

PRO AND VERB MOVEMENT IN ARABIC SYNTAX

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Abstract

This paper aims at investigating the properties of pro or the null subject in Arabic syntax. Pro features were investigated practically and theoretically and then, a new mechanism was proposed to derive pro, as well as regular subject, in all Arabic structures. In this mechanism the verb moves to [Spec, T] to check the regular subject features. To indicate the identity of pro in certain structures, the verb moves another time to [Spec, AGR].

Keywords: Pro, verb movement, pre- verbal NP

Introduction

The null subject in Arabic syntax has received a great deal of research by traditional Arabic Grammarians and modern syntacticians (Soltan (2006), Aoun, Benmamoun and Sportiche (1994), and Ouhalla (1994), among others) who have proposed new perspectives based, in general, on generative grammar.

Although the majority of these studies have agreed that Arabic allows a null subject (henceforth, pro) in its structure, the features of this pro and its relations to other elements in the sentence remained debatable issues. This paper aims at discussing some of these debatable issues and presenting a new perspective that focuses on the relations between pro, verb movement, and AGR(ment) features.

Before reviewing the theoretical and empirical literature, let us have a brief summary of the most important aspects of Arabic syntax related to the topic of this paper. The following two phrases show the structures of an overt and a covert (pro) subjects:

- (1) sharib- a al awladu al haleeb.
drink- past the boys the milk
“The boys drank the milk”
- (2) sharib- oo al haleeb.
drink- past (pl, masc.) the milk
“The boys drank the milk”

The most obvious difference between (1) and (2) is the lack of the lexical overt subject ‘al awlaadu’ (the boys) in the latter. The subject in (2) is not realized phonetically as a lexical NP, so it is called in the literature a covert subject/ null subject/ pro. The second difference between (1) and (2) is the emergence of the suffix ‘- oo’ that is attached to the verb ‘sharib-oo’ (they drank) in (2). This suffix has replaced ‘- a’, the verb suffix in (1). This new suffix ‘-oo’ has emerged to indicate the identity of pro in (2) as a third masculine plural. Because this suffix presents the three features of the missing subjects, i.e. person, gender, and number it is given the title “full agreement” to distinguish it from another type of suffixes that indicates only two features, namely person and gender; hence it is called “partial agreement”. In addition to this ‘-oo’ suffix, Arabic allows other suffixes (full agreements or AGR markers) to emerge and specify the identities of other types of pro. Researchers have noticed that there is a correspondence between the absence of the lexical subjects and the emergence of new full agreements in certain structures. However, these researchers have not reached a sole conclusion with regard to the nature of the subject in these structures and/or the nature of these agreements. For example, Arabic grammarians consider the suffix ‘- oo’ in (2) as the subject of that clause. Some contemporary researchers (such as Ouhalla, (1994)) argue that the subject of (2) is pro and the suffix ‘- oo’ is its AGR marker. A third argument of other researchers (such as Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1998)) considers the suffix ‘- oo’ as an AGR marker that replaces the subject and carries its lexical and (may be its) semantic features. This analysis, in somehow, has a similarity with the traditional grammarians’ analysis.

The complication of this matter does not stop here. It escalates and gets more branches and analyses when other structures with other features are involved in the discussion. For instance, the full agreement that was noticed in (2) in a null subject structure can also be observed in other structures, namely a pre- verb NP structure (i.e. SVO) as in (3) and a regular Arabic structure (VSO) that has a pronominal subject as in (4):

(3) al awlaadu sharib- oo al haleeb.
 the boys drink- past (pl, masc.) the milk
 “The boys drank the milk”

(4) sharib- oo Hum al haleeb.
 drink- past (pl, masc.) they the milk
 “They (boys) drank the milk”

Generally speaking, Arabic is by default a VSO language that shows partial and full agreements attached to the verb in different situations. The partial agreement can be noticed in VSO structure with a lexical subject. Full

agreement can be observed in other structures, namely, in a SVO structure, VSO structure with a null subject, and VSO with a pronominal subject.

This paper is going to investigate pro structure and its features from a Minimalist perspective. A new proposal will be presented to account for the derivation of pro, its features and its relation with verb movement. This attempt will help to establish a systematic mechanism that connects between the derivation of pro and overt subject from one hand and the verb movement from the other hand.

To serve this goal, this research is divided into four sections. Section one has been designated to this introduction. Section two focuses on the related literature and its various analyses that try to account for pro and Arabic word order. The third section of this paper, which shapes the main body of this research, is divided into some sub- sections that investigate the covert subjects in Arabic syntax, discuss Pre- verb NP, and propose a new mechanism to derive pro. The last section summarizes and concludes the argument.

Literature Review

The null subject or pro received a great deal of scholarly discussions after it was first discussed for several times by Chomsky's "Government and Binding", "Principles and Parameters", and "the Minimalist Program" theories. As a mysterious element that belongs to the Empty Categories (pro, PRO, trace) which were discovered by Chomsky in 1970s, pro was the target of many researchers who attempted to explore its features and compare it to other elements in the clause in different languages. Chomsky (1981 and 1995) proposes that pro is the null subject of a certain structure that does not show an overt subject. This phenomenon can be observed in pro- drop languages or Null Subject Languages (NSLs). This pro is a covert nominal subject (+ pronominal) that takes the place of a regular subject; so it carries a nominative case and a theta role. Many researchers started from this premise and conducted further researches in an attempt to apply these features to different pro(s) in different NSLs. Since Arabic allows pro to occur in its structure, it was considered by some of that research. In the last few years, more attention was given to Arabic pro. Some of those researchers who studied it tried to propose various analyses to account for the derivation of pro and to explain its relation to the predicate. One of the most important recent studies that discussed pro is the "The Syntax of Arabic" by Aoun, Benmamoun and Choueiri (2010). In this book some perspectives are presented briefly including that of Aoun and Benmamoun who discussed pro, agreement and word order in three varieties of Arabic. Their argument was presented in a detailed paper published in 1994. The basic argument in that paper is compatible, in a sense, with Chomsky's analysis presented in

his book “The minimalist Program” (1995). Aoun and Benmamoun, for example, argue that in SVO structure, the lexical subject which is generated in VP moves to the specifier of IP to fulfill the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) and to check its nominative case. This argument results in denying the occurrence of *pro* in SVO structure. This analysis was also adopted by some other scholars including Jalabnah (2007) and Ouhalla (1994) who precisely specified the location of that subject to be in [spec, TP]. In the VSO structure, Aoun and Benmamoun argue that the thematic subject remains in VP and another covert expletive appears in [Spec, IP] to receive, instead of the genuine subject, a full agreement via Spec- head configuration relationship. But the emergence of a full agreement by this analysis was problematic. Although the full agreement is accepted in SVO structure, it is not allowed in VSO structure. The full agreement in this case is supposed to be a partial agreement that usually appears in VSO order. To solve this problem, Aoun and Benmamoun postulated “that the verb raises farther up to a head position (of some intermediate projection, call it F), in which it retains the agreement information "gathered" in I.” (204). According to them, the verb- movement to a higher position causes the structure to lose its full agreement and be satisfied with the non- problematic partial agreement. This idea was rejected totally by Soltan (2006) who argues that “the full-versus-partial agreement asymmetry is shown to follow not from a Spec-head analysis as previously proposed (Mohammad 1990, 2000; Aoun et al 1994), but rather from the standard assumption that *pro* in null subject languages has to be identified by rich agreement at the interface.”(239) This analysis is supported by the traditional perspective that considers *pro* as the genuine subject in SVO structure and pre NP as a based generated topic-comment structure. To account for the full agreement of *pro*, Soltan adopts Chomsky’s Agree approach as an alternative to the Spec- head configuration. What distinguishes this alternative and makes it special is that it “takes place at a distance (rather than in a Spec-head configuration) within a local search domain” (258). In this operation , *pro*, like other lexical subjects, agrees with T and gets its full agreement checked without moving to [Spec, TP] as required by the Spec- head configuration. Such an approach eliminates the need for a covert expletive to occupy [Spec, TP]. In addition to this perspective Soltan argues that all nouns in Arabic structure have nominative case by default. This view is adopted by traditional grammarians and some contemporary researchers such as Ouhalla (1994) who adopted Fassi Fehri’s (1993) view and elaborated it to account for verb movement in Arabic.

In his proposal, Ouhalla (1994) argues that in Arabic clause structure “T is higher than AGR” (43). The same structure was adopted by Jalabneh (2007) in his argument. According to Ouhalla, this proposal helps generate the VSO order of Arabic in a natural way via the movement of V to T and

the emergence of an expletive pro in [Spec, AGR]. This expletive pro is necessary to form a Spec- Head agreement relation with AGR. As the last movement in this structure, the thematic subject that was occupying the [Spec, VP] position moves to [Spec, AGR] to replace the expletive pro. Although Ouhalla has proposed an expletive pro in the same structure of the lexical thematic subject in VSO order, he did not include in his analysis any clause that does not show any lexical subject.

Another interesting analysis was proposed by Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (A and A 1998) who focused on parametrizing AGR in some languages (including Arabic). They maintain that AGR can fulfill EPP instead of NP. This, according to them, “opens the possibility of furthermore proposing that the AGR affix counts as a theta- bearing argument in Null Subject Languages (NSLs)”(531). In an answer to how AGR fulfills EPP, A and A explain that the strong AGR features trigger the verb- raising in NSLs. This movement of a head (the verb) rather than a noun is chosen by the structure because it is less costly (economy reason) and also because Arabic, like some other languages, has “verbal agreement morphology with the categorial status of a pronominal element” (494). As a result “VSO orders never involve a covert expletive”. This argument goes against the covert expletive claim of Aoun, Benmamoun (2010), and Ouhalla (1994). In another result, A and A argue that the preverbal subject in Arabic SVO structure is a base- generated topic. The same result was maintained by Soltan (2006) and Other Arabic grammarians who utilize the similarity between verb agreement in SVO structure and pro structure to indicate that there is a null subject in both structures and that the pre NP in SVO order is not the subject of the clause. In the end of their article, A and A refused to support or reject the existence of pro, though many have interpreted their results to mean that pro can be dispensed with.

At the end of this section, the researcher would mention that the traditional Arabic grammarians as well as many current researchers maintain that pro, which is supposed to be a hidden subject that has the same properties of a regular subject, exists only in five cases under two conditions. The first condition is the absence of a lexical post verbal subject. The second condition is when the verb does not show full agreement markers. According to them, full agreements are considered attached pronouns. With regard to the first condition, Arabic grammarians refuse to consider the pre verbal NP in SVO as a subject. Rather it is a topic or a dislocated element. To them, SVO is broken down into NP, VSO. In this structure, the subject might be covert (pro) or attached pronoun. If it is pro, then it will have the same features of a regular pro in a VSO structure.

In this section, some theoretical and practical views were summarized and sometimes compared in order to establish a background that will help develop the argument of this paper in the next section.

Pro and V- movement analysis.

This section is divided into three sub- sections. The focus of the first two sections is on the occurrence of pro in VSO and SVO structures. The third section presents a new perspective that illustrates the derivation of pro and its relation to other elements of the sentence.

1. PRO IN VSO STRUCTURE. There is a general consensus amongst all scholars that the subject of (5) is overt and the subject of (6) is covert.

(5) thaHaba zaydun ila al madrasati maashiyan
 went zayd to the school walking
 “Zayd went to the school walking”

(6) athHabu ilaa al madrasati kulla sabaah
 go (I) to the school every morning
 “(I) go to the school every morning”

In (5), the lexical noun ‘Zaid’ is the subject of the clause. It is the agent of the verb ‘thahaba’ (went) and it is assigned the nominative case. This subject is visible, non- attached to the verb and has a theta role. The other subject in (6) is invisible but the verb ‘athhabu’ (go) and its markers indicate the identity of this invisible subject i.e. pro as ‘I’. To check the occurrence of pro and its features in other structures, the following clauses that have different structures are going to be investigated in this section. This investigation will be a necessary step towards studying the features of pro and its structure from a minimalist perspective. All the below clauses (7- 18) contain pro(s):

(7) sa-na-thHab-u ilaa al madrasati sabaahan
 will-go (we) to the school in morning
 “(We) will go to the school in the morning”

(8) sa-ya-thHab-u ilaa al madrasati sabaahan
 will- go (he) to the school in morning
 “(He) will go to the school in the morning”

(9) tathHabu ilaa al madrasati kulla sabaah
 goes (she) to the school every morning
 “(She) goes to the school every morning”

(10) laa yuhibaani al kathiba
 not (neg.) love (both, masc.) the dishonesty
 “(They both) do not love dishonesty”

(11) laa tathHabaani ilaa al madrasati kulla sabaah

- not (neg.) Go (both, fem.) to the school every morning
 “(They both) go to the school every morning”
- (12) lam yamootoo mina al joo’
 not (neg.) die (they, masc.) from the hunger
 “(They) did not starve to death”
- (13) yathHabna ilaa al madrasati kulla sabaah
 go (they, fem.) to the school every morning
 “(They) go to the school every morning”
- (14) Hal tathHabu ilaa al madrasati kulla sabaah?
 do go (you, 2nd, masc.) to the school every morning
 “Do (you) go to the school every morning?”
- (15) Hal tathHabeena ilaa al madrasati kulla sabaah?
 do go (you, 2nd, fem.) to the school every morning
 “Do (you) go to the school every morning?”
- (16) Hal tathHab-aani ilaa al madrasati kulla sabaah?
 do go (you, 2nd, dual) to the school every morning
 “Do (you) go to the school every morning?”
- (17) Hal tathHaboon ilaa al madrasati kulla sabaah?
 do go (you, 2nd, pl, masc.) to the school every morning
 “Do (you) go to the school every morning?”
- (18) Hal tathHab-na ilaa al madrasati kulla sabaah?
 do go (you, 2nd, pl, fem) to the school every morning
 “Do (you) go to the school every morning?”

The previous sentences (7- 18) show pro in different contexts and structures. Each pro stands for a pronoun that takes the role of a subject. Pro in these sentences did not show any sensitivity against any of the Arabic 12 pronouns: I, we, he, she, they (pl, masc.), they (pl, fem), they (dual), you (sg., masc.), you (sg., fem.), you (dual), you (pl, masc.), you (pl, fem.). Also it is noticed that pro occurs in affirmative, negative and interrogative structures as in (9, 10, and 17 respectively). In addition to that, (7, 10, and 12) illustrate that pro can carry the thematic roles of agent, experiencer, and theme.

It is worth mentioning here that although Arabic grammarians believe that pro is the hidden subject (dhameer Mustater) in (6, 7, 8, and 9), they do not agree that the subject in (10- 18) is a pro. Rather it is an attached pronoun that carries the thematic and syntactic features of a regular pronominal or lexical pronoun. This perspective is not adopted here because all of these markers behave in the same way and have similar characteristics in the subject structure which is the concern of this paper. For example, the existence of any of these AGR markers such as -aani and -na in (16 and 13), in isolation renders them meaningless. Similarly, the AGR markers of a pro in these sentences (7-9), which according to traditional Arabic researchers

have pro, show no meaning in isolation. For this reason the researcher adopts the other opinion of recent generative grammar researchers, such as Aoun, Benmamoun (2010), Soltan (2006) and Jalabneh (2007), who consider these markers AGR features.

To sum up this section, pro is the null subject of VSO structure⁴¹. It can occur in all types of clauses like affirmative perfective, affirmative imperfective, negative, and interrogative. The rich AGR markers attached to predicate indicate the identity of each pro which can stand for all Arabic pronouns.

2. PRE- VERBAL NP AND PRO

It was mentioned in section two that some researchers (A and A, Soltan, among others) rejected the claim that the Arabic pre- verbal NP in SVO structure is a genuine subject. These researchers discussed the evidence of such a claim and proposed several practical and theoretical evidences to refute that assumption. In addition to these evidences the researcher would extend that perspective with some further discussion.

According to Arabic grammarians, the pre verbal NP is a Mubtada? (a topic or clitic- left dislocated (CLLD) that is used semantically to emphasize the agent of the action but not the action itself as in regular VSO sentences. The term ‘Mubtada?’ means something to start with. It is followed always by its ‘Khabar’ (a report or a piece of information added to that noun). These definitions indicate that the Mubtada? (henceforth, CLLD) is a person or an object that is well-known to the hearer and the speaker and shared between them. When this noun is mentioned at the beginning of a phrase, it is often to answer a question similar to that in (19):

(19) Q: Who drank the milk?

A: al awladu shariboo al Haleeb

The boys drank the milk

In (19), the answer to the proposed question starts with ‘al awlad’ (the boys) who are the agents of the action and the source of inquiry in the question. If the question focuses on the action itself, then the answer should start with the verb. As a matter of fact, the majority of Arabic sentences are formed in VSO order with partial agreements. However, when the CLLD is used in a clause, the verb of that clause shows full agreement to indicate the identity of the genuine subject that does not appear in the genuine post verbal subject position. What supports such a claim is the emergence of the full agreement when CLLD is dropped from the structure. In this case the verb still shows the full agreement of a null subject. That means full agreement

⁴¹ Note here that the VSO structure with an overt lexical subject is excluded from the discussion.

coincides with the absence of the post subject rather than the absence of CLLD. Hence, Arab grammarians and other researchers did not consider CLLD as a subject that changed its location.

Yet, some traditional grammarians discussed the movement of the subject to a pre position. Abbaas (1970) has explained the partial agreement restriction of this movement. According to traditional grammarians, if this movement has to take place, then it should not cause the partial agreement of the verb to be changed; otherwise, it is wrong. This argument was supported by the old uncommon use of this structure by certain Arab tribes who would, sometimes, pronounce the subject at the beginning of the sentence without changing the partial agreement of the verb as in (20)

- (20) a. Qaama ar Rijaalu
 stood up, masc. the men
 b. ar Rijaalu qaama
 the men stood up, masc
 “The men stood up”.

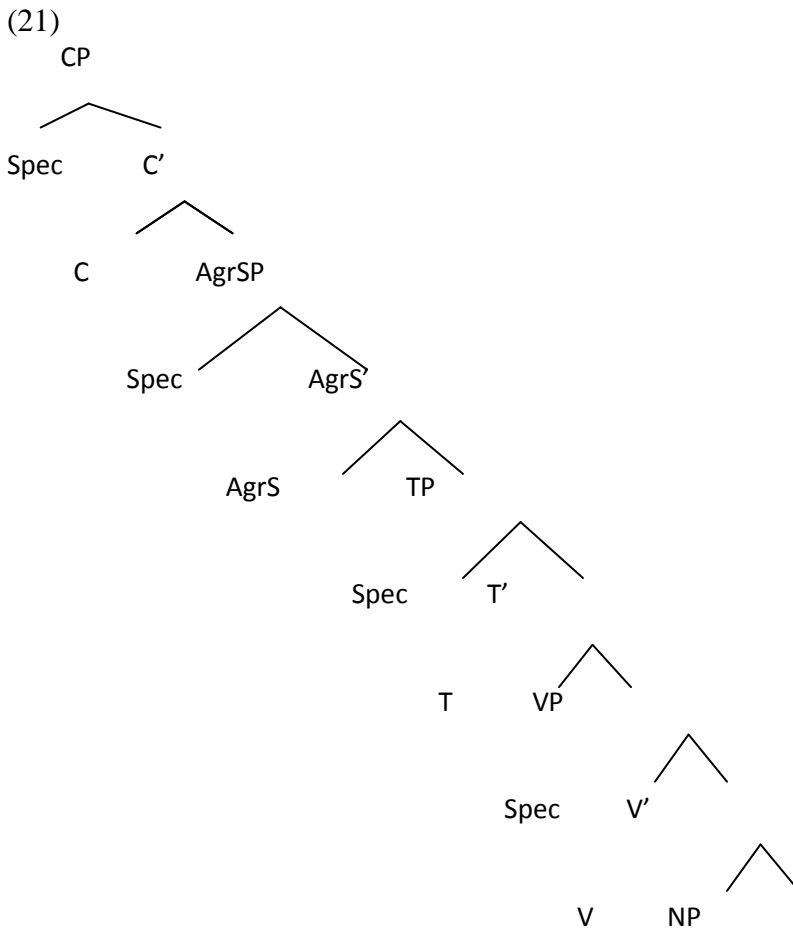
In the previous two clauses, the partial agreement is observed with pre and post subjects. This observation causes a problem to the maintained argument of Aoun, Benmamoun (2010), and Ouhalla (1994) who built their analysis on full agreement in SVO structure.

For many semantic and theoretical reasons, the researcher adopts the traditional Arabic grammarians’ analysis. This analysis, which is also supported by Soltan (2006) and A and A (1998), entails that the pre verbal NP in Arabic is not the subject of the sentence; so it is not a result of a subject movement. Rather it is a topic or a CLLD that is generated in a location [F] higher than [Spec, AGR]. It is described by Soltan as a base-generated element that does not have a direct connection with regard to the generation processes of the clause structure. Based on that, the researcher argues that the null pronoun *pro* does exist in the so-called SVO Arabic structure in the regular post verb position. To be more precise, the researcher recommends the use of NP, VSO term instead of SVO. In the end, the researcher assumes that *pro* in NP, VSO structure has the same properties of a regular *pro* that was discussed in the previous section. In the next section *pro* features and verb- movement will be discussed.

3. PRO FEATURES AND V- MOVEMENT

In so far, the researcher has proposed that *pro* is the null subject that occupies the post verbal position of a regular subject in VSO and NP, VSO structures. In this section the syntactic and semantic features of this *pro* are discussed.

Let us start with the popular tree diagram adopted by Chomsky (1995: 173) with slight modifications illustrated in (21):



Many researchers (Aoun, Benmamoun (2010), Ouhalla (1994), Jalabneh (2007), among others) have proved that Arabic subject (both covert and overt) is generated after the numeration stage in the VP shell. After that, the subject merges (Merge operation) with the verb to get its theta role in [Spec, VP] under Theta- Role Assignment Principle (TRAP) which, as explained by Hornstein et al, (2005) mandates all theta roles to “be assigned under Merge operation” (54). Instead of moving out of the VP, the researcher adopts the claim that Arabic subject does not leave its location [Spec, VP] but remains in situ. This claim has been proved to account for Arabic (Aoun et al (2010), Ouhalla (1994), among others) and also for some other languages such as Irish. Although this assumption is adopted by these Arabic researchers for VSO order, they argue for the existence of another subject (expletive pro) in the same structure to render their analysis correct.

Up to now, the assignment of θ - role (not case) has been discussed. But still the other requirements of a sentence, namely EPP, word order and

the subject- verb agreement have to be fulfilled. To meet all of these requirements let us assume that the verb leaves its domain and performs two movements that account for these requirements. The first movement takes the verb as well as its nominal features to [Spec, TP], the canonical position of a subject, to check the EPP and to check person and gender features (partial agreement). This first movement occurs regardless of the visibility factor of the subject in [Spec, VP]. However, the second movement is restricted by the visibility of the subject. If the subject is not phonetically realized i.e. pro, the verb performs another movement and lands at [Spec, AGR] to check the number feature and thus forms a full agreement that identifies the identity of that null subject. Assuming that the two movements are on the right track, all the requirements of a well- formed clause (except for the nominative case which will be discussed separately below) have been met.

Yet, this analysis has some inquires about the role of the verb in fulfilling the EPP and ϕ - features and the capability of this analysis to account for SVO and VSO structures with and without pro.

Let us start first with the main inquiry about the role of the verb in fulfilling these features that are regularly fulfilled by the subject.

Recall that all elements of a clause enter the numeration phase with their features that have to be checked before they can be realized at PF. Recall also that [+ interpretable] features of a certain element have to be checked against the [- interpretable] features of another element within a Spec- head configuration. From a minimalist perspective, a subject enters the numeration with its [+ interpretable] ϕ – features and then it moves to check these features against their equivalent [- interpretable] features of T. In this analysis the researcher would assume that the Arabic subject enters the numeration with [-interpretable] features while the Arabic verb enters the numeration with [+ interpretable] pronominal features. In other words, since Arabic verb always carries rich agreements at PF, the researcher would assume that it has the priority to carry [+interpretable] features. Such features can be checked more than one time and reach the PF without causing the derivation to crash. What happens next is that the features of the verb get checked first against these of the subject before the verb moves to check these features another time against T features. As mentioned earlier, the verb might move another step, in case of pro, to check these features against the AGR features. Thus, all the ϕ –features required to generate a sound clause are met.

Back to the first checking operation between the verb and the subject, there are two things that have to be explained. First, the subject is triggered by its [- interpretable] features to move to [Spec, VP] to check its features and to get its theta role. Second, during this operation, the verb

checks the status of the subject (whether it is overt or covert) and its ϕ – features to agree with it. If the subject is overt, partial features (person and gender) will be checked. But if it is pro all features will be checked. After the completion of this local checking stage, the verb will be ready to move either one time to [Spec, TP] or two times to [Spec, TP] and [Spec, AGR] to check these activated features.

But does this analysis violate these two common norms, namely the subject features have to be checked by the subject and the verb has to agree with the subject? The quick answer is no. Our analysis entails that the ϕ – features are checked first between the subject and the predicate before they are checked again against other heads (T and AGR). Notice that the whole process is a process of checking the ϕ –features of the subject itself. They were not altered at all. Indeed, they were activated first (by checking them against these of the verb) and then carried by the verb which is supposed to agree with the subject by reflecting similar features. Let us simply argue that they are two faces of the same coin. The verb has to agree with the subject by carrying the features of that subject. These features are considered theoretically subject features but let us remember that they never appear on the subject. Rather they are attached to the verb. To conclude, in this analysis, the verb carries the subject features which are attached to it (verb) and check them on behalf of the subject against T and AGR heads.

Let us shift the discussion now to EPP, the other requirement of a well- formed clause. I adopt A and A’s argument that permits the AGR features to fulfill the EPP requirement. Such argument coincides, in general, with the traditional Arabic perspective that considers attached pronouns as verb agreement markers. These attached pronouns, according to them, have the same properties of regular subjects (including the ability to fulfill EPP).

With regard to the nominative case of a subject, the researcher adopts the argument of Arabic grammarians, Fassi Fehri (1993), Ouhalla (1994) and Soltan (2006) that nominative case is assigned to Arabic nouns and pronoun by a default mechanism. This mechanism is restricted only to these nouns that are not preceded by any article or element that changes its default case. Let us have a glimpse at some examples:

(22) jaa?a zayd- un
 came Zayd-Nom.
 “Zayd has come”

(23) zaydun batal-un
 zayd-Nom. hero- Nom.
 “Zayd is a hero”

(24) nabeel- un jaa?a
 nabeel- Nom. Came
 “Nabeel has come”

(25) al hamamat-u fawqa ash Shajarat-i
the dove- Nom. on the tree- Dat.

“The dove is on the tree”

(26) inna zayd-an batal- un
indeed zayd- accus. hero- Nom.

“Indeed Zayd is a hero”

All nouns in (22- 26) have nominative cases except for the two nouns ‘ash Shajarati’ (the tree) in (25) and Zaid in (26). What prevent these nouns from getting a nominative case are the particles that preceded them. In (25) ‘the tree’ was preceded by the preposition ‘fawqa’ (on) that gave it a dative case. In (26), the noun ‘Zaid-an’ carries the accusative case under the effect of ‘inna’ (indeed) which is considered in Arabic as an accusative case assigner. For this reason, Arabic subject in our assumption is generated with a nominative case that does not require any checking operation. Even if it does require checking, we assume that it will occur via verb movement i.e. it will be checked like other ϕ –features.

In the last part of this section the researcher would discuss some benefits of this analysis in the light of other analyses proposed by other researchers.

The several analyses that account for pro in Arabic syntax triggered the researcher to present a new perspective that, as the researcher sees it, have more strong points and less weak points than these analyses. What makes this proposal more special is its consistency that is achieved by presenting only one primary model that works for all scenarios of Arabic structures. However, this primary model has some slight differences. In this primary model VSO, VSO with pro, and NP,SVO have the same primary subject- verb relation. All subjects are generated inside VP and remain there. In all these structures V moves to T to check the partial AGR features and fulfill EPP requirement. If the subject is pro, V moves from T to AGR to check full features. This mechanism works very fine with most controversial structure SVO and reduces its problematic consequences that face other analyses (more details can be found in Soltan’s (2006) paper). This proposal has a precedent approach that considers multiple subject positions for some structures, such as the Icelandic Transitive Expletive Construction⁴².

Another advantage of this proposal is its correspondence to the economy principle of Minimalism. As it is noticed in the abovementioned argument, this proposal reduces the number of these movements proposed by other researchers. Indeed, it restricts the movement inside the clause to only one in the regular VSO structure and to two movements in all NP,SVO

⁴² Thanks to Dr. Brain (California State University, Fresno) for sharing this information

structures and in some VSO structures that have pro. This Economy fact has to be taken in consideration when comparing this analysis to other analyses that present two different structures that require two movements each. For example, in Ouhalla's (1994) proposal, the insertion of a covert expletive is required and an extra movement of the thematic subject has to take place to replace that covert expletive. Such extra elements and movements do not exhibit an appropriate observation to Economy principles but they increase the cost of derivation.

In addition to what has been mentioned, I do believe that the adaptation of this analysis to many traditional as well as contemporary views and putting them together helps to bridge the gap between the new perspectives of modern syntacticians and the traditional theories of Arab grammarians who shape the majority of Arabic professors and researchers in many academic institutions. This step is very necessary to prove the validity of generative grammar to tackle the syntactical issues of Arabic (the largest used Semitic language). Indeed, many Arabic grammarians have some sensitivity toward generative syntax and its new theories which, according to some of them, are incompatible with Arabic syntax.

Conclusion

After exploring different analyses and perspectives, this paper has proposed a new mechanism to derive pro, as well as regular subject, in all Arabic structures. This mechanism is based on two premises. First, the subject (either covert or overt) remains in [Spec, VP] position. Second, the verb moves to [Spec, T] to check EPP and the ϕ -features of the subject. In pro structure the verb moves an extra movement to [Spec, AGR] to check the features of the null subject. This last movement accounts for the full agreement features observed in certain structures. To build this mechanism, several concepts and ideas of traditional and contemporary researchers were revised and adopted. For syntactic and semantic reasons, it is assumed that (i) nominative case is assigned by default and (ii) pro occurs in SVO structure.

The last section of the paper presents some advantages of this mechanism such as its consistency and its accountability to Economy principles.

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Appendix A Abbreviations

AGR: Agreement
 Dhameer Mustater: a hidden/ covert pronoun
 EPP: Extended Projection Principle
 Fem. : Feminine
 F: unspecified position of a syntactic element.
 IP : Inflectional Phrase/ Agreement Phrase
 Khabar: a report or a piece of information added to that noun.
 Masc.: Masculine
 Mubtada?: a topic or clitic- left dislocated(CLLD)
 NSLs: *Null Subject Languages*: Languages that do not allow pro to appear overtly.
 NP: Noun Phrase
 PF: Phonetic Form
 PL: Plural
 pro: It is the covert subject of a finite clause
 PRO: It is the covert subject of a no- finite clause
 Sg. : Singular
 Spec.: a specifier a complement and/ or adjunct.
 SVO: Subject, Verb, Object (the structure of a phrase in this order)
 TP: Tense Phrase
 TRAP: Theta- Role Assignment Principle
 V- MOVEMENT: Verb Movement
 VP: Verb Phrase
 VSO: Verb, Subject, Object (the structure of a phrase in this order)
 θ – role: Thematic relations/ the semantic roles associated to NP in a sentence.

Appendix B Chart of Arabic Segments

a ا	kh خ	sh ش	gh غ	n ن	? أ
b ب	d د	S ص	f ف	H ها	aa اا
t ت	th ذ	dh ض	q ق	o/ u و	
th ث	r ر	Th ظ	k ك	oo وو	
j ج	z ز	T ط	l ل	i/ y/ ي	
h ح	s س	‘ ع	m م	ee بي	