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An Agree-based Approach to Structural Case Assignment in Najrani Arabic

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Abstract

This study aims to examine structural (nominative and accusative) Case assignment in Najrani Arabic (henceforth, NA) and in turn provide a satisfactorily unified account on how structural Case is assigned in Najrani Arabic within Chomsky's (2001, 2005) Agree theory. It attempts to present a straightforward answer to the following questions: (i) how is structural (nominative and accusative) Case assigned in NA, given the recent developments and challenges in Chomsky's (2001, 2005) Agree theory?, and (ii) how are Case and agreement features valued in NA syntax? A closer examination of structural Case in NA demonstrates that, unlike Standard Arabic, NA has an abstract Case system which is not morphologically realized, a similar phenomenon to that of English. Furthermore, the study examines structural Case assignment in VSO and SVO structures and points out that structural Case in NA is assigned via an Agree relation between a probe and a goal within a c-command domain. That is, in VSO structures in NA, nominative Case is assigned by the C-T complex via an Agree relation established between T and the subject in [Spec-TP] while accusative Case is a reflex of an Agree relation between the light v and the object DP. Besides, preverbal DPs in SVO structures undergoes movement from [Spec-vP] to [Spec-topP] and leaves a resumptive pro(nominal in [Spec-vp] which appears as either an overt number marker cliticized onto the verb or as a covert pro(nominal). However, in SVO structures introduced by the complementiser *inn*, there are two DPs; a post-verbal DP and a preverbal one. The post-verbal DP is assigned nominative Case by the C-T complex while the preverbal DP is assigned accusative lexical Case in the presence of the over Case assigner *inn* or default nominative Case in the absence of *inn*.

Keywords: Structural Case, Agree relation, probe, goal, phase, abstract Case, C-T complex

1. Introduction

The study of structural Case assignment has recently received much attention cross-linguistically, where various analyses have been presented and several proposals have been argued for in different languages in the world with the aim of providing a satisfactory account on the subject under discussion (Al-Khalil (786); Sibawayh (796); and Ibn Hisham (1360) for Standard Arabic), Pollock, (1989) for French and English; Eisenbeiss et al. (2006) for German, Fillmore (1968); Bobaljik (1994); Schütze (2001); and Chomsky (1981, 1991, 1995, 2001, 2005) for English and other languages. Besides, more recent analyses on Case assignment in Standard Arabic have also been seen in Mohammed (1990, 2000); Plunkett (1993); Fassi Fehri (1993, 2005); Ouhallah (1994); Benmamoun (2000); Soltan (2007); Musabhien (2008); Al-Balushi (2010); and Fakih (2005, 2014, 2015, 2016); most of these accounts were based on minimalism.

The present paper focuses on Najrani Arabic, which is a variety of Standard Arabic spoken by the people of the Najran region, which is located in the south western part of Saudi Arabia. In this study, we explore structural Case assignment in Najrani Arabic (NA) whose Case system has fascinated us sufficiently to investigate and examine it with a view to providing a unified treatment of the subject in question based on Chomsky's (2001, 2005) Agree theory which constitutes the phase model and feature inheritance approach. The topic of structural (nominative and accusative) Case assignment in NA is selected for study for the following reasons: (i) structural Case system of Najrani Arabic has never been studied morpho-syntactically before, (ii) there is a need to provide a satisfactorily unified account of structural Case assignment in NA in a modern framework, given the recent challenges in linguistic theory posed by minimalism, more particularly Agree theory. The objective is to examine the interaction between the NA data and Chomsky's (2005) Agree theory with regards to structural Case assignment.

This study has, however, been organized into the following sections: section 2 reviews the views of the traditional Arab grammarians on the notion of structural Case in SA. It also presents the historical development of Case starting from Fillmore (1968), Chomsky (1970), and Chomsky and Lasnik (1977); it also shows how structural Case was standardized in Chomsky's GB theory (1981-1991), section 3 explores Chomsky's (1993-1995) treatment of structural Case in the early minimalist syntax, section 4 discusses the recent developments of Chomsky's minimalist syntax (Merge, Agree and Move) and introduces Case and feature matching as well as phase theory, section 5 presents the proposed analysis in NA based on Chomsky's (2005) Agree theory (Case morphology, structural Case assignment in VSO & SVO, verbal copular sentences, structural Case assignment in SVO and Case assignment of the preverbal DP), and section 6 summarizes the findings of the study.

2. Literature review

2.1 Traditional Arab grammarians and structural Case marking: the governor hypothesis

The governor hypothesis was established to provide a logical explanation of how syntactic structures are constructed in Standard Arabic. The early studies of the Arab grammarians focused on the notion of government/governor and how it was used in the syntax to assign Case to different constituents of a sentence. According to As-Saied (2002), the governor hypothesis was created by Al-Hadrami in (735), modified by Al-Khalil in (786), and explained systematically by the greatest Arab grammarian Sibawayh (796). It was considered to be one of the most important theories in traditional Arabic grammar. In Standard Arabic grammar, governors were divided into verbal and non-verbal; they were further sub-divided into strong and weak as well as standard and subsidiary governors. Strong governors were classified according to their morpho-syntactic effect on other constituents of a structure. Standard Arabic governors included verbs and particles whereas subsidiary ones included nouns (As-Saied, 2002).

Moreover, Al-Rajehi (1998) pointed out the importance of the governor hypothesis to Case marking and indicated that Case pillars (to use his terminology) are: a governor (i.e., an assigner which assigns Case to an NP), an assignee (i.e., a position which determines the meaning and function of the word), and a Case marker, which indicates the position of the word. Al-Rajehi also mentioned that the governor hypothesis in Standard Arabic is related to sentence type and word order alternations.

Structural Case in Standard Arabic is assigned under government by a governor to a constituent in a sentence. The traditional Arab grammarians (like Al-Khalil, 786; Sibawayh, 796; and Ibn Hisham, 1360, among others) emphasize that there are three types of structural Case in Standard Arabic: nominative, accusative and genitive. Al-Khalil (786) provides a detailed account of structural Case assignment in Standard Arabic. Al-Khalil (786) states that "Accusatives in Standard Arabic are fifty one types including objects …, while Nominatives are twenty two types among which are subject, topic and comment, (i.e., subject and predicate), the subject of *kaana* and its sisters, and the predicate of *?inna* and its sisters. Furthermore, genitives are nine types among which are prepositions and the construct state" (Al-Khalil, 786: 118).

Moreover, Arab grammarians and linguists distinguished between a nominal sentence and a verbal one. A nominal sentence is viewed as one that does not begin with a verb. According to Al-Rahawi (2007), a nominal sentence can either be a verbless sentence or one with SVO word order. A verbless sentence is viewed by Al-Horais (2006) as "a sentence with the absence of an overt verbal copula in the present tense which is traditionally called, by the Arab grammarians, *al-Jumlah al-ismiyah* 'the Nominal Sentence' " (p. 102).

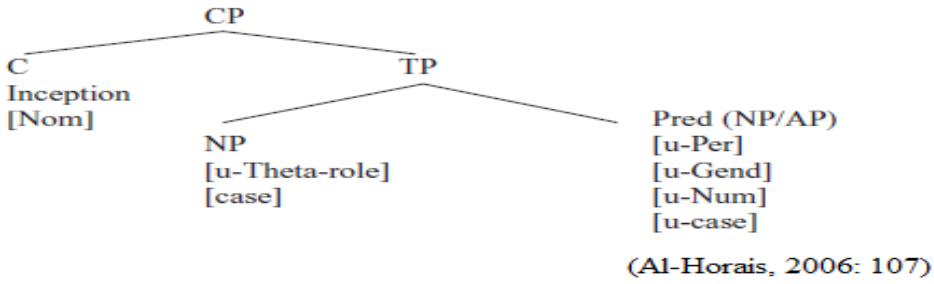
According to Al-Rajehi (1998), any nominal sentence stands on two essential parts, a topic and a predicate, and both parts are always nominative. He also indicates that the topic of a nominal sentence is always an NP whereas the predicate can be an NP or a combination of a verb and an NP which supports the view that SVO word order is a nominal sentence, too.

On the other hand, Al-Rahawi (2007) provides a thorough account on the traditional Arab grammarians' views on the governor hypothesis of the nominal sentence. He claims that Basry linguists including Sibawayh (796) hold the view that the topic of the nominal sentence is assigned nominative Case by the inception which is an abstract, non-verbal governor whereas the predicate is assigned nominative Case by the topic which is a verbal governor. Among the linguists who share this opinion are Al-Faresi (987); Ibn-Jinni (1002); Al-Dinori (1146); Ibn-Malik (1274); and Ibn-Hisham (1360). However, Al-Rahawi (2007) claims that some other Basry linguists, such as Al-Akhfash (830); Ibn Al-Mubarrad (898); Ibn al-sarraj (928); and Al-Jarjani (1079), hold the view that the governor of the topic is the inception and the governor of the predicate is both the inception and the subject. Hence, by the combination of the two governors, the verbal and the non-verbal one, the predicate is assigned nominative Case. Moreover, Al-Rahawi (2007) presents the views of the Kufan linguists and demonstrates that they are with the view that the topic governs the predicate and the predicate governs the topic. Thus, each one governs the other and assigns nominative Case to it. This view is held by Al-Kisa'ei (805); Al-Farra (822); and Abu Hayyan (1344).

To sum up, Al-Rahawi (2007) stresses that presenting the traditional Arab grammarians' views on the governor hypothesis of the nominal sentence reflects the fact that there were debates between Basries and Kufans upon the governor of both the subject and predicate of a nominal sentence. It also shows that there is agreement amongst Basries concerning the fact that the inception is the governor of the subject. However, Al-Rahawi (2007) states that there is still some disagreement on what governs the predicate.

Structural Case assignment in verbless sentences is also discussed by modern Arab linguists such as Fass Fehri (1993); Benmamoun (2000); Fakih (2006); and Al-Horais (2006), among others. Let us quote Al-Horais' example in (1) and his tree-diagram in (2) for further illustration.

1. Muhammadun muʕallimun
   muhammad-nom a teacher-nom
   'Muhammad (is) a teacher.'

2. 

(Al-Horais, 2006: 107)

For such government to work properly the 'Topic' must not be preceded by any particles such as *kaana* and its sisters or *ʔinna* and its sisters. If it was preceded by such particles, the subject could have been governed by a verbal governor (i.e., a stronger governor) and consequently could have been assigned different Case (Al-Rajehi, 1998). This can be illustrated in (3).

3. ʔinna muhammad-an muʕallim-un
   comp Muhammad.acc teacher.nom
   'Certainly, Muhammad is a teacher.'

In addition, structural Case assignment in SVO sentences can be demonstrated in (4).

4. ahmad-u kataba risaalat-an
   Ahmad-nom wrote.3p.sg.m letter.acc.indef
   'Ahmad wrote a letter.'

According to the traditional Arab grammarians, the NP 'Ahmad' in (4) is assigned nominative Case by 'the inception' and the VP *kataba risaalat-an* constitutes the predicate of the sentence.

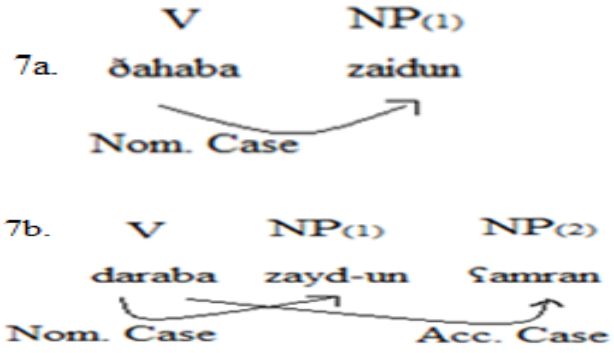
On the other hand, a verbal sentence in Standard Arabic is seen as one that begins with a verb, which is the unmarked VSO word order. According to Al-Rajehi (1998), the basic elements of a verbal sentence are the verb and its subject which means that the verb may only require a subject NP to express its meaning. However, there are some verbs which require a subject NP and seek an object, and sometime two objects; as in the case of transitive and ditransitive verbs, respectively. In other words, Standard Arabic verbs are of two types; an intransitive verb *'alfiʕl allazim'* which requires one argument NP, particularly a subject NP, and a transitive verb *'alfiʕl almutaʕaddi'* which demands two argument NPs; i.e., the first argument NP is the subject and the second is an object NP. There are also ditransitive verbs which require the obligatory presence of three argument NPs; the subject NP and two object NPs, (Al-Khalil, 786; Sibawayh, 796; Ibn Hisham, 1360; Wright, 1989; and Al-Rajehi, 1998, among others). This can be demonstrated in (5).

5. ðahaba zaidun
   went.3p.sg.m Zaid.Nom
   'Zaid went'

The verb *ðahaba* 'went' in (5) is intransitive which requires the obligatory presence of an argument NP, particularly the subject NP, *Zayd-un*. However, when the verb is transitive it requires two argument NPs, the first argument NP is the subject while the second is the object NP. This can be shown in (6).

6. daraba zaid-un ʕamran
   hit.3p.sg.m Zaid.Nom Amr.acc
   'Zaid hit Amr.'

Regarding the governor in the verbal sentence, it is the verb which acts as the verbal governor. According to As-Saied (2002), in his discussion of the governor hypothesis, the traditional Arab grammarians stress that it is the verb which assigns nominative Case to the subject NP and accusative Case to the object NP. Thus, the traditional Arab grammarians explain the governing role of the verb in Standard Arabic and how it assigns nominative Case to the subject NP and accusative Case to the object NP, as illustrated in (7) below.



2.2 The notion of Case in Standard Arabic terms

This sub-section presents an overview of the views of the traditional Arab grammarians regarding the historical development of Case in Standard Arabic and examines the different proposals advocated by the Arab grammarians and linguists in their syntactic analyses.

Awn (1952) stated that much attention was given to Case and its governing syntactic rules in Standard Arabic because this kind of attention and practice was a common art in Standard Arabic traditions. Mustafa (1992) indicated that early Arabs considered a person who spoke and misused a linguistic form, especially Case markers, to be inferior to their Arabic culture. Mustafa (1992) also pointed out that the interest in mentioning and emphasizing the morpho-syntactic rules of Standard Arabic, commonly used in the pre-Islamic poetry and in the holly Qur'an, was motivated by the idea to reserve the Holy Qur'an from corruption, or what was called *allahn*. This encouraged a large number of the Arab grammarians to establish complete, thorough morpho-syntactic studies on Standard Arabic. In such studies, great attention was given to Case and Case marking as the basis of understanding properly the sentence construction in Standard Arabic. For instance, Ibn Hisham (1360) views Case as an overt or covert effect of a governor on a certain word. Al-Rajehi (1998) points out that Case is an inflectional ending suffixed to a word which determines its position and function in a sentence as a result of being governed by a certain governor. Al-Tahhan (2006) states that it is a verbal change which affects a word stem. Moreover, Al-Hujailaan (2000) demonstrates that the Arab grammarians have had different views concerning the notion of Case. The first view sees Case as a verbal effect, that is, its existence in the structure is confined to the presence of Case markers (Al-Hujailaan, 2000). That is, to some grammarians Case is confined to overt morphological Case. In this connection, Yaqoot (1994) views Case as an inflectional morpheme which denotes the functional meaning of a word in combination with other words. The second view treats Case as a semantic effect denoting a semantic function of a word. The difference here is that Case is related to meaning rather than simply a verbal effect (Al-Hujailaan, 2000). The third view is that Case-marking is not only the overt morphological realization of Case but is also a system that combines words and Case markers by means of certain morpho-syntactic relationships. Thus, overt Case markers are indicators of the presence of Case but not Case itself (Al-Hujailaan, 2000). Moreover, Al-Tahhan (2006) argues that Case marking in Standard Arabic can be of two types: (i) functional Case marking which is basically concerned with the function of a word within a sentence, and (ii) inflectional Case marking which takes care of certain words whose endings change as a result of a certain position in a sentence.

2.3 Case theory and pre-minimalism

2.3.1 Case grammar

Lyons (1966) provided an account on Case in English and showed the difference between Nominative and Objective Case in the initial stages of the development era of syntactic analyses. Fillmore (1968) presented his theory of Case grammar which was proposed with the aim to reintroducing the interpretation of Case system "in the light of deep and surface structures" (p. 42). In generative grammar, Case is considered to be "a phenomenon of language … (which) is often visible in the form of case morphology, e.g., inflection and particles." (Otsuka, 2000: 80). Fillmore (1968: 35) pointed out that the basic assumption of Case in generative grammar is that "it is not present in Deep Structure" at all, but is merely the inflexional 'realization' of particular syntactic relationships" which can only be defined in terms of surface structure relations. In general, generative grammarians viewed Case markers as "surface structure reflexes, introduced by rules of various kinds of deep and surface syntactic relations" (ibid. 26). Furthermore, Fillmore (1971: 35) discussed the relations between the verb and its arguments in terms of semantic roles or "deep structure cases". Fillmore stated that cases in English were traditionally of six types, "agentive, instrumental, dative, factitive, locative and objective" (p. 46). He also suggested that 'deep structure cases' could be discovered and justified by mere syntactic criteria.

2.3.2 Chomsky's treatment of structural Case assignment: the GB approach

The motive behind the establishment of Case theory is to provide a reasonable account for the distribution of NPs within a construction. The first tentative view in the field was proposed by Chomsky (1970) when he proposed the X-bar theory. Then, some attempts were assumed in Chomsky and Lasnik (1977) but the standardization of Case theory began in Chomsky's (1981) Government and Binding Theory, improved in sub-sequent works in the rest of the 1980s and 1990s, and perfected in minimalism. It may be observed that Chomsky's *Lectures on Government and Binding* (1981) established the foundation of Case theory and showed clearly how structural Case could be assigned in a

systematic manner. Chomsky's GB model was inspired by Vergnaud's (1977) comments on Chomsky and Lasnik (1977). A number of the basic elements in Case theory proposed in Chomsky (1981) were influenced by Vergnaud's (1977) suggestions some of which are the Case filter, the distinction between abstract and morphological Case and the definition of government, and later on the checking theory. Chomsky and Lasnik (1977) proposed a filter to account for the distribution of NPs in English in (8).

8. *[a NP to VP] unless a is adjacent to and in the domain of [-N]

Then Vergnaud (1977), commenting on their proposal, hypothesizes that (movement of) NP to VP follows from Case factors. And since inflectional Case morphology in English is poor, he suggests replacing this filter with a more suitable one to be a principle of UG. Thus, Vergnaud (1977) assumes that "NPs are assigned abstract Case, even when Case has no overt morphological realization" (cited in Freiden, 2008). This observation led Chomsky (1981) to propose the Case Filter Principle to rule out any NP without Case, illustrated as in (9).

9. Case Filter: Every phonetically realized NP must be assigned (abstract) Case.

Chomsky (1981) distinguishes morphological Case from abstract Case and structural Case from inherent Case in the GB framework. Morphological Case represents Case differences by different Case inflections. However, languages with a poor system of inflectional morphology will represent Case abstractly. In other words, morphological Case is overtly realized on an NP while abstract Case is not. In this connection, Haegeman (1994: 155) states that "abstract Case is a universal property, while the overt realization of abstract Case by means of morphological Case varies cross-linguistically."

Chomsky (1981) introduces the term “structural Case” for abstract Case which is assigned under government, at S-structure configurations, and by heads of certain syntactic categories. Chomsky proposes that the fundamental properties of Case-assignment can be as illustrated in (10):

10. "i. NP is nominative if governed by AGR

ii. NP is objective if governed by V with the sub-categorization feature: -NP (i.e., transitive)

iii. NP is oblique if governed by P

iv. NP is genitive in [NP- X]

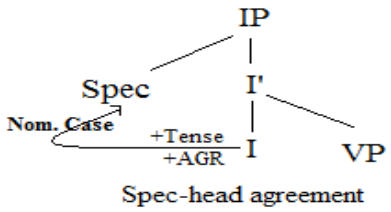
v. NP is inherently Case-marked as determined by the properties of its [-N] governor" (Chomsky, 1981: 170)

Chomsky (1981) refers to the Case assigned under (i-iv) as "structural Case" and the Case assigned under (v) as "inherent Case" (p. 170), thus introducing the term 'structural Case' and distinguishing it from ' inherent Case.' Furthermore, the literature of the GB approach reflects that there are two basic configurations for structural Case marking; the Spec-head agreement relation and the head-complement (agreement) relation; or government. The former assigns nominative Case to the subject NP whereas the latter assigns accusative Case to the complement NP of the head. Structural Case is assigned under structural configurations from the assigner to the assignee whereas inherent Case is defined in terms of thematic relations between the assigner and the assignee.

2.3.2.1 Nominative Case assignment within the GB approach

Subject-verb agreement and nominative Case assignment result from a Spec-head agreement between the finite I(NFL) and the NP in [Spec-IP] position with the requirement that I(NFL) is [+Tense, +AGR] (Haegeman, 1994 and Soltan, 2007). This relation can be represented in (11).

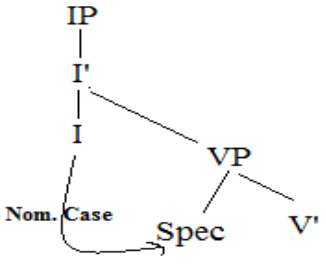
11.



Spec-head agreement

The syntactic representation in (11) works successfully with languages that require SVO word order but unfortunately fails to account for the languages with VSO word order. Thus, a proposal was made to extend the notion of government, hence to allow a governing role for I(NFL) to assign Nominative Case to [Spec-VP] in addition to its agreement role (Sproat, 1985; Mohammad, 1990; and Raposo and Uriagereka, 1990). This proposal can be represented in (12).

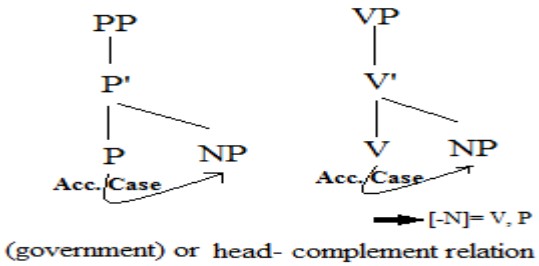
12.



2.3.2.2 Accusative Case assignnment within the GB aaproach

Accusative Case, on the other hand, is assigned under government by [-N] categoies; V and P to the complement, as shown in (13) below. There is a condition on this kind of government which states that the governed element should be the closest one to the governor; this is known as the minimality condition (or requirement). The syntactic represenataions in (13) illustrate how the Case lexical assigners (V and P) assign accusative Case to the governed NPs in their governed domain.13

13.



3. Chomsky's (1991, 1993, 1995) account of structural Case: the early minimalist syntax

The extension of the notion of government led to a number of theoretical questions against the government theory and complicated the establishment of a unified theoretical basis for syntactic analysis. That is, the contradictions within the theory motivated a new direction to the study of Case. Two basic problems of government are the contradiction between nominative Case marking by an inflectional head and accusative Case marking by a lexical head as well as the problem of the type of configuration in assigning Case. Such problems led to further cross-linguistic investigations. Chomsky (1981) proposes four levels of representation: the Surface Structure, the Deep Structure, the Phonetic Form (PF), and the Logical Form (LF). He also proposes that NPs are assigned Case under government. However, his levels of representation were questioned in the minimalist analyses. Given this, Chomsky (1993) proposes replacing Case assignment with Case checking. That is, Chomsky proposes that NPs/DPs enter a derivation fully inflected with features; i.e. DPs are introduced with their Case features specified. In this connection, Hornstein (2005: 29) states that "instead of requiring that DPs be assigned Case by a governing head, we say that the Case-feature of a DP must be licensed by matching the Case-feature of a governing head. In place of assignment, we substitute checking."

3.1 Spec-head approach: a unified theory

The publication of an influential study by Pollock (1989) on French and English made an attempt to unify the configuration under which both nominative and accusative Case can be checked. Pollock (1989) proposes the Split-Infl hypothesis which states that the IP consists of two maximal projections, Agreement Phrase (AgrP) and Tense Phrase (TP). This hypothesis assumes that there will be two heads within the IP; one presenting tense (T^0) and another presenting (subject) agreement (Agr^0) with the Agr being in a higher position than T. Chomsky (1995) stresses that the functions of the (morphological) features of such projections are to "check properties of the verb that raises to them, and they check the properties of the DP that raises to their Spec; thus they ensure that DP and V are properly paired" (Chomsky, 1995: 197). Following Pollock's (1989) proposal, Chomsky (1991) proposes the split of the Agr into Agrs and Agro to account for both subject and object agreement cross languages. Furthermore, Chomsky (1995: 174) proposes a Spec-head approach to account for all agreement and Case assignment phenomena in which he indicates that "both agreement and Case as manifestations of the spec-head relation…We assume that T raises to Agrs and V raises to Agro" (p. 174). That is, nominative Case can be checked in [Spec-AgrsP] configuration and accusative Case in [Spec-AgroP]. The procedure requires the subject NP to move to [Spec-AgrsP] to check nominative Case and subject agreement features and the object NP raises to [Spec-AgroP] for accusative Case checking and object agreement features. Hence, these proposals achieve the advantages of eliminating the complex notion of government, reducing Case configuration relations into Spec-head agreement relations only and providing a unified basis for Case marking by inflectional heads only. Hence avoiding the asymmetry of having case being assigned by lexical heads once and by functional heads in another.

However, this proposal was not seen to be the perfect solution. According to Pollock's (1989) proposal, the subject NP must raise to [Spec-Agr] for Nominative Case checking. Besides, the verb has to move to T as well. As a consequence, this may lead to the problem of whether it would be possible to establish the required Spec-head relations while maintaining the required word order of a particular language. For example, using this procedure in English will derive ungrammatical sentences. This may be due to the fact that English verbs do not move to inflectional heads and accordingly it may not be possible to derive the appropriate word order. Thus, we can have SOV word order for English sentences.

In an attempt to solve the problem, Chomsky (1993) suggested a minimalist alternative; he proposed two-cycle syntax; an overt cycle (feeding the phonetic form PF) and a covert cycle (leading the derivation to proceed to the LF). In doing so, he assumed the overt movement of the subject DP from its base position to [Spec-AgrsP], and the covert movement of the object DP to [Spec-AgroP]. Here, he reduced the levels of representation from four levels to only two levels: PF and LF, thus paving the way to the beginning of a minimalist linguistic theory, mainly the Minimalist Program.

3.2 Case and feature checking

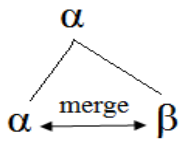
By splitting the Agr projection, Chomsky (1993) proposes that the Agr node and the T node have both nominal features; Case and agreement and verbal features; tense and agreement. According to Parody (1993) "the verbal features (V) check the inflectional features of the verb and the nominal features (N) check the morphological features of the DPs such as Case and agreement" (p. 372). Furthermore, Chomsky (1993) assumes that features vary in strength; they can be strong or weak and the movement of a constituent to [Spec-AgrP] is motivated by the strength of its features. According to Chomsky (1993), ‘‘strong’’ features are visible at PF while ‘‘weak’’ features (are) invisible at PF (p. 198). This means that weak features need to be checked at LF whereas strong features are visible at PF and must be checked before Spell-out. Features are often valued as [+/-Interpretable]. At LF, all features must be [+ Interpretable] which means that they have been checked to be recognized. The process of checking such features is called feature checking which is defined by Kennedy (2000) to be "a LOCAL relation (which is either) a Spec-head or Head-head relation" (p. 5). It takes place via movement which may be overt (at PF) or covert (at LF). Chomsky (1995) points out that in such movement, strong features need to move overtly at PF while weak features move covertly at LF. Chomsky (1995) stresses that "A strong feature thus triggers a rule that eliminates it: [strength] is associated with a pair of operations, one that introduces it into the derivation … a second that (quickly) eliminates it" (p. 233). This indicates that checking weak features deletes them immediately. Moreover, Chomsky (1993) emphasizes that feature checking of Case requires that T^0 raises to $Agrs^0$ and V^0 to $Agro^0$; the resulting complex [$_{Agr}$ T+Agrs] and [$_{Agr}$ V+Agro] check agreement and license Case, nominative and accusative, respectively. He states that agreement is determined by the F-Features of the Agr head of the Agr complex and Case by an element that adjoins to Agr (T or V).

However, in an attempt to refine some weaknesses pointed out by prominent syntacticians in the earlier version of minimalist framework, Chomsky (1995) modifies his (1991-1993) proposals and suggests that the functional head which licenses structural Case is the same one that checks verbal agreement. Thus, he dispenses with his (1991, 1993) independent agreement (Agr) projection altogether. Fakih (2012) demonstrates that Chomsky (1995) dispenses with Agr altogether in later versions of the minimalist assumptions, due to certain problems that arose in earlier analyses of the Minimalist Program (1995). Chomsky asserts that Agr consists only of the strong features that force movement. Chomsky stresses that the problems that arose in earlier drafts of the minimalist approach now disappear.

4. Recent developments in Chomsky’s minimalist syntax

To lead a derivation towards the interface levels, some syntactic operations must be applied. There are three core syntactic operations in minimalist syntax: Merge, Agree, and Move. In his analysis of the operation Merge, Chomsky (2001) states that “in its most elementary form, a generative system is based on an operation that takes structures already formed and combines them into a new structure, call it Merge" (p. 3). Chomsky views the operation Merge as an operation which forms larger units out of those already constructed; it is a recursive process. It also is conceived as a "structure- building operation" by (Bobaljik, 1994: 1) in which two objects α and β are taken to form a new object (α, β) from them. Moreover, Chomsky (2001) points out that "Merge takes two elements α, β already constructed and creates a new one consisting of the two; in the simplest case {α, β} (p.6). The process can be demonstrated in (14) and (15).

14. Merge (α, β) → {α, {α, β} }

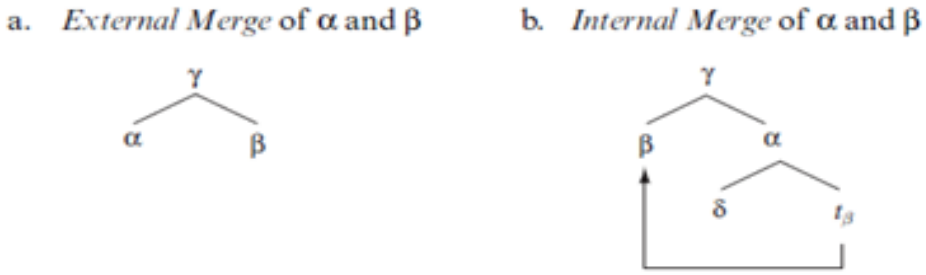
15. 

Merge is considered to be a binary process which is assumed to combine only two syntactic objects at a time to form one larger syntactic object. It is also a recursive process which can be applied as many times as needed. Any constituent formed by Merge can be remerged with another constituent. The output of Merge is identified with a label which designates its properties. In other words, if one of the merged elements, say α for example, passes its properties to the newly generated constituent, then α will be regarded as the head of the pair and the label of the new element. To clarify the process, take the following example: 'write book' can be formed by merging the verb 'write' with the noun 'book' in the following manner as illustrated in (16).

16. Merge (write, book) → { write,{ write, book}}The resulted constituent of Merge inherits its properties from the verb and it is more likely to behave as a verb. That is, ' write book ' behaves like the verb 'write'. Therefore, the label of the new element will be identified as a VP.

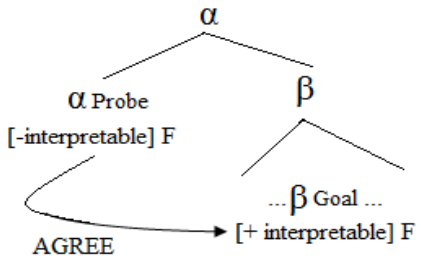
However, in later versions of MP, Merge has been distinguished to be of two types; external Merge and internal Merge. External Merge takes two separate syntactic objects and combines them to form one larger syntactic object. Internal Merge is similar to external Merge in combining two syntactic elements but it differs in that one of the merged objects is part of the other. Internal Merge was known as 'Move'. It can be observed that Chomsky (2004) replaces the term Move by Internal Merge. External Merge and internal Merge are represented by Citko (2011) in (17) for more illustration.

17.



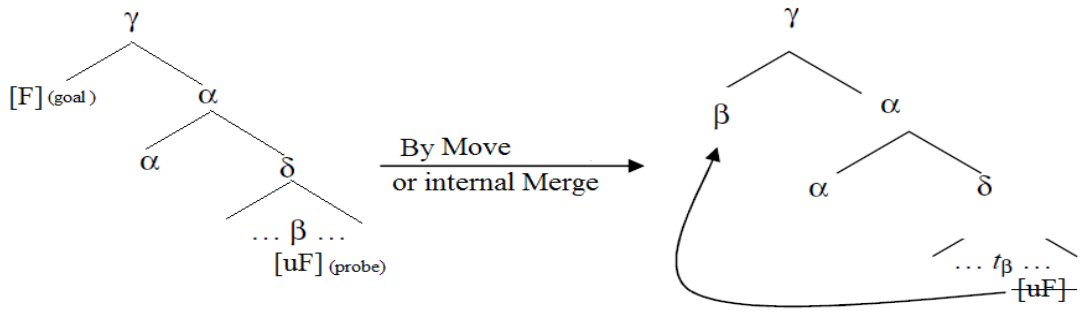
The second syntactic operation in MP is Agree which is defined to be the relationship between an uninterpretable feature on a probe and a target in the probe's c-command domain (Chomsky, 2000, 2001; Bardeas, 2005; and Heck & Richards, 2007). Agree helps in checking the uninterpretable features in order to cause them to converge at the LF. Assuming this operation, Agree contributes to the development of a more flexible understanding of the agreement phenomenon. It provides an explanation of the word order asymmetry observed in languages such as, Arabic. It differs from the earlier conception of agreement in the GB framework in that it does not require movement and it is not specifically a Spec-head relation. Thus, agreement has been treated as the result of a built-in operation; Agree in which an agreement relation between two elements of a sentence can be established at a distance, though still subject to certain locality considerations. This can be demonstrated in the following representationin (18).

18.



The third syntactic operation is Move. Like Merge, it is also a structure building operation. It received considerable attention throughout the development of linguistic theories. In GB, move-alpha was an important process moving "any element to anywhere at any time" (Hornstein, 2001: 2). Later, movement was considered to be motivated by the necessity to check an unvalued feature. As previously mentioned, the valuation of uninterpretable features, in the early versions of MP (Chomsky, 1993), required the movement of some elements from their base positions to a specifier position of an Agreement head. However, with the abandonment of the Agr heads, the valuation of the interpretable features was assumed to be checked in the specifier positions of the functional heads; TP and vP. After the introduction of the operation Agree (Chomsky, 2000 and later), the role of the operation Move is restricted, to only satisfy the EPP feature. According to Musabhein (2008), "EPP is a feature carried by the functional heads such as T; it requires that the specifier positions must be filled" (p. 76). In Chomsky (1995), Move is considered a subtype of Merge; internal Merge. In later versions of Chomsky's (2000) minimalist analyses, Move is considered to be a combination of both Merge and Agree. Move establishes agreement between at least one feature of α and a corresponding (uninterpretable) feature of β (uF) and merges β {P(F)} to αP where β {P(F)} becomes the specifier (Spec) of α [Spec,α]. In addition, Move is a combination of "Copy + Merge" (Bobaljik, 1994: 3). That is, a moved element leaves a copy in the original place, a trace which gets deleted in the PF, but remains available for interpretation at LF and in the same time is merged with a new constituent. To make the point clear, Move can be represented in (19) below.

19.



4.1 Case and feature matching

Case and agreement features have received considerable attention in minimalist analysis of linguistic theory. Case and agreement have been studied in relation to each other in a number of linguistic modules. In the GB theory (Chomsky

1981-1991) Case features were assumed to be licensed in two syntactic configurations; a Spec-head agreement configuration or a head-complement agreement. In early versions of the minimalist framework (Chomsky, 1993, 1995), specifically in the Spec-head approach, Case was assumed to be licensed via agreement with AGR heads. Moreover, in the Minimalist Inquiries of Chomsky's (2000, 2001) an agreement relation via an operation Agree was assumed to license Case. This shows that Case and agreement are interrelated and hence should be studied in relation to each other.

In the recent MP accounts (Chomsky, 2000 and later), Case is defined as an uninterpretable feature which needs to be valued before LF. It has been considered to be valued via the operation Agree. Accusative Case results from the Agree relation between the head v and the object while nominative Case results from an Agree relation between the subject and T. The distinctiveness of the operation Agree lies in the assumption that the valuation of Case does not motivate movement which meets the economy requirements called by the MP.

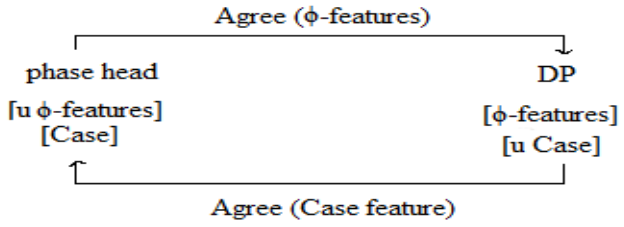
4.2 Phase theory

The introduction of the concepts of phase and feature inheritance in Chomsky (2001, 2005) brought a significant improvement to the notion of Agree. Chomsky (2001) defines phases as "the operative elements" (p. 15) within a structure which means that they are the locus of features and the source for syntactic operations. Chomsky (2001, 2005) divides a structure into two basic phases; CP and vP. TP and VP are not phases, and they do not have features themselves but they inherit their features from the phase heads. For T, Chomsky asserts that it is not a phase and claims that "in the lexicon, T lacks these features. T manifests the basic tense features if and only if it is selected by C… Agree- and Tense-features are inherited from C, the phase head" (Chomsky, 2005: 11). The valuation of Case and agreement occurs as a manifestation of the operation Agree between the phase head and a DP. For example, accusative Case is the result of an Agree relation between the light verb v, the phase head of vP, and the object DP.

5. The proposed analysis

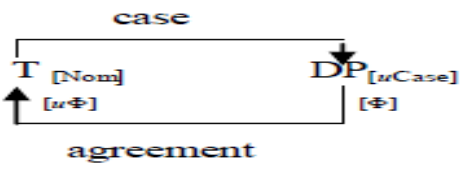
In our minimalist analysis of structural Case assignment in NA, we adopt Chomsky's (2001-2005) Agree theory and in turn suggest an alternative framework of the subject under investigation. Chomsky (2001) proposes that Case is an interpretable feature on the phase heads. He also assumes that Case is uninterpretable on DPs. Chomsky (2005) speculates that the operation Agree operates on the probes (the phase heads) and the goals (the DPs) to value their unvalued uninterpretable features. Chomsky (2001) proposes that the operation Agree applies when both the probe and the goal are active. This activeness condition requires that both the probe and the goal carry an uninterpretable feature which has to be valued. Thus, Agree is a mutual relationship between the goal and the probe. In his feature inheritance framework, Chomsky (2005) assumes that Case and ϕ-features are inherited from the phase heads. Chomsky also assumes that C, the head of the CP phase, is the source of all features on T. Case assignment on the subject or the object is a reflex of an Agree relation which holds between the light v and the object for accusative Case, on the one hand, and the C-T complex and the subject for nominative Case, on the other. This operation begins when the probe starts searching for a matching active goal to value its uninterpretable features. In structural Case assignment, the phase heads probe down for a goal to value their unvalued uninterpretable ϕ-features. The valuation of the agreement features (ϕ-features) co-occur with the valuation of the Case features. The process can be demonstrated in the syntactic representation in (20) below.

20.



To illustrate the point let us consider nominative Case assignment on subjects by T. The phase head C of the CP phase passes its features to the head T of TP; an interpretable nominative Case feature and unvalued phi-features [uϕ]. The head T is an active probe which searches for a goal with interpretable ϕ-features and unvalued Case features. Such a goal will be a DP. DPs are merged with interpretable ϕ-features and unvalued Case features. The probe T will value the unvalued Case features on the nearest goal and in the same time will have its ϕ-features valued by the DP. Hence, the features on both the head T and the subject DP will be valued and then deleted in the syntax, as illustrated in the syntactic representation in (21) below.

21.



5.1 Case morphology in Najrani Arabic

In this section, we explore the nature of Case morphology in NA and examine whether or not it is similar to that of Standard Arabic. There is no doubt that Standard Arabic is well-known for its rich inflectional system of Case assignment; Case is overtly assigned morphologically to nominals. There are three overt Case markers which are suffixed to nominals in SA: *-u* is the overt suffix which shows the nominative Case marker, *-a* is the accusative Case

marker, and *-i* is the genitive Case marker. The examples in (22) illustrate overt Case endings on nominals in Standard Arabic.

22a. ʔal-walad-**u** kataba risaalat-**an**
the.boy.nom wrote.3p.sg.m letter.acc.indef
'The boy wrote a letter.'

b. kataba ʔal-walad-**u** risaalat-**an**
wrote.3p.sg.m the.boy.nom letter.acc.indef
'The boy wrote a letter.'

c. * ʔal-walad-**a** kataba risaalat-**un**
the.boy.acc wrote.3p.sg.m letter.nom.indef

d. *kataba ʔal-walad-**a** risaalat-**un**
wrote.3p.sg.m the.boy.acc letter.nom.indef

The subject DPs in both (22a) and (22b), in the post-verbal position and in the preverbal position, are assigned overtly nominative Case. Singular DPs in Standard Arabic are inflected with (*-u*) for nominative Case, being for the overt Case marker. The object DPs in both (22a) and (22b) are assigned overtly accusative Case. Singular DPs in SA are inflected with (*-a)* for accusative Case. The ungrammaticality of the sentences in (22c) and (22d) stems from a violation of the Case morphology. That is, using the accusative Case inflection (*-a*) with a subject renders the sentence ungrammatical. Similarly, using the nominative Case marker (*-u*) with the object renders the sentence ungrammatical. Given this, SA is sensitive to overt Case endings. From the sentences in (22) above, it is observed that Case in SA is overt and hence is morphologically realized on nominals.

A closer look at the present-day English Case system demonstrates that Case is not overtly morphologically realized; rather it is abstract. The following examples (23) illustrate the point in English.

23a. John loves Mary.

b. Mary loves John.

c. Kate saw Bill.

d. Bill saw Kate.

The sentences in (23) show that DPs in the subject and object positions do not show any overt Case ending realized on them despite the fact that such DPs in the subject positions have been intentionally used in the object positions and vice versa for the sake of more clarification. That is, there is no morphological change observed in the endings of such DPs which can indicate the presence of overt Case markers. On the other hand, what remained of the Case system in the present-day English can be seen in the pronominal system where Case distinction can be observed in pronouns. This can be demonstrated in the following examples in (24).

24a. He loves her.

b. She loves him.

c. He saw her.

d. She saw him.

e. I respect them.

f. They respect me.

The sentences in (24) show clearly that the nominative subject pronouns are different from the accusative object pronouns. The pronoun changes its morphological shape according to the syntactic position it occupies in the sentence, as demonstrated in (24) above. For instance, the pronouns *he, she, I, and they* in (24) above are nominative subject pronouns which must be used in the subject position whereas *him, her, me, and them* are accusative object pronouns which have to be used in the object positions.

The questions that can be posed here are: Is Case overtly morphologically realized in NA in the same way as in SA? If not, does NA have abstract Case similar to that of English?

Now let us examine whether Case markers in NA are overtly realized on nominals as in SA or whether NA Case is abstract as in English. To illustrate the point let us consider the following examples from NA demonstrated in (25) below.

25a. lʕeb el-walad kuurah
played.3p.sg.m the.boy.nom football.acc
'The boy played football.'

b. el-walad lʕeb kuurah
the.boy.nom played.3p.sg.m football.acc
'The boy played football.'

c. el-bint ktabat el-giSSah
the.girl.nom wrote.3p.sg.f the.story.acc
'The girl wrote the story.'

d. ktabat el-bint el-giSSah
wrote.3p.sg.f the.girl.nom the.story.acc
'The girl wrote the story.'

The sentences in (25) illustrate that, like English, NA does not have overt Case endings, which means that Case is abstract in NA. From the examples in (25) above it can be observed that both the subject and the object are not inflected for Case in the sense that no Case markers are overtly realized on such DPs. However, this does not mean that NA does not have Case. We argue here that NA does not have overt morphological Case but rather it has abstract Case which is similar to that of English. Given this, we argue that the subject DPs *el-walad* 'the boy' and *el-bint* 'the girl' in (25) above are assigned nominative Case and the object DPs *kuurah* 'football' and *giSSah* 'story' are assigned accusative Case. In the sections below, we will discuss in detail how nominative Case and accusative Case are assigned in NA on the basis of Chomsky's (2001, 2005) Agree theory.

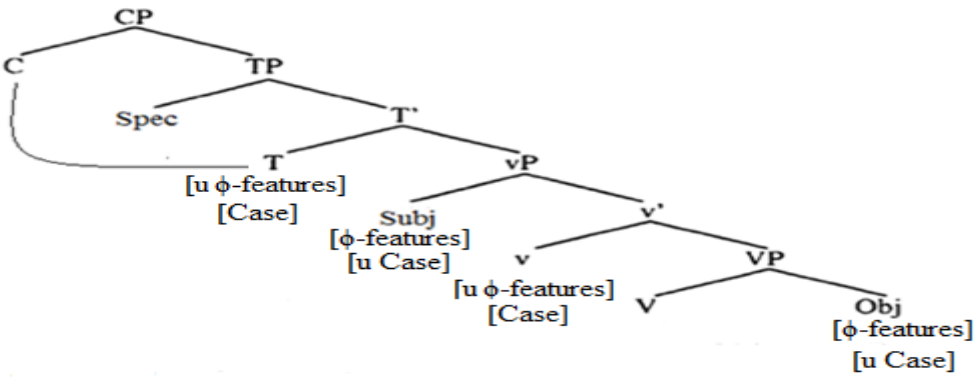
5.2 Structural Case assignment in Najrani Arabic

This section discusses structural Case assignment in Najrani Arabic and shows how nominative and accusative Cases are assigned in the language. The objective is to examine structural Case assignment in VSO and SVO sentences in NA and then present an alternative minimalist analysis which seeks to provide a satisfactorily unified account of structural Case assignment within Chomsky's (2001, 2005) Agree theory.

5.2.1 Structural Case assignment in VSO in NA

This section seeks to explore the syntax of structural Case assignment in NA with the aim to providing a satisfactorily unified account on the subject under discussion within Chomsky's (2001, 2005) minimalist analysis advocated in Agree theory which constitutes the phase theory and feature inheritance approach. We adopt the following clause structure in (26) to represent the underlying Case-agreement features in VSO structures in NA.

26.



As shown in (26) above, we propose that in NA accusative Case assignment on the object DP is a reflex of an Agree relation between the functional light v and the object; it is in this syntactic operation that accusative Case is valued by the phase head v, being the probe. Consider the examples in (27) below to illustrate the point. The following syntactic representation in (27e) shows how accusative Case is assigned structurally via the operation Agree in NA.

27a. gara yusef el-jeriidah
read.3p.sg.m Yusef.nom the.newspaper.acc
'Yusef read the newspaper.'

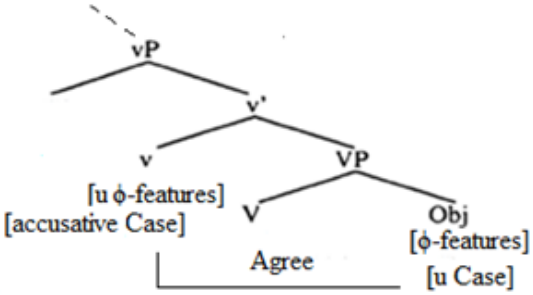
b. sherb- at rana el-ʕasiir
drank.3p.sg.f Rana.nom the.juice.acc
'Rana drank the juice.'

c. fetah nasser el-baab
opened.3p.sg.m Nasser.nom the.door.acc
'Nasser opened the door.'

d. saag ahmad el.syyarah
drove.3p.sg.m Ahmad.nom the.car.acc

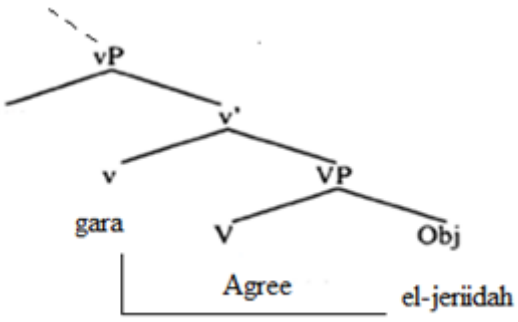
'Ahmad drove the car.'

e.



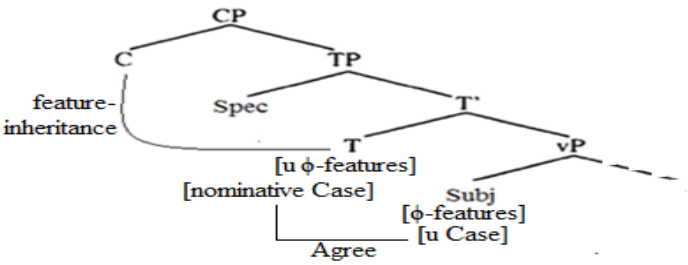
In all of these examples in (27) the verb raises to the functional light v head where it agrees with the object DP. Let us, for instance, use the example in (27a) to clarify the point; the verb *gara* raises to the functional light v head where it agrees with the object DP *el-jeriidah* and assigns it accusative Case, as illustrated in the following diagram in (28) below.

28.

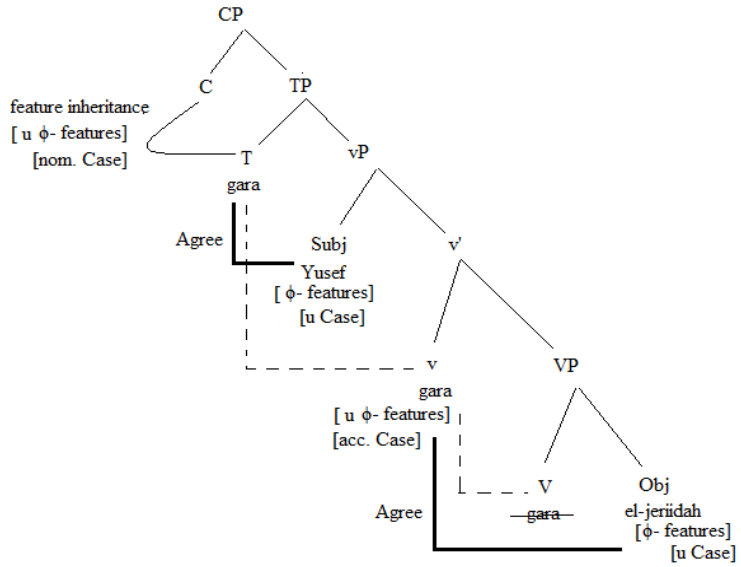


On the other hand, we assume that nominative Case on the subject is valued by the complex C-T which operates as the probe. This means that the accusative Case feature is a feature of v while the nominative Case feature is a feature of C. It is assumed in Chomsky's (2005) feature inheritance approach that the phase head C is the locus of features on T. C transmits its Case and ϕ-features to the subject via the head T; it is in this operation that an Agree relation is established between the C-T complex (the probe) and the subject DP (the goal); the latter receives nominative Case as an outcome of this operation, as shown in (29) below. This means that the subject DP *Yusef* in (28a) above receives nominative Case structurally via an Agree operation established between the complex C-T (the probe) and *Yusef* (the goal). This can be demonstrated in (29) and exemplified in the representation in (30) below.

29.



30.



The syntactic representation in (30) above reflects the process by which Case in VSO structures is valued. It starts by C passing its features to T. C passes unvalued ϕ-features and a valued Case feature to T by which T probes down for a matching goal to value the unvalued features.

The verb *gara* 'read' raises from V to the functional v head. The light v agrees with the object DP *el-jeriidah* 'the newspaper' and assigns accusative Case to it. Then the verb raises to T to value its yet unvalued features. T in the VSO structures does not receive an Edge feature (i.e, tense feature) from C, hence the subject stays in situ and does not raise to [Spec-TP]. The C-T complex agrees with the subject DP *Yusef* in [Spec-vP] and assigns nominative Case to it.

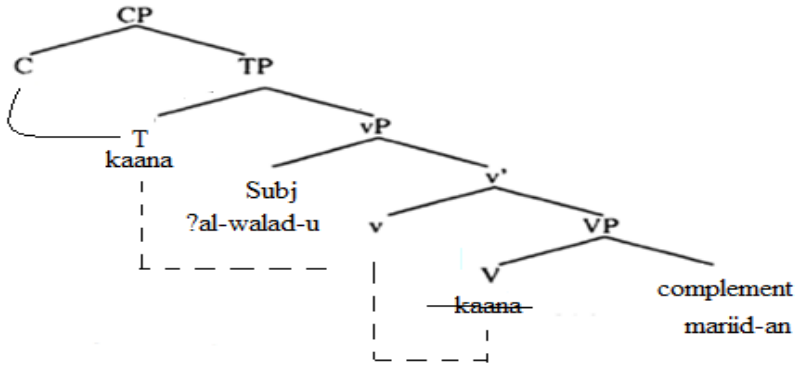
5.2.2 Verbal copular sentences in NA

In this sub-section, we attempt to discuss verbal copular structures in NA in the light of structural Case assignment. The objective is to show the morpho-syntactic behavior of verbal copular structures in NA, how nominative and accusative Cases are assigned in the language, and how the NA data interact with the minimalist assumptions of Chomsky's (2001, 2005) Agree theory. Before we explore the verbal copular structures in NA, let us see how the verbal copula operates in the syntax of SA. It can be observed that the structure of a verbal copular sentence resembles the structure of any normal verbal sentence in SA. It may look similar to the morpho-syntactic properties of the verb 'to be' in English. It requires the obligatory presence of two arguments: a subject DP and a complement. It assigns nominative Case to the subject and accusative Case to the complement. Consider the following examples from SA and its syntactic representation in (31) to illustrate the point clearly.

31a. kaana ?al-walad-u mariid-an
was.3p.sg.m the.boy.nom sick.acc
'The boy was sick.'

b. kaanat al-bint-u mariid-at-an
was.3p.sg.f the.girl.nom sick.acc
'The girl was sick'.

c.



A closer look at the sentences in (31) above reveals the fact that a verbal copular sentence is identical to the normal verbal sentence in SA in terms of structural Case assignment. As shown in the clause structure in (31c) above, the lexical verb *kaana* 'be-past' raises from V to the functional light v position where it agrees with the complement and assigns accusative Case to it structurally. In addition, we argue that the subject is base-generated in [Spec-vP] and is assigned nominative Case by the C-T complex when the verb raises to T. Similar to any verbal sentence, the verb raises from V to v and then to T.

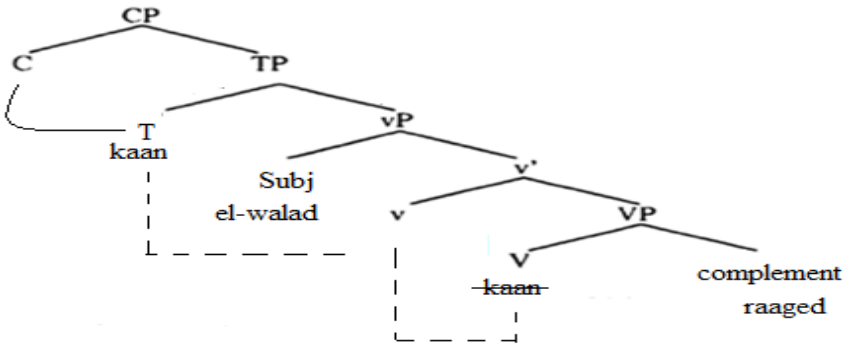
The verbal copular sentence in NA almost behaves in the same manner as that of SA. The only difference between them is that the verbal copular sentence in NA takes the VS form only; it cannot be of an SVO structure. Consider the following examples in (32) from NA to illustrate the point.

32a. kaan el-walaad raaged
was.3p.sg.m the.boy.nom sleeping.acc
'The boy was asleep.'

b. *el-walad kaan raaged
the.boy.nom was.3p.sg.m sleeping.acc

The unacceptability of (32b) can be attributed to the presence of the subject before the verbal copula. Given this, a condition on the verbal copular sentence in NA can be formulated which stipulates that the verbal copular structure should strictly follow the VS order, not the SV order. This can be illustrated in (33).

33.



In the NA clause structure in (33) above, the verb *kaan* moves from the lexical verb to the functional head v where it assigns accusative Case to the complement *raaged* 'asleep' and then moves to T. The phase head C does not have an Edge feature (i.e. tense feature) to pass to T. Therefore, the subject DP remains in situ at [Spec-vP]; any movement of the subject DP *el-walad* to a higher position is not allowed in VSO copular structures. Hence, the verbal copular sentences in NA exhibit only the VS order.

5.2.3 Structural Case assignment in SVO in NA

This sub-section discusses structural Case assignment in SVO structures introduced by the complementiser *inn* in NA. It also shows how structural Case assignment in SVO structures introduced by the complementiser *?inna* behaves in SA with the aim of illustrating the difference between NA and SA in this regard.

Structural Case assignment in SVO sentences in SA has been a challenging matter since the sentence is found to have two subject DPs; the preverbal DP and the post-verbal DP. Arab and Western linguists could not provide a satisfactory analysis on the subject in question. The first challenge concerns the nature of the preverbal DP; some authors view it as a subject whereas others treat it as a topic. This has been addressed by the traditional Arab grammarians (Sibawayh, 768 and Ibn Hisham, 1360).

On the one hand, the preverbal DP is considered to be a subject by some modern linguists because it is assumed to move from [Spec-vP] to [Spec-TP] which is a position for subjects (Mohammad, 1990 2000; Demirdache, 1991; Bahloul and Harbert, 1992; Fassi Fehri, 1993; Aoun et al., 1994; Bolotin, 1995; and Benmamoun and Lorimor, 2006, among many others). Moreover, the preverbal DP is viewed as a topic by other linguists because it is assumed to be located in the preverbal position and is associated with a resumptive pronoun within the clause (Plunkett, 1993; Akkal, 1996; Ouhalla, 1997; and Musabhein, 2008).

In this study, we argue that the preverbal DP in SVO structures in NA is a topic, not a subject. This means that the preverbal DP is located in the specifier position of the Top Phrase, but not in [Spec-TP]. Given this, we assume that the preverbal DP raises to the preverbal position via movement, and this syntactic movement is motivated by the Edge feature (i.e. tense feature) on the head Top.

Moreover, another challenge which faces SVO structures in SA revolves around the question of how to present a balanced treatment on Case assignment of both the post-verbal and the preverbal DPs in such SVO structures by the same phase head. This problem stems from the fact that SVO structures contain two subject DPs within the CP phase. The post-verbal subject DP is always invariably nominative whereas the preverbal DP can either be nominative or accusative depending on the type of the head C. That is, if the phase head C is covert/null, the preverbal DP is assigned nominative Case, as demonstrated in (34a) below. However, if the phase head C is overt, introduced by an overt Case assigner *?inna*, the preverbal DP is invariably assigned accusative Case, as demonstrated in (34b) below. This can be illustrated in the following examples from SA in (34).

34a. ?al-?awlaad-**u** katab-**uu** al-dars-**a**

the.boys.nom wrote.3p.sg.m the.lesson.acc

'The boys wrote the lesson'.

b. ?inna al-?awlaad-**a** katab-**uu** al-dars-**a**

comp the.boys.acc wrote.3p.sg.m the.lesson.acc

'Indeed, the boys wrote the lesson'.

In (34a), the phase head C is null and therefore the preverbal DP is assigned nominative Case whereas in (34b) the phase head C is occupied with an overt Case assigner *?inna,* hence the DP is assigned accusative Case.

There are different proposals concerning the second problem. Linguists vary in their views upon the issue. Chomsky (2005) proposes a long distance Agree relation by which the phase head C can value the features of both DPs without movement. Chomsky (2005) states that "If C-T agrees with the goal DP, the latter can remain in-situ under long-distance Agree, with all uninterpretable features valued; or it can raise as far as SPEC-T, at which point it is inactivated, with all features valued, and cannot raise further to SPEC-C (p. 10).

On the other hand, Soltan (2007) proposes that "the nominative case appearing on preverbal and post-verbal DPs is not the same: Nominative case assigned to postverbal DPs is structural, whereas nominative case appearing on preverbal DPs is actually the default case typically assigned to topics in this language in absence of any available lexical or structural Case assigner" (p. 54). His proposal seems to be convincing because it matches the requirements of the default Case as proposed by Schütze (2001). According to Schütze (2001), "the default Case forms of a language are those that are used to spell out nominal expressions (e.g. DPs) that are not associated with any case feature assigned or otherwise determined by syntactic mechanisms" (pp. 1-2). This means that the default Case is only assigned in the absence of any lexical or structural Case assigners. Schütze (2001) proposes that the default Case in English is accusative. However, the treatment of the default Case in Arabic reflects that the default Case is nominative (Mohamed 1990, 2000; Ouhalla 1994; Soltan, 2007; Musabhein, 2008; and Al-Balushi, 2010). This means that nominative Case can be assigned to any DP when there is no available Case assigner. On the other hand, default Case, as proposed by Soltan (2007), is "a last resort mechanism used only when the syntax fails to assign case … It is only confined to those elements that do not engage in the agreement and case system" (p. 74).

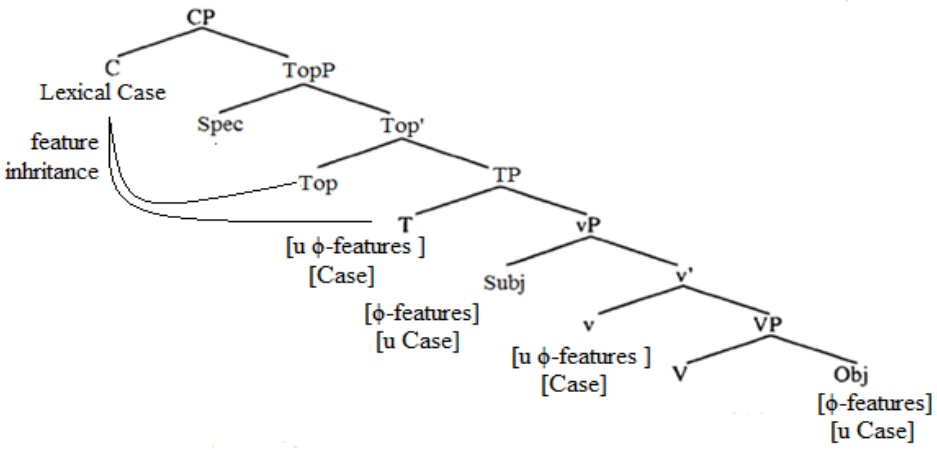
However, the feature inheritance approach as adopted by Fassi Fehri (2005) and Musabhein (2008) helps them to avoid the use of the default Case. Fassi Fehri (2005) proposes that there are two subjects: an external subject which is the preverbal DP and an internal subject in the form of a pro(noun) which "is realized through rich agreement, involving Person/Number/Gender and Case" (p. 4). He also assumes that every C assigns two Cases; an external accusative Case to the preverbal noun phrase and an internal nominative Case to the post verbal *pro* subject. In his proposal, it is not clear why C assigns two different cases without a clear strategy to do so.

Musabhein (2008), on the other hand, adopts a different position from that of Fassi Fehri's proposal on Case assignment. Musabhein (2008) assumes that C has one nominative structural Case and another lexical accusative Case. He proposes that the nominative Case on the subject DP is valued in [Spec-vP] by the C-T complex. He also proposes that in preverbal DPs, the subject raises from [Spec-vP] to [Spec-TopP]. As it moves, the subject leaves behind a pronounceable resumptive pronoun in its base position in [Spec-vP]. Musabhein (2008) further assumes that the raised element works as an active goal to be valued by the phase head C. Moreover, he speculates "that the overt C … has a non-structural intrinsic Lexical Case feature which is not part of the bundle of features that are transferred to T" (p. 126). In this connection, he claims that

> "The structural Case that is assigned via T to the post-verbal subject is always nominative irrespective of the type of C. Conversely, the value of the Lexical Case depends on the type of C; while the overt complementiser assigns lexical accusative Case, … the covert complementiser assigns lexical nominative Case to the preverbal noun phrase" (p. 130).

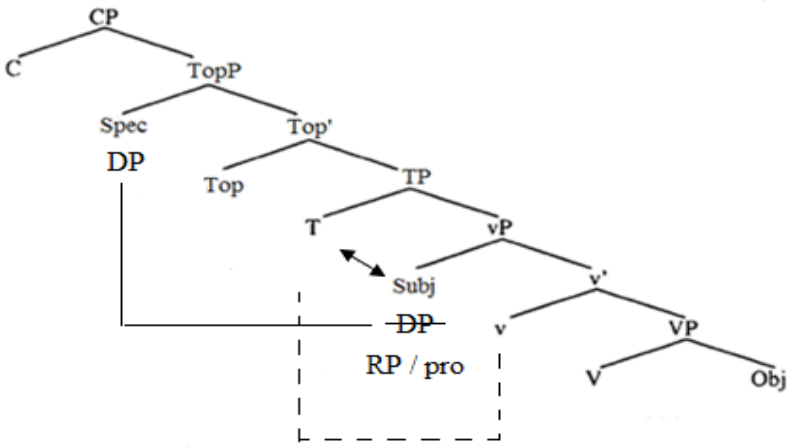
In this study, however, we adopt Chomsky's (2001, 2005) Agree theory and assume that the phase head C is the locus of features. In SVO structures, the phase head C passes its structural Case feature along with its ϕ-features to the head T, and its edge feature (i.e. tense feature) to the head Top. Feature valuation within the feature inheritance model is a bottom-up process. That is, the head T values the features of the DPs that it c-commands. After that, internal Merge can take place and further valuation of features can occur. We assume that the underlying structure of features in SVO sentences can be demonstrated in the syntactic representation in (35) below.

35.



Following Musabhein's (2008) proposal on Case assignment in Jordanian Arabic, we assume that the raising of a DP from [Spec-vP] to [Spec-TopP] in NA leaves a copy of the raised item in [Spec-vP] in the form of a resumptive pronoun. However, we diverge from Musabhein's condition that the resumptive pronoun is pronounceable and in turn assume that the resumptive pronoun can be either overt or covert in NA. We argue that a plural DP leaves an overt resumptive pronoun while a singular DP leaves only a covert pro(nominal). Given this, we propose that a pro(nominal) is left in [Spec-vP]. This can be shown in the following representation in (36).

36.



The subject DP is base-generated in [Spec-vP]. T agrees with the DP in [Spec-vP] and assigns nominative Case to it. Then the Edge feature (i.e. tense feature) on TopP motivates the DP to move to [Spec-TopP]. When the DP raises to [Spec-TopP], it leaves a copy in its base position which stands as a holder for Case and agreement features. This copy can either be overt (resumptive pronoun (RP)) or covert (pro). However, as the DP remerges in [Spec-TopP], it becomes an active goal with which C agrees and assigns lexical Case. Consider the following examples from NA in (37) and their representations in (38) to illustrate the point.

37a. el-ʕyaal kteba-uu risaalah

the.boys.nom wrote.pl.m- they.nom. letter.acc.indef.

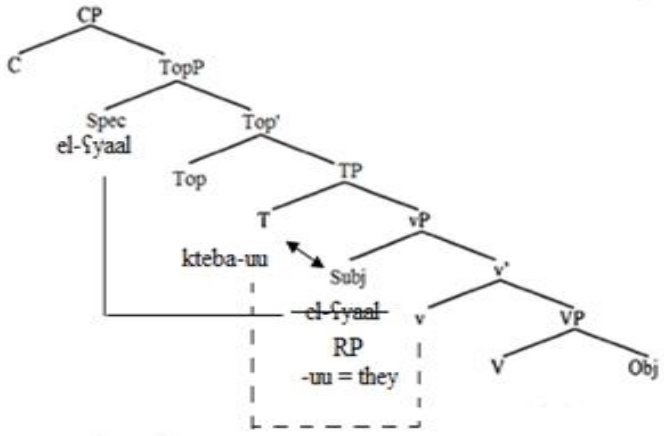
'The boys wrote a letter'.

b. el-walad ketab risaalah

the.boy.nom wrote.3p.sg.m-pro.nom letter.acc.indef.

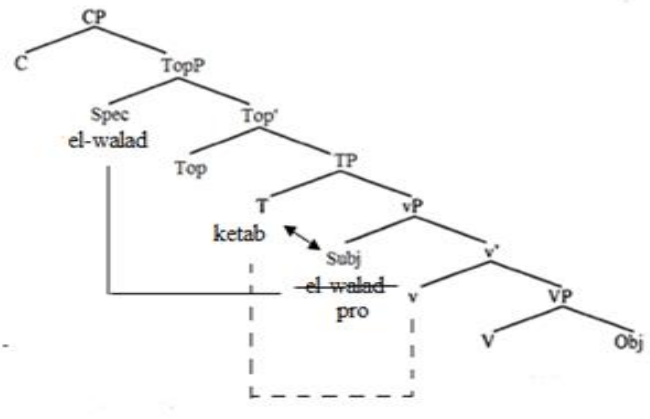
'The boy wrote a letter'.

38a.



plural

38b.



singular

In (38a), the subject DP *el-ʕyaal* 'the boys' is plural. When the subject DP *el-ʕyaal* raises to [Spec-TopP] to get topicalization, it leaves behind an overt copy *–uu* (they), a resumptive pronoun (RP). The RP attaches with the verb on the head T and forms the plural verb form *kteba-uu* 'they wrote'. However, in (38b), the subject *el-walad* 'the boy' is singular. When it raises to [Spec-TopP], it does not leave behind an overt RP but instead it leaves a null/covert pro; which is known in Standard Arabic as *dhamiir mustater* 'a covert/implicit/understood pronoun'. For that, nothing has to be attached to the verb on T and hence it takes the singular verb form *ketab* 'he wrote'.

5.2.4 Case assignment of the preverbal DP

The preverbal DP can either be nominative or accusative. It is nominative if it is not preceded by any overt Case assigner, otherwise it is accusative. Reconsider the examples in (34) above which are reproduced in (39) below for further illustration.

39a. al-ʔawlaad.**u** katab-**uu** al-dars-**a**
the.boys.nom wrote.pl.m the.lesson.acc
'The boys wrote the lesson.'

b. **ʔinna** al-ʔawlaad-**a** katab-**uu** al-dars-**a**
comp the.boys.acc wrote.pl.m the.lesson.acc
'Indeed, the boys wrote the lesson.'

In (39a), the preverbal DP is assigned nominative Case whereas in (39b) it is assigned accusative Case. The main difference between the two is that (39b) contains an overt Case assigner *ʔinna* which assigns accusative Case to the DP.

Furthermore, Fassi Fehri (2003) proposes that "subjects in SVO sentences receive default nominative only in the absence of external governors, otherwise, they receive specific structural cases from the latter" (Fassi Fehri, 1993: 45). Similarly, Soltan (2007) assumes that the preverbal nominative Case in SVO sentences is a default Case which is assigned in the absence of structural and Lexical Case assigners. On the other hand, Musabhein (2008) proposes that C has extra Lexical Case which is not transferred to T. This Lexical Case is accusative in the presence of an overt Case assigner *ʔinna* whereas it is nominative in the absence of any Case assigners. Lexical Case has been defined to be "word bound, i.e. tied to specific lexical entries" (Bráðdal, 2011: 5). It has also been defined to be "based on the (Case assignment) specifications of particular lexical items" (Eisenbeiss, 2006:3).

Building on the preceding analyses and following Musabhein's (2008) proposal, we propose that an overt C such as *ʔinna* in SA and *inn* in NA has an intrinsic Lexical Case property. Based on this, the overt C enters into an Agree relation with the preverbal DP and assigns accusative Case to it. However, we diverge from Musabhein's (2008) proposal in that we do not consider the preverbal nominative Case as a Lexical Case. Instead, we assume, following Fassi Fehri (1993) and Soltan (2007), that it is a default Case which is assigned when no structural or lexical relations are available to assign another Case. Consider the following NA example in (40) below to illustrate the point.

40a. el-walad yalʕab kuurah
the.boy.nom play.3p.sg.m football.acc
'The boy is playing football.'

b. **inn** el-walad yalʕab kuurah
comp the.boy.acc play.3p.sg.m football.acc
'Indeed, the boy is playing football.'

In (40a), the preverbal DP *el-walad* 'the boy' is not preceded by any overt Case assigner so it is assigned default nominative Case. However, in (40b), the preverbal DP is preceded by the complementizer *inn*, the overt Case assigner, which assigns a lexical accusative Case to the subject. It can be observed in the preceding examples in (40), and throughout the study, that Case in NA is not overtly morphologically realized as in SA. This does not mean that NA does not have Case, rather, Case is abstract; it is similar to that of English.

6. Conclusion

This study has discussed the assignment of structural (nominative and accusative) Case in NA and has shown that Case in NA is abstract; this means that Case is not overtly morphologically realized in NA, similar to that of English. It has also explored structural Case assignment in VSO and SVO structures in NA within Chomsky's (2001, 2005) Agree theory and has pointed out that structural Case in NA is assigned via an Agree relation between a probe and a goal within a c-command domain. In VSO structures, for instance, nominative Case is assigned by the C-T complex via an Agree relation established between T and the subject in [Spec-TP] while accusative Case is a reflex of an Agree relation between the light v and the object DP. We have assumed that the Case value on a DP is the product of an Agree relation between a probe (a phase head) and a goal (a DP). Furthermore, we have shown that accusative Case on the object DP in NA is a reflex of an Agree relation between the functional light v and the object. However, in SVO structures introduced by the complementiser *inn*, it has shown that there are two DPs; a post-verbal DP and a preverbal one. The post-verbal DP is assigned nominative Case by the C-T complex while the preverbal DP is assigned accusative lexical Case or default nominative Case.

Moreover, in exploring SVO order, the study has shown that the preverbal DP is a topic, not a subject. It has stressed that the preverbal DP is a topic which is located in TopP by movement; this movement is motivated morpho-syntactically by the Edge feature on that phase. Besides, it has been proposed that the movement of the preverbal DP leaves behind a resumptive pronoun (RP) in its base position which serves as a place holder for the Case and agreement features in the base position in [Spec-vP]. It has further assumed that the resumptive pronoun can be overt or covert in the structure. It has proposed that an overt RP in NA is found in plural DPs and it manifests itself in the form of a number clitic attached onto the verb. Moreover, it has been postulated that a covert *pro* (nominal) is left in [Spec-vP] as a holder for Case and agreement which resembles the covert/implicit/understood pronoun phenomenon known as *dhamiir mustater* in SA. In addition, we have assumed that the raised DP is an active goal for a further Case valuation consideration discharged by C itself. We have also proposed that the type of Case assigned to the preverbal DP depends on the type of C. We have assumed that an overt C assigns lexical Case by means of the overt lexical item in C, while a covert C assigns the default Case to that DP.

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