

Adverbial Accusative Case in Arabic

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ABSTRACT

The accusative case is mainly attached to the objects. It is the case that marks objects in transitive clauses; however, in many languages accusative case is not only found on objects, but it is extended to mark NP adverbials. It is attached to elements outside the domain of the verb. Consider the example from Arabic below.

(1) *ḍahab-tu ʔila al-madiinat-I layl-an*

went-Is to the-city-gen night-acc

‘I went to the city at night’

In the example above, we find the word *layl-an* ‘at night’ is marked with accusative case though it is not an argument. It is an adverb of time. The occurrence of case on adjuncts has been termed adverbial case or semantic case. It should be noted that this type of case has not received much attention in the literature of modern linguistics. Only a few studies have been conducted to investigate this phenomenon. When discussing some examples about the adverbial case, Butt (2006, p. 7) states the following: “Given the basic assumption that the primary purpose of case is to mark the arguments of a predicate, this type of data remains an issue which has not as yet received a good/standard solution within modern syntactic theories.” By this type of data, she refers to some data from German and Korean where some adverbials are marked with accusative case. So, this issue has not been dealt with in some detail in modern linguistics as also stated by Butt in another context: “Very little work has been done on semantic case, primarily because it tends to be associated with adjuncts, and the theoretical concern is with licensing and constraining the appearance of core verbal arguments” (p.71).

Keywords: Absolute, Adverbial Case, Accusative Case, Cognate, Object, Locative, Temporal.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Problem

It has been noted that all adverbs in Arabic are accusative, regardless of the kind of the adverb. The occurrence of case on adjuncts has been termed adverbial case or semantic case. This type of case has not received much attention in the literature of modern linguistics. Only a few studies have been conducted to investigate this phenomenon.

B. Aim

This research aims to focus on accusative NP adverbial in Arabic, as well as their exceptions.

C. Scope

This research is an attempt to figure out the domain of the accusative case on the NP adverbials in Arabic. It will also concern with the accusative case checking on NP adverbials in Arabic; we hope that this will be applicable for some other language as well.

D. Hypothesis

The research hypothesizes that all adverbial NPs are stamped with accusative case in Arabic.

E. Value of the Study

This case has not received much attention in modern linguistics, so this research is dedicated to investigating this phenomenon in some details.

II. LOCATIVE OBJECT AND TEMPORAL OBJECT: ADVERBS OF PLACE AND TIME

The adverbs of place and time in Arabic are marked with accusative case. Consider the following examples.

(1) makaθ-tu fi al-hind-I sanat-an
Stayed-Is in the-India-gen year-acc
'I stayed in India for one year'

(2) saafara barr-an
traveled land-acc
'He travelled by land'

The adverb of time sanat-an in (1) and the adverb of place barr-an in (2) are both marked with accusative case. Now let us see the source of this case. How is it checked? The answer for this question will shed light, not only on Arabic, but on other languages as well because many languages exhibit such phenomenon. However, it is of great importance to see how the literature has dealt with such constructions.

The next subsections deal with the approaches that have been adopted for investigating this phenomenon. We will see how these approaches deal with these constructions and if we can use these analyses to account for accusative case of adverbials in Arabic.

Kim and Maling (1993) give a detailed description and clear explanation of case assignment for frequency adverbials in Korean. They assume that frequency adverbials and verbal objects have fundamentally the same source of structural case. They support their analysis by the fact that there is making a matching in case between frequency adverbials and verbal objects. That is to say that when the verbal objects carry accusative case, the frequency adverbials will carry accusative case, but if the verbal objects carry nominative case, the frequency adverbials will carry nominative case.

Maling (1993) argues at length that adverbials of measure, duration, and frequency (in Finnish) behave just like objects with respect to case assignment and, in particular, notes the following generalization about syntactic case assignment: only one NP dependent of the verb receives the nominative, namely, the one which has the highest grammatical function; other dependents receive the accusative. We can understand from this that her claim is that the accusative case on the adverbials is assigned by the verb in the same way the objects are. So, the accusative case on objects as well as on adverbials is assigned by the same thing, namely, the verb, Maling (1993, pp. 49-74).

Nakajima (2006, pp. 674-684) also came to the same conclusion. He assumes that an accusative adverbial is assigned accusative case by the verb. We will come to this when talking about cognate object.

Pesteky (2008) assumes that modifiers of *v'* is accusative. What we can understand from this is that adverbials, which are considered to be the modifiers of the verbs, are assigned accusative case by the verb.

To sum up, we find that many linguists assume that adverbials get case from the verb. However, as we mentioned earlier, by assuming that it is the verb that assigns accusative case to the adverbials, it is not clear under which mechanism the verb can do so, given that we can find accusative NP adverbials with all types of verbs. We can find accusative NP adverbials with transitive, ditransitive, and intransitive verbs.

To solve the problem above, we assume that in Arabic there is a functional projection between *vP* and *VP*. We call this projection Transitive Phrase (*TrP*). The head of the *TrP* is responsible for checking accusative case on adverbials. We assume that in the course of the derivation, accusative adverbials acquire [+*Tr*] feature which is a formal feature and must be checked off; otherwise, the derivation will crash. To maintain the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs, we propose that the verb carries [+*Tr*] feature in addition to [+*ACC*] when it is transitive. Thus, the accusative adverbial raises to the Spec of *Tr*, in a Spec-head relation, to check its accusative case against that of *Tr*. The verb, on the other hand, raises to the head of the *TrP* to check its [+*Tr*] feature when it is transitive. We also assume that the accusative case on the objects will be checked by the small *v* and *TrP* is only generated when the sentence includes an accusative adverbial. In case we don't have an accusative adverbial, the *TrP* will not be generated.

We present an analysis for the accusative case on adverbs of time and place, and we will show that this account can be used in other constructions like the cognate objects, the causative objects, the circumstantial expressions, and the accusative of the measurement, specification or comparison. Further, we assume that this proposal can be used to account for the accusative case on adverbials in general. This solution is important because it is evident that the correct characterization of case marking on the NP adverbials will contribute to a better understanding of the overall system of case assignment/ checking. In other words, we need an umbrella that can cover the range of accusative NP adverbials is general. So, in the following sections, we will present an analysis that can cover all the accusative NP adverbials. We propose a functional phrase. This phrase is called Transitive Phrase (*TrP*) and we argue that the head of this phrase can be license the accusative case on NP adverbials. Conclusion

A conclusion section is not required. Although a conclusion may review the main points of the paper, do not replicate the abstract as the conclusion. A conclusion might elaborate on the importance of the work or suggest applications and extensions.

III. ABSOLUTE OBJECT OR COGNATE OBJECT

The cognate object, known as *maʿṣūl muṭlaq* in Arabic, is the surface of structure object built on the same root as its corresponding verb. Can (2008, p.60) defines cognate object as “a direct object whose semantic content is more or less identical to that of the verb which governs it.” Consider the following examples from Arabic.

- (1) a. *Daraba al-walad-a Darb-an*
hit the-boy-acc hitting-acc
‘He hit the boy badly.’
b. *kallama-hu takliim-an*
spoke-him speaking-acc
‘He spoke to him speaking.’

The two cognate objects in the example (1), *Darb-an* and *takliim-an*, are marked with accusative case. Now the question to ask is what assigns accusative case to these noun phrases. But before we account for case assignment on cognate objects, let us see how they have been dealt within the literature.

A. *The Different Views about Cognate Object Constructions*

Cognate objects constructions have received some attention in the literature by different linguists. The question of whether cognate objects are arguments or adjuncts has been the locus of debate in the linguistic field for the many years. Some linguists like Massam (1990, 161-190), and Tenny (1994), assume that cognate objects are arguments while some other linguists like Jones (1988, 89-110) assumes that cognate objects are adjuncts. The next section will deal with different views regarding cognate objects. It presents the different arguments of some linguists about cognate object constructions.

B. *Cognate Objects Properties in Arabic*

Cognate objects in Arabic are always identical to hyponymic objects. It seems that there is no clear cut distinction between the two constructions. Some properties from the two constructions are not found in Arabic, while some others from the two groups are available.

Take passivization, for example. In Arabic, we can passivize neither the cognate object nor the hyponymic object constructions. Consider the following example:

- (2) a. *ʔibtasama ar-rajul-u ʔibtisaamat-an jamiilat-an*
smiled the-man-nom smile-acc beautiful-acc
‘The man smiled a beautiful smile.’
b. *ʔubtisima ʔibtisaamat-un jamiilat-un*
smiled (pass) smile-nom beautiful-acc
‘A beautiful smile was smiled.’
(3) a. *kasarat al-ʔumm-u al-qalam-a kasr-an*
broke the-mother-nom the-pen-acc breaking-acc
‘The mother broke the pen breaking.’
b. **kusira al-qalam-u kasr-un*
broken (pass) the-pen-nom breaking-nom
‘The pen was broken a break.’

It is also observed that in Arabic the object can be cognate as in (4) or not cognate as in (5).

- (4) *maata mawt-an ʔaniiʕ-an*
died death-acc gruesome-acc
‘He died a gruesome death.’
(5) *maata ʔintiHaar-an*
died suicide-acc
‘He committed a suicide.’

It is clear from the examples above that the cognate object constructions and the so-called hyponymic object constructions are identical.

C. *Case Checking in Cognate Object Constructions in Arabic*

Since we assume that Arabic exhibits adverbial cognate objects, we will not discuss accusative case checking on the so-called argumental cognate objects. We will be confine ourselves to account for the adverbial cognate objects. Many linguists assume that cognate objects can be assigned case by the same way the direct can.

They are assigned case by the verb. For example, Nakajima (2006) came to the conclusion that the adverbial cognate objects may be assigned accusative case by the verb or by some functional projection. He assumes that there are two possibilities to account for the accusative case:

One possibility is to assume, along with Pereltsvaig (2000), that adverbial cognate objects are accusative adverbials, to which accusative case is assigned in some functional maximal projection. Another possibility is to assume that an accusative adverbial is assigned accusative case by the verb that precedes it.

However, as we mentioned above, it is not clear how the verb checks the accusative case of the cognate objects if we take into consideration that cognate objects can be used with all types of verbs. Though in English, cognate objects can occur with unergative verbs only.

IV. CAUSATIVE OBJECT OR ACCUSATIVE OF CAUSE

The causative object is an accusative NP used to clarify the cause of the verb preceding it. See the examples below.

(1) waqafa ali-un ?ikraam-an li-mohammed-in
stood up Ali-nom honor-acc for-Mohammed-gen
'Ali stood up in honor of Mohammed.'

(2) harab-tu ?awf-an
fled-Is fear-acc

The NPs ?ikraam-an and ?awf-an in the examples above are used to answer the question, 'why'? Both of them are marked with accusative case. What is the source of this case? We will follow the same arguments we used to account for the case assignment on the adverbs of time and place above to account for accusative case assignments on these constructions. However, before we apply the new proposal, for the sake of argument, let us see what other positions can be assumed.

We may assume that there is a null preposition in the examples above. This null preposition is the accusative case assigner and it has been deleted via historical change. This is supported by the fact that these constructions can be written as in (3) and (4) with preposition phrases without changing the meaning.

(3) waqafa ali-un li- ?ikraam-i mohammed-in
stood up Ali-nom for-honor-gen Mohammed-gen
'Ali stood up in honor of Mohammed.'

(4) harab-to min al-?awf-i
fled-Is from the-fear-gen
'I fled for fear.'

However, in these constructions, the NPs li- ?ikraam-i and al-?awf-i are marked with genitive case, not accusative. This is because, as we mentioned above, prepositions in Arabic assign genitive case. There is no historical evidence of preposition in Arabic assigning accusative case. So, the assumption that there is a null preposition which assigns case to the causative object is not true because these objects are marked with accusative case which the prepositions cannot assign. Also, the assumption that it is the verb which checks the accusative case in these constructions doesn't work for the reason we mentioned earlier.

To account for the accusative case on the adverbials, we will adopt the proposed analysis that we used to account for the accusative case on adverbs of place and time. We assume that there is a TrP in these constructions and the head of this phrase is generated to check the accusative case on these adverbials. The adverbial raises to the Spec of TrP to check its accusative case feature.

V. ACCUSATIVE OF STATE (HAAL)

The accusative of state or circumstantial expressions in Arabic shows the state of the nouns that precede them. They are always marked with accusative case. The following examples make this point clear.

(1) ?aqbala al-walad-u baakiy-an
came the-boy-nom crying-acc
'The boy came crying.'

(2) naama aT-Tifl-u Haziin-an
slept the-child-nom sad-acc
'The child slept sad.'

The words baakiy-an and Haziin-an in the two examples above are called Haal, 'accusative of state'. They are marked with accusative case. We would like to account for the accusative case assignment on these nouns. There are two assumptions that can be made. The first one is to assume that there is a hidden verb in these constructions, and it is this verb which is responsible for accusative case assignment. We may assume that this hidden verb is the verb kaana 'be'. As we mentioned above, kaana and its sisters are defective verbs, and they have the ability to assign accusative case to the predicate of verbless or nominal sentences.

The assumption that there is a hidden verb may be supported by two facts. First, when you want to ask a question about the state of someone or something, you will use the verb to 'be'. If you want to ask about the state of al-walad-u in (1), for example, the question will be something like (3) below.

(3) kaifa kaana al-walad-u ʕindamaa ʔaqbala?

How was the-boy-nom when came?

'How was the boy when he came?'

It is clear from the example in (3) that we used the verb kaana when we asked about the state of al-walad-u. So, this piece of evidence may lead one to assume that it is this hidden verb which assigns accusative case to the word baakiy-an.

The other piece evidence that there is a hidden verb is that in some Arabic dialects the verb 'be' is still used overtly when talking about the circumstantial state.

VI. ACCUSATIVE OF SPECIFICATION, MEASUREMENT AND COMPARISON (TAMYIIZ)

The accusative of specification, or what is called tamiyiz 'specification' in traditional Arab grammars, is a word used to clarify that one precedes it. Consider the following examples.

(1) ʔiʕtaray-tu raʕl-an Haliib-an

bought-Is pound-acc milk-acc

'I bought a pound of milk.'

(2) katab-naa situun-a risaalat-an

wrote-we sixty-acc letter-acc

'We wrote sixty letters.'

(3) malaʔat al-fataat-u al-ʔinaaʔ-a maaʔ-an

filled the-girl-nom the-jug-acc water-acc

'The girl filled the jug with water.'

The words Haliib-an, risaalat-an and maaʔ-an in the sentences above are called accusative of specification, measurement, and comparison. They are used to clarify that the words that precede them. In (1), for example, the word Haliib-an clarifies the thing that I bought. It tells the listener that I bought a pound of milk, not a pound of salt or pound of sugar. And in (3), the word maaʔ-an tells that listener that I filled the jug with water, not with anything else. Thus, the words of specification, measurement, and comparison are used to clarify the words that they modify.

It is clear that the words of specification, measurement, and comparison are marked with accusative case and that is why they are called accusative of specification, measurement, and comparison.

Section Six

Exceptions

In Arabic, there are some exceptive particles which should be followed by a noun that carries accusative case. That is why traditional Arab grammarians include 'exception' under what they call of al-man-Suubaat, 'accusatives'. Let us consider the examples below.

(1) a. ʔaqbala ar-rijaal-u ʔilla rajul-an

came the-men-nom except man-acc

'The men came except a man.'

b. maata ar-rukkaab-u ʔilla Tifl-an

died the-passenger-nom except child-acc

'The passenger died except a child.'

We notice that the nouns rajul-an and Tifl-an are marked with accusative case when they are used after the exceptive particle ʔilla. Now, let us answer the usual question regarding accusative case assignment, but before doing so, recall that some particles can assign accusative case while some others cannot assign any case or they assign genitive case. Remember also that we assume that the difference which we find between these particles is due to the nature of the particle. We assume further that the particles that have the ability to assign accusative case are verbal in nature or they have a verbal quality. We assume that the particles have [+ACC] which must be checked off, otherwise the derivation will crash.

It should be noted that there are some other words that can be used in the exceptional expression. These words include siwaa, ʔair, ʕalaa, baida, ʕada. However, in this section, we will only talk about word ʔilla because it is used as exceptive particle. While the others can be used as nouns like siwaa and ʔair, or as verbs like ʕalaa and ʕada. I leave this issue for farther research.

One may ask the following question: Why shouldn't we treat ʔilla as a preposition that could assign accusative case, instead of genitive? In other words, is it possible to say that over a period of time, prepositions in Arabic assign accusative case and then, because of historical change, they assign genitive? Then, we treat ʔilla as a preposition that retains its ability to assign accusative case. However, as we mentioned earlier. There is no historical evidence for the prepositions assigning accusative case in Arabic.

Now let us apply the same mechanism to account for the accusative case checking on the NP after the exceptive particle ?illa.

We assume that particle ?illa has a verbal quality, that is why it can assign accusative case to the noun that follows. By looking deeper at the meaning of this particle, we find that it includes a verb. The meaning that can be assigned to this particle is ?astathni 'I exclude'. So, the example in (1a) will be something like the following.

(2) ?aqbala ar-rijaal-u ?astathn-I rajul-an
came the-men-nom exclude man-acc

'The men came, I exclude a man.' / 'The men came except a man.'

It is clear from the example above that the exceptive particle, ?illa, has a verbal quality. It includes a verb in its meaning. This verbal quality is responsible for assigning accusative case to the noun that follows this particle. Thus, we assume that the exceptive particle has [+ACC] feature which must be checked off. In case that this particle does not have a verbal quality, the noun that follows carries a case depending on its position in the sentence. Let us consider some examples and see the difference between the particle that has a verbal quality and the one that does not. Let us compare the example in (2) above with the ones in (3) and (4) below.

(3) maa ?aqbala ?illa rajul-un
not came except man-nom

'Nobody came except a man.'

(4) maa ?axTa?a ?illa waaHid-un
not committed mistakes except one-nom

'Nobody has committed mistakes except one.'

The above examples show that the noun phrases which follow the particle ?illa carry nominative case. We assume that the particle ?illa in these sentences does not have a verbal quality. We cannot assign the meaning 'I exclude' to the particle in these sentences and we think that this is the reason why traditional Arab grammarians assume that the above examples are not considered as exceptional expressions. The meaning of the sentences in (3) and (4) will be 'a man came' and 'one has committed mistakes', respectively. Thus, syntactically speaking, the particle in these sentences does not have any role to play. Accordingly, the noun phrases that follow this particle carry nominative case because they are used as subjects. In other words, the particle ?illa in the above examples does not [+ACC] feature, hence, no need for its checking.

Now let us come to the accusative case checking on the NP that follows the exceptive particle. It is clear that exceptive particle and the NP that follows are in the adjunct position.

We can write the sentence without them and the sentence has not been affected. This is clear from the grammaticality of the sentence in (5) below.

(5) ?aqbala ar-rijaal-u

come the-men-nom

'The men came.'

The deletion of al-mustathna does not affect the grammaticality of the sentence; therefore, al-mustathna is in the adjunct position. Since it is in the adjunct position, we can apply the same mechanism that we used to account for the accusative case on the comitative object. We assume that there is a functional category called Transitive Phrase (TrP) between vP and VP and the head of this phrase is responsible for accusative case checking on adverbials.

VII. CONCLUSION

This research aims at investigating and diagnosing the nature of the accusative case on NP adverbials in Arabic. As a matter of fact, NP adverbials in Arabic are marked with accusative case. The main objective of this research is to answer the question regarding the source of the accusative case on NP adverbials. This issue was and is still a topic of debate among the linguists. How the accusative case on NP adverbials is assigned/checked is a controversial issue.

Thus, after introducing the first type of adverbials in Arabic, namely, the adverbs of time and place, we presented the different views of many linguists about the source of the accusative case on NP adverbials. We have examined their assumptions and analyses and proved that they cannot be applicable on Arabic. Then, we have come up with a new proposal that can account for the accusative case on adverbials in Arabic and we hope it can be used to account for accusative case on NP adverbials in other languages. The main idea of our proposal is that there is a functional projection between vP and VP. This projection is called Transitive Phrase (TrP). The head of this phrase is responsible for accusative case checking on NP adverbials. We assume that Tr has [+ACC] feature that must be checked off, otherwise the derivation would crash.

Thus, we assume that every NP adverbial should raise to the Spec of TrP to check its accusative case feature against that of the head Tr in a Spec-head configuration. To maintain the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs, we assume that in addition to [+ACC] feature, the transitive verb has [+Tr] feature, so it should raise to Tr to check this feature. We assume further that TrP is only generated when sentence contains an NP adverbial. On the other hand, we maintain that the little *v* is the accusative case checker on the objects. We have shown that the new proposal can be used to account for the accusative case checking on NP adverbials. Then we extend this to the cognate object constructions, the causative object, the accusative of state, the accusative of specification, measurement, and comparison, the comitative object, and finally the exception.

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