subject and the predicate are identical in terms of being definite NPs as in (5). The presence of a third-person pronoun, in this case *huwa* “he”, is obligatory; otherwise, the second NP will be construed as a modifier for the first; “The accountant manager...”.

- (5) Al-mudir-u *(huwa) al-muhasib-u
 The-manager-Nom he the-accountant-Nom
 “The manager is the accountant”

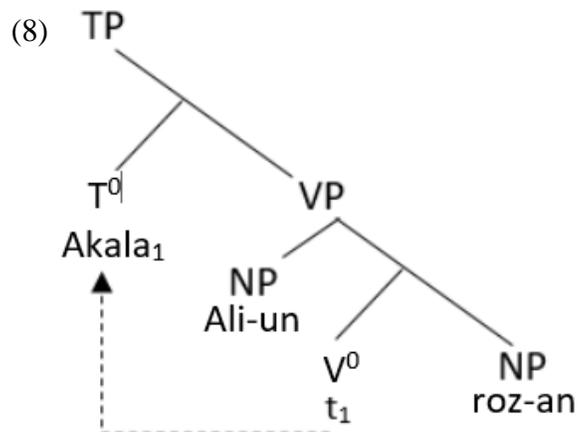
Eid (1991) suggest that *huwa* serves as an identity predicate. Choueiri (2016) proposes a very recent analysis of the equative sentence. She postulated a functional projection FP whose head hosts *huwa* and agrees with the subject in its specifier. *Huwa* is base generated at F⁰ and FP is sandwiched between TP and PredP as in (6).



4.2.4 Main Verb

The verb in this construction represents the predicate which takes a number of arguments depending on its theta grid. A two-place predicate like *akala* “eat” in (7) has a syntactic analysis (8) identical to that of the copular in (4).

- (7) *akala* *Ali-un* *roz-an*
Eat.past.ms Ali-Nom rice-Acc
“Ali ate rice”



4.3 Challenges for Earlier Analyses

4.3.1 Subject Asymmetry

By examining more data, we find that indefinite/unspecified subjects in verbless (9b), copular (9b) and equative sentences (9c) are not allowed. Meanwhile, verbal predicates may accept both definite and indefinite subjects as in (10).

(9) a. al-sairat-u/*sairat-un jadidat-un

The-car-Nom new-Nom

“The car/ a car is new”

b. kanat al-sairat-u/*sairat-u jadidat-an

was the-car-Nom new-Acc

“The car/ car was new”

c. Al-mudir-u/*mudir-u huwa al-muhasib-u

The-manager-Nom he the-accountant-Nom

“The manager/a manager is the accountant”

(10) ishtara al-rajul-u/rajul-un bait-an

Buy.past.3ms the-man-Nom house-ACC

“The man/a man bought a house”

The reviewed mainstream accounts do not provide an explanation of this subject asymmetry between verbal predicates on one side and the rest of the predicates on the other.

4.3.2 *kana* Subject.

Previous analysis assumed that *kana* and the main verb share the same subject as in (11a), which is shown by the agreement morphology for each verb. Actually, this is not always the case; *kana* may have its own subject that is not co-referenced with the subject of the main verb. Sentence (11b) shows that “the assignment” is the subject of *kana* while the main verb takes “the students” as its subject.

- (11) a. (kana-t) al-talibat-u₁ yu-raji-na₁ al-wajib-a.
(were-fm) the-student-Nom revise-they.fm the-assignment-Acc
“The students are (were) revising the assignment”
- b. (kana) al-wajib-u₁ tu-raji-hu₁ al-talibat-u.
(was.ms) the-assignment-Nom revise-it.ms the-student.fm-Nom
“The assignment, the students are (were) revising”

In (11b), *kana* shows a 3rd person masculine agreement with the adjacent NP “the assignment”¹³. The main verbs agrees with the NP “the students (female)” through the prefix *tu-* (it would be *yu-* in case of masculine). Thus, it is a fact that each verb has its own subject.

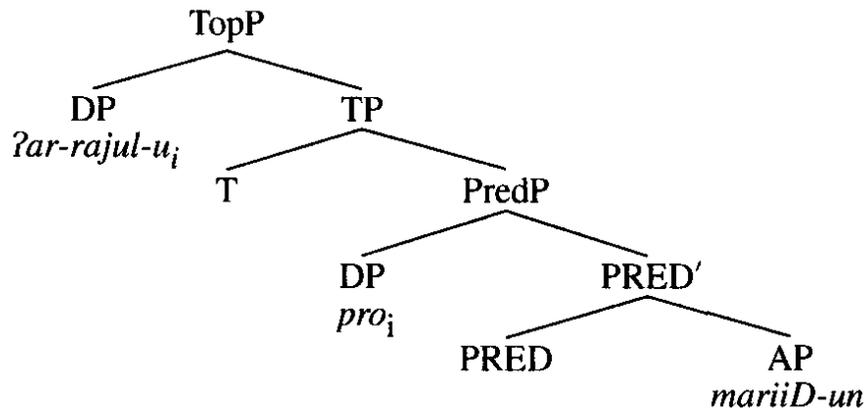
¹³ Arabic NPs must be specified for gender.

4.4 Recent Work on Arabic predicates

Before I introduce the proposed analysis of Arabic predicates, I will first review some recent studies where some of the gaps above have been noted and taken into consideration.

4.4.1 Alblushi (2011;2013)

Alblushi's concentration was to account for case assignment in copular and verbless sentences. In the course of his argument, he proposes structure for both constructions. He revives and modifies an idea that originated in Bakir (1980). Bakir claimed that verbless sentences are underlyingly composed of four elements: topic, copular verb, pronominal subject, and predicate; then the verb and the subject are deleted. However, according to Alblushi, this suggestion fails to explain why the predicate is still appearing in nominative case. What is important for our discussion is that Bakir's proposal views the initial NP in verbless constructions as a topic, which solves the problem of definiteness raised in (9a). Alblushi puts forward the following construction to account for verbless sentences.



(Alblushi, 2013:9)

Alblushi believes that there is no VP projection but a predicate phrase. The subject of PredP is a *pro* that is co-indexed with a base-generated topic as a specifier of a left-peripheral TopP. This could be the most plausible structure that accounts for topicality effects and case assignment. Still, there is a phenomenon in Arabic verbless sentences that may pose a problem for Alblushi’s analysis. The subject of PredP can be indefinite if the predicate is a PP, but the predicate must precede the subject as in (12).

(12) a. *awlad-un fi al-hadiqat-i

Boy.pl-Nom in the-park-Gen

“Boys were in the park”

b. fi al-hadiqat-i awlad-un

in the-park-Gen boys

“Boys were in the park”

c. al-awlad-u fi al-hadiqat-i
 the-boy.pl-Nom in the-park-Gen

“The boys were in the park”

d. *fi al-hadiqat-I al-awlad-u
 in the-park-Gen the-boy.pl-Nom

“The boys were in the park”

With regards to copular sentences, Alblushi believes that the copular verb is generated at V^0 which takes PredP as a complement. Under this analysis, the accusative predicate is the complement of $Pred^0$. However, this does not explain why *kana* subject must be definite/specified. Moreover, Alblushi fails to connect the verbless and *kana* construction.

4.4.2 Alaqrabeh (2015); Alaqrabeh & Alsarayreh (2017)

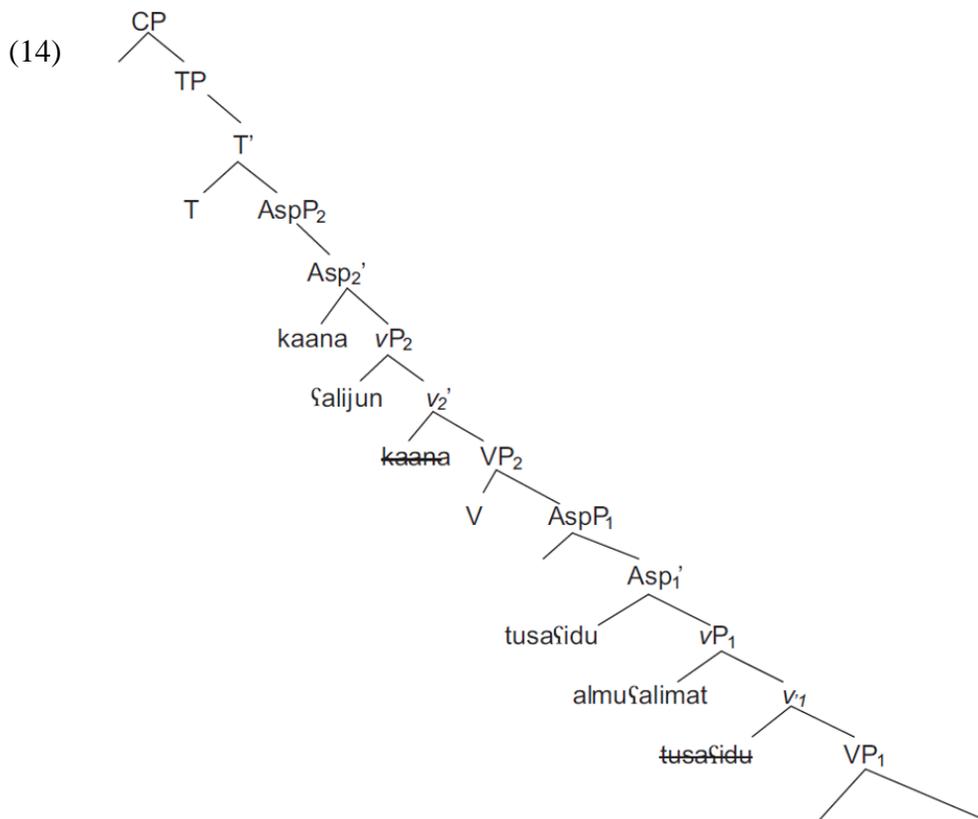
In this subsection, I will discuss the treatment of the distinguished *kana* subject problem mentioned in (4.3.2) as it appeared in Alaqrabeh (2015) and Alaqrabeh & Alsarayreh (2017). They brought up the fact that *kana* actually has its own subject as in (13).

(13) kana Ali-un tu-said-hu al-mualimat-u
 Past.be.3ms Ali-Nom impr.help.3fm-him the-teacher-Nom

“Ali was in a state that the teacher helped him.”

(Alaqrabeh & Alsarayreh, 2017: 34)

The sentence in (13) has two subjects; “Ali” and “the teacher”. The former is the subject of *kana* and the latter is the subject of “help”. Thus, in their opinion, the Arabic periphrastic tense construction cannot be seen as a continuous VP projection. The proposed structure of (13) is shown in (14).



Apart from distinctive subjects, they have listed a number of arguments in favor of this proposed structure. First, each verb can be negated independently, which indicates the presence of two NegPs. Since there is only one TP, the higher VP, *kana*,

may only be negated with the tensed negation particles *lam* “didn’t” or *lan* “won’t”. The lower VP is negated by using the tense-neutral negative particle *la* “no”, while tensed particles are banned. The agreement patterns that each verb has with its subject is evidence for two AgrSPs; in (13) *kana* shows masculine agreement while “help” is marked for feminine agreement. The universal adverb order by Cinque (1999) proves that the construction is mono-clausal and should conform to the adverbs’ hierarchy as in (15)

(15) a. sarahat-an kaan Ali-un adat-an yusaydu-ha kather-an

Frankly-acc was.3sgm Ali-nom usually-acc help.3sgm-her a lot-acc

‘Frankly, Ali was usually helping her a lot.’

b. *adat-an kaan Ali-un sarahat-an yusaydu-ha kather-an

usually-acc was.3sgm Ali-nom frankly-acc help.3sgm-her a lot-acc

(Alaqrabeh & Alsarayreh, 2017: 27)

I agree with the authors that *kana* + main V constructions are mono-clausal and I view their work as a significant step in understanding the internal structure of these clauses. However, their proposal does not explain the definiteness effect on *kana*’s subject which hides a long story that will be explained in the next section.

4.5 Topicality and Arabic Clausal Structure

Although recent work on Arabic clause structure has bridged some of the gaps of earlier studies, there are still some unresolved issues. A major challenge is raised by sentence (9b) repeated here in (16a).

- (16) a. *kanat al-sairat-u/*sairat-u jadidat-an*
was the-car-Nom new-Acc
“The car/ car was new”
- b. *ishtara al-rajul-u/rajul-un bait-an*
Buy.past.3ms the-man-Nom house-ACC
“The man/a man bought a house”

The sentences above show that the subject of *kana* cannot be indefinite (16a) while definiteness does not affect the choice of the regular verb’s subject (16b). The discrepancy between the two kinds of predicates in the interaction with definiteness is a clear indication that they should receive different analyses. However, *kana*’s definiteness effect is shared with other types of predicates; namely equative and verbless sentences. The definiteness parameter is strongly associated with topical NPs. As a starting point to analyze Arabic clauses, I will rely on the notion of topic as described by IS (information structure) theory and straightforwardly introduce the following topicality condition (17).

(17) The Topicality Condition for Arabic clauses:

Verbless, equative and copulative constructions must satisfy a topicality condition: they must have a topic.

Now we have a new categorization of Arabic clauses where verbless, equative and copulative constructions (henceforth VECCs) constitute one type and the clauses with only a regular verb is another. Below is a list of arguments that subjects of VECCs are on par with topics.

4.5.1 Topical Reading

We have already seen in (9), repeated in (18), that VECCs' subjects cannot be (unspecified) indefinites, which is a strong indication for topicality. In the meanwhile, subjects of content verbs can be in-/definite (19).

(18) a. al-sairat-u/*sairat-un jadidat-un

The-car-Nom new-Nom

“The car/ a car is new”

b. kanat al-sairat-u/*sairat-u jadidat-an

was the-car-Nom new-Acc

“The car/ car was new”

c. Al-mudir-u/*mudir-u huwa al-muhasib-u

The-manager-Nom he the-accountant-Nom

“The manager/a manager is the accountant”

- (19) ishtara al-rajul-u/rajul-un bait-an
 Buy.past.3ms the-man-Nom house-ACC
 “The man/a man bought a house”

However, the main principle behind topicality is that topicalized constituents should be realized as topics. The subject of *kana* indeed has a topical reading as shown in (20).

- (20) a. How was Ali treated by Ahmed?
 b. Kana (Ali-un) ya-htarimu-hu (Ahmed-un)
 be.pst.3ms respect.impr.3ms-him
 “Ali, Ahmed was respecting (him)”
 c. #Kana Ahmed ya-htrimu Ali-an

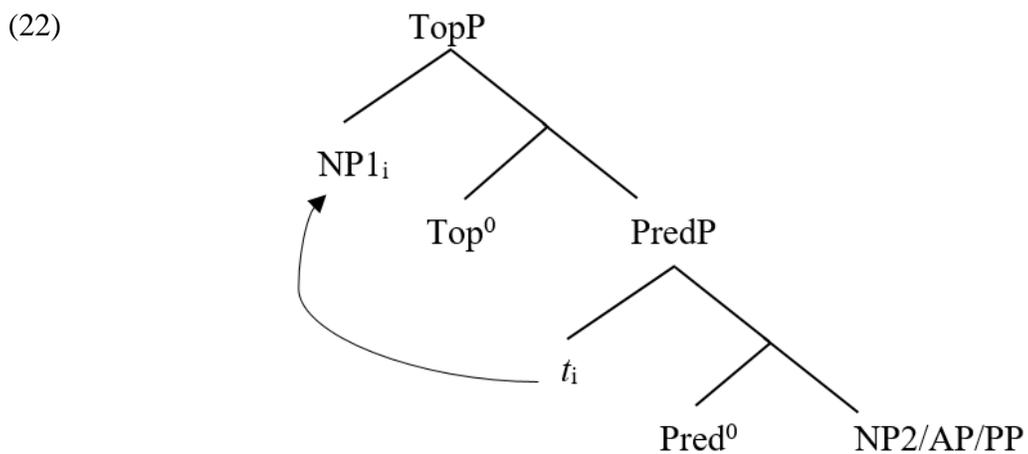
The question in (20a) is about Ali and how Ahmed treats him. If we examine both answers in (20b,c), we will find that the allocation of the main verb’s thematic roles are the same. Nevertheless, the felicitous answer is (20b) since the NP *Ali* is placed in its natural position as *kana*’s subject, i.e. a topic, where it is required by the context. In (20c), Ahmed is given a topical status as *kana*’s subject which is not understood from the context, so the sentence looks odd. Moreover, as (20b) shows, *Ali* will be mapped as *kana*’s subject if both subjects are dropped.

4.6 Analyzing VECCs

The first step to analyze VECCs is to understand how they are related. Verbless predicates cannot co-exist with any of the other two constructions. On the other hand, copular and equative sentences may co-exist as in (21).

- (21) kana al-mujrim-u huwa al-haris-a
 Was.pst.3ms the-criminal-Nom he the-keeper-Acc
 “The criminal was the keeper.”

The assumption, then, is that verbless sentences represent the absence of other predicational relations. According to Aoun *et. al.* (2010), there is a proposal that verbless sentences are PredPs without functional projection. Yet, the topicality condition of its subjects suggests that at least a TopP should be projected. I would suggest the construction in (22) as the simplest representation of verbless sentences as in (22).



It is important before going further in the analysis of VECCs to explain the nature of PredP. I am not using PredP in the sense of John Bowers (1993). Mainly for semantic reasons, he refused the idea that the subject of the sentence is assigned a theta role within the VP. Thus, he proposed a functional projection PredP (PrP in his terms) to introduce the semantic role of the subject (Bowers, 1993: 630). This solution is also syntactically driven as verbs uniformly assigns theta roles to Spec positions. The canonical position of the (direct) object is Spec-VP while it is Spec-PredP for the subjects. The complement of the VP is left for constituents such as indirect objects. PredP is F-selected by IP or subcategorized for by the VP. There is no indications in Bowers' proposal to the notion of topic-comment structure.

The current PredP is aligned with the ideas elaborated in Kuroda (1972). Kuroda asserted that the concept of topic cannot be captured by the traditional notion of the subject. He took advantage of Japanese discourse markers *wa* and *ga* to differentiate between categorial judgments which have subject-predicate structure andthetic judgements which are subjectless. He indicated that constituents associated with *wa* are specified and pragmatically realized as topics. However, such constructions are categorial judgments and should receive subject-predicate analysis. Hence, the subjects in subject-predicate constructions is not confined to syntactic subjects but extends to topics. Consequently, the topic is semantically and syntactically linked to the comment by a predicate head where the former is in the specifier and the latter is the complement. Kuroda has succeeded in accommodating the topics into the XP scheme. Still, my

proposal distinguishes between the subject and the topic positions. We will see later that two different constituents can, at the same time, occupy these positions. In such cases, the subject of PredP will not receive a topical reading, which is a divergence from Kuroda's analysis.

The construction in (22) differs from Alblushi's (2013) in two aspects. First, the topic is base-generated in Spec-PredP and then moves to Spec-TopP. Second, there is no tense projection, with justifications that are mentioned below. The absence of case assigners leads both the predicate and the subject to bear the default case marker (Schutze, 2001) which, in the case of Arabic, is nominative. I also assume that the absence of a tense projection yields a default reading for the present tense. Fassi Fehri (1981) believes that present tense is the default and unmarked specification for Arabic but he assumes a tense projection.

There are a number of reasons to believe that verbless sentences lack TPs. Primarily, there is no tense morphology. In tensed clauses, tense must be phonologically realized, e.g. on the verb or the negation particles. It seems that the presence of a TP in Arabic correlates with the presence of VPs where the highest verbal head must be specified for tense. One may say that Pred⁰ is itself not phonologically realized; how can it host a tense morphology? This leads to the second argument in favor of the absence of TPs. In fact, Pred⁰ will be overt when the predicational relation is emphasized (23a) or the verbless sentence is negated as in (23b).

(23) a. Ali-un HUWA marid-un

Ali-Nom he sick-Nom

“Ali IS sick.”

b. Ali-un ma *(huwa) marid-un

Ali-Nom not he sick-Nom

“Ali is not sick.”

b. ma thahaba/yathhabu Salim-un ela al-soq-i

not go.past.3ms/go.pres.3ms Salim-Nom to the-market-Gen

“Salim did not go/ is not going to the market.”

The clause in (23a) is negated by the particle *ma* “not”, but it must be accompanied by the pronoun *huwa* “he” which represents Pred⁰. Sentence (23b) shows that *ma* does not carry tense morphology as it can be used to negate a past/present verb. The negation particle may not be separated from *huwa* which supports the view that *ma huwa* is a complex head derived by moving *huwa* to Neg⁰. Although this head is phonologically overt, it does not show any tense morphology. This case is similar to Alaqrabeh & Alsarayreh’s argument in section (4.4.2). They asserted that the lower VP is not inflected for tense since it is negated only with a tense-neutral negation particle such as *laa*.

However, verbless sentences may accept adverbial phrases associated with tense projection such as for four days as in (23-2).

(23-2) a. Ali-un marid-un li-arbat-i ayam-in

Ali-Nom sick-Nom for-four-Gen day.pl-Gen

“Ali has been sick for four days.”

Although I claim that there is no tense projection, I assert that the construction is assigned a default present reading. The explanation of this assignment could come from Pragmatic Enrichment Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986). The concept of this theory is that under-specified linguistic elements can be compensated for by the means of contextual clues (Recanati 2012). In verbless sentences, present tense is under-specified because it is assigned by default and there is no tense morphology. Thus, accepting phrases like *for four days* can be understood in the context of pragmatic enrichment of the present tense.

4.6.1 Equative Constructions

A shared property between equative and verbless sentences is the nominative case that both the predicate and the subject show. They also share the absence of tense morphology. There is an opinion that the difference between copular and equative sentences is “illusory” (Adger & Gillian, 2003: 325). I would extend this view to the difference between verbless and equative construction.

My claim regarding equative sentences is that they have the same syntax as verbless sentences. There are situations where Pred^0 should be phonologically

expressed, such as the case of negation as in (23). Equation in Arabic is another case that requires overt Pred⁰ to differentiate between a topic-comment string (25a) and a modified NP (25b); the equative pronoun *huwa* reestablishes the relation among the NPs to be realized as predicational rather than modificational.

(25) a. al-mudir-u huwa al-masul-u.
 the-manager-Nom he the-responsible-Nom
 “The manager is the responsible one.”

b. al-mudir-u al-masul-u.....
 the-manager-Nom the-responsible-Nom
 “The responsible manager.....”

I may now say that “equation”, as a linguistic concept, is not accurately describing *huwa* sentences such as (25a) where they represent a special case of verbless construction. Nevertheless, I will continue referring to these special verbless sentences as “equative”. The insertion of *huwa* could also be explained on the basis of the Distinctness Condition (Richards 2010). This condition claims that languages avoid adjacent constituents that are too similar. Nevertheless, if the topic of an equative sentence is well established in the context, Pred⁰ would optionally be realized. For example, we can imagine a situation where a couple with kids are separated and person A tells Person B that there is a problem. B asks: *what is the problem?* Either version of (26) is grammatical and felicitous.

(26) al-mushkilat-u (heya) al-afal-u

The-problem-Nom (it) the-kids-Nom

“The problem is the kids”

In this respect, I am siding with Heggie (1988), William (1994) and Moro (1997) who agree that a copular sentence of two DPs is mapped into a referential DP and a predicate DP. Still, I propose a different derivation of the sentence’s surface structure. Arabic equative constructions will be redefined in section (4.7.3) below, as they provide valuable support for the Topicality Condition stated in (17).

4.6.2 Copular Constructions

I believe that Arabic provides a unique empirical insight into copular constructions. If we consider the sentences in (27), we find that the truth condition for (27a) and the embedded clause in (27b) is the same; they are true iff “the weather is nice”.

(27) a. al-jau-u jamil-un

The-weather-Nom nice-Nom

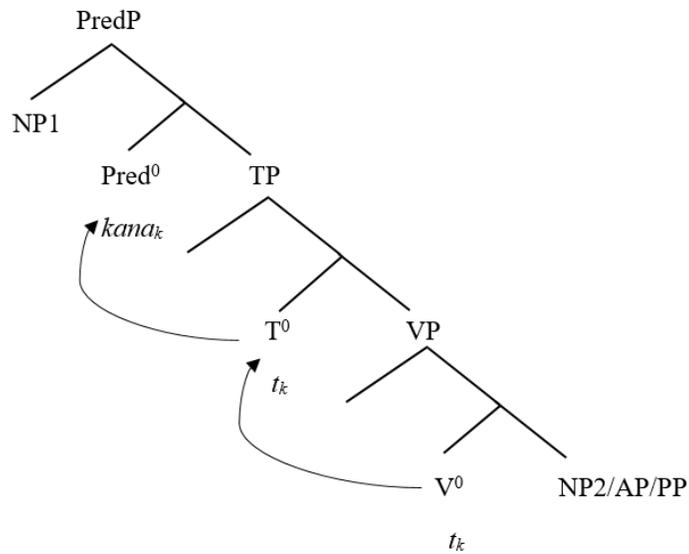
“The weather is nice”

b. athhabu ela al-bahr-i endama yakun al-jau-u jamil-an

go.pres.1sg to the-sea-Gen when is the-weather nice-Acc

“I go to the beach when the weather is nice”

The complementizer *endama* “when” selects V-initial clauses¹⁴. Thus, the insertion of *yakun* (the present form of *kana*) satisfy this selection property of “when”. What is relevant here is that the predicational relation between the subject “weather” and the predicate “nice” is not affected by the absence/presence of *yakun* (or *kana*). Hence, I may refer to *kana* and its sisters as “parasitic verbs” that live on verbless constructions¹⁵. Once a verbless construction is engaged with *kana*, its subject becomes *kana*’s subject and its predicate becomes *kana*’s complement as shown in (28).



¹⁴ Chapter 5 tackles complementizers in more details.

¹⁵ **Pred⁰** has, in my opinion, idiosyncratic properties contributing to the parasitic phenomenon. It does not assign case nor does it have an independent phonological form as it is expressed by a functionalized pronoun that agrees with the subject.

The derivation in (28) is not complete since NP1 should be raised to Spec-TopP. Moreover, *kana* surfaces in a position higher than the topicalized NP1. There is a proposal by Aoun *et. al.* (2010) that *kana* raises to some kind of functional projection (FP). They mentioned that the nature of this FP is still not clear. I will adopt their analysis with respect to the projection of FP, but I assume different internal structure for the copular sentence. Aoun *et. al.* (2010) believe that FP immediately dominates a TP where *kana*'s subject surfaces as its specifier. The current hypothesis offers that FP immediately dominates a TopP that, in turn, immediately dominates a PredP. The derivation of *kana* is best shown by an equative sentence since it has an overt Pred⁰ (29a), which is sketched in (29b), and the derivation process is illustrated in (30).

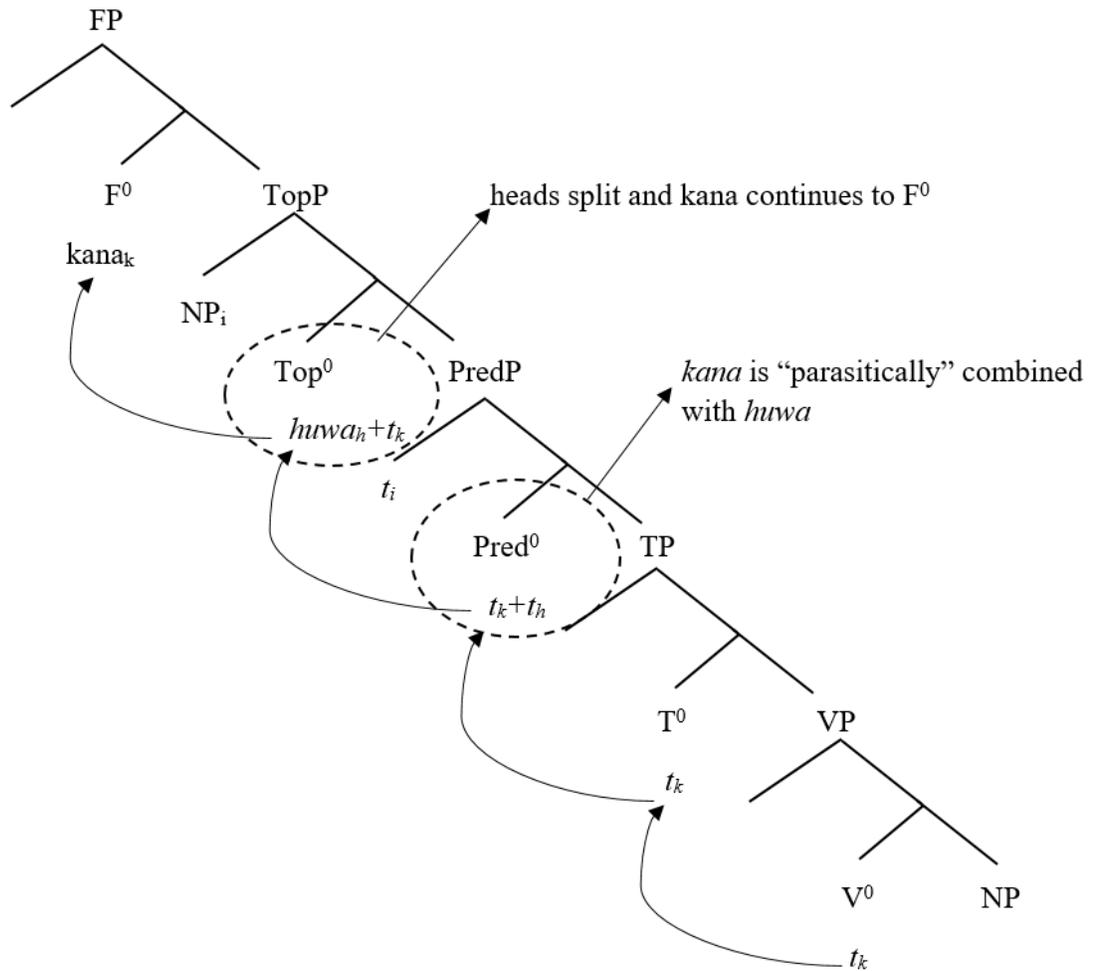
(29) a. *kana al-mudir-u huwa al-masul-u.*

Be.past.3ms the-manager-Nom he the-responsible-Acc

“The manager was the responsible”

b. [FP [F0 *kana*_k] [TopP NP_i [Top0 *huwa*+*t*_k] [PredP *t*_i [Pred0 *t*_h+*t*_k] [TP [T0 *t*_k] [VP [V0 *t*_k]NP]]]]]]

(30)



The copular verb *kana* is generated at V⁰, but it must be checked for other specifications such as tense and [+F] features. As it moves to F⁰, it combines with *huwa* at Pred⁰. The complex head moves to Top⁰; then it splits because *huwa* does not have [F] feature to check. I believe that the split is possible due to the parasitic nature of the *kana* + *huwa* combination.

4.7 Satisfying the Topicality Condition

In the deliberations over VECCs, the illustrations involved raising of PredP subject to Spec-TopP to satisfy the Topicality Condition. I will show in this section that different constituents, in a systematic process, may fulfill satisfying the topicality Condition. Generally, those constituents are supposedly conforming to topic properties mentioned in (1.3.2). I would rely on the definiteness/specificity parameter to test a constituent eligibility for topicalization. This parameter extends to topical prepositional phrases that contain NPs. If the NP within the PP is eligible for topicality, the PP would be eligible (31a) otherwise, it will not (31b)¹⁶.

(31) a. fi al-jabil-i banay-na manzil-a-na

In the-mountain-Nom build.past.1-we house-Acc-our

“In the mountain, we built our house.”

b. *fi jabil-in banay-na manzil-a-na

In mountain-Nom build.past.1-we house-Acc-our

“In a mountain, we built our house.”

As I am going through the constituents that may satisfy the Topicality Condition, I am actually presenting arguments in defense of this condition. The first argument is based on indefinite PredP subjects. The second is related to a unique agreement pattern

¹⁶ It would be grammatical if the PP is focused.

in copular sentences where *kana* may optionally agree with the subject. The third takes advantage of equative constructions.

The hypothesis I propose claims that a verbless sentence like (32a) satisfies the Topicality Condition by raising the definite PredP subject “the lion” from Spec-PredP to spec-TopP.

(32) a. al-asad-u fi al-qafas-i

The-lion-Nom in the-cage-Gen

“The lion is in the cage.”

b. * asad-un fi al-qafas-i

lion-Nom in the-cage-Gen

“A lion is in the cage.”

The current proposal shares the prediction with some previous proposals that (32b) is ungrammatical; yet, they differ in how to explain this judgment. Earlier proposals, such as Alblushi (2013), claim that the NP “a lion” occupies Spec-TopP position, which is banned for indefinite/unspecified NPs. On the other hand, my suggestion is that the NP “a lion” is in Spec-PredP position, but (32b) lacks a topic, which is a violation of the Topicality Condition. Hence, (32b) can be saved if there is a way to fulfill the condition. This process provides an insight on how the Topicality Condition works. A grammatical version of (32b) is (33).

- (33) fi al-qafas-i asad-un
in the-cage-Gen lion-Nom
“In the cage is a lion.”

It seems that locative inversion saves the sentence, but how does it work? The PP is not focalized, so it cannot be focus movement. Sentence (33) is still maintaining the predicational relations where “a lion” is the subject and the PP is the predicate. In other words, (33) has an underlying structure similar to (32b). Under the current proposal, the sentence has been saved by moving the predicate to Spec-TopP to satisfy the Topicality Condition. If this is true, a PP with an indefinite NP will not work because it cannot be topicalized, as explained in (31). This prediction is correct as shown in (34) where both the subject and the predicate fail to fulfill the Topicality Condition.

- (34) *fi qafas-in asad-un
in cage-Gen lion-Nom
“In a cage is a lion.”

In fact, the sentence is still savable because there another way to satisfy the Topicality Condition. The existential “there” can be inserted at Spec-TopP and save verbless sentences not only when subjects cannot satisfy the Topicality Condition, but also when the predicate cannot either (35).

- (35) hunaka asad-un fi al-qafas-i /qafas-in
there lion-Nom in the-cage-Gen/ cage-Gen
“There is a lion in the cage/a cage.”

The alternation between the strategies, when available, is not fully optional. For example, person A tells B that he entered a deserted house and saw a cage. He may use any of the sentences in (36) to continue telling his story.

- (36) a. fi al-qafas-i asad-un
in the-cage-Gen lion-Nom
“In the cage is a lion.”
b. hunaka asad-un fi al-qafas-i
there lion-Nom in the-cage-Gen
“There is a lion in the cage.”

Person A may use (36a) to isolate “the cage” from the rest of the scene and comment on what inside it, or comment on the whole scene using (36b).

- (37) a. al-asad-u fi al-qafas-i
the-lion-Nom in the-cage-Gen
“The lion is in the cage.”
b. *hunaka al-asad-u fi al-qafas-i
there the-lion-Nom in the-cage-Gen
“*There is the lion in the cage.”

c. *fi al-qafas-i al-asad-u
in the-cage-Gen the-lion-Nom

“There is the lion in the cage.”

d. fi AL-QAFAS-I al-asad-u
in the-cage-Gen the-lion-Nom

“In the CAGE is the lion.”

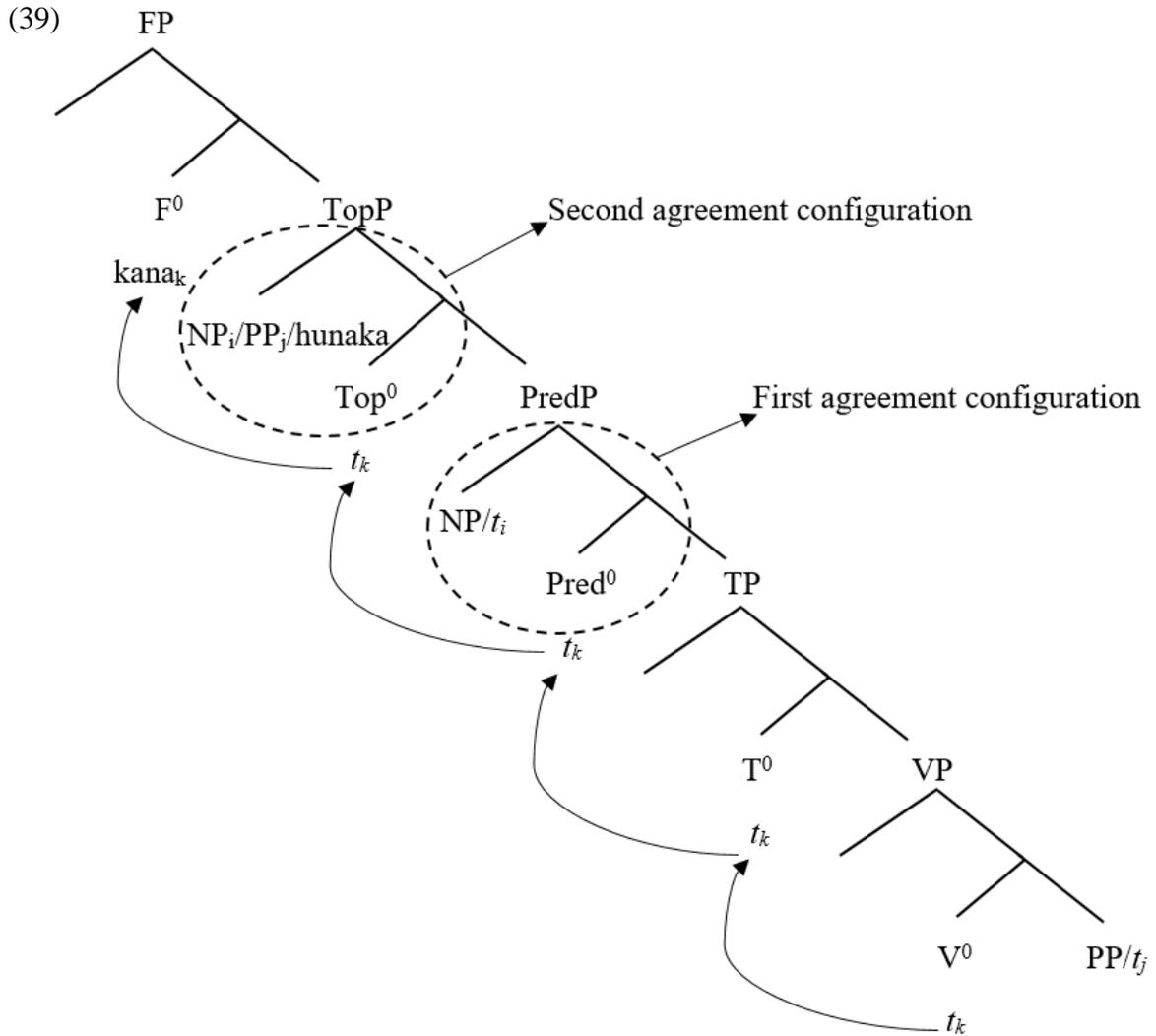
The subject in sentence (37a) has moved to Spec-TopP to satisfy the Topicality Condition. The ungrammaticality of (37b,c) indicates that the subject of PredP must be raised to the topic position if it is qualified and neither of the following two strategies should be used: *hunaka* “there” insertion (37b) or locative inversion of qualified PPs (37b). The predicate may appear before the subject in Spec-FocP (37d) and the subject raises to the topic position.

The grammatical versions of *hunaka* insertion, locative inversion and subject topicalization yield different pragmatic readings. Yet, moving between these strategies is restricted by syntactic rules. I think the syntactic scenario is the following. When producing a VECC, the speaker puts in mind that there should be a topic. The subject of PredP is considered first. If it does not match the topic criteria then the speaker, depending on his pragmatic needs, can choose either *hunaka* insertion or locative inversion. If the predicate is also not qualified, the only solution is opting to *hunaka* insertion.

c. kanat/*kana al-banat-u fi al-saff-i
was.fm/was.ms the-girls-Nom in the-queue-Gen
“Girls were in the queue”

The paradigm in (38) shows that the optional verb-subject gender agreement is possible only if the subject is not raised to the topic position (38a,b), but if it moves to Spec-TopP (38b) the agreement is obligatory. First, I assert that, unlike Soltan’s (2007) analysis, the optionality of agreement is not limited to gender. The case is that the verb optionally chooses between two agreement configurations¹⁷.

¹⁷ I am adopting the view that agreement requires Spec-Head setting. Koopman (2006) claimed that it is the only agreement configuration.



In situations like (38a,b), the derivation is the following: the copular verb *kana* moves from its base position at V⁰ all the way up to F⁰, creating two configurations for agreement as illustrated in (39). The first agreement setting is created when the verb moves to Pred⁰. *Kana* agrees with the constituent in the specifier of PredP: the subject. This subject of PredP stays in-situ because, being indefinite/unspecified, it is not qualified to move to Spec-TopP. The verb then raises to Top⁰ where the second

agreement setting is realized. *Kana* agrees with the constituent in Spec-TopP: the topic, which is different from the subject of PredP. Whether the topic is a PP (38a) or an existential “there” (38b), a third-person masculine default agreement is triggered since Arabic allows default agreement (Soltan, 2007:93). The reason for the default agreement is that the PP does not carry phi-features (Bayer & Bader, 2007) and *hunaka* is either endowed with default phi-features or it does not have phi-features¹⁸. At Spell-Out, the speaker can choose between these two distinct agreement settings. The intuition, of my own and other native speakers’, about the readings resulting from each choice is that they are the same.

The process with the other case of a raised subject (38c) is similar. However, the copular verb ends up agreeing with the same constituent in both configurations. As the verb moves to the first agreement configuration at Pred⁰, it will agree with the trace of the subject which occupies Spec-PredP, the subject position. Then, the verb moves to the second configuration at Top⁰ agreeing with the raised subject which surfaces at the topic position. Since NP-traces inherit the phi-features of their antecedents (Quicoli, 1996), both configurations lead to the same results which impose a unified agreement pattern even if the verb is separated from the topic with a focused fronted predicate (40).

(40) kanat /*kana fi AL-SAFF-i al-banat-u

¹⁸ Specially that non-existential *hunaka* “there” substitutes PPs like “on the table”; even existential *there* carries PPs meaning “in some place/ at some time”.

was.fm/was.ms in the-queue-Gen the-girls-Nom

“In THE QUEUE, [there] were girls.”

4.7.2 Equation and the Topicality Condition

A property that distinguishes Arabic equative sentences from English, for example, is that they are expressed with an element other than the copular verb; *i.e.* a pronoun like *huwa*. Moreover, the copular verb can co-exist with the equation pronoun. I will take advantage of this property to show the behavior of equative sentences.

As mentioned early in (4.6.1), equative sentences are verbless sentences that, for a stated reason, require an overt Pred⁰ as in (25a). This is repeated in (41):

(41) al-mudir-u huwa al-masul-u.
the-manager-Nom he the-responsible-Nom

“The manager is the responsible one.”

I adopted the view that one NP is the subject and the other is the predicate. Both NPs in (41) are of the same semantic type, bear the same case marker and share the same reference. According to the analysis in 5.6.1., the subject should be raised to the topic position if it is qualified. Presumably, the sentence-initial topic in (41) should be mapped into the subject and the second NP is the predicate, but is this really the case?

In fact, there is a way to distinguish between the two categories when a copular verb is engaged.

- (42) Kana al-mudir-u huwa al-masul-a.
 Be.past.3ms the-manager-Nom he the-responsible-Acc
 “The manager was the responsible one.”

In (42), things are clear; the first nominative NP is the subject and the second is the predicate since it bears the accusative case marking as a VP complement. Therefore, the first NP is the subject and the second is the predicate. However, locative inversion discussed in (4.6.1) indicates an important fact: predicates can satisfy the Topicality Condition. This is contingent to the subject’s incompatibility for topicalization. Another way to think of locative inversion is to assume a hierarchy between the subject and the predicate to satisfy the Topicality Condition. PPs can be subjects as in (43), an Arabic version of Koster’s (1978) example (17) which is cited in Shlonsky (2003).

- (43) a. tahtu al-tawilat-i makan-un jaid-un lil-ixtiba-i
 Under the-table-Gen place-Nom good-Nom for-hiding-Gen
 “Under the table is a good place for hiding.”
 b. *makan-un jaid-un lil-ixtiba-I tahta al-tawilat-i
 place-Nom good-Nom for-hiding-Gen Under the-table-Gen
 “A good place for hiding is under the table.”
 c. kana tahta al-tawilat-i makan-an jaid-an lil-ixtiba-i

be.past.3ms Under the-table-Gen place-Nom good-Nom for-hiding-Gen

“Under the table was a good place for hiding.”

d. *Hunaka tahtu al-tawilat-i makan-un jaid-un lil-ixtiba-i

There Under the-table-Gen palce-Nom good-Nom for-hiding-Gen

“*There under the table is a good place for hiding.”

Actually, (43a) can be understood as a locative inversion, but (43c) shows that the PP is the subject since the NP “place” is accusative¹⁹. If the subject is not raised, the sentence violates the Topicality Condition (43b). The sentence cannot be saved via existential “there” insertion (43d), which is similar to the case of a definite NP subject as in (37b). Consequently, the generalization about “there” insertion is that it is only used when the subject cannot satisfy the Topicality Condition. Another relevant conclusion here is that the topic-qualified subject NPs and PPs behave equally in regards to “there” insertion; they must move to the topic position. Now, I will modify the NP in (43a) to be definite. Interestingly, the resultant sentence (44) is equative.

(44) a. tahtu al-tawilat-i huwa al-makan-u al-jaid-un lil-ixtiba-i

Under the-table-Gen he (it) the-place-Nom the-good-Nom for-hiding-Gen

“Under the table is the good place for hiding.”

b. al-makan-u al-jaid-un lil-ixtiba-I huwa tahtu al-tawilat-i

¹⁹ It is very hard intuitively to distinguish between locative inversion and subject raising without *kana* being engaged in the construction.

the-place-Nom the-good-Nom for-hiding-Gen he (it) under the-table-Gen

“The good place for hiding is under the table.”

Either the subject (44a) or the predicate (44b) of the equative sentence may satisfy the Topicality Condition. In the light of these facts, I would define equation in Arabic as the following:

(45) The Syntactic Equation in Arabic

Arabic equative sentences are verbless sentences where both subjects and predicates can equally satisfy the Topicality Condition.

Before I defend the hypothesis in (45), I assert that it does not impose any restrictions on the type of the subject or the predicate. I would first clarify the meaning of “equally” mentioned in (45) where equation can be realized across different phrase types. If we compare the sentences in (46) below with the sentences in (44), we find that subjects and predicates can, in principle, satisfy the Topicality Condition. Yet, the equation is established in (44) only.

(46) a. al-qitt-u tahtu al-tawilat-i

The-cat-Nom under the-table-Gen

“The cat is under the table.”

b. *tahtu al-tawilat-i al-qitt-u

under the-table-Gen the-cat-Nom

“Under the table is the cat.”

I believe the concept of substitution is at the heart of equative sentences. The idea of free substitution among NPs and PPs is hard to accommodate on a purely syntactic basis. However, the current hypothesis stresses that such a substitution is pragmatic since it is performed at Spec-TopP, which is a position equally opened to NPs and PPs as long as they are eligible for topicality. Pragmatic substitution in topics is, I think, possible when more than one constituent leads a specified reference. The NP “the good place for hiding” in (44) points to a specific place which happens to be “under the table”. The PP and NP share an already-established reference so, from a pragmatic point of view, they can equally satisfy the Topicality Condition and form an equative construction. On the other hand, the NP “the cat” and the PP “under the table” in (46) lead to two distinct references even if they are specified and eligible for topicality; they are not equal. This account explains how equation can be established among different categories.

One way to test this hypothesis is to engage a copular verb so the subject and the predicate are case-marked differently. The sentences in (47) involve two equal NPs.

- (47) a. kana al-mudir-u huwa al-masul-a.
 Be.past.3ms the-manager-Nom he the-responsible-Acc
 “The manager was the responsible”
- b. kana al-masul-a huwa al-mudir-u.
 be.past.3ms the-responsible-Acc he the-manager-Nom
 “The responsible was the manager.”

By comparing the sentences in (47), we can see that the topic position freely alternates between the subject (47a) and the predicate (47b). I consulted many native speakers and they all agree that no abnormality arises when hearing each version; there is no markedness. Meanwhile, they would not accept non-equative sentences with a reversed subject-predicate order like (48b) unless the predicate bears a focal accent (48c), which will be a marked sentence.

(48) a. kana al-bait-u sairat-an

Be.past.3ms the-house-Nom car-Acc

“The house was a car.”

b. *kana sairat-an al-bait-u

Be.past.3ms car-Acc the-house-Nom

“A car was the house.”

c. kana SAIRAT-AN al-bait-u

Be.past.3ms car-Acc the-house-Nom

“A CAR was the house.”

I view this as solid evidence of the Topicality Condition. Although *kana*'s complement in (47b) surfaces in a position preceding the subject, the sentence is not marked. Syntactically, the complement is in a canonical position, which is Spec-TopP. A question left in this section is *why are sentences like (46b) not grammatical?* The sentence is repeated in (49).

(49) *tahtu al-tawilat-i al-qitt-u
under the-table-Gen the-cat-Nom
“Under the table is the cat.”

I already put forward an assumption that there might be a sort of hierarchy in fulfilling the Topicality Condition. An earlier observation concluded that the subject is considered first. If it is not qualified then there are two options: either raising the predicate, in the case that it conforms to topicality, or inserting the existential *hunaka* “there”. After examining the equative constructions, I find that the predicate can be promoted to the subject’s hierarchal level when an equative relation is established between them. Consequently, predicates split into equative and non-equative where the latter is never considered unless is it a PP, i.e. locative inversion. The hierarchy for satisfying the Topicality Condition is posited in (50).

(50) subject/equative predicate > locative inversion/”there” insertion

As a result, the ungrammaticality of sentence (49) can be explained as a violation of the hierarchy in (50); the locative inversion overrides a qualified subject.

4.8 Two Types of Topics

We have already seen that topics may overtly be realized as corresponding to the Topicality Condition, but *is this always the case?* Specifically, that topical phrases’

appearance essentially follows the pragmatic needs of the discourse. In (51b, c), “Saturday” is in a topic position.

(51) a. Q: What about Saturday?

b. A1: al-sabt-u ala jadwal-i
 the-Saturday-Nom on schedule-my
 “Saturday is on my schedule.”

c. A2: al-sabt-u fi al-madrasat-i half-un
 the-Saturday-Nom in the-school-Gen party-Nom
 “Saturday, in the school [there] is a party.”

Sentence (51b) is a verbless sentence that can be analyzed according to the current frame. “Saturday” is base generated at Spec-PredP then moved to Spec-TopP to satisfy the Topicality Condition. On the other hand, the predicate “in the school” fulfills the Topicality Condition in (51c) because the subject “a party” is not qualified, and “Saturday” is a higher topic. There are at least two assumptions about “Saturday” in (51c). One is to view “Saturday” as a subject of a higher PredP that moved to Spec-TopP. The other is to be analyzed as a base-generated topic.

A reliable test to decide between the two proposals is the existential “there” insertion, which can be used to save the construction if PredP’s subject fails to satisfy the Topicality Condition. The Arabic NP *al-sabt* “(the) Saturday” is definite and should refer to a specific Saturday, e.g. next Saturday, so it would be qualified to satisfy the

Topicality Condition. If it appears without the definite article or a specifying device then it may refer to any Saturday. Consequently, it will not be able satisfy the Topicality Condition but “there” insertion would be licensed to do so.

(52) a. *hunaka sabt-un ala jadwal-i*

there Saturday-Nom on schedule-my

“There is a Saturday on my schedule.”

b. **hunaka sabt-un fi al-madrasat-i half-un*

there the-Saturday-Nom in the-school-Gen party-Nom

“(There) a Saturday, in the school, [there] is a party.”

Sentence (52a), as corresponding to (51b), is saved with “there” insertion. Meanwhile, this strategy fails to save (52b) which means that we are dealing with a different type of topics. I will call the type represented by (52a, 51b) predicative topics (P-topics) and refer to the other, (51c) as free topics (F-topics). The first type corresponds to the Topicality Condition and occupies Spec-TopP that immediately dominates a PredP. The other type is base-generated at the specifier position of a higher TopP which does not immediately dominate a PredP.

I found that this categorization is crucial to the functional projection (FP) mentioned in (4.6.2). It turns out that it only accepts P-topics in the specifier of its complement as in (53).

(53) a. *kana* *al-sabt-u* *ala jadwal-i*
Be.past.3ms the-Saturday-Nom on schedule-my

“Saturday was on my schedule.”

b. **kana* *al-sabt-u* *fi al-madrasat-i* *half-un*
Be.past.3ms the-Saturday-Nom in the-school-Gen party-Nom

“Saturday, in the school [there] was a party.”

The copular verb *kana* must surface at F⁰. The grammaticality of (53a) indicates the projection of FP, which hosts *kana*. On the other hand, *kana* fails to surface before “Saturday” in (53b) which is an F-topic.

Hence, the existential *hunaka* “there” insertion and *kana* engagement with the construction can be seen as tests for topics. The former is valid only for definite/specified NP topics. First, the NP is stripped of definiteness/specificity, so it will lose grammaticality. If the construction is saved with *hunaka* insertion then it is a P-topic otherwise, it would be an F-topic. Since locative inversion is at the same level of hierarchy as *hunaka* in (50), it can also be used as a test in the same way *hunaka* is used²⁰. It is important to realize here that the inserted/inverted constituent becomes a P-topic. The *kana* test, on the other hand, is valid for all topics (e.g. NPs and PPs). It is

²⁰ However, there is a restriction on locative inversion that might be formalized in further work. In short, the inverted PP should have a restrictive effect on the relevant PredP subject. For example, if the subject of PredP is the indefinite NP *sabtun* “a Saturday”, it can be saved with PPs like “on my schedule” but not “with me”.

simply performed by placing *kana* before the topic; P-topics allow *kana* while F-topics do not.

4.9 Preverbal Subjects Refined

It has already been decided in chapter 3 that preverbal subjects are topics. Now, I will use the tests stated in (4.8) to examine if they are P-topics or F-topics. The first test is to strip the preverbal subject of its definiteness and see if the construction can be saved via “there” insertion.

(55) a. al-atfal-u yakul-un al-kaakat-a fi al-hadiqa-i

The-kids-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they the-cake-Acc at the-park-Gen

“The kids are eating the cake at the park.”

b. *atfal-un yakul-un al-kaakat-a fi al-hadiqa-i

kids-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they the-cake-Acc at the-park-Gen

“kids are eating the cake at the park.”

c. hunaka atfal-u yakul-un al-kaakat-a fi al-hadiqa-i

There kids-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they the-cake-Acc at the-park-Gen

“There are kids eating the cake at the park.”

d. *hunaka al-atfal-u yakul-un al-kaakat-a fi al-hadiqa-i

there The-kids-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they the-cake-Acc at the-park-Gen

“*There are the kids eating the cake at the park.”

Sentence (55a) shows a grammatical sentence with a definite preverbal subject. When the preverbal subject is indefinite, the sentence will not be grammatical (55b). Example (55c) is the most relevant here; it shows that the insertion of “there” has saved the construction and licenses the indefinite preverbal subject. Thus, preverbal subjects side with P-topics. The ungrammaticality of (55d) stems from the violation of the hierarchy (50) which applies to P-topics. The second test is locative inversion, which will be applied to (55b).

(56) fi al-hadiqa-i atfal-un yakul-un al-kaakat-a
 at the-park-Gen kids-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they the-cake-Acc
 “At the park, kids are eating the cake.”

The sentence is actually saved by the locative inversion (56). The adjunct PP “at the park” has been raised to Spec-TopP and satisfied the Topicality Condition. The final test is considering the engagement of *kana*. No changes are required for sentence (55a); just checking if it accepts *kana*.

(57) a. kana al-atal-u yakul-un al-kaakat-a fi al-hadiqa-i
 Be.past.3ms the-kids-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they the-cake-Acc at the-park-Gen
 “The kids were eating the cake at the park.”

The sentence is still grammatical after *kana* engagement (57). This, along with the previous test, confirms that preverbal subjects are P-topics. They are originated as PredP subjects and raised to Spec-TopP if qualified (55a). If not, they stay at their base

position and the sentence is saved by other means that include the expletive “there” (55c) or locative inversion (56). This analysis perfectly extends to topicalized objects (57).

- (57) a. *hunaka atfal-u yakul-un kaakat-an fi al-hadiqa-i*
 There kids-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they cake-Acc at the-park-Gen
 “There are kids eating the cake at the park.”
- b. **hunaka atfal-u kaakat-un yakul-un-ha fi al-hadiqa-i*
 There kids-Nom cake-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they-it at the-park-Gen
 “There are kids eating cake at the park.”
- c. *hunaka atfal-u fi al-hadiqa-i kaakat-un yakul-un-ha*
 There kids-Nom at the-park-Gen cake-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they-it
 “There are kids eating cake at the park.”

Sentence (57) shows an in-situ indefinite object and an indefinite PredP subject that is saved with *hunaka* “there” insertion. When the object is topicalized, the sentence becomes ungrammatical. The reason, according to the current hypothesis, is that it cannot move from Spec-PredP2 to Spec-TopP2 since it is not qualified for topicality. The prediction is that the sentence can still be corrected with a saving strategy. The locative inversion strategy works (57c); the prediction is true.

4.10 Topics and Resumption

Rizzi (1997) noticed that, in Italian, NP topics are related to post-predicate RPs. Thus, the aim of this subsection is to determine the pattern RPs follow with regards to peripheral constituents. The appearance of RPs within the IP region is not restricted to verb cliticization, but an RP also may be contained within a PP adjunct as in (58):

- (58) a. al-hadiqat-u₁ yakul atfal-un kaakat-an fi-ha₁
 the-park-Nom eat.pres.1ms kids-Nom cake-Acc at-it
 “The park, kids are eating the cake at (it).”

The topic “the park” co-indexes with the pronoun “-it” that is contained within the PP “at it”. I will take advantage of this and all remarks mentioned earlier to construct the paradigm in (60).

- (60) a. al-sabt-u₁ zort-o jadd-i (fi-h₁)
 The-Saturday-Nom visit.past.1-I grandfather-my on-it
 “Saturday, I visited my grandfather (on it).”
b. hunaka sabt-un₁ zort-o jadd-i *(fi-h₁)
 there Saturday-Nom visit.past.1-I grandfather-my on-it
 “There is a Saturday I visited my grandfather (on it).”
c. kana al-sabt-u₁ zort-o jadd-i *(fi-h₁)
 be.past.3ms Saturday-Nom visit.past.1-I grandfather-my on-it
 “Saturday was [the day] I visited my grandfather (on it).”

d. kana hunaka sabt-un₁ zort-o jadd-i *(fi-h₁)
 be.past.3ms there Saturday-Nom visit.past.1-I grandfather-my on-it

“There was a Saturday I visited my grandfather (on it).”

Each sentence in (60) has two versions. The only difference between the versions is in the presence/absence of the adjunct *fi-h* “on it”; they constitute minimal pairs. The RP is expressed within the adjunct PP.

“(The) Saturday” in (60a) is a topic, that can be optionally associated with RP because both versions are grammatical. Thus, a straight conclusion is that RPs are not always obligatory for topicalized NPs. However, the discrepancy in the grammaticality for the rest of the sentences leads to more interesting facts. First, it seems that RPs decide between F-topics (grammatical 60b-d) and P-topics (ungrammatical 60b-d) as the sentences pass/fail “there” insertion (60b) and *kana* engagement (60c,d) tests. Second, all occurrences of RPs, regardless to their co-indexation, are obligatory in sentences containing P-topics. Third, which is most relevant, the P-topic “there” is not associated with an RP in (grammatical 60b) but the subject of PredP “Saturday” is. Sentence (60d) confirms that *hunaka* is actually a P-topic as it accepts *kana* engagement. What is consistent here is that RPs always co-index with the subject of PredP regardless of its topichood status in general; whether stayed in-situ or moved to Spec-TopP. Thus, I claim that, at least in Arabic, topics *per se* are not directly linked to RPs but these RPs are rather associated with PredP subjects. Consequently, all topics related to RPs should be P-topics but the reverse is not always true.

The last issue brought up here is *where can RPs be expressed and in what domain?* It seems that RPs can be expressed on any constituent that allows cliticization. We have already seen RPs cliticized to verbs and prepositions. NPs may also host RPs as in (61):

(61) a. al-bint₁-u [bait-u-ha₁]₂ yarifu-hu₂ Ali-un.

The-girl-Nom house-Nom-her know.pres.3-it Ali-Nom

“The girl, her house, Ali knows (it).”

b. *[bait-u-ha₁]₂ al-bint₁-u yarifu-hu₂ Ali-un.

house-Nom-her the-girl-Nom know.pres.3-it Ali-Nom

“*Her₁ house, the girl₁, Ali knows (it).”

Sentence (61a) comprises two PredPs. The subject of the higher PredP “the girl” is co-index with an RP cliticized to the subject of the lower PredP “her house”. The other indication here is the RP can be realized as high as the specifier position of the phrase immediately dominated by the relevant PredP. I believe this is the highest limit for the RPs because the sentence will not be grammatical if the RP is realized higher (61b); this could be due to crossover effects.

4.11 Minimality Effects

Sentence (61a) also shows that PredP is iterative. If PredP is selected by FP, as claimed here, then there are two FP heads where *kana* may surface. The prediction is

that *kana* may surface only at the lower F⁰ because moving to the higher F⁰ would violate the Minimality Condition (Chomsky, 1986) at it is relativized by Rizzi (1990).

(62) a. al-bint₁-u kana [bait-u-ha₁]₂ yarifu-hu₂ Ali-un.

The-girl-Nom be.past.3ms house-Nom-her know.pres.3-it Ali-Nom

“The girl, (as for) her house, Ali was knowledgeable about it.”

b.?? kanat al-bint₁-u [bait-u-ha₁]₂ yarifu-hu₂ Ali-un²¹.

Be.past3fm the-girl-Nom house-Nom-her know.pres.3-it Ali-Nom

“(As for) the girl, her house, was knowledgeable about it.”

The predictions are borne out. In (62a), *kana* surfaces at the lower F⁰ as a proof of FP lower projection. However, in (62b), *kana* surfaces at the higher F⁰, which shows a minimality effect by crossing a head of the same category, i.e. the lower F⁰ (PredP heads, as they check *kana*, are also aligned with F⁰ in contributing to this minimality effect). Actually, if *kana* crosses more than one FP/PredP heads, the sentence will be completely ungrammatical as in (63b).

(63) a. al-wardat-u₁ Ali-un₂ al-banat-u₃ atay-na₃-ha₁ l-hu₂

The-flower-Nom Ali-Nom the-girls-Nom give.past-they.fm-it to-him

“The flower, Ali, the girls gave it to him.”

b. * kanat al-wardat-u₁ Ali-un₂ al-banat-u₃ atay-na₃-ha₁ l-hu₂

²¹ This is my personal judgment, many others consider (62b) ungrammatical.

be.past.3fm the-flower-Nom Ali-Nom the-girls-Nom give.past-they.fm-it to-him

“As for the flower, Ali and the girls, it was given to him by them²² .”

Another important prediction for the current hypothesis regarding minimality is related to the proposed categorization of topics. F-topics do not require FP or PredP projections; they need only a TopP. Sentence (64b) confirms that *kana* may cross a Top⁰ without a minimality effect. I see that as evidence that topic phrases hosting F-topics and P-topics are also of a different syntactic category; F-TopPs and P-TopPs.

(64) a. What were the boys doing in the garden?

b. kana al-awlad-u₁ fi al-hadiqat-i yelab-un₁.

Be.past.3ms the-boy.pl.ms-Nom in the-garden-Gen play.pres.3-they.pl.ms

“As for the boys, in the garden, they were playing.”

4.12 Conclusion

The main Arabic predicational constructions include verbless, copular, equative and main verb constructions. The first three types, VECCs, share the property of accepting only definite/specified subjects while the fourth does not show such a restriction. Early accounts frequently ignore the definiteness matter. Alblushi (2013) revived an early account that a verbless sentence has a topic. He assumed that the topic is always co-

²² The Arabic sentence (63b) is active; the English translation is just describing the situation.

indexed with the subject of a lower PredP, which is not true. Equative sentences are the least studied construction. Choueiri (2016) proposed an analysis of equative sentences incorporating an intermediate functional projection, which, I believe, is not needed. The other matter where most of the literature was silent about is the fact that the auxiliary²³ verb *kana* can have a subject distinguished from the subject of the main verb. Alaqrabeh & Alsarayreh (2017) tried to resolve this distinction issue but their proposal fails to explain the definiteness restriction. There were, to the best of my knowledge, no proposals accounting for the definiteness effect in equative and copular sentences.

The main issue, I think, with the previous syntactic accounts is that they tend to examine each predicate in isolation of the constructions. My analysis combines all predicate types and investigates the interaction among them. I adopt the definiteness effect in categorizing predicates: VECCs in one side and the main verbs in the other. VECCs seem to stem from verbless sentences. They all require a topic for their interpretation, so I assumed the simplest presentation be a PredP immediately dominated by a TopP. The topic requirement for VECCs is formulated into a Topicality Condition. It simply states that a VECC construction must have a topic. The fulfilment of the Topicality Condition considers first the subject of PredP or its equative predicate then considers locative inversion or an existential “there” insertion. Topics whose purpose is fulfilling the Topicality Condition are (P)redicative-topics, while the rest of topics are (F)ree-

²³ I avoided using this term earlier as I believe *kana* is not fully auxiliary; the term is used here only for illustration.

topics. In case of *kana* “be” engagement, P-topics agree with *kana* at P-Top⁰. P-topicPs are selected by an F⁰, which is also the surface position for copular verbs. Resumptive Pronouns (RPs) only co-index with the subject of a PredP. This analysis resolves the thorny issue of preverbal subjects as they are actually subjects of PredP. It also seems to capture all facts regarding VECCs such as:

- The definiteness effect.
- *Kana*’s distinct subject.
- Locative inversion.
- Existential “there” insertion.
- Absence of markedness in inverted predicate-subject in equative constructions.
- *Kana* optional agreement.
- Distribution of peripheral NPs co-indexed with lower RPs.
- The minimality effect when *kana* is engaged.

Chapter 5

ROOT-EMBEDDED (A)SYMETERY

5.1 Introduction

Most Arabic resources (e.g. Aoun et. al., 2010; Ennassiri, 2014) categorize complementizers according to their ability to select either finite or non-finite clauses. In this study, the concentration will be on the complementizer effect on the Information Structure (IS) of the embedded clause. Thus, the discussions in earlier chapters will help clarify the behavior of complementizers. The IS criterion divides Arabic embedders into three types that are discussed in section (5.2). The next section sheds light on what I call Embedded Clause Phenomena where main clauses behaves as if they are embedded. Section (5.4) presents an analysis of these phenomena and how they are directly linked to P-topics.

5.2 Types of Arabic Complementizers

This subsection is only descriptive. There will be a subsequent analysis of the relevant complementizers. If I assume that the IS of embedded clauses is chosen by the complementizer, then the patterns will be the following:

- (1) a. Only V-initial clauses are allowed.
 b. Flexible IS.
 c. V-initial clauses are banned.

The first two types will be described briefly while the third will be analyzed in the light of the clausal structure proposed in the previous chapter.

5.2.1 V-initial Complementizers

This type of complementizer naturally follows the line of unmarked VSO word order. It also allows VOS, so the constraint here is that the clause must be V-initial. Examples of this kind include *kay* and *li-* where the first is an independent morpheme and the second is cliticized initially to the verb.

- (2) a. Salim-un thahab ela al-soq-i kay yabia al-sairat-a
 Salim-Nom go.past.3ms. to the-market-Gen to sell.pres.3ms the-car-Acc
 “Salim went to the market to sell the car.”
- b. *Salim-un thahab ela al-soq-i kay al-sairat-a yabia
 Salim-Nom go.past.3ms. to the-market-Gen to the-car-Acc sell.pres.3ms
 “Salim went to the market to sell the car.”

Sentence (2a) shows that *kay* is followed by the verb but when the object of the embedded clause is fronted, the sentence becomes ungrammatical (2b). The complementizer *indama* “when” is also another example of this type.

5.2.2 Flexible Complementizers

This group permits IS patterns beyond V-initial clauses. They lead to the belief that embedded clauses can exhibit root processes such as topicalization. These processes are studied under the Main Clause Phenomena (MCP). They have received an early attention in the literature (cf. Edmonds 1971; Ross 1971; Hooper & Thompson 1973; and Green 1976 who suggested the name). It is important to know that MCP are not homogeneous (de Vries, 2007). An example of the MCP is the central/peripheral adverbial clause as elaborated by Haegeman (e.g. Haegeman 2002; 2010; 2012). Hooper and Thompson (1973) suggested a semantic/pragmatic explanation for adverbial clauses. Haegeman, on the other hand, attempts to elaborate a syntactic account. However, the MCP examples below are for illustration only; no analysis will be brought up.

I will consider only *argument fronting* as an aspect of MCP. The sentences below show the difference between what are called central adverbials (3) and peripheral adverbials (4).

(3) a *While this paper I was revising last week, I thought of another analysis.

b *When her regular column she began to write again, I thought she would be OK.

c *If these exams you don't pass, you won't get the degree.

(Haegeman 2010: 1)

(4) a. His face not many admired, while his character still fewer felt they could praise.

b. And yet some popular things are so brilliant, like *The Simpsons* and *the Angel of the North*. While other brilliant things hardly anyone buys – I’d put my friend’s first novel and sherry in this category.

c. Sophie would put Len between two women who would have to bear his halitosis, while Gillian she buried mid-table among the also-rans.

(Haegeman 2012: 23)

Argument fronting is banned under central adverbials. In (3a), fronting the object “this paper” resulted in an ungrammatical sentence, which is an explanation that extends to sentences (3b, c). On the contrary, peripheral adverbial clauses allow argument fronting. The objects in (4), underlined, are fronted under the temporal adverb “while”.

Similarly, Arabic *bainama* “while” gives rise to the MCP. It bans argument fronting in one environment (5a), and permits it in another (6b); V-initial is shared (b sentences). The conditional *itha* “if” is also among this group.

(5) a. Salim-un jama al-hataba-a bainma the-food-Acc cook.past.3.fm

Salim-Nom gather.past.3.ms the-wood while al-taam-a tabakhat

Salma

Salma.

“Salim gathered the wood while the food Samla cooked”

b. Salim-un jama al-hataba-a bainma tabakhat Salma

Salim-Nom gather.past.3.ms the-wood while cook.past.3.fm Salma
al-taam-a.

the-food-Acc

“Salim gathered the wood while Samla cooked the food”

(6) a. *bainama al-marad-a kan yazur-u Ali-un , amtarat

While the-museum-Acc be.past.3ms visit.pres.3.ms Ali-Nom rain.3.fm.sg
al-smaa-u.

the-sky-Nom

“*While the museum Ali was visiting, it rained”

b. bainama kan yazur-u Ali-un al-marad-a , amtarat

While be.past.3fm visit.pres.3.ms Ali-Nom the-museum-Acc rain.3.fm.sg
al-smaa-u.

the-sky-Nom

“*While Ali was visiting the museum, it rained.”

5.2.3 Banning Embedded V-initial Clauses.

One group of complementizers is mysterious because it does not allow unmarked word order. One of the most common complementizers belongs to this category, which is *anna* “that”. It is selected by many verbs such as believe, think, know and realize.

(7) a. adunnu anna Ali-an qaraa al-kitab-a.

(I) think.pres.1 that Ali-Acc read.past.3ms the-book-Acc

“I think that Ali has read the book.”

b. *adunnu anna qaraa Ali-un al-kitab-a .

(I) think.pres.1 that read.past.3ms Ali-Nom the-book-Acc

“I think that Ali has read the book.”

c. adunnu anna al-kitab-a₁ qaraa*(-hu₁) Ali-un.

(I) think.pres.1 that the-book-Acc read.past.3ms Ali-Nom

“I think that Ali has read the book.”

Sentence (7a) has an embedded SVO clause, so it satisfies the selection property of *anna*. On the other hand, (7b) is VSO which *anna* does not accept as a complement. Sentence (7c) shows that *anna* is also compatible with OVS order only when the object co-indexes with a lower RP (grammatical 7c). There are only two more complementizers of this sort; *lakinna* ‘but’ and *lianna* ‘because’. We will see below that these complementizers are part of a larger system.

5.3 The Embedded Clause Phenomena

The third type of the complementizers above creates a unique embedding environment where the basic word order is not allowed. Interestingly, this behavior can be found in main clauses also. There is a group of particles that introduce matrix clauses

and lead to similar effects; particularly the ban on the unmarked VSO. Hence, main clauses behave as if they are embedded. By contrast with the MCP mentioned in (5.2.2), I will call these effects The Embedded Clause Phenomena (EmCP). I am not sure if the EmCP is noticed in other languages even under different labels²⁶. The Arabic particles responsible for the EmCP constitute a subgroup of what the classic Arabic grammarian has classified as *inna* and its sisters²⁷. This subgroup includes the following four members:

- (8) a. *inna* ‘verily, indeed’
- b. *kaʔinna* ‘as if’
- c. *layta* ‘If only’
- d. *laʕala* ‘Perhaps’

The particles in (8) introduce only main clauses and not lexically selected. It will not be surprising to know that the rest of *inna*’s sisters are actually the complementizers discussed in section (5.2.3) as summarized in (9).

- (9) a. *anna* ‘that’
- b. *lakinna* ‘but’

²⁶ There is no literature under the label “the embedded clause phenomenon” except few speculations that such phenomenon might be found; now it is evident in Arabic.

²⁷ Sībawayhi (died in 796), the famous Arab linguist, *called* them the five particles (Ali, 2015) by conflating some members.

c. *lianna* “because”

The strange behavior of these embedders and the EmCP could be a manifestation of the same phenomena. It is worthy of note that MSA but not SSA utilizes the particles in (8); the reason could be that they may indicate a high degree of language formality. Additionally, they are more common in Classical Arabic than in MSA. Arab grammarians grouped these particles according to their shared (morpho)syntactic features. Consequently, in this study, referring to a property of any member of *inna* and its sisters extends to the other members. The sentences in (10,11) show the distribution of the subgroup (8) of *inna* and its sister particles.

(10) a. *yaqra* *Ali-un* *al-resalat-a*.

Read.pres.3sg.ms *Ali-Nom* the-letter-Acc

“Ali is reading the letter.”

b. **inna* *yaqra* *Ali-un* *al-resalat-a*.

indeed read.pres.3sg.ms *Ali-Nom* the-letter-Acc

c. *inna* *Ali-an* *yaqra* *al-resalat-a*.

indeed *Ali-Acc* read.pres.3sg.ms the-letter-Acc

“Indeed Ali reads the letter.”

(11) a. *laʕala* *al-sairat-a₁* *Ali-un* *ishtara-ha₁*.

Perhaps the-car *Ali-Nom* buy.past.3sg.ms-it

“Perhaps, the car Ali bought (it).”

b. **laʕala* *al-sairat-a* *Ali-un* *ishtara*.

Perhaps the-car Ali-Nom buy.past.3sg.ms

“Perhaps, the car Ali bought.”

Sentence (10a) is a simple VSO with unmarked order. Sentence (10b) shows that VSO is banned under the *inna* particle. However, SVO order (10c) may have *inna* initially. Sentence (11a) introduces the fact that *laʕala* accepts OSV. Sentence (11b) shows the same word order, OSV, but the sentence is ungrammatical. Therefore, referring to word order in explaining the grammaticality of *inna*'s sentences is not enough without examining actual information structure of the clause.

The examples in (12) manifest the resemblance between an embedded clause (12a) and a main clause introduced by *anna* (12b). The embedded clause is valid as a main clause, which is a clear illustration of the EmCP.

(12) a. Saeed-un yalamu anna al-esar-a asbaha asifata-an

Saeed-Nom know.pres.3. that the-hurricane-Ann become.past.3ms. storm-Acc

“Saeed knows that the hurricane became a storm.”

b. inna al-esar-a asbaha asifata-an

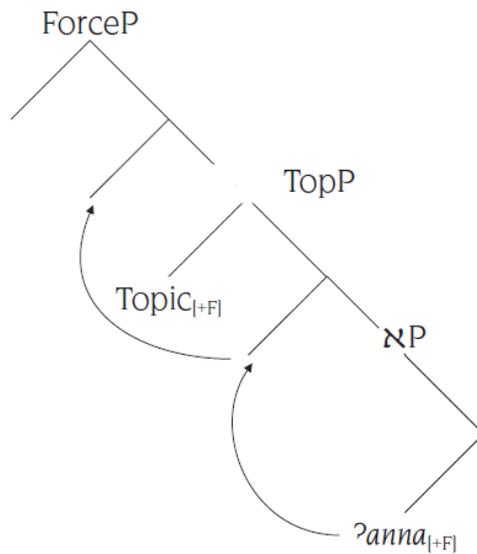
indeed the-hurricane-Ann become.past.3ms. storm-Acc

“Indeed, the hurricane became a storm.”

5.3.1 Shlonsky (2000)

According to this paper, the derivational process of *inna* sentences is the following: *inna* is based generated at the head of a proposed phrase; he called it (NP). This phrase is immediately dominated by the highest TopP²⁸. The particle *inna* is endowed by [+F] feature that must be checked during the derivation. The feature is checked by the topic when *inna* moves to Top⁰. When the topic is checked [+F], it is shifted from nominative to accusative case. Thus, as Shlonsky claims, this case is not structural but rather a manifestation of the feature [F] checking as Spec-Head configuration; at Top⁰. To account for the surface form where *inna* precedes the topic, Shlonsky suggests that *inna* moves further to Force⁰. The derivation of *inna* is shown in (13) as it appeared in Shlonsky (2000: 19).

²⁸ Shlonsky asserts that the NP following *inna* is not necessarily a topic but any constituent occupying the specifier of the XP immediately dominating NP



(13)

Shlonsky was not clear on the type of the complement NP takes. He shows that NP is sandwiched between two topic phrases, so I assume that the complement is a TopP. However, I believe that *inna* cannot be generated below the NP it targets. Shlonsky did not discuss the verbless construction that consists of a subject and predicate as in (14a). A construction of this type accepts *inna* (14b).

(14) a. al-kitab-u fi al-sondoq-i

The-book-Nom in the-box-Gen

“The book is in the box.”

b. inna al-kitab-a fi al-sondoq-i

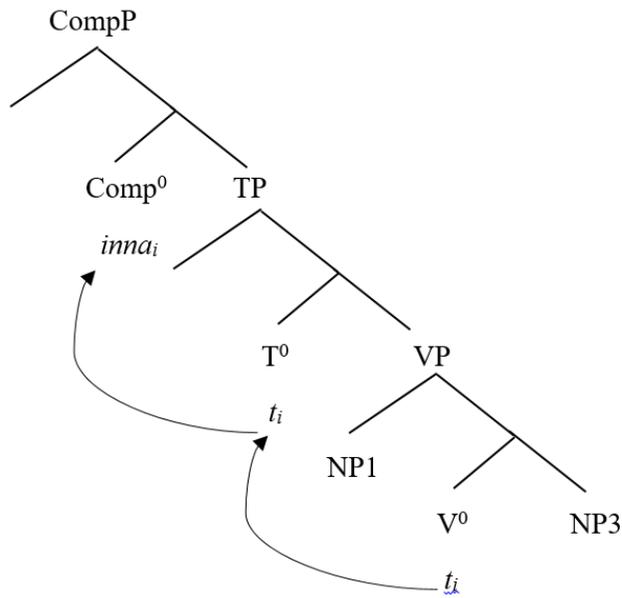
indeed the-book-Acc in the-box-Gen

“indeed, the book is in the box.”

Shlonsky's proposal requires that *inna* be dominated by the phrase that hosts its targeted constituent. Sentence (14b) shows that this constituent is the subject of the PredP. Unlike peripheral topics, there is no justification, other than hosting *inna*, to detach the subject from the predicate with the intervening NP. In such a case, what would be the complement of NP? It cannot be another PredP because its subject position will be empty. The only option is that it must be the PP, and this would destroy the predicational relation. Moreover, this hypothesis does not establish a clear selection relation between *inna* and the noun receiving its case where the facts in (5.4) will confirm it exists.

5.3.2 Al-Asbahi (2013)

The claim here is that *inna* and its sisters are full-fledged verbs that are generated at the head of a VP. Yet, they differ from other verbs in that they have properties of complementizers. Their accusative case marking is delayed until they move to a Comp⁰ head that dominates the VP. There, *inna* and its sisters may exceptionally case-mark the subject of PredP. However, there is an intervening TP which Al-Asbahi believed does not block case assignment. The process is shown in (15).



(15)

I believe that this claim is not valid. An intrinsic property of Arabic verbs is that they are inflected for tense, which is not evident in *inna* or its sister. Moreover, there is a definiteness restriction imposed by *inna* on the noun receiving its case, which is not relevant to full-fledged verbs. Al-Asbahi relies on two arguments. The first is that some *inna* sisters carry certain verbal meaning as in (16).

(16) ka-anna = “confirm that like (confirm that (someone) (is) like”

(Al-Asbahi, 2013: 38)

This argument is refuted by the fact that there are other constituents carrying verbal meanings but they do not show syntactic verbal behavior such as nominalized verbs (17b). It cannot be said that *safar-u-ha* “her travel” is a verb but is an argument in subject position.

(17) a. Hind-un safarat
Hind-Nom travel.past.3fm.
“Hind has travelled”

b. safar-u-ha ahzanan-i
travel-Nom-her make.past.1 sad-me
“Her travel made me sad”

Al-Asbahi’s second argument is based on cliticization. He sees that, like verbs (18a), *inna* and its sisters allow pronominal clitics (18b). Actually, cliticization is not a property restricted to verbs as discussed in (4.10); PPs may also host clitics (18c). Thus, I believe there is not enough evidence for *inna* particles to be treated as verbs.

(18) a. Zaid-un yuhibu-ha
Zaid-Nom love.pres.3ms-her
“Zaid loves her.”

b. inna-ha sahia
indeed-her awake
“indeed, she is awake.”

c. baqitu maa-ha
(I) stay.past.1 with-her
“I stayed with her”

5.4 Analyzing The EmCP

Contrary to Shlonsky's (2000) proposal, I have already shown that *inna* may not be generated below the constituent it targets. I disagree with Al-Asbahi (2013) that *inna* is a verb as it lacks tense and agreement morphology. Nevertheless, I agree that *inna* assigns case via the ECM (Exceptional Case Marking) but strict locality should be respected; no intervening nodes. Sentences in (19) summarize essential facts about *inna* and its sisters.

(19) a. * *inna yaqra* Ali-un al-resalat-a.
indeed read.pres.3sg.ms Ali-Nom the-letter-Acc
“Indeed, Ali reads the letter.”

b. *inna Ali-an yaqra* al-resalat-a.
indeed Ali-Acc read.pres.3sg.ms the-letter-Acc
“Indeed, Ali reads the letter.”

c. *laʕala al-sairat-a_i Ali-un ishtara-*(ha_i).*
Perhaps the-car Ali-Nom buy.past.3sg.ms-it
“Perhaps, the car Ali bought (it).”

d. **laʕala AL-SAIRAT-A Ali-un ishtara.*
Perhaps the-car Ali-Nom buy.past.3sg.ms
“Perhaps, the CAR Ali bought.”

The particles of *inna* and its sisters disallow V-initial sentences (19a). SVO is allowed (19b). OVS is allowed only if the fronted object is accompanied by an RP

(grammatical 19c). Fronted focused objects cannot follow *laʕala*, one of *inna*'s sisters (19d). These facts show that the properties of the constituent following *inna* exactly match the properties of (P)redicative-topics discussed in chapter 4. Here it includes the preverbal subject (19b) and topicalized objects (grammatical 19c). Meanwhile, scrambled (ungrammatical 19c) and unresumed focused constituents (19d) cannot satisfy *inna*'s selection.

Chapter 4 provides the necessary tools to analyze P-topics. The first step in analyzing *inna* and its sisters is to confirm that they only may select P-topics. I will recall some sentences from chapter 4. I will check *inna*'s compatibility with the other type of topics: (F)ree-topics.

(20) a. *kana al-sabt-u al-ghorfat-u mutawafirat-un
 Be.past.3ms the-Saturday-Nom the-room-Nom available-Nom

“Saturday was the room available.”

b. *inna al-sabt-a/-u al-ghorfat-u mutawafirat-un
 indeed the-Saturday-Nom the-room-Nom available-Nom

“Indeed, Saturday is the room available.”

The topic “(the) Saturday” in (20a) is an F-topic since it does not engage with the copular verb *kana*. Sentence (20b) shows that *inna* also does not accept F-topics whether they accommodate the accusative or maintain the nominative case.

The patterns of *inna* we have already seen include only topicalized arguments. According to the analysis in chapter 4, the topical arguments are base-generated at PredP’s subject position and then moved to Spec-TopP. The crucial point now is to examine if the accusative case is discharged by *inna* to topical arguments at Spec-PredP or at Spec-TopP. There are cases where the subject of PredP is distinguished from the constituent at Spec-TopP; namely locative inversion and *hunaka* “there” insertion. In both situations, “there” insertion (21a) and locative inversion (21b), the subject of PredP stays in-situ because it is not qualified to satisfy the Topicality Condition.

- (21) a. *hunaka atfal-u yakul-un kaakat-an fi al-hadiqa-i*
 There kids-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they cake-Acc at the-park-Gen
 “There are kids eating the cake at the park”
- b. *fi al-hadiqa-i atfal-un yakul-un kaakat-an*
 at the-park-Gen kids-Nom eat.pres.1ms-they cake-Acc
 “A the park, kids are eating the cake”
- c. *inna hunaka atfal-an yakul-un kaakat-an fi al-hadiqa-i*
 Indeed there kids-Acc eat.pres.1ms-they cake-Acc at the-park-Gen
 “Indeed, there are kids eating the cake at the park”
- d. *inna fi al-hadiqa-i atfal-an yakul-un kaakat-an*
 Indeed at the-park-Gen kids-Acc eat.pres.1ms-they cake-Acc
 “Indeed, at the park, kids are eating the cake”

The subject of PredP “kids” in (21a,b) bears nominative case which is assigned by default as it was explained in section (4.6). Sentences (21c,d) indicate that *inna* targets the subject of PredP as its case is shifted from nominative to accusative. The collective fact confirms that the constituent receiving *inna*’s case is the subject of PredP whether it stays, as in (21c,d), or moves higher, as the case with topicalized arguments (e.g. 19b).

The subject of PredP is in a specifier position. The only way, I believe, to receive *inna*’s case discharge is through the ECM. The position available for this configuration is Top⁰ of the phrase that hosts the P-topic and immediately dominates PredP. I would depend on verbless sentences as the simplest constructions that interact with *inna* and its sisters as in (14), which are repeated in (22). The syntactic tree for (22b) is shown in (23).

(22) a. al-kitab-u fi al-sondoq-i

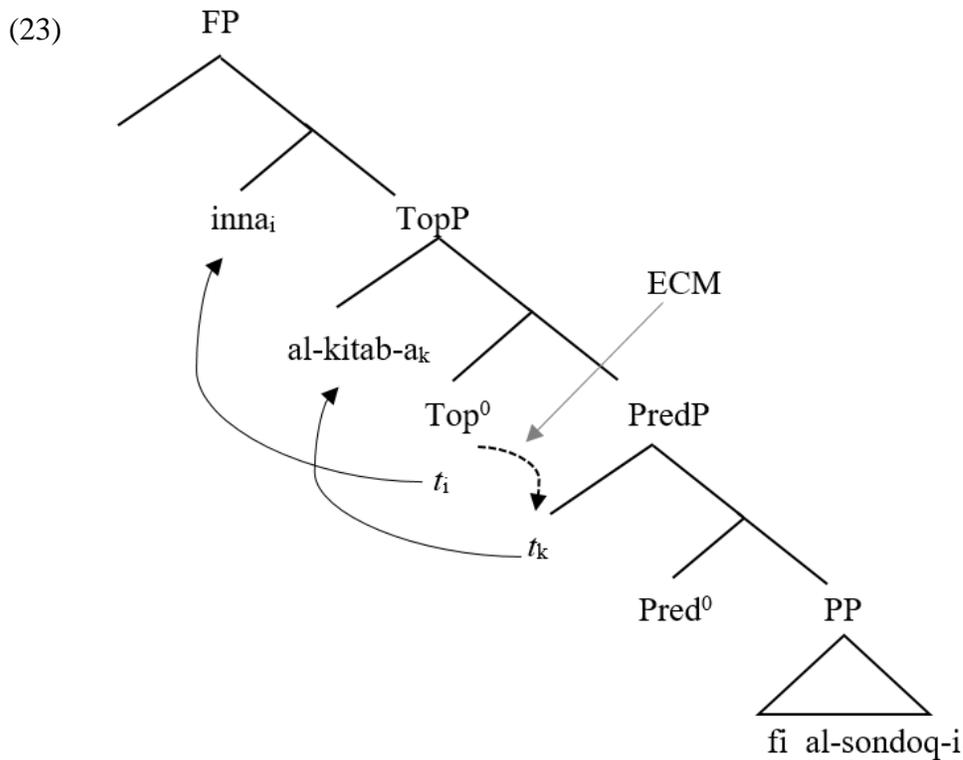
The-book-Nom in the-box-Gen

“The book is in the box.”

b. inna al-kitab-a fi al-sondoq-i

indeed the-book-Acc in the-box-Gen

“indeed, the book is in the box.”



The derivation of the *inna* sentence in (23) suggests that *inna* is base-generated at Top⁰ and then moved to F⁰. The subject of PredP *al-kitab-a* is moved to Spec-TopP to satisfy the Topicality Condition. Before those movements take place, *inna* discharges its accusative case on the subject of PredP. The significance of this derivation is that it captures all facts about *inna*. It explains why *inna* discharges case only to PredP subjects and why *inna* is always followed by P-topics. Moreover, the derivation asserts deeper differences between the functional heads of P-TopPs and F-TopPs where only the former host *inna*.

Now, I would refer to FP and the nature of F⁰. It is already mentioned in chapter 4 that *kana* surfaces at F⁰. Here, it seems that *inna* also surfaces at F⁰. I agree with

Shlonsky (2003) that *inna* is realized at Force⁰ since it has an emphatic effect. Consequently, F⁰ could actually be Force⁰. If this is true, then it will be limited to *inna* because *kana* can co-exist with *inna* but it must be lower than *inna* as in (24).

(24) *inna* al-sairat-a₁ kanat Hind-un₂ taqud-u₂-ha₁
 Indeed the-car-Acc be.past.3fm Hind-Nom drive.pres.3fm
 “Indeed, the car, Hind was driving.”

The topicalized object “the car” has started in Spec-PredP1 where it received the accusative case by *inna*. Meanwhile the preverbal subject “Hind” is generated at Spec-PredP2. As ForceP constitutes the upper limit of the clause (Rizzi, 1997), *kana* cannot be realized at Force⁰. There are two ways to analyze this situation. First is that P-topic phrases can be selected by, at least, two heads: F⁰ and Force⁰. The other way is to assume that P-topic phrases are always chosen by F⁰. In this case, *inna* undergoes further movement to Force⁰ after it is checked by F⁰. I lean to the second analysis because it provides a unified account for EmCP; these phenomena are associated with the presence of FPs.

Last, but not least, in this chapter is discussing extraction in respect to the current view. The complementizer *anna* “that” is responsible for what is known in literature as *that-t* effect, which simply describe the ban on the sequence “that+trace”. Aoun *et. al.* (2010), illustrated this matter for Arabic with the sentence in (25).

(25) [ayy-u fataat-in]₁ alim-ta anna-*(ha₁) qad rabihat l-jaeizat-a
 which-Nom girl-Gen learned.3ms-you that-*(she) had. won.3fm the-prize-Acc
 ‘Which girl did you learn that she has won the prize?’

(Aoun e. al., 2010: 24)

The mainstream view here is that the subject of the embedded clause resists *wh*-extraction to a higher matrix position. In fact, the Topicality Condition has an explanatory power over *that-t* effect at least in Arabic. The ungrammatical version of sentence (25) violates the Topicality Condition. The extraction here is not for the subject of the main verb “won”²⁹ but for the P-topic that is co-indexed with it. This would be a violation of the Topic-Criterion where “the empirical evidence for criteria such as the *wh*-Criterion, Neg-Criterion, Focus-Criterion clearly shows that they are stated on representations and *may not* be satisfied derivationally³⁰” (Shlonsky, 2000: 336). Thus, the grammatical version of (25) satisfies the Topicality Condition by topicalizing the subject. The prediction, then, is that a topicalized object of the embedded clause would also satisfy the Topicality Condition and the subject would still be extracted to the matrix clause. Sentence (26a) confirms this hypothesis; the topicalized object “the

²⁹ The subject of the embedded verb is realized as *pro*. If the plural form is used then the subject would be overt; *rabih-na* “won-they.fm”.

³⁰ Via traces

prize” fulfilled the Topicality Condition and the subject “which girl” is extracted for the embedded clause.

(26) a. [ayy-u fataat-in]₁ alim-ta anna l-jaaeizat-a₂ qad rabihat-ha₂ t₁.

which-Nom girl-Gen learned.3ms-you that the-prize-Acc had won.3fm

‘Which girl did you learn that she has won the prize?’

b. [ayy-u fataat-in]₁ alim-ta anna-hu qad rabihat l-jaaeizat-a

which-Nom girl-Gen learned.3ms-you that-it had. won.3fm the-prize-Acc

‘Which girl did you learn that she has won the prize?’

The problem in (25) is also a good opportunity to introduce the expletive *it* and how it is related to the Topicality Condition. I have already shown that *hunaka* “there” insertion is a strategy used to fill the P-topic position when the subject of PredP is not qualified for topicality. Here, the expletive pronoun *-hu* can be cliticized to *anna*. I believe the expletive is based-generated at Spec-PredP then moves to P-topic position to satisfy the Topicality Condition. From a pragmatic point of view, the expletive has a reading similar to the existential *there*. Both constituents, *there* and the expletive *-hu*, have acquired this topical reading by being incorporated or promoted to the P-topic position. I believe they are phonological realization of what Erteschik-Shir (1999) called a stage topic such as the state of “here” or “now”.

In sum, this chapter categorizes Arabic complementizers into three types. The first accepts only V-initial sentences. The second is flexible and responsible for the

MCP. The third is the most interesting as it bans the unmarked word order and leads to the EmCP. This behavior seems to be related to the presence of FP. *Inna* and its sisters are base-generated at P-Top⁰ then checked by F⁰ before they surface at Force⁰. It also shows that *that-t* effect can be explained as a violation of the Topicality Condition rather than a restriction on subject extraction.

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