

Raising in Standard Arabic: Forward, Backward, and None

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Standard Arabic (SA) is a verb-initial, VSO language in which pre-verbal subjects are also allowed, producing SVO structures. As sentences (1) and (2) demonstrate, the verb shows partial agreement in gender (and probably person) in VSO structures (1a-b), but it shows full agreement in person, gender, and number in SVO structures (2a-b). The sentences also show that VSO plus full agreement and SVO plus partial agreement result with ungrammaticality.

(1) VSO + Partial Agreement¹

(a) *daras-a/*ū* *l-³awlād-u* *l-³umūlat-a*
studied-3MS/3MP the-children-NOM the-lesson-ACC
'The children studied the lesson.'

(b) *daras-at/*na* *l-fatayat-u* *l-³umūlat-a* -
studied-3FS/3FP the-girls-NOM the-lesson-ACC
'The girls studied the lesson.'

(2) SVO + Full Agreement

(a) *l-³awlad-u* *daras-ū/*a* *l-³umūlat-a*
the-children-NOM studied-3MP/3MS the-lesson-ACC
'The children studied the lesson.'

(b) *l-fatayat-u* *daras-na/*at* *l-³umūlat-a* -
the-girls-NOM studied-3FP/3FS the-lesson-ACC
'The girls studied the lesson.'

In addition, SA is a subject pro-drop language. When the subject is not pronounced, the verb shows full agreement, as (3) illustrates.

- (3) daras-ū/na l-³um0ūlat-a
 studied-3MP/3FP the-lesson-ACC
 ‘They(M/F) studied the lesson.’

The main purpose of this paper is to examine a category of SA subject-to-subject raising verbs known as verbs of appropinquation. Subject-to-subject raising is a dependency relation between two subject positions in a given structure, one in the matrix clause and one in a subordinate clause; the matrix subject position is not assigned a thematic role. The standard assumption is that this dependency relation is established through movement. For example, in *Johfij seems , to love Mary*, the pronounced NP in the higher clause and the implied NP in the subordinate clause are one and the same, *John*, related by movement. In addition, *John* is not assigned a thematic role in the matrix clause — i.e., *John* is not a “seemer” — but it is assigned one in the subordinate clause; thus, *John* is a “lover”.

SA verbs of appropinquation license two types of raising structures, forward and backward. In addition, they license non-raising structures.

- (i) Forward raising: The subject undergoes first merge in the subordinate clause before it moves to the matrix clause where it is pronounced.
- (ii) Backward raising: The subject moves to the matrix clause as evident by the structural effect it triggers on the matrix predicate, but it is pronounced in the subordinate clause.
- (iii) Non-raising: The subject does not move beyond the subordinate clause in which it is pronounced.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 1 presents an overview of the relevant SA raising verbs. Section 2 runs a number of tests to show that the verbs under investigation are in fact raising verbs. Section 3 introduces data of the different types of raising and analyzes them within Nunes's (2004) Minimalist framework of the Copy-plus-Merge Theory of Movement. Section 4 concludes the article and provides directions for further research.

1. SA Raising Verbs of Appropinquation: An Overview

SA has raising verbs known as verbs of proximity, hope, and inception (Badawi et al. 2004; Wright 2007, 106-108). Wright (2007) labels them collectively as verbs of appropinquation, a practice I adopt here.

These verbs take as a complement a subordinate clause whose predicate is headed by an imperfective verb. The subordinate verb can be subjunctive (preceded by *bn* "to"), indicative (not preceded by *bn* "to"), or either, depending on the selection properties of the raising verb. In the following subsections, I give an overview of the three types of verbs of appropinquation.

1.1 Verbs of proximity

The raising verbs of proximity are *kād-a*, *bwfak-a*, and *karab-a*, and they all mean "to be on the verge of" or "to be about (to)." The sentences in (4) are examples. While *bn* "to" is optional, it is less common with *kād-a* and *karab-a* (Al-Ghalayini 2003, 206).

(4) (a) kād-a 1-maṭar-u (ʔan) ya-hṭil-u/a

was.about-3MS the-rain-NOM to 3M-fall-s.IND/SUB

‘The rain was about to fall.’

(b) ʔawjāk-a 1-waqṭ-u (ʔan) ya-ntahi

was.about-3MS the-time-NOM to 3M-end.s.IND/SUB

‘The time was about to end.’

(c) karab-a I-ṣubḥ-u (ʔan) ya-nbalij-u/a

was.about-3MS the-morning-NOM to 3M-emerge-s.IND/SUB

‘The morning was about to dawn.’

(from Al-Ghalayini 2003, 204)

1.2 Verbs of hope

The raising verbs of hope are *bsa*, *hara*, and *xlawlaq-a*. They all denote a hope for the

occurrence of the predicate. All subcategorize for a subordinate clause headed by *bn* “to” as (5a-

c) show, although *bn* is optional with *ʕasa* (Al-Ghalayini 2003: 206).

(5) (a) ʕasa rabb-u-kum (ʔan) ya-rḥam-u/a-kum

may.3MS god-NOM-your to 3M-have.mercy.on-S.IND/sUB-you

‘May your Lord have mercy on you.’

(b) ḥara zayd-un *(ʔan) ya-qūm-a

may.3MS Zaid-NOM to 3M-rise-s.suB

‘Perhaps Zaid will rise.’

- (c) xlawlaq-at l-sama³-ū ^{*}(³an) ta-mṭur-a
 may-3FS the-sky-NOM to 3F-rain-s.suB
 ‘The sky is likely to rain.’

(from Wright 2007, 108)

1.3 Verbs of inception

The raising verbs of inception are plenty, some of which are *linfa habba*, *fara c-a*, and *ṭafiq-*

a. They mean “to start” or “to set about,” (6). These verbs do not subcategorize for *bn* “to.”

- (6) (a) ³anjā³-a xalil-un (^{*}³an) ya-ktub-u
 started-3MS Khalil-NOM 3M-write-s.iND
 ‘Khalil started to write.’
- (b) habb-a l-qawm-u (^{*}³an) ya-tasābaq-ū-n
 started-3MS the-people-NOM 3-race.each.other-MP-iND
 ‘The people started to race each other.’

(from Al-Ghalayini 2003, 204)

The following section runs three tests to show that the SA verbs of appropinquation qualify as raising verbs.

2. Raising Tests

Subject-to-subject raising predicates share at least three properties (Davies and Dubinsky 2004; Polinsky and Potsdam 2006):

- (i) They do not check accusative case.
- (ii) They select a clausal complement (IP or CP).
- (iii) They are one-place predicates that do not take an external argument.

2.1 Property (i)

The examples presented thus far show that the subject of an SA raising verb of appropinquation is always nominative. This is true in all cases except when the subject occupies a sentence-initial position and is preceded by the complementizer *inna/inna*. In this case, the complementizer checks accusative case on the subject, (7). The crucial point is that the raising verbs themselves do not check accusative case.

- (7) ³inna l-nisa³-a⁻ taflq-na ya-^ctaq-na ^cabid-a-hunna
- COMP the-women-ACC started-3FP 3-free-FP.iND slaves-ACC-their
- wa-y a-tazawwaj -na-hum
- and-3-marry-FP. iND-them
- ‘The women started to free their slaves and marry them.’

2.2 Property (ii)

I take the property that SA verbs of appropinquation select for a clausal complement to be evidently available for the raising verbs that obligatorily select for complements headed by the particle *im* “to”. The assumption is that *im* occupies a position higher than vP/VP, probably IP or CP (Habib 2009; Soitan 2007, 143).

Evidence that this property is also available for the verbs that select for complements with an optional or no *im* “to” comes from the fact that the complements may project their own negative nodes, (8a). Assuming that negation projects higher than vP/VP, it is fair to consider the complements of these verbs as clausal complements. Further evidence comes from the fact that each clause in a raising structure may receive independent event modification, as (8b) illustrates

(see Potsdam and Polinsky, to appear, for similar tests, and Fassi-Fehri 1993, 52 for an argument that the complements under examination are IPs).

(8) (a) ³a-kād-u lā ³u-ṣaddiq-u l-tarhib-a l-ḥār

ls-am.about.iND NEG ls-believe-iND the-welcome-ACC the-warm

‘I almost can’t believe the warm welcome.’

(from *Ahram* 1999 newspaper)²

(c) ³axīran jara^c-ā l-dabab-u ya-ṇqajī^c-u bi-biṭ³in

at.last started-3MS the-fog-NOM 3M-clear-s.iND in-slow

‘At last the fog started to clear slowly.’

2.3 Property (iii)

One way to show that the SA raising verbs of appropinquation are one-place predicates is by contrasting them with two-place control predicates. Three diagnostics are available (see Davis and Dubinsky 2004):

2.3.1 *Diagnostic 1: Selectional restriction.* Given that one-place raising predicates do not

assign an external theta-role, they do not have a restriction on the type of subject they may have.

The same is not true with two-place control predicates. To illustrate, the sentences in (9) indicate

that the raising verb *bwfaka* “was about (to),” unlike the control verb *qarrara* “decided,” may

have an inanimate NP as a subject.

(9) (a) ³awjak-a l-ḥajar-u ³an ya-tadahraj-a

was.about-3MS the stone-NOM to 3M-roll-s.suB

‘The stone was about to roll down.’

(b) #qarrar-a 1-ḥajar-u 3an ya-tadaḥraj-a

decided-3MS the stone-NOM to 3M-roll-s.suB

‘The stone decided to roll down.’

2.3.2 *Diagnostic 2: Idiom chunks.* Raising, but not control, predicates may take the subject of an idiom chunk as their own while still preserving the idiomatic meaning. Observe the idiom chunk in (10). It preserves its idiomatic meaning when used with the raising verb *kāda* ‘was about (to)’ in (11). It can only be interpreted literally, however, when it is used with the control verb *ḥāwal-a* ‘tried’ in (12).

(10) 3irtabaṭ-a lisān-u-hu

got.tied-3MS tongue-NOM-his

Literal meaning: ‘His tongue was tied.’

Idiomatic meaning: ‘He became speechless.’

(11) kād-a (lisān-u-hu) 3an ya-rtaḃiṭ-a (lisān-u-hu)

was.about-3MS tongue-NOM-his to 3M-get.tied-s.suB tongue-NOM-his

Literal meaning: ‘His tongue was about to be tied.’

Idiomatic meaning: ‘He was almost speechless.’

(12) #ḥāwal-a lisān-u-hu 3an ya-rtaḃiṭ-a

tried-3MS tongue-NOM-his to 3M-get.tied-s.suB

Literal meaning: ‘His tongue tried to be tied.’

No idiomatic meaning

2.S.S Diagnostic S: Passive. Finally, the sentences in (13-14) show that an active construction is semantically equivalent to its passive counterpart with the raising verb *kāda* “was about (to),” but not with the control verb *ʔistaṭā-a* “managed.”

- (13) (a) *kād-a* *liverpūl* *ʔan yu-ḥaqqiq-a l-taʔādul-a*
 was.about-3MS Liverpool.NOM to 3M-achieve-s.suBthe-draw-ACC
 ‘Liverpool was about to achieve a draw.’

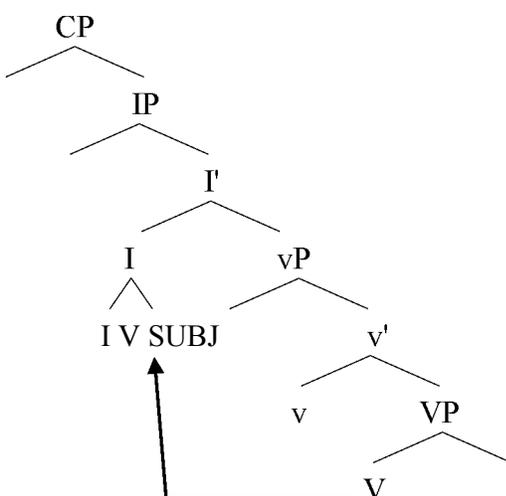
(from the *Thawra* 1996 newspaper)

- (b) *kād-a* *l-taʔādul-u* *ʔan yu-ḥaqqaq-a*
 was.about-3MS the-draw-NOM to 3M-be.achieved-s.suB
ʔala yadd liverpūl
 on.the.hand liverpool
 ‘A draw was about to be achieved by Liverpool.’

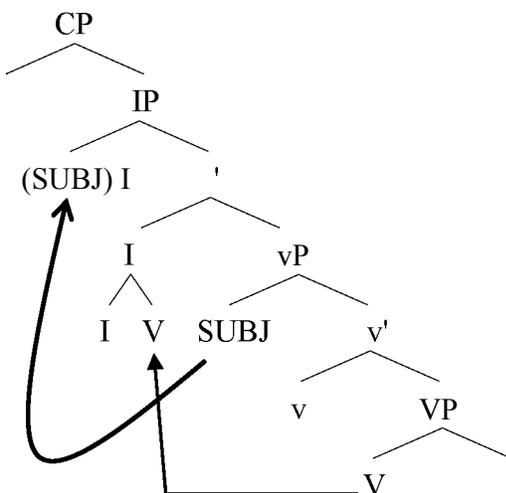
- (14) (a) *ʔistaṭāʔ-a* *liverpūl* *ʔan yu-ḥaqqiq-a l-taʔādul-a*
 managed-3MS Liverpool.NOM to 3M-achieve-s.suB the-draw-ACC
 ‘Liverpool managed to achieve a draw.’

- (b) *#ʔistaṭāʔ-a* *l-taʔādul-u* *ʔan yu-ḥaqqaq-a* *ʔala yadd*
 managed-3MS the-draw-NOM to 3M-be.achieved-s.suB on.the.hand
liverpūl
 liverpool
 ‘A draw managed to be achieved by Liverpool.’

(17) a. Partial Agreement: ⁴



b. Full Agreement:



I adopt Nunes's (2004) Copy-plus-Merge Theory of Movement, which holds that movement is made of four operations: Copy, Merge, Form Chain, Chain Reduction. That is, the movement of the subject in (17b) constitutes the following four steps: (i) the subject copies out of Spec,vP; (ii) it merges in Spec,IP; (iii) the two copies form a chain, a step contingent on c-command; and (iv) chain reduction takes place, whereby only one copy survives deletion.

Step (iv) takes place in order for the structure to be mapped into a linear order at PF in accordance with Kayne's (1994) Linear Correspondence Axiom. The gist of this axiom is that precedence at PF is asymmetric. This entails that a syntactic object may not be preceded and followed by the same element at PF. The verb in (17b) is preceded and followed by the same

element, namely, two non-distinct copies of the subject related through movement. This is why one of them has to be deleted.

In the rest of this section, I present data of the different types of raising. I also present the derivational history of each type, showing that the raising structures in question can be either forward or backward raising; alternatively, selected predicates of appropinquation may not involve raising at all.

3.1 Forward raising

All the raising structures we have seen so far have the pattern in (18). This is a forward raising construction in which the subject is base-generated in the subordinate clause before it moves to the matrix clause where it is pronounced.

(18) *taflq-a* 1-*nās-u* *ya-nṣarif-ū-n*

started-3MS the-people-NOM 3-leave-MP-iND

‘The people started to leave.’

(adapted from Al-Ghalayini 2003, 205)

Derivationally, sentence (18) has the structure in (19). The subject *l-nās-u* “the people” undergoes first merge in Spec,vP of the subordinate clause and moves to Spec,IP, triggering full agreement on the subordinate verb *ya-nsarif-ūn* “leave.” Subsequently, the subject moves to Spec, VP of the matrix clause. No further movement takes place, which is why the matrix verb *tafiq-a* “started” takes on partial agreement.

(24) ṭaflq-na ya-^ctaq-na ^cabid-a-hunna wa-ya-tazawwaj-na-hum

started-3FP 3-free-FP.IND slaves-ACC-their and-3-marry-FP.IND-them

‘They(F) started to free their slaves and marry them.’

3.2 Backward Raising

Another type of raising licensed in SA is backward raising. Backward raising structures show evidence that the subject has moved to the matrix clause, yet the subject is pronounced in the subordinate clause. Sentences (25-26) are examples. The partial agreement on the raising verb is an indication that at some point in the derivation the subject occupied a post-verbal position in the matrix clause. That is, (25) and (26) have the same structure in (19) above. Yet, the subject is pronounced post-verbally in the subordinate clause, triggering partial agreement on the subordinate verb.

(25) kād-at ta-tawaqqaf-u ḥarakat-u l-sayyārāt

was.about-3FS 3F-stop-s.iND the.movement-NOM the-cars

‘The cars almost stopped moving.’

(from *Ahram* 1999 newspaper)

(26) kād-a yu-ṣbih-u ³awlād-u-na gārībīn

were, ab out-3 MS 3M-become-s.iND children-NOM-our lost

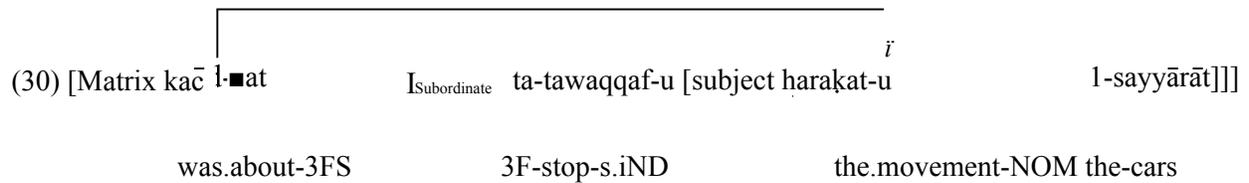
fi gābāti l-³ismant

in forests the-cement

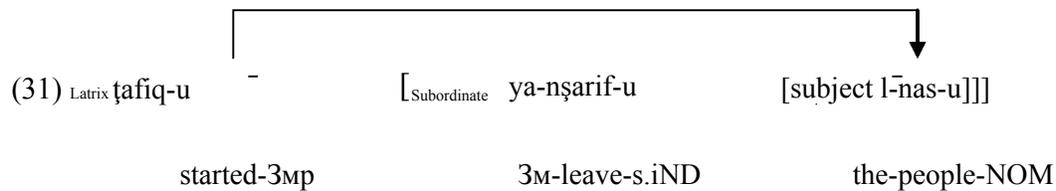
Our children became almost lost in the forest of cement.’

(from *Hayat* 1996 newspaper)

A point is in order before I proceed. While agreement on the matrix verb is evidence that the pronounced subordinate subject has a copy in the matrix clause, it is not sufficient evidence. Recent research (e.g., Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1999; Polinsky and Potsdam 2001; Potsdam 2009; Potsdam and Polinsky, to appear) shows that agreement does not have to be local and that long-distance agreement, whereby the matrix predicate agrees with a subordinate argument, is possible. In other words, sentences (25) and (27) may have the structures in (30-31), in which the matrix verb establishes long-distance agreement with the subordinate subject.



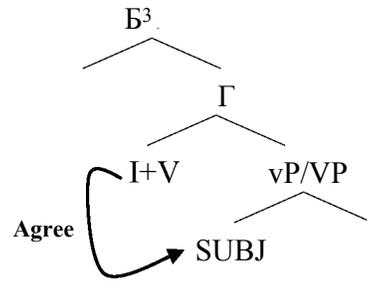
‘The cars almost stopped moving.’



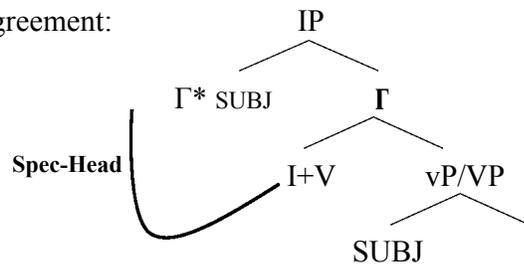
‘The people started to leave.’

I rule out this possibility on two grounds. First, partial agreement between the verb and the subject in SA obtains when the subject remains inside vP/VP. This means that partial agreement obtains via Agree à la Chomsky (2000), (32). Full agreement, on the other hand, is the outcome of a Spec-Head relation between the verb and the subject, (33). The agreement patterns in (30) and (31) indicate that the former corresponds to (32) and is the outcome of Agree, while the latter corresponds to (33) and is the outcome of a Spec-Head configuration. Stated differently, long-distance agreement cannot be responsible for both partial and full agreement. This is why the agreement patterns in (30) and (31) are more likely to be of the local type.

(32) Partial Agreement:



(33) Full Agreement:



Further evidence comes from impossible cases of long-distance agreement with non-nominative subjects. To elaborate, SA has verbs that subcategorize for accusative experiencers. Some examples are *yū'sif* “make sorry,” *yūm kin* “enable,” *yūgdib* “make angry,” *yāntab* “haunt,” *yāglib* “overcome,” *yūz* ‘/ʔ’ “annoy.” The sentences in (34) are examples. Notice that the verb agrees with the nominative argument, which is masculine in (34a) and feminine in (34b).

(34) (a) galab-a-hā l-nu^aaš-u

overcame-3MS-her the-sleepiness-NOM

‘She was overcome by sleepiness.’

Literally: ‘Sleepiness overcame her.’

(b) za^aaj-at-ni tašarrufāt-u-ka

annoy ed-3 F S-m e b ehavi ors-NOM-y our

‘I was annoyed by your behavior.’

Literally: ‘Your behaviors annoyed me.’

While SA prefers nominative arguments to be the functional subjects, the accusative arguments in (34) may also function as subjects. For example, they can function as the subordinate contrólées in control structures like (35a-b).

(35) (a) ḥāwal-at ʔan-lā ya-ġlib-a-hā l-nu^caš-u
 tried-3FS to-NEG 3M-overcome-s.suB-her the-sleepiness-NOM
 ‘She tried not to be overcome by sleepiness.’

Literally: ‘She tried that Sleepiness would not overcome her.’

(b) ḥāwal-tu ʔan-la tu-z^cīj-a-ni taṣarrufaṭ-u-ka
 tried-1s to-NEG 3F-annoy-S.SETB-me behaviors-NOM-your
 ‘I tried not to be annoyed by your behavior.’

Literally: ‘I tried that your behaviors wouldn’t annoy me.’

Similarly, SA verbs of appropinquation may display agreement with an accusative experiencer, as the sentences in (36) show. Under a long-distance-agreement analysis, the verbs of appropinquation in (36) agree with the subordinate accusative experiencers, which is not possible. The reason is that in SA a post-verbal argument has to be nominative in order to trigger agreement on the verb; for example, this is why the subordinate subject agrees with the subordinate nominative NP. This implies that agreement in SA is strictly local; it is established between the verb and a nominative copy of the experiencer available in the matrix clause as a result of movement.

(36) (a) bi-llāhi ʿalaj-ki ʾajīb-ī-ni fa-ʾana ʾa-kād-u ʾan

in-God on-you.F answer-2sF-me for-I ls-am.about to

ya-glib-a-ni l-ḥayāʾ-u

3M-overcome-s.suB-me the-shyness-NOM

‘By God answer me, for I am about to be overcome by shyness.’

http://arabia.kangun.com/my_profile_guestbook.php?uſemame=salahh&&page=4 - Aug 2009

(b) sawwad-ū l-malāmiḥ-a l-ʿarabīyat-a wa-badaʾ-at

blackened-3Mp the-features-ACC the-Arab-ACC and-started-3FS

ya-glib-u-hā l-sawād-u l-kāḥil

3m-overcome-s.iND-her the-blackness-NOM the-pitch

‘They tarnished the Arab face, and it (the Arab face) started to look pitch black.’

<http://www.hdrmut.net/vb/1052697130-post16.html> - Aug 2009

This said, it is important to note that the sentences in (36) may also be realized as (37), with the raising verbs displaying agreement with the nominative arguments in the subordinate clauses. Prescriptively, the sentences in (37) belong to a higher variety. If the analysis thus far is correct, then sentences (37a-b) involve the movement of the subordinate nominative subject to the matrix clause, and the structures are also instances of backward raising.

(37) (a) ... ya-kād-u ʾan ya-glib-a-ni l-ḥayāʾ-u

... 3M-am.about-s.iND to 3M-overcome-s.suB-me the-shyness-NOM

‘... shyness is about to overcome me.’

(b) ... *wū-būdiī^l-a* *ya-glib-u-ha^ˀ* *l-sawād-u* *l-kāḥil*

... and-started-3MS 3m-overcome-s.iND-her the-blackness-NOM the-pitch

‘... and blackness started to overcome it (the Arab face).’

3.3 Non-raising

Of all the verbs of appropinquation, three may take a single default form (3 person, singular masculine) regardless of the phi features of the subject of the subordinate clause. These are *bsa* “may” and *hwfak-a* “was.about,” and less commonly *xlawlaq-a* “may” (Al-Ghalayini 2003, 207; Wright 2007, 107-108). The sentences in (38) and (39) are examples. Notice that the raising verbs *bsa* “may” and *bwfak-a* “was about (to)” are masculine singular irrespective of the gender and number of the subordinate subject. Wright (2007, 107) calls these invariable verb forms impersonal; that is, they take the whole subordinate clause as their subject.

(38) (a) ^ˀasa ³an ta-qūm-a l-nisā³-u
 may-3 MS to 3F-rise-s.suBthe worn en-NOM
 ‘Perhaps the women will rise.’

(b) ^ˀasa ³an ya-qūm-a ³ixwat-u-ka
 may-3MS to 3M-rise-s.suB brothers-NOM-your
 ‘Perhaps your brothers will rise.’

(adapted from Jamal-El-Din 1996, 290)

(39) (a) ³awjak-a^ˀ ³an ta-ʔab-a l-qawīyyāt-u
 was.about-3MS to 3F-get.tired-s.suB the. strong, worn en-NOM
 ‘The strong women were about to get tired.’

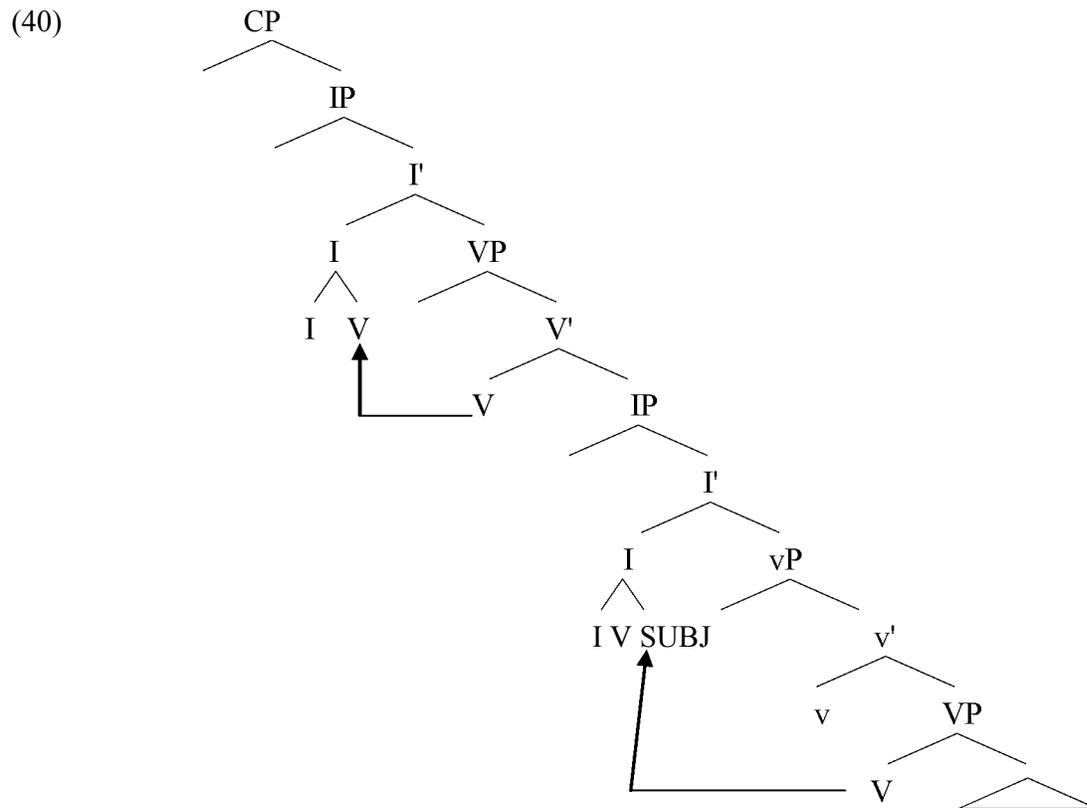
(b) ʔawjāk-a ʔan ya-tʔab-a l-ʔwiyyaʔ-u

was.about-3MS to 3M-get.tired-s.suB the. strong.men-NOM

‘The strong men were about to get tired.’

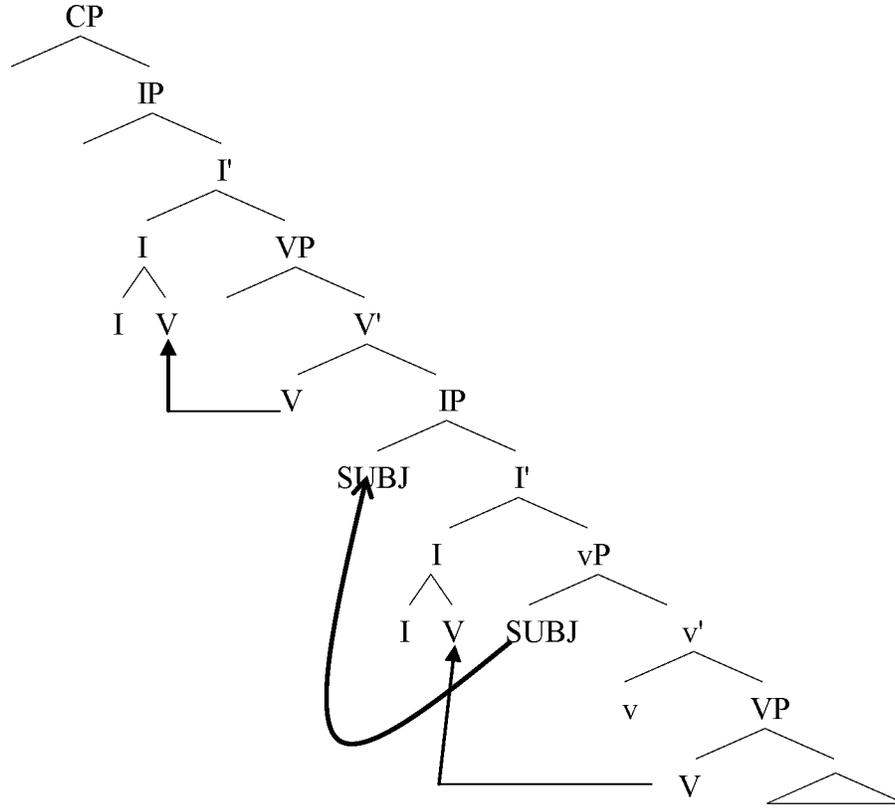
(adapted from Hasan 1975, 617)

Derivationally, the sentences in (38-39) have the structure in (40). The subject undergoes first merge in Spec,vP/VP of the subordinate clause, triggering partial agreement on the subordinate verb. No further movement takes place. This is why the matrix verb takes on default agreement (3rd person, masculine, singular).



Another option should be available within the non-raising category. The subject may move to Spec,IP of the subordinate clause, triggering full agreement on the subordinate verb. No further movement takes place, resulting with default agreement on the matrix verb. Thus, (41).

(41)



This non-raising pattern is also attested. For example, sentence (42) shows that the matrix verb may display default agreement although it is linearly followed by a feminine subject. The subordinate verb, on the other hand, shows full agreement (the verb takes on 3 person singular feminine with non-human plural).

(42) ʿasa l-jihaf-u l-maʿniya ta-qum-u bi-mā

may-3MS the-concerned authorities-NOM 3F-advance-s.iND with-what

ya-tawajjab-u ʿalay-ha min masʿūliyyāt (أعلىها من مسؤولياتها)

3M-advance-s.iND on-her of responsibilities

‘Perhaps the concerned authorities will attend to the issues they should take care of.’

(from *Thawra* newspaper)

4. Conclusion

In this article, I presented evidence of three types of subject-to-subject raising structures in SA. These are forward, backward, and non-raising structures. All three are licensed by what is called verbs of appropinquation in SA grammatical tradition. These include verbs of proximity, hope, and inception. In addition, I analyzed the data in the framework of Nunes's (2004) Copy-plus-Merge Theory of Movement. I suggested that forward and backward raising are derivationally similar. In both cases, the subject undergoes first merge in the subordinate clause before it moves to the matrix clause. The difference between the two structures resides in the outcome of deletion at PF. If a copy of the subject in the matrix clause survives deletion, the result is forward raising. If, on the other hand, a copy of the subject in the subordinate clause is spared, the result is backward raising. With regard to non-raising structures, I showed that the subject does not move to the matrix clause at all, in which case the raising verb takes on default agreement.

At a broader scale, this article helps bridge the gap between raising and control, and it contributes to the typology of control and raising put forth by Polinsky and Potsdam (2006). To elaborate, Hornstein (1999) argues that control is movement, just as raising is movement. Recent work by Polinsky and Potsdam (2002, 2006) and Haddad (2009, 2010, 2011) among others shows that control structures may be realized as instances of forward, backward, or copy control. The SA raising structures analyzed here, along with work by Potsdam (2009) and Potsdam and Polinsky (to appear), show that raising, just like control, is not always unidirectional.

At the same time, the SA backward raising data lead to two questions that call for further research. First, backward raising seems to be a rare phenomenon cross-linguistically. I am only aware of one other case of true backward raising in Adyghe, a Northwest Caucasian language

(Potsdam and Polinsky, to appear). The question is: What makes languages like Adyghe and Standard Arabic different in this respect.

Equally important is the question of agreement. In the Chomskyan tradition, agreement takes place in narrow syntax as a result of feature checking. Backward raising structures like (43) challenge this view. We learnt in section 3.2 that *l-nās-u* “the people” in (43) moves to a preverbal position in the matrix clause, touching down in Spec,IP of the subordinate clause. At PF, chain reduction applies, deleting all but the lowest copy. In principle, an overt copy of the subject in Spec,IP of the subordinate clause should be able to trigger full agreement on the subordinate verb in narrow syntax. (Note that this is exactly what happens in the matrix clause; the matrix verb displays full agreement as a result of an unpronounced copy in matrix Spec,IP.) Nevertheless, the PF operation chain reduction seems to leave its marks on agreement. Chain reduction spares a post-verbal copy of the subject in the subordinate clause; consequently, the subordinate verb takes on partial agreement.

(43) ʔaflq-ū ya-nʕarif-u l-nās-u

started-3mp 3M-leave-s.iND the-people-NOM

‘The people started to leave.’

This observation seems to suggest that agreement does not (only) take place in narrow syntax, and that it is a post-syntactic, morphological process. Recent work by Ackema and Benmamoun (2000), Neeleman (2003), Benmamoun and Lorimor (2006), and Bobaljik (2006) suggests that this is probably the case. I leave this topic for future research.

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Notes

1 The following abbreviations are used in the glossing: 1—1st person, 3—3rd person, ACC—accusative, COMP—complementizer, F—feminine, IND—indicative, M—masculine, NEG—negative, NOM—nominative, P—plural, s—singular, SUB—subjunctive.

2 All data collected from newspapers (*Ahram*, *Thawrci*, etc.) are taken from the *arabiCorpus: arabic corpus search tool* at the following website: <http://arabicorpus.bvu.edu>.

3 While this approach to agreement in SA is reasonable (e.g., Benmamoun 1992; Bahloul and Harbert 1993; Guasti and Rizzi 2002; Franck et al 2006), nothing serious hinges on it. See Aoun et al. 2010, chapter 4 for an overview of different analyses of agreement in SA. The crucial point for the purpose of this article is that the two types of agreement (partial vs. full) are contingent on word order, which is also true of approaches that argue for one mechanism of agreement (only Spec-Head or only Agree).

4 The verbs in (17a-b) probably undergo head movement to v° before they move to I° . This movement is not presented in the trees for simplicity.

5 Al-Ghalayani (2003, 205) extends his observation to all verbs of appropinquation, implying that a structure like (i) is also possible. See Hasan (1975, 628) and Rida (1962, 266) for a similar observation.

(i) ʔawjak-u ʔan ya-taʔaxxar-a l-ṭullāb-u

were.about-3M to 3M-be.late-s.suB the-students-NOM

‘The students were about to be late.’

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