

Case Conflict in Arabic Relative Clauses: A Phase-Based Approach

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Abstract: Case conflict in relative clauses is observed when a relative pronoun carries Case different from the one associated with its base position. Instead, it appears with Case that is identical to Case of its antecedent that is external to the relative clause. This phenomenon - commonly referred to as Case Attraction - is attested in languages such as Ancient Greek, Latin, and German. It is also easily observed in Modern Standard Arabic where the relative pronoun shows agreement in Case, gender and number with the noun modified by the relative clause. The original position of the relative pronoun is normally filled with a resumptive pronoun that represents the features of the relative pronoun. This study adopts the most recent assumptions of the Minimalist Program to account for the behavior of Arabic relative pronouns. It assumes that the relative clause is right adjoined to the noun it modifies and the relative pronoun moves to a left peripheral position within the structure of the relative clause leaving behind a copy. At a later stage of the derivation, Case of the relative pronoun is unified with Case of its antecedent. The unified Case feature is then valued under Agree with a higher head.

Keywords: agreement, Arabic, case conflict, Minimalism, relative clause

1. Introduction

Relativization is the process of using a relative pronoun to introduce a relative clause to modify a noun. The relative pronoun is coindexed with the nominal antecedent modified by the relative clause. However, it belongs syntactically to the modifying relative clause where its form and grammatical function are determined by the position in which it stands within the structure of the clause. In English, for example, the selection of the relative pronoun *who*, *whose* or any other form is due to its grammatical function within the clause. Consider:

- (1) a. I saw the man who met you.
b. I saw the man whom you met.

The antecedent of the relative pronoun in both (1a) and (1b) is the DP *the man* which functions as an object in the matrix clause. However, the coindexed relative pronoun appears as nominative in (1a) because it functions as a subject within the relative clause and as accusative in (1b) because it is an object.

While English is straightforward in this respect, relativization in other languages is an intriguing topic that merits further investigation under the latest assumptions within the minimalist framework of the syntactic theory, as formulated in Chomsky (1993 and later). It has been observed by, inter alia, Pittner (1995), Bianchi (1999), Salzmann (2006), and Grimm (2007) that relativization in languages such as Latin, Ancient Greek, and Old High German behaves in a

peculiar way. That is to say, the relative pronoun agrees with its antecedent in Case feature regardless of the grammatical function it has inside the relative clause; it has Case that matches Case carried by its coindexed antecedent which is modified by the relative clause. This phenomenon is generally referred to as *Case Attraction* (Bianchi 2000; Georgi and Salzmann 2014; Kakarikos 2014). Case Attraction, which is an instance of Case conflict, is exceptional in that it does not follow the general rules that determine how Case value is assigned. While the relative pronoun Case in the Latin sentence (2a) below is attracted from nominative to accusative, it is attracted from nominative to genitive in the Old High German sentence (2b).

- (2) a. urbem quam statuo vestra est
 city.ACC which.ACC I found yours is
 ‘The city which I found is yours.’

(Bianchi 1999:93)

- b. sie gedâht’ ouch maniger leide, der ir
 she thought also some offerings-GEN which-GEN her
 dâ héimé geschach.
 at home happened
 ‘She thought about some misfortunes that happened to her at home.’

(Pittner 1995:198)

This type of Case Attraction is defined as proper attraction (Grimm 2007) and is always distinguished from inverse attraction which works in an opposite way; Case on the antecedent is attracted to match Case on the relative pronoun (see Bianchi 1999; Grimm 2007; Cypionka, Dörre and Bayer 2018). Inverse case attraction is beyond the scope of this paper as it does not exist in Arabic. Georgi and Salzmann (2014) and Cypionka et al. (2018) among many others have clarified that Case Attraction is in principle optional, has morphological exponence, subject to adjacency, and most importantly is associated with Case hierarchy. Pittner (1995) Georgi and Salzmann (2014) assume that Case hierarchy is based on agentivity according to which Case has the following scale that lists it from the least oblique to the most oblique:

- (3) Nom < Acc < Dat < Gen

Accordingly, the attracted Case on the relative pronoun must be less marked (i.e. less oblique) than the attracting Case on the antecedent. However, Case Attraction is sometimes complicated by the presence of resumptive pronouns to recover the relative clause internal Case. In Swiss German, for example, Georgi and Salzmann (2017) observe that Case Attraction is obligatory, and a resumptive pronoun is used if Case within the relative clause is more oblique than Case of the antecedent. Resumption, when present, poses a challenge to the standard assumption of

syntactic theory because the matrix Case (of the antecedent), which is located outside the boundaries of the relative clause, determines the form of the resumptive pronoun Case inside the relative clause (cf. Georgi and Salzmann 2014).

Superficially, the relative pronouns in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA henceforth) look similar to their counterparts in Latin and Old High German in (2) above. In MSA, the relative pronouns straddle the line between the head noun (i.e. its antecedent) and the defining clause; they follow their antecedents and show agreement with them. Irrespective of its grammatical function within the relative clause, the relative pronoun shows full agreement with its antecedent and carries whatever Case value the antecedent has.

- (4) a. dʒaaʔa al-walad-aani **al-laḏaani** qabal-ta-huma
 came the-boy-Nom.Dual who-Nom.Dual met-you- them.Dual
 ‘The two boys whom you met came.’
- b. raʔai-tu al-walad-aini **al-laḏaini** qabal-ta-huma
 saw-I the-boy-Acc.Dual who-Acc.Dual met-you-them.Dual
 ‘I saw the two boys whom you met.’
- c. wasala al-muʔalim-u **al-laḏi** ʕaiyan-naa-hu
 arrived the-teacher-Nom who.3ms appointed-we- him
 ‘The teacher whom we appointed arrived.’
- d. nadzaḥat al-muʔalimat-u **al-lati** qabal-tu-haa
 succeeded the-teacher.f-Nom who.3fs met-I-her
 ‘The female teacher whom I met succeeded.’

The relative pronoun in (4a) and (4b) above functions as an object within the relative clause. In both cases, it is associated with an accusative resumptive pronoun. However, in (4a), the relative pronoun is nominative because its antecedent functions as a subject in the matrix clause. In (4b), on the other hand, the antecedent is accusative because it is the object of the verb in the matrix clause. Therefore, the relative pronoun has accusative Case. Relative pronouns, along with the personal pronouns, belong to a closed class of words referred to by the traditional Arab grammarians as *mabni* ‘uninflected’ forms. The masculine and feminine singular forms *al-laḏi* in (4c) and *al-lati* in (4d) end with a long vowel which makes it impossible to add the inflectional morphological case markers *-u* for the nominative, *-a* for the accusative and *-i* for the genitive. The Plural masculine *al-laḏina* and the plural feminine *al-laati* are also uninflected; they both retain the same form regardless of the Case value assigned to them. However, dual marking in MSA is observed on all masculine and feminine nouns, adjectives, and relative pronouns because the morphological case marker in these forms is associated with the dual number marker. To clarify, the dual masculine relative pronoun can have the nominative form *al-laḏ-aani* or the accusative form *al-laḏ-aini*, whereas the same does not hold true for the singular form *al-laḏi* or the plural forms as they do not show this distinction. Morphological case marking, when it is

present, mirrors syntactic Case, as Chomsky (1995) assumes. Therefore, I use examples with the dual forms of the relative pronouns in this paper for the sake of clarity. MSA differs from the languages that allow Case Attraction in that the relative pronoun Case agreement with the antecedent is not optional as the examples (4a) and (4b) above have suggested. The main point of departure between MSA and language with Case Attraction is that Arabic relatives are not sensitive to Case hierarchy; the relative pronoun carries whatever Case value the antecedent has, regardless of its original Case associated with its position and grammatical function within the relative clause. In addition to the sentences in (4) above where the object relative pronoun has nominative Case, the relative pronoun in the following sentence, which has the function of the subject within the relative clause, appears carrying accusative Case in accordance with Case of the antecedent. Consider:

- (5) qabl-tu al-bint-aini al-lataini kataba-ta at-taqreer-a
 met-I the-girl-Acc.Dual who-Acc.Dual wrote-f.dual the-report-Acc
 'I met the two girls who wrote the report.'

In the languages where optional Case Attraction is allowed, Case on the relative pronoun is an instance of Case conflict which is normally resolved by a syntactic means; the relative pronoun agrees with its antecedent and it retains Case determined by its relative clause internal position. In this situation, it does not raise a problem. Alternatively, it can be solved by Case Attraction which has been a hot topic of discussion. MSA relative pronouns seem to oscillate between these two possibilities. On the one hand, the relative pronoun retains its syntactic function within the relative clause by having a coindexed resumptive pronoun (see the discussion in section 4 below). On the other hand, it shows full agreement with the antecedent including agreement in Case feature. This agreement between the antecedent and the relative pronoun is not optional, and it is not sensitive to Case hierarchy. Based on these differences, I assume that Case on MSA relative pronoun is the outcome of a probe-goal Agree relation that holds between the antecedent as DP containing the relative clause and a higher functional head. In other words, Case value on the relative pronoun and its antecedent is achieved by syntactic means at a phase level. Therefore, I adopt Phase Theory as reformulated in Chomsky (2008) and propose an analysis that is based on the notion of phase, which is the domain within which agreement and Case are determined. Before we delve into the discussion, the relevant phase-related assumptions of the minimalist framework are reviewed in the next section.

2. Phase theory

The notion of phase has constituted an integral part of the Minimalist Program since its early days. As discussed in Chomsky (1993, 1995, 1998, 2008), the basic concept underlying Minimalism is that the syntactic operations Agree and Move are feature-driven, and they take place at the level of the *phase* which is a unit of syntactic computation with a head that triggers these syntactic operations. Chomsky argues that all the lexical items in the lexicon are endowed with sets of phonological, semantic, and formal features that derive the computation. The

features of person, number, and gender are grouped into a class collectively referred to as ϕ -features. Case feature and Edge Feature (EF) are considered formal features. Depending on whether they contribute to the semantic interpretation of the lexical items or not, ϕ -features are divided into two types: interpretable or uninterpretable. ϕ -features are interpretable because they are relevant to the semantic interpretation of nominals. However, these features are uninterpretable on functional heads such as *v*, *T*, and *C* simply because they do not contribute to the semantic interpretation of these elements. Consequently, the interpretable ϕ -features enter the derivation valued, whereas the uninterpretable features are introduced unvalued. The formal features are uninterpretable. On the one hand, Case feature is uninterpretable on nominals, that is why it enters the derivation unvalued. EF, on the other hand, is a property of functional heads such as *v*, *T* or *C*. It is an uninterpretable feature and when present it triggers movement of a DP to the edge of the phase, i.e. the Spec position (Bošković 2007; Alenazy 2009; Holmberg, Sheehan and Jenneke 2019). It is worth mentioning that Chomsky, Gallego and Ott (2019) suggest a trigger-free approach for movement; they assume that movement (the operation Internal Merge as they term it) “is generally not triggered but applies freely” (Chomsky et al. 2019: 237) if it observes locality. This amounts to saying that, in the case of the relative pronoun movement, the existence of EF to attract the relative pronoun to a left peripheral position is unnecessary. In this paper, however, I will pursue the proposal that relative pronoun movement is triggered by EF. To get a convergent derivation, all the uninterpretable ϕ -features on the functional heads and Case feature on nominals should be deleted prior to the LF level as required by the Principle of Full Interpretation which allows only elements with appropriate interpretation to be available at PF and LF levels. If these features are not valued and deleted the derivation ‘crashes’ (cf. Chomsky 1995).

During the derivation of the phase, all the unvalued uninterpretable ϕ -features of a functional head (a probe) are valued and deleted under the local operation Agree which works at the level of the phase. This operation matches these features on a functional head (a probe) with their valued counterparts carried by a nominal (a goal) that has to be active and available for Agree by virtue of having an unvalued Case feature. The essential operation Agree is reformulated in Chomsky (2001: 122) as follows:

- (6) The probe α agrees with the goal β providing that:
- a. α has uninterpretable ϕ -features.
 - b. β has matching interpretable ϕ -features.
 - c. β is active by virtue of having an unvalued Case feature.
 - d. α c-commands β .
 - e. There is no potential goal γ intervening between α and β .

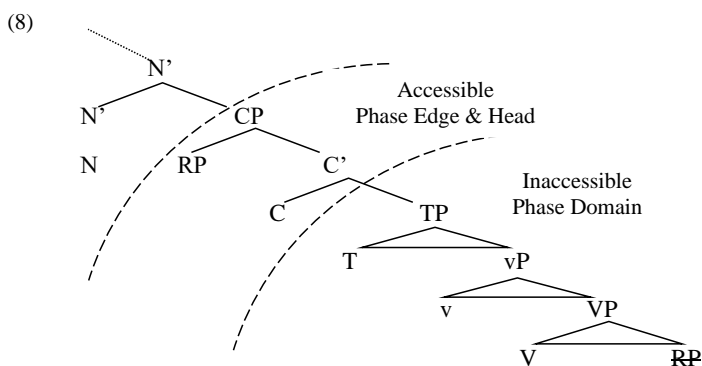
In fact, this definition of Agree operation implies that this operation results in the valuation and deletion of all the unvalued instances of uninterpretable features carried by both the probe and the goal. The unvalued uninterpretable Case feature

is valued and deleted, too. Agree relation that holds between the light v and the object results in an accusative Case value, whereas the Agree relation between T and the subject results in a nominative Case value. When the derivation of the phase is complete, it is transferred to the LF and PF interface levels where it becomes inert. Put differently, when the phase is completed, its domain becomes inaccessible for further syntactic operations initiated by higher probes. However, the phase head and its left edge remain accessible, as the Phase Impenetrability Condition below suggests.

- (7) In Phase α with head H , the domain of H is not accessible to operations outside α , but only H and its edge.

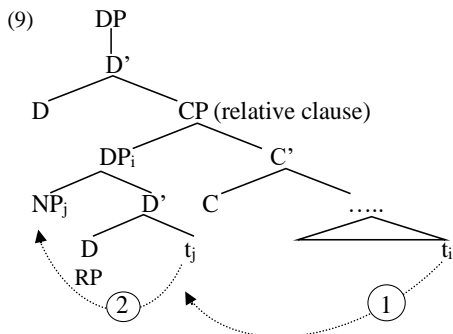
(Chomsky 1998: 22)

With this condition in mind, we now return to relative clauses, which are undoubtedly CP phases based on Chomsky's definition of phase. The structure (8) below depicts the structure of the relative. The relative pronoun here is in a left peripheral position, which means that it is accessible to a higher probe; therefore, it can be assigned Case which is not associated with its grammatical function as an object in its original position within the relative clause.



In fact, the relative pronoun is originally an accusative object of the verb within the vP phase; this means that its Case is valued inside the phase. In accordance with the minimalist assumptions, if Case feature is valued, the nominal bearing it becomes an inactive goal. Therefore, it cannot be involved in any further Agree relation.

However, the relative pronoun apparently receives a new Case value after it has moved to the edge of the CP phase.



The questions that should be addressed carefully concern the movement of the relative pronoun from its canonical position and how it becomes an active goal with an unvalued Case feature in its new position. MSA data admit discussion and this paper seeks to answer two main questions. The first question concerns the surface position of the relative pronoun and how it is achieved. The second question concerns the Case feature and how it is valued on the antecedent and the relative pronoun. However, before we proceed to the discussion of these questions and the proposed analysis of MSA relative clauses, an overview of the prominent analyses in the literature is presented in the following section.

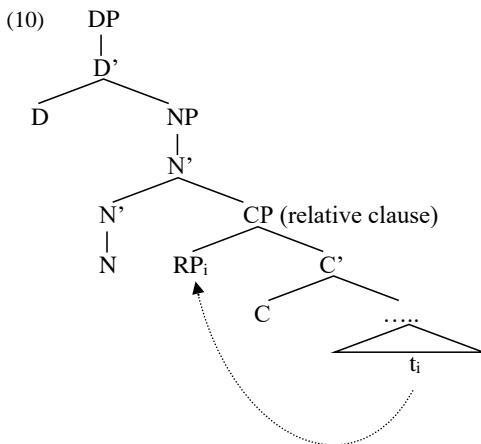
3. Approaches to relative clauses

In the relevant literature, three different analyses of relative clauses are generally distinguished based on how the relative pronoun is treated. The first analysis is the promotion analysis advocated by Kayne (1994) following Vergnaud (1974). Under this analysis, which is also referred to as head-raising analysis, the relative clause is analyzed as a CP complement selected by a determiner (D^o). Kayne suggests that the relative pronoun originates as a determiner of its antecedent within the structure of the relative clause forming a relative DP that undergoes movement from its base position to the specifier position of the CP. As the structure (9) below shows, in the new landing site of the relative DP (Spec, CP), the antecedent undergoes NP movement to the specifier of DP. The latter movement ensures that the NP is adjacent to the higher D and that the antecedent and the relative pronoun are in the right order.

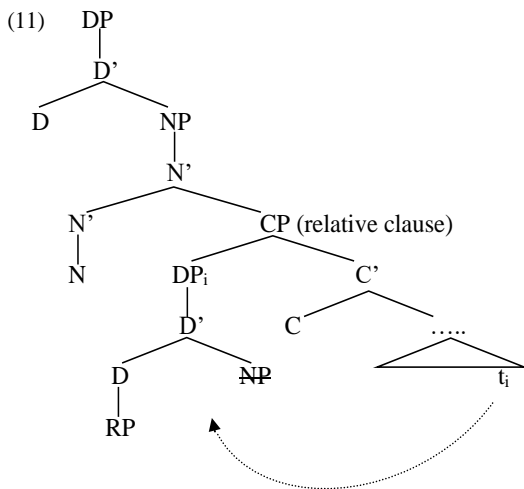
Kayne’s promotion analysis was met with criticism from Borsley (1997, 2001) and Salzmann (2006, 2017) among others. According to Borsley (1997), NP movement from the relative DP to its specifier is not justified if the relative pronoun is analyzed as D head. Also, Salzmann (2017) argues that Kayne’s promotion analysis is problematic as it does not clarify why movement across other constituents takes place. Furthermore, the promotion analysis seems to be incompatible with the minimalist assumptions as it has some superfluous and unnecessary steps. In other words, the analysis of the relative clause as a CP complement of D has a theoretical drawback that seems to pose a real problem to the phase-based feature inheritance

model outlined in the previous section. The idea that D° selects CP complement is inconsistent with the established claim in the minimalist framework that the functional head in the phrase selects a lexical core that has interpretable ϕ -features (cf. Chomsky 2008). In fact, the behavior of MSA relative clauses provides an argument against Kayne's promotion analysis. The relative clause is a modifying constituent that appears in a position where an attributive adjective is used (cf. Galal 2004). Also, the relative pronoun is a nominal element that has its own interpretable ϕ -features in addition to Case feature. This means that the relative pronoun itself has features that should be valued under Agree operation which is subject to phase restrictions.

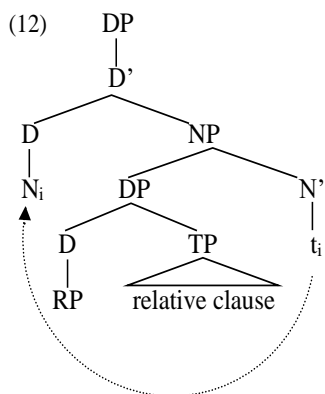
The second analysis adopted by Chomsky (1977) and Jackendoff (1977) is the right-adjunction analysis. According to this approach, the relative clause is represented as CP right adjoined to an antecedent noun external to the relative clause. As the structure (10) below illustrates; the relative pronoun is base generated within the relative clause, and it achieves its surface position in the left periphery by A' movement to the specifier of CP. The relationship between the external antecedent and the relative pronoun is obtained by co-indexation.



The third analysis is the matching analysis found in Lees (1961), Chomsky (1973), Salzmann (2006), and Pankau (2016) among others. It is halfway between the two analyses discussed above (Bhatt 2002; Salzmann 2017). Under the assumptions of this analysis, the relative pronoun is analyzed as a determiner of NP that has the same identity as the external antecedent. The relative DP undergoes A' movement in the same manner as in the right adjunction analysis in (10) above. However, the NP complement is deleted under identity with the external head.



The issue of Case conflict in MSA relative clauses has not been well addressed within the minimalist framework. Most of the previous analyses have focused on the nature and positions of the relative pronouns and how the linear word order is achieved in addition to the correlation between relativization and resumption and agreement. In the majority of the literature published on the relative clauses, relative pronouns are conceived of as relative markers or relative complementizers, particularly in the work of Aoun and Choueiri (1997), Choueiri (2002), Ouhalla (2004), Galal (2004) and Aoun and Li (1993) to name but a few. Furthermore, the discussion of the relative clauses in the regional varieties of Arabic raises no problems concerning Case feature as this feature, especially on relative pronouns, is not marked morphologically in these varieties. One analysis to consider here is that presented by Ouhalla (2004) who builds on Aoun and Choueiri (1997) and claims that the relative markers are composed of a definite article and Agr (agreement) features. Accordingly, he suggests an alternative analysis to Kayne’s (1994) promotion analysis and assumes that the categorial identity of the relative clause in Arabic is a DP. He argues that this DP is composed of D (the relative marker) and a TP complement. The resulting DP (i.e. the relative clause) is left



adjoined to the relativized N which moves to D position. Ouhalla's view is schematized as follows:

This analysis cannot be taken for granted as it encounters serious problems when faced with the latest assumptions concerning the status of TP. Chomsky (2008) argues that finite TP does not exist unless it is selected by C, the head of the CP phase; T inherits its tense and ϕ -features from C. The relative clause in Arabic is unarguably a finite clause that should be analyzed as CP, not TP. A further problem with Ouhalla's proposal is that the left adjunction of the relative clauses is unnecessary as it makes the movement of N to D longer than preferred. Minimalism requires movement to be as short as possible (Chomsky 1995); shortest move of N to D can be achieved if the relative clause is right adjoined.

The right adjunction analysis outlined in (10) above is arguably straightforward, and it better represents the general structure of the relative clause. However, it does not capture agreement and Case facts on the relative pronoun. In the next section, I consider relative clauses as right adjoined CPs and propose a fresh analysis that is based on the most recent assumptions of the Minimalist Program as postulated in Chomsky (2008).

4. The proposed analysis

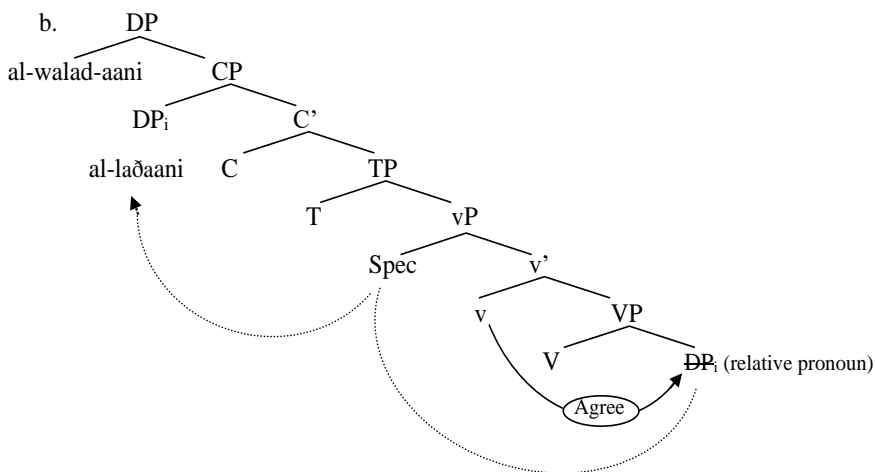
The analysis I propose here is underlined by the assumption that the relative clause is a modifying CP right adjoined to N', as in (8) above, and it is a phase which is subject to the condition (7) above. The analysis is therefore composed of two parts. The first part concerns the movement of the relative pronoun from its base position to a left peripheral position within the structure of the relative clause; it explains why and how such a movement takes place and what landing site it targets. The second part of the analysis concerns how the Case value on the moved relative pronoun is determined in its new position.

4.1 The relative pronoun movement

We first show how the derivation of the relative clause proceeds. For example, in (4a) above, repeated below as (13a) for convenience, the relative pronoun originates as a DP object of the verb. The relative pronoun serves as an active goal by virtue of having an unvalued Case feature. As the structure (13b) illustrates, the relative pronoun enters an Agree relation with the probe *v*, the functional head. The result of this Agree operation is the accusative Case feature of the relative pronoun. As the derivation of the relative clause as a CP phase proceeds, the relative pronoun undergoes A' movement to a left peripheral position; it targets Spec, CP to satisfy an EF of C. In conformity with the definition of phase, I assume that the relative pronoun moves first through an outer specifier of vP to escape the boundaries of the vP phase (cf. Chomsky 1995 for the existence of outer Spec,vP position; in Chomsky's work it is a position constructed to allow object shift across the subject).

- (13) a. dʒaaʔa al-walad-aani **al-laḏaani** qabal-ta-huma
 came the-boy-Nom.Dual who-Nom.Dual met-you-them.Dual

‘The two boys whom you met came.’

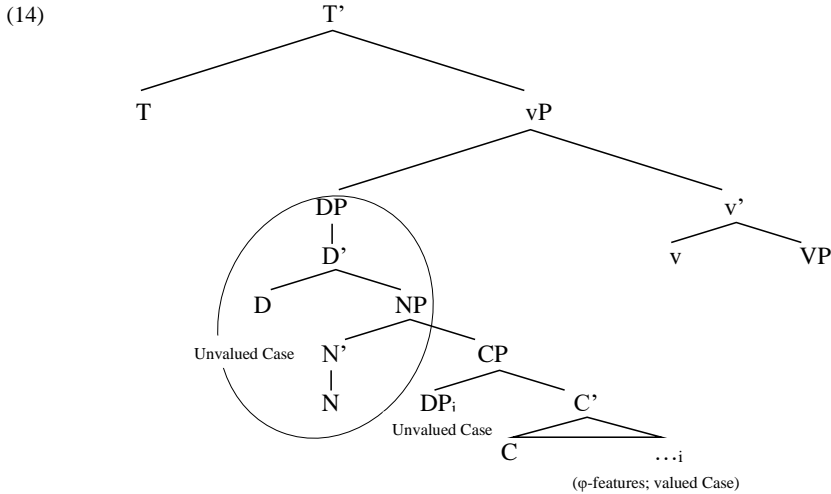


The question that arises at this juncture is: why does the Case value carried by the relative pronoun in Spec, CP mismatch the Case value associated with its canonical position before it has moved? To account for this mismatch in the Case value, I adopt the Copy Theory of Movement (Chomsky 1995) and assume, following Alenazy (2009), that when a DP moves to a higher position, it leaves behind a null copy which is sometimes realized as a resumptive pronoun that embodies its features. Alenazy (2009) builds his view on Pesetsky (1997) who claims movement leaves a copy with a minimal spellout that takes the form of a pronoun. Pesetsky (1998) confirms this conclusion and argues that resumptive pronouns are spellout copies of moved DPs. Accordingly, I postulate that the relative pronoun in the structure (13b) above moves and leaves in its base position its valued Case feature. The copy of the relative pronoun in its new position (Spec, CP) is fresh in the sense that it has unvalued Case feature which renders it an active goal that is available for a new Agree relation. The derivation does not converge if this unvalued Case feature is not valued and deleted. Although the relative clause as a CP becomes inert at this stage, its edge where the relative pronoun is located remains accessible to higher heads in conformity with the Phase Impenetrability Condition (7) above. With this in mind, we now proceed to the second level of the analysis. It accounts for how Case feature of the relative pronoun is valued in its new position and why it matches Case feature of its antecedent.

4.2 Feature spreading

The DP relative pronoun is now in the Spec, CP position of the relative clause which is right adjoined to the antecedent noun. While the relationship between the relative pronoun and its antecedent is established by means of co-indexation as mentioned

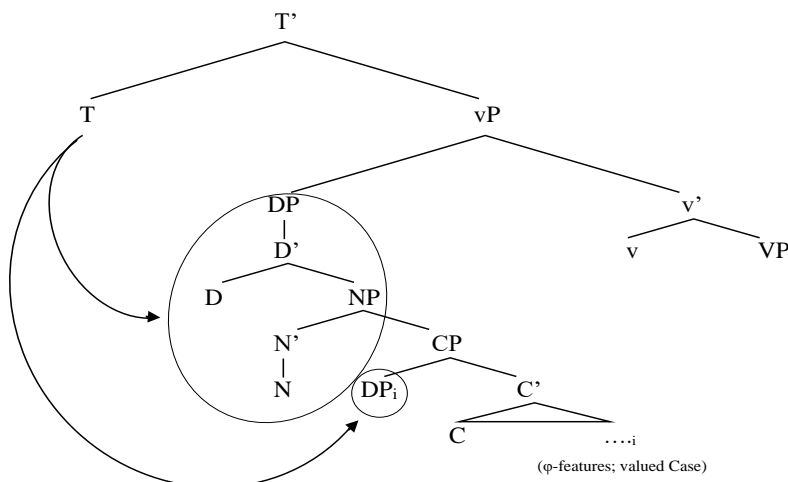
earlier in section 3 above, they both have unvalued Case feature. The structure (14) below shows the configuration in which they occur.



Being a subject, the matrix DP serves as an active goal in Spec, vP; it is c-commanded by the probe T with which it enters in an Agree relation. Under this Agree relation, Case feature of the matrix DP (the antecedent) is valued as nominative. The way the matrix DP Case feature is valued is straightforward. However, the operation by which the relative pronoun in Spec, CP receives its Case value requires explanation¹.

One plausible suggestion to account for how the antecedent and the relative pronoun receive identical Case values is to assume, building on Hiraiwa (2001), that a multiple Agree relation is established. In other words, the probe T in the structure (14) above, which is active by virtue of having unvalued φ-features, locates the antecedent and the relative pronoun as active goals with unvalued Case feature and it agrees with them simultaneously. According to Hiraiwa, a probe can enter an Agree relation with multiple goals providing that they are within its c-commanding domain. Apparently, the antecedent and the relative pronoun in (14) above are within the c-commanding domain of the probe T. Therefore, we could suggest that Agree takes place and Case feature is valued as nominative on both the antecedent and the relative pronoun, as (15) below illustrates:

(15)



However, this proposal is not without a challenge. The status of the DP as a phase is not confirmed in the literature. It may define a phase as Chomsky (2008) speculates. If this view is right, then a higher head cannot access the DP domain, which means that T does not initiate Agree with the relative pronoun as the latter exists in a position lower than D, the head of the phase. It should be noted at this juncture that the right adjunction analysis suggests that the relative pronoun in its new position is subject to tampering by an external head, which poses a violation to the No Tampering Condition (NTC). This condition was initially introduced in Chomsky (2005) to regulate the operation Merge (including Internal Merge or Move using the old term) and ensure that Merge of two syntactic objects leaves them unchanged. The relative pronoun which moves from its base position to the left periphery of the relative clause as in (15) above remains unchanged, which means that no violation of NTC is admitted. NTC can be eliminated in favor of PIC as Gallego (2020) argues due to the redundant nature of both conditions.

An alternative analysis to multiple Agree can be introduced building on the Feature Sharing Model as developed in Frampton and Gutmann (2006). The operation Agree according to them “induces feature sharing with matching features coalescing into a single feature which is valued if either of the coalescing features is valued.” Also, Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) argue for a similar view which conceives of the operation Agree as a process of feature sharing. In his analysis of how the postnominal attributive adjective acquires the same values of definiteness, Case, and φ-features of the noun it modifies, Fakh (2017) adopts Feature Sharing Model and assumes that a feature sharing process unifies two occurrences of a feature into two instances of a single feature. Regarding Case feature, Fakh suggests that the occurrences of this feature on the noun and the modifying adjective become two instances of one single feature and they both are valued simultaneously under one Agree relation between the DP containing them and a higher head. I extend this proposal to relative pronouns and argue that the relative pronoun exists within the boundaries of its antecedent with which it shares φ-features in addition to the unvalued Case feature. The unvalued Case feature on

the relative pronoun is unified with its counterpart on the antecedent. After the matrix DP enters Agree with a higher head, it receives the Case value as the byproduct of this Agree relation (cf. Chomsky 2008). Consequently, it projects morphologically on both the nominal antecedent and the relative pronoun. This line of analysis captures the Case conflict facts in Arabic relative clauses, and it also provides support in favor of the theoretical assumptions that underline Phase Theory, Agree Theory, and Copy Theory of Movement. I conclude with one important remark regarding resumption. The resumptive pronoun in the object position is optional because it can sometimes be omitted in MSA. The sentence in (13a) above, for example, is possible without the resumptive pronoun as the grammaticality of (16) below suggests.

- (16) dzaaʔa al-walad-aani **al-lað-aani** qabal-ta
 came the-boy-Nom.Dual who-Nom.Dual met-you
 ‘The two boys whom you met came.’

I argue that this optionality does not raise a challenge to the line of analysis proposed in this paper. The resumptive pronoun is a realized copy of a lexical item that has moved; it is, as mentioned earlier in this section, a representation of the bundle of features associated with that item (Pesetsky 1997). This claim is supported by the argument made by Aoun, Choueiri and Hornstein (2001) who refer to resumption where the resumptive pronoun relates to its antecedent via movement as *apparent resumption*. According to them, this type of resumption parallels *gap strategy* where the nominal that has moved is associated with a gap. In both contexts, in fact, there is a copy that is overt in the former type or covert (or null) in the latter. I claim, therefore, that if no ambiguity arises, this resumptive pronominal copy can be deleted at the PF level.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have addressed the issue of Case conflict in MSA relative clauses which has not received attention in the literature. In a situation where Case conflict is present, the relative pronoun appears with Case feature not associated with its canonical position inside the relative clause. Rather, the relative pronoun carries Case feature that is identical to Case carried by an antecedent external to the relative clause. I presented a right adjunction analysis of MSA relative clauses under the latest assumption of the minimalist framework; the relative clause is a CP right adjoined to its antecedent. It is argued that the relative pronoun undergoes A' movement from its base position inside the relative clause to Spec, CP. Adopting the Copy Theory of Movement, this movement of the relative pronoun leaves behind its valued Case feature along with its ϕ -features realized as a resumptive pronoun that embodies these features. The copy of the relative pronoun in Spec, CP is fresh in the sense that it has unvalued Case feature, which renders it an active goal available for Agree with a higher probe. Since the new position of the relative pronoun is within its antecedent's domain and both items are coindexed, the unvalued Case features on them are unified in one feature. Correspondingly, when the external DP receives Case under Agree with a higher probe, Case feature of the

antecedent and the relative pronoun is valued simultaneously. This analysis which observes all the constraints imposed by the theoretical framework and the properties of the phase, the domain of syntactic operations, suggests that we no longer need analyses that may involve unnecessary steps. Phase Theory provides an adequate explanation of the processes involved in building the structure of the relative clause and relating it to an antecedent noun; the phase-based analysis presented in this paper captures the linear word order and Case facts in MSA relative clauses. However, further research is needed to confirm the phasal status of the Arabic DP and whether right adjunction of relative clauses and other postnominal modifiers such as adjectives complies with the notion of phase and the conditions (especially PIC) required to build its structure.

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Endnote

¹An anonymous reviewer points to the possibility of case assignment to the relative pronoun at the PF interface level. The idea that case is assigned at the PF level dates back to Marantz (1991) who assumes that case assignment might not happen in narrow syntax (i.e. it is not valued under Agree as in Chomsky's work). Rather, he argues that case assignment rules may apply at the PF interface level. He notes that there is no correspondence between the grammatical function of the nominal and its case in Georgian and Icelandic. Accordingly, he assumes that "case and agreement are part of the PF branch of grammar" (Marantz, 1991:20). Also, Baker (2015) argues, building on data from Japanese, Korean, Amharic and Burushaski languages, that structural case can be assigned under a non-agreement-based system which he dubs as *dependent case assignment mode*. However, Baker's view contrasts with Marantz's; he assumes that dependent case assignment takes place in narrow syntax, which means that case is not determined at PF level. Because case in MSA is part of agreement, we cannot assume that it is valued at PF building on its semantic properties and theoretical grounds. In other words, case does not contribute to the semantic interpretation of nominals, but it is strongly associated with the relationship (i.e. Agree) that holds between a functional head and a nominal element. Therefore, I follow the standard assumption that case is an uninterpretable feature that should be valued and deleted before the spellout and reaching the LF and PF interfaces (cf. Chomsky 2008).

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