On Tense and Agreement in the Realization of Negation in Standard Arabic[1]

Ayoub Loutfi

FLSH, Ben M'sik-Hassan II University in Casablanca, Morocco

ayoubloutfi1@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper addresses two issues that characterize the (morpho)-syntax of sentential negation in Standard Arabic (SA) and modern Arabic varieties. The first one is parametric and addresses the location of negation in the clause structure. The second issue concerns the agreement markers realized on the negative particle *laysa* along with the temporal interpretation that some of the negative markers in SA encode, namely *lan* and *lam*. Two views have been contrasted in the literature: the *Low-Neg analysis*, according to which Neg is the complement of TP, and the *High-Neg analysis* whereby Neg is higher than T. In this study, I will argue that while the two views account form a good range of empirical facts, *Low-Neg analysis* lacks empirical adequacy. Similarly, the *High-Neg view* is hard to reconcile within the Spec-head agreement and the standard Agree approach. However, I will show that the *High-Neg analysis* can be still maintained under the Feature-Inheritance approach, in which T inherits its ø-features and Tense feature from C.

Keywords: Negation; Agreement; Standard Arabic; Negative Projection; Feature Inheritance; Tense Phrase.

1. Introduction

In Standard Arabic (SA), there is currently a controversy regarding the exact syntactic position of NegP. This controversy stems from the observation that sentential negation in SA presents basically two challenging issues. The first issue concerns the Neg-subject agreement associated with the negative *laysa*, which, among other things, carries the agreement inflection carried by verbs, as indicated in the sentences below.

---

(1)

    a. lays-**uu** fii l-bayt-i
         NEG-3mp in the-house-GEN
         'They aren't at home'

    b. lays-**at** mariiDat-an
         NEG-3fs sick-ACC
         'She isn't sick'

The second problem addresses the issue of the temporal interpretation that *laa* and its variants *lam* and *lan* encode. The following examples are illustrative:

(2)

    a. Zayd-un laa yu-ħibb-u l-ʔaflaam-a
         Zayd-NOM NEG-Present 3m-write-IMP-3ms the-movies-ACC
         'Zayd doesn't like movies'

    b. lam ya-xruʒ Zayd-un l-baariħat-a
         NEG-Past 3m-went out Zayd-NOM the-yesterday-ACC
         'Zayd didn't go out yesterday'

    c. lan ya-xruʒ-a Zayd-un ɣad-an
         NEG-Future 3ms-went out Zayd-NOM tomorrow-ACC
         'Zayd won't go out tomorrow'

These problems have been difficult to reconcile within the Spec-head agreement and the standard Agree approach[2]. To this end, the present paper attempts to propose a novel solution to these problems, providing a unifying account that would explain these otherwise unrelated behaviors. In particular, the main hypothesis defended here is that these behaviors are explained on the basis of Chomsky's (2005) Feature-Inheritance mechanism, whereby T inherits its ø-features and tense from C.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 attempts to review the current analyses to the issues at hand. These analyses are referred to in the literature as *The Low-Neg Approach* and the

---

[2] Expletive constructions pose a challenge to the spec-head agreement relation. Consider the following examples:
   i.   There are men in the room
   ii.   There is a man in the garden
In both examples, the auxiliary agrees with the complements not with *there*, as wrongly predicted by the spec-head relation. See Chomsky (2001) for a discussion.

High-Neg Approach. Section 3. reviews the Agree mechanism proposed in The Minimalist Program. This includes a brief survey of the Agree system and the Feature-inheritance model. In light of this hypothesis, section 4 presents the basic analysis. Sections 5 and 6 provides an analysis to the observed adjacency requirement on negation and the syntactic representation of the negative *maa*, respectively. Finally, section 7 explores the possibility of reducing the different realizations of the negative particles to Late Insertion.

2. The Position of Neg: Two Main Views

The interaction of negation with tense and agreement has resulted in two major analyses attempting to capture the structural position of negation in the clause structure. These are referred to by Soltan (2011) as *Low-Neg Analysis* and *High-Neg Analysis* Each position proposes a different analysis and captures different empirical generalizations. The subsections that immediately follow summarize and discuss the major claims and generalizations of each.

2.1. Low-Neg Analysis

The *Low-Neg Analysis* suggests that SA is similar to English in that Neg is dominated by T, selecting VP as its complement.

(3)
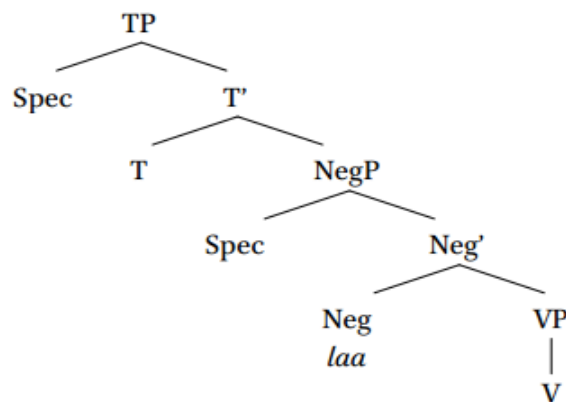
(Benmamoun *et al.* 2010: 113)

3

The Low-Neg Analysis is adopted in Benmamoun (1992, 2000), Ouhalla (1993) and Aoun *et al.* (2010). As pointed out in Aoun *et al.* (2010), Neg blocks movement of the verb to T. This movement is blocked by minimality constraints, namely Head Movement Constraint (Travis, 1984). Adjacent to T, it thus follows that Neg encodes tense. This approach also provides an adequate analysis of the surface realization of tense in *lam* and *lan*. In particular, when Neg merges with T_{PASTt}, *lam* is spelled out, whereas *lan* is selected when Neg merges with T_{FUTURE} (see for example Benmamoun, 2000).

Furthermore, the *Low-Neg Analysis* seems to explain the discontinuous negative morpheme exhibited by some Arabic varieties. For instance, Moroccan Arabic (MA) is a language where sentential negation is morphosyntactically realized as either a discontinuous morpheme *ma-...-ʃ* or the non-discontinuous *maʃi*. On the basis of the syntactic configuration in (3), the circumfixal behavior of the morpheme is the result of the successive-cyclic head movement of the verb to T, as shown in the derived structure in (4):
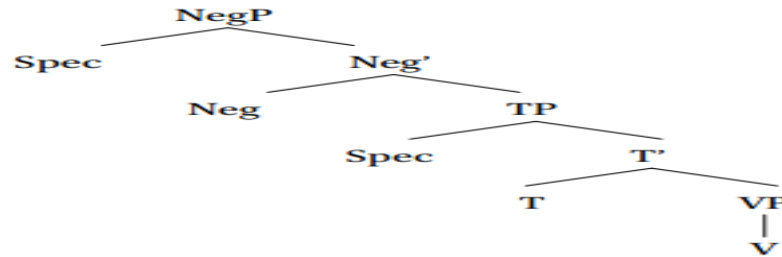
(4)
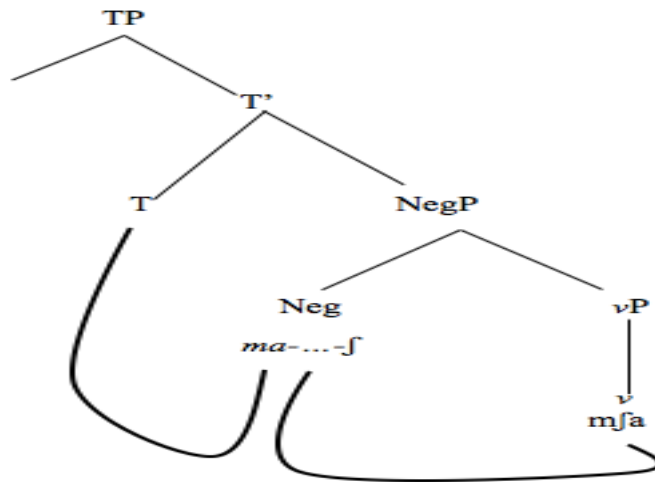
As it stands, verb movement to tense must go through the negative[3] projection. Being morphologically dependent, this allows the negative morpheme to form a complex morphological unit with the verb (Benmamoun, 2000; Loutfi, 2017).

---

[3] For the analysis that the verb moves to T, the interested reader is referred to Benmamoun (2000) and Aoun *et al.* (2010).

4

2.2. High-Neg Negation

The proponents of this approach (Fassi Fehri, 1993; Shlonsky, 1997; Soltan, 2006, 2011; Benmamoun *et al.* 2013) assume the configuration in (9), wherein Neg is higher than T.

(5)

```
              NegP
          /          \
      Spec            Neg'
                   /        \
               Neg            TP
                          /        \
                      Spec          T'
                                 /       \
                               T          VP
                                          |
                                          V
```

The arguments advanced for the *High-Neg Analysis* are manifold. The first argument comes from the order of morphemes in MA. In particular, MA forms future tense periphrastically via the auxiliary *ɣadi* or its clitic variant {ɣa-}, as illustrated in (6):

(6)   Mohammed ɣadi y-Safr ɣədda
        Mohammed WILL-3ms 3ms-travel tomorrow
        'Mohammed is travelling tomorrow'

The future auxiliary encodes the future interpretation. As a result, the verb does not move to T. This explains the imperfective morphology on the verb. Note, however, in the context of negation, the realization of the negative morpheme is realized on the auxiliary *ɣadi*, contrary to the pattern predicated by the *Low-Neg Analysis*. To be precise, the *Low-Neg Analysis* would predict that the sentence in (7-b) is grammatical. This is largely because Neg in (7) is closer to the verb than T.

(7)

      a. Mohammed ma-ɣadi-ʃ y-Safr ɣədda
          Mohammed NEG-WILL-3ms-NEG 3ms-travel tomorrow
          'Mohammed is not travelling tomorrow'

      b. *Mohammed ɣadi ma-y-Safr-ʃ ɣədda
          Mohammed WILL-3ms NEG-3ms-travel-NEG tomorrow

The second argument in favor of the structure in (5) comes from the accusative case assigned by *laa* in (8) (Benmamoun *et al.,* 2013:101).

(8)

      a.   mudarris-un ɣaaʔib-un
          NEG teacher-ms.NOM absent-3ms.NOM
          'A teacher is absent'

      b.   laa mudarris-a ɣaaʔib-un
          NEG teacher-ms.ACC absent-3ms.NOM
          'No teacher is absent'

Interestingly, similar behavior is exhibited by the complementizers *ʔanna* and *ʔinna,* both of which assign accusative case to the subject they immediately c-command (see Aoun *et al.* 2010 for analysis along these lines).

(9)

      a.   Hind-un fii l-bayti
          Hind-NOM in the-house-GEN
          'Hind is at home'

      b.   ʔinna Hind-an fii l-bayti
          COMP Hind-ACC in the-house-GEN
          '(I confirm that) Hind is at home'

     As the data in (9) and (10) show, in the presence of the relevant case assigner, the subject receives the accusative case; otherwise it is in the nominative case, as shown in (9-a) and (10-a). In fact, such a generalization is hard to explain under the *Low-Neg Analysis*. For one thing, if we assume that Neg is a case assigner, we would predict that the sentence in (10-b) is grammatical. This is because in (10-b) the closet case assigner that immediately c-commands Zayd is Neg[4], as is evident from the fact that Neg is a closer case assigner to the subject than T.

(10)

      a.   Zayd-un laa yu-ħibb-u l-ʔaflaam-a
          Zayd-NOM NEG-Present 3m-write-IMP-3ms the-movies-ACC
   'Zayd doesn't like movies'

---

[4] However, note that this prediction is contingent upon the assumption that *Zayd* is base-generated in the specifier of the VP (see Mohammed, 2000).

b. *Zayd-an laa yu-ħibb-u l-ʔaflaam-a
    Zayd-ACC NEG-Present 3m-write-IMP-3ms the-movies-ACC

For another, the accusative case assigned to the subject in (8-b) above will be mysterious, for the evident reason that there is no overt case assigner. This would also regard accusative case as a default form on a par with nominative case. This is not cross-linguistically valid, however (see McFadden, 2004).

To sum up, in this section I have explored the two main views proposed to account for the representation of sentential negation in SA and in modern Arabic dialects. I have shown that each approach makes different predications. The *High-Neg Approach* has been shown to make the correct predications. However, the High-Neg view is hard to reconcile within the Spec-head agreement and the standard Agree approach (Chomsky, 2001). I will show that the High-Neg analysis can be still maintained under the Feature-Inheritance approach, in which T inherits its ø-features and Tense feature from C (Chomsky, 2004, 2005; Richards, 2007), supporting the syntactic configuration in (11):

(11)

C   Neg   T   Subject

Tense & ø-Feature Transfer   **Match-Agree**
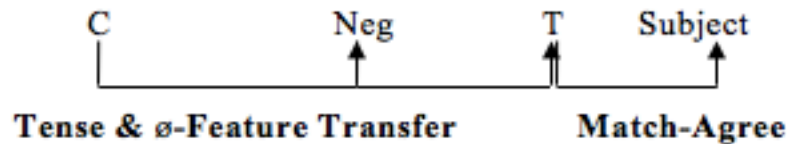
Before proceeding to the proposed analysis, some background concepts on the theory of Feature inheritance is deemed convenient.

3. Feature-Inheritance

In the Minimalist Program (MP), Chomsky (2004) abandons the assumption that agreement is established in a Spec-head relation; rather, the process whereby agreement is obtained is the operation Agree. In particular, Agree establishes an agreement relation between two elements. The first element is the Probe, while the other one is the Goal, a process seen as a mutual valuation of features, in that the Probe enters the derivation with unvalued uninterpretable features

but the Goal enters the derivation with these features valued (and vice versa). The existence of unvalued features in both makes them active, hence visible to the computational system. Once the agreement relation between the two is established, both the Probe and the Goal are rendered inactive, i.e. no longer accessible to further operations (Chomsky, 2001: 6).

(12)
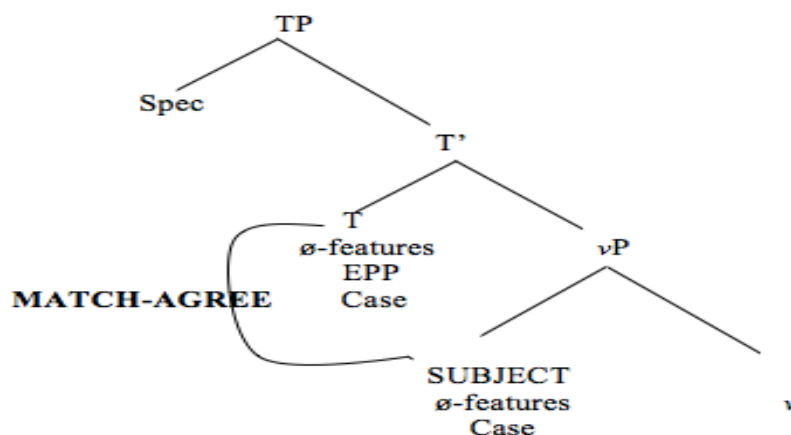
The possible Probes are for instance C, T and little *v*, whereas the Goal is any DP with matching features in the c-commanding domain of the Probe. As shown in the tree diagram in (12), T enters the derivation with uninterpretable (unvalued) ø-features. As a probe, T locates a local suitable goal with active matching features in its search domain. T will locate the closest active DP. As demonstrated in (12), the DP located in the specifier of *v*P qualifies as such a candidate as it has an unvalued case feature. The DP then values the unvalued ø-features of T, which in turn values the unvalued case feature on the nominal expression. It is customary that DPs move to [Spec, T] to check the strong EPP feature (Chomsky, 1995), a feature requiring that a DP must occupy the [Spec, T]. In the MP, this process is seen as a by-product of Agree. Of interest to the present purposes is Chomsky's (2004, 2005) assumption that the formal features associated with T are inherited from the phase head C (complementizer).

Two syntactic corollaries arise herein. First, T is a probe only when it is selected by C. In view of this fact, raising and ECM (Exceptional Case Marking) are given a straightforward analysis, i.e. each construction lacks C (Richards, 2007). Second, operations such as subject-verb

agreement and subject movement now arise via the mechanism of Feature Inheritance. In a finite declarative sentence, this is visualized in (13) below:

(13)

C ———————————————→ T ———————————————→ SUBJECT
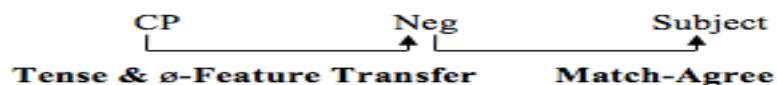
TRANSFER   AGREE
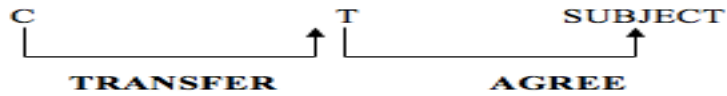
As will be delineated in what follows, agreement and tense realized on negative particles in SA provide a strong empirical support to the structure in (11).

4. Proposed Analysis

As has been discussed in section 2, the different structures posited as to the position of Neg in Arabic have different implications. While the *High-Neg Analysis* correctly captures the Future-Neg-Verb pattern in MA, a complication arises as to how and why some negative particles encode tense and establish Subject-Neg agreement in SA. Under the Feature-Inheritance model suggested above, this is straightforwardly accounted for. Starting with the Subject-Neg agreement, this can be explained on the basis of the following structure:

(14)

CP ———————————→ Neg ———————————→ Subject

Tense & ø-Feature Transfer   Match-Agree

The structure above illustrates that upon merging, C transfers its ø-features to Neg. Neg now has [-interpretable] ø-features, hence it is active. It probes for a local subject in its c-command domain. As a result of the Agree operation, these ø-features are valued and deleted. The agreement morphemes on Neg are thus the reflex of the Agree operation established with the subject.

Note that in the representation in (14), TP is not projected. One argument in favor of this is that *laysa* appears in nominal constructions, where no verbal copula is realized. In the absence of the relevant verbal copula, the default present interpretation always follows. In the MP,

however, nominative case is intimately related to the presence of a tense head. Without further speculation, this paper assumes as provisionally correct that since SA displays a default nominative case system, its realization in verbal constructions is default. As such, no TP projection is required.

Along these lines, Benmamoun (2000) puts forth a number of arguments in support of the projection of tense in verbless constructions. One of these arguments is expletive constructions, the standard assumption within the principles-and-parameters framework being that expletives satisfy the EPP feature located under T.

(15)   hunaka Tullaab-un fii l-bayti
         there students-NOM in the-house-GEN
         'There are students in the house'

Interestingly, Subject-Neg agreement is not established when the expletive '*hunaaka*' intervenes between the subject and *laysa*.

(16)

        a. laysa hunaaka Tullaab-un fii l-bayti
            NEG-3ms there students-NOM in the-house-GEN
            'There are no students in the house'

        b. *lays-uu hunaaka Tulaab-un fii l-bayti
             NEG-3mp there students-NOM in the-house-GEN

As illustrated in (16-b), when the Neg-subject agreement holds, ungrammaticality ensues. This ungrammaticality can be accounted for if one assumes that T, if present, blocks the agreement process. Another piece of evidence supporting the configuration in (14) comes from Maltese Arabic. Like MA, negation in Maltese Arabic is expressed through the circumfix ma- -x[5], as illustrated in (17):

(17)

        a. smajt l-istorja Kolha
            heard-1sg the-sotry all
            'I heard the whole strory'

---

[5] The vowel *a* is deleted when it is followed by a round vowel, as shown in (18-19) below.

b. ma-smajt-x l-istorja kolha
    NEG-heard-NEG the-story all
    'I didn't hear the whole story'

(Borg and Azzopardi-Alexander, 1997: 88)

Furthermore, in the absence of a finite auxiliary verb, negation is realized by the negative circumfix ma-…-x along with the pronominal *-hu-*. As argued in Benmamoun (2000: 79), this pronominal clitic carries the third masculine singular features. This feature is often associated with the expletive pronoun in Arabic.

(18)   m-hu-x se jmur id-dar
         NEG fut. goes-3ms the-house
         'He isn't going to go home'

Interestingly, in the absence of an auxiliary verb the discontinuous negative morpheme merges with the expletive, as illustrated in (19):

(19)   m-hawn-x hafna traffiku fit-triq
         NEG-here-NEG much traffic in-the-road
         'There isn't a lot of traffic in the road'

The facts in (18) and (19) follow if one assumes that T is not present. This allows the negative morpheme to freely merge with the pronominal *-hu-* in (18) and the expletive in (19). Another piece of evidence supporting our claim comes from the co-occurrence restriction that holds between *laysa* and the auxiliary *kaan*, as the ungrammaticality of the examples in (20-c) and (20-e) show.

(20)

    a. kaan-at Hind-un mariiDat-an
        AUX-PAST-3fs Hind-NOM sick-ACC
        'Hind was sick'

    b. lays-at Hind-un mariiDat-an
        NEG-3fs Hind-NOM sick-ACC
        'Hind is not sick'

    c. *lays-at kaan-at Hind-un mariiDat-an
         NEG-3fs AUX-PAST-3fs Hind-NOM sick-ACC

    d. Hind-un lam ta-kun mariiDat-an
        Hind-NOM NEG-Past 3fs-AUX sick-ACC
        'Hind wasn't sick'

    e. *Hind-un laysat ta-kun mariiDat-an
        Hind-NOM NEG-3fs 3fs-AUX sick-ACC

In much the same way, in the past tense, *laysa* is blocked by *lam*, as shown in (21) below:

(21)   lam ta-kun fii l-bayt-i
            NEG-Past 3fs-AUX the-house-GEN
            'She wasn't home'

    Similarly, *laa* and its variants cannot occur in verbless sentences (Fassi-Fehri, 1993:164):

(22)   *laa/*lan/*lam fii l-bayti
            NEG/NEG-Fut/NEG-Past in the-house-GEN

In view of these facts, it is tempting to argue that Neg transfers ø-features to T, and only then does T, being active, probe the subject. As for tense, two analyses are conceivable, the first of which is where Neg can be said to keep tense. Hence, no tense-sharing relation with T applies. The second analysis is to argue that Neg shares tense with T[6]. As a matter of fact, the first analysis seems more plausible than the second one, for the evident reason that, in the presence of a negative element, the verb appears in the imperfective morphology (23-b); otherwise the verb is morphologically marked as perfective (23-a). This suggests the failure of the tense-sharing process.

(23)

    a. xaraʒ-a Zayd-un l-baariħat-a
        went-out-3ms Zayd-Nom the-yesterday-ACC
        'Zayd went out yesterday'

    b. lam ya-xruʒ Zayd-un l-baariħat-a
        NEG-Past 3m-went out Zayd-Nom the-yesterday-ACC
        'Zayd didn't go out yesterday'

---

[6] Ouali (2010, 2013) argues that there are three logical possibilities implied in the Feature-Inheritance model. These are DONATE, KEEP, and SHARE.

The fact that Neg transfers its features to T is supported by Ouali's (2011) *C-to-Neg-to-T ø-Feature Transfer*, stated as follows:

(24)   **C-to-Neg-to-T ø-Features Transfer**
        C transfers its ø-features to T via Neg
                                                    (Ouali, 2011: 33)

To illustrate with a concrete example, Tashlhit Amazigh realizes negation through a preverbal morpheme *ur* and the epenthetic vowel *i* (Ouali, 2011; Bensoukas, 2015).

(25)

    a. idd**a** Hicham
        left-3ms. Hicham
        'Hicham left'

    b. ur idd**i** Hicham
        NEG left-3ms.NEG Hicham
        'Hicham didn't leave'

Ouali (2011) proposes that the negative morphology on the verb in (25-b) is a remnant of the *C-to-Neg-to-T ø-Feature Transfer*[7]. On the basis of these facts, the feature transfer process is obtained as follows:

(26)
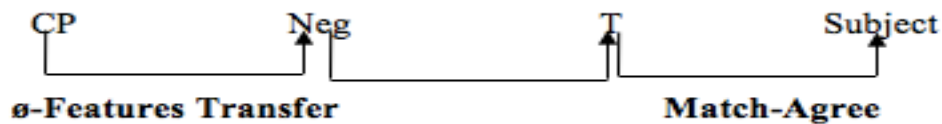
In the absence of an intervening head, in this case Neg, Subject-verb agreement holds perfectly, as C transfers its ø-features directly to T. Thus, when T is projected, the Subject-Neg agreement does not hold. This is the case in verbal constructions in examples (2) above, repeated below for convenience:

---

[7] Negation in Moroccan Amazigh is much more complex than the facts presented here. See Ouali (2011) and Bensoukas (2015) and the references cited therein.

(27)

    a.   Zayd-un laa yu-ħibb-u l-ʔaflaam-a
        Zayd-Nom NEG-Present 3m-write-IMP-3ms the-movies-Acc
        'Zayd doesn't like movies'
    b.   lam ya-xruʒ Zayd-un l-baariħata
        NEG-Past 3m-went out Zayd-Nom the-yesterday
        'Zayd didn't go out yesterday'
    c.   lan ya-xruʒ Zayd-un ɣadan
        Neg-Future 3ms-went out Zayd-Nom tomorrow
        'Zayd won't go out tomorrow'

5. Negation and Adjacency Requirement

It has been observed that the distribution of negation in SA displays a strict adjacency requirement, according to which *laa* and its variant must be adjacent to the verb (Fassi Fehri, 1993; Benmamoun, 2000); otherwise, ungrammaticality ensues, as shown in (28-b).

(28)

    a.   lan ya-ʔti-ya **Zayd-un**
        NEG-Future 3ms-come Zayd-NOM
      'Zayd won't come'

    b.   *lan **Zayd-un** ya-ʔti-ya
   NEG-Future Zayd-NOM3ms-come

laysa, on the other hand, does not observe such requirement, as shown by the fact that the subject can intervene between the negative and the verb.

(29)

    a.   **Zayd-un** laysa maRiiD-an
        Zayd-NOM NEG-3ms sick-ACC
        'Zayd isn't sick'

    b.   laysa **Zayd-un** maRiiD-an
        NEG-3ms Zayd-NOM sick-ACC
        'Zayd isn't sick'

In this study, the adjacency requirement is explained on the basis of the syntactic configuration in (30). In particular, when T is present the verb must move to check the [V] feature of tense (Benmamoun, 2000). This explains why the two lexical heads, Neg and V, are adjacent, forming a complex head. This is made clear in the following tree diagram:

(30)
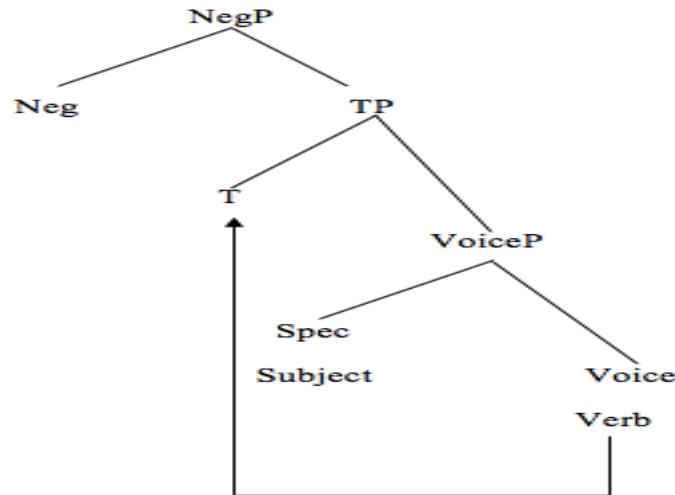
In the absence of T in a non-verbal context, however, no such a requirement is instigated, thus accounting for (28). Before closing this section, it has been pointed out by Benmamoun (2000), building on Moutaouakil (1993), that *laysa* appears in verbal contexts as well, as indicated by the grammaticality of the following sentence:

(31)   las-tu ʔa-drii
          NEG-3ms 3ms-know
          'I don't know'

This being the case, however, this does not seem to undermine our thesis that *laysa* appears in a clause structure where TP is not projected. There is supporting evidence that the verb in the imperfective form does not move to T. This is evident from the ungrammaticality of the periphrastic causative sentence in (32-b), where the verb movement in the embedded clause is not possible (see Loutfi, 2017 for an analysis).

(32)

    a.   ʒaʕal-a Zayd-un l-bint-a ta-rqusu
         made-3ms Zayd-NOM the-girl-ACC 3fs-dance
         'Zayd made the girl dance'

    b.   *ʒaʕal-a Zayd-un ta-rqusu l-bint-a
         made-3ms Zayd-NOM the-girl-ACC 3fs-dance
         'Zayd made the girl dance'

The idea that the verb does not move in embedded clauses is consistent with the analysis suggested in Loutfi (2017), according to which embedded clauses in periphrastic causatives do not project a TP. Instances where the verb, although appearing with imperfective morphology, undergoes verb movement to T can still be maintained if we assume the Neg head does not share tense with T.

6. The Negative *maa*

If the analysis proposed is maintained, *maa* seems to pose problems. As has been pointed out, *maa* appears in a wide range of contexts, both verbal and non-verbal, and its distribution does not seem to be restricted by tense. This is coupled with the fact that the verb negated by *maa* is conjugated according to the tense of the sentence, which means that *maa* does not block verb movement to T (Aoun *et al.* 2010).

(33)

    a. maa xaraʒ-at Hind-un
        NEG went-out-3fs Hind-Nom
        'Hind didn't go out'

    b. maa ta-xruʒ-u Hind-un fii layl-i
        NEG 3fs-go-out'3fs Hind-Nom in night-GEN
        'Hind doesn't go out at night'

    c. maa Sa-tu-saafir-u Zaynab-un
        NEG FUT-3fs-travel-3fs Zaynab-Nom
        'Zaynab won't travel'

    d. maa Hind-un fii l-bayt-i
        NEG Hind-Nom in the-house-Gen
        'Hind isn't at home'

    e. maa xaalid-un ħaziin-un
        NEG Khalid-Nom sad-Nom
        'Khalid isn't sad'

Ouhalla (1993) argues that *maa* acts as a marker of negative contrastive focus, as it contrastively focuses the whole proposition. As defined by Ouhalla (1993: 277), 'negative focus is used to assert the falsity of a given prevailing piece of information, which can be encoded in a whole proposition (sentence), or in just a constituent of a sentence'. Assuming that this analysis is on the right track, this explains why *maa*, contrary to the other negative particles, does not

participate in the Feature-Inheritance model. More precisely, *maa* is merged higher in the structure than C and T. This also explains the co-occurrence of both the discontinuous morpheme *ma-...-ʃ* and the non-discontinuous *maʃi* in (34).

(34)

      a. maʃi ma-ʒa-ʃ
         NEG NEG-came-3ms-NEG
         'Not that he didn't come'

      b. maʃi ma-zwin-ʃ
         NEG NEG-beautiful-3ms-NEG
         'Not that he isn't beautiful'

Similar to *maa*, *maʃi* also acts as a focus marker, contrastively focusing the whole proposition, as *maʃi* in (38) clearly asserts the falsity of the proposition that 'he didn't come'. Since *maʃi* and the discontinuous morpheme *ma-...-ʃ* are not in complementary distribution, the two negative morphemes cannot be said to occupy the same position. This fact suggests that *maʃi* is higher in the clause than C. Following Ouhalla (1993), *maʃi* is similar to *maa* in that the two are the heads of the focus projection located higher than C and T. This explains why *maa* neither carries tense nor inflects for agreement. Therefore, *maa* does not block the feature sharing process.

7. Negation and Late Insertion

With *laysa* and *laa* and its temporal variants instantiating different syntactic configurations, it is tempting to advance the proposal suggested in Benmamoun (2000), according to which there is one single negative element. With the exception of *maa*, this proposal is also supported by the fact that the different negative particles share a common phonological form. Given our theoretical approach, we diverge from Benmamoun's implementation of this proposal, however, proposing that their realization is governed by Late Insertion (Halle and Marantz, 1993, 1994). As shown in (59), each negative element is specified with a set of specific features that licenses its context of insertion.

(35)   ***Vocabulary Items proposed for Negation***

    a. laa   ⇔   [+V, $T_{Present}$]

    b. lam   ⇔   [+V, T_{PAST}]

    c. lan   ⇔   [+V, T_{FUTURE}]

    d. laysa ⇔   [+V, +N]

    e. maa   ⇔   [Focus]

8. Conclusion

The locus of interest of this paper has been to explain the seemingly disparate range of empirical facts displayed by the negative elements in SA. These are the Subject-Neg agreement triggered by *laysa* and the temporal interpretation associated with *lan* and *lam*. It has been demonstrated that these behaviors are unified under the Feature Inheritance system suggested in Chomsky (2004, 2005), whereby T inherits its tense and ø-features from C. The advantages of this system are twofold. First, it has been shown that the Subject-Neg agreement and the tense encoded by *lan* and *lam* are not coincidental, but the result of the mechanism Agree, thereby unifying these two seemingly unrelated phenomena. Second, it has been demonstrated that the *High-Neg* analysi*s* proves more explanatory than the *Low-Neg* approach.

Furthermore, an adequate and unified analysis of the adjacency requirement on the verb and the negative *laa* and its temporal variants has been provided. As opposed to Benmamoun (2000), I have shown that the adjacency requirement (or its lack thereof) boils down to the (un)-availability of movement of the verb to T. In non-verbless sentences, where T was argued not to be projected, such a requirement is not observed. This analysis straightforwardly captures the generalization that *laa* and its variants always requires the presence of a verbal head. Granted that the analysis proposed herein is on the right track, the feature inheritance approach to agreement would have several implications on the realizations of agreement and case in SA, an issue we leave to future research.

References

Aoun, J. Benmamoun, E. and Choueiri, L. (2010). *The Syntax of Arabic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Benmamoun, A. (1992). *Functional and Inflectional Morphology: Problems of Projection, Representation and Derivation*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Benmamoun, A. (2000). *The Feature Structure of Functional Categories: A Comparative Study of Arabic Dialects*. Oxford University Press.

Benmamoun, A. Abunasser, M. Al-Sabbagh, R. Bidaoui, A. Shalash, D. (2013). The Location of Sentential Negation in Arabic Varieties. *Brill's Annual of Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics* (5) 83-116.

Bensoukas, K. (2015). Amazigh Negative Verb Morphology: How Far Does the Variation Go?. *Brill's Journal of Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics* (7) 211-278.

Borg, A. and Azzopardi-Alexander, M. (1997). *Maltese*. Routledge, London.

Chomsky, N. (1995). *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Chomsky, N. (2004). Beyond Explanatory Adequacy. In *Structures and Beyond*, A. Belletti (Ed.), 104–131. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chomsky, N. (2005). Three Factors in Language Design. *Linguistic Inquiry* 36: 1-22.

Fassi-Fehri, A. (1993). *Issues in the Structure of Arabic Clauses and Words*. Dordrecht, Kluwer.

Halle, M. and Marantz, A. (1993). Distributed Morphology and the Pieces of Inflection. In *The View from Building 20: Essays in Honor of Sylvain Bromberger*, K. Hale and S.J. Keyser (Eds), 111-176. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Halle, M. and Marantz, A. (1994). Some Key Pieces of Distributed Morphology. In *Papers on Phonology and Morphology [MIT Working Papers in Linguistics 21]*, A. Carnie, H. Harley and T. Bures (Eds), 275-288. Cambridge, MA: Department of Linguistics, MIT.

Loutfi, A. (2017). *Aspects of the Clause Structure and Word Formation in Arabic: A Distributed Morphology Analysis*. Doctoral Dissertation, Mohammed V University, Faculty of Letters, Rabat.

McFadden, T. (2004). *The Position of Morphological Case in the Derivation: a Study on the Syntax-Morphology Interface*. PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

Mohammed, M. (2000). *Word Order, Agreement and Pronominalization in Standard and Palestinian Arabic*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Ouali, H. (2011). *Agreement, Pronominal Clitics, and Negation in Tamazight Berber*. Continuum: Bloomsbury Studies in Theoretical Linguistics

Ouhalla, J. (1993). Negation, Focus and Tense: The Arabic maa and laa. *Rivista di Linguistica* 5: 275–300.

Ouhalla, J. (2002). The Structure and Logical Form of Negative Sentences in Arabic. In *Themes in Arabic and Hebrew Syntax*, J. Ouhalla and U. Shlonsky (Eds), 299-320. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Richards, N. (2007). On Feature Inheritance: An Argument from the Phase Impenetrability Condition. *Linguistic inquiry* 38: 563-572.

Shlonsky, Ur. (1997). *Clause structure and Word Order in Hebrew and Arabic: An Essay in Comparative Semitic syntax*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Soltan, U. (2006). Standard Arabic Subject-verb Agreement Asymmetry Revisited in an Agree-based Minimalist Syntax. In *Agreement Systems,* C. Boeckx, (Ed.), 238–265. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Soltan, U. (2011). On Issues of Arabic Syntax: An Essay in Syntactic Argumentation. *Brill's Annual of Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics* (3) 236–280.

Travis, L. (1984). *Parameters and Effects of Word Order Variation*. MIT PhD dissertation.