Antisymmetric Predicate Inversion in the Arabic DP: Deriving XP-raising and Case

0. The topic and the problem: Cinque (2003) presents an interesting antisymmetric account of the Arabic DP. Cinque’s key-idea is that the ‘mirror-image’ of the Arabic DP (1) is the result of generalized XP-raising. Yet, no reason is given for UG’s preferring XP-raising over Spec-to-Spec raising and the nature of WP is not spelled out (7a). Another problem of this account is that it does not explain the dialectal variation in the Arabic DP: noyes (morphological) case, ie (1a) vs. (1b). This issue is particularly cogent in the light of some recent findings on the Old Arabic DP (about 300 AD – 750 AD: Owens 2006) showing that Arabic case is not such:

(A) ‘case’ originally occurs in the modification-structure between N and its modifier (Owens 2006)

(B) the putative ‘case’-endings (NONREs) -u, -a, -i respectively perform the same semantic role (cp. Owens 2006 and the vocative construction (2): yaa + noun + modifier).

(C) the ‘OBL’ -i is the output of the combination of ‘NOM’ -u plus the particle i (wi > -i, as per Garbin & Durand 1994), which since Barth (1913) has been identified with the Dem(onstrative) base ’i of (3)

(D) the choice of ‘case’-endings is not a matter of semantic roles, but of binary dialectal variation, between the Tamimi group (-u) and the Hijazi one (-i) (Owens 2006 and (2a) vs. (2b)).

Thus there arises a fourth problem in that the categorial status of ‘case’ in the Arabic DP is not clear.

1. The aim: This study aims at showing that these four problems can be given a unified solution (NONRE analysis henceforth). Namely, that the modifier of the Arabic DP is a non-restrictive relative clause (NONRE) linked to its antecedent by means of a Conjunction, the equivalent of English and and of Somali oo in the NONREs (4). This Conj acts as copula (Relator) between the antecedent(subject) and the NONRE(predicate) (cp. den Dikken 2006).

2. Developing the solution: Evidence in favor of interpreting ‘NOM’ -u as Conj is not just morphological (its identity with the dialectal Arabic Conj ‘and’, on which see e.g. Cowell 1964: 9, 18) but also syntactic. Benmamoun (2000) argues that a given morpheme and the morpheme that reinforces it via the Jespersen’s cycle have the same categorial status: thus in dialectal Arabic maa, sh ‘ne, pas’ both occupy Neg. Remarkably in the construction in (5), felt by native speakers as a NONRE (Fareh 1998: 308), Arabic ‘NOM’ -u is reinforced by the Conj wa ‘and’, in parallel with Neg (6). This diagnostics supports a generalized NONRE analysis of all the modifiers preceded by -u (be it combined with -i or not), adjectives included. Accordingly, Cinque’s WP is to be identified with Frascarelli and Puglielli’s (2006) ConjP (matching analysis: see (7b)).

The NONRE analysis, if combined with Kayne’s (1994) and den Dikken’s (2006) predicate inversion analyses of NONREs derives the variation -u, -a, -i as well. According to Kayne, reasons of D-scope trigger parametrized predicate inversion of the NONRE across its antecedent, either overtly (Japanese) or at LF (English). But predicate inversion instantiates a dedicated copula, the Linker hosted in a functional head F. In particular the Thai Linker thii is (1) a grammaticalized Dem (2) responsible for the ‘restoration’ of the basic word order NP + modifier (den Dikken 2006: 233). In Arabic the Dem ‘i (I) behaves the same way, since it is responsible for the ‘restored’ word order in (2b), in line with (II):

[ZIP [...] room=umbrella...] Relator+thii+0Z [FP [AdjP ...]jäj-big [...]F' : tRelator+thii tRelatorP tAdjP ]]]

[ZIP [NONRE fasaaq] 0AgP+i+0Z [FP [AdjP [NONRE Op l-khabiithah] t t] F' : tAgP+t [ConjP tNP tAgP tAgP ]]]

On these grounds, the contrast ‘NOM’-‘OBL’ is a matter of parametric/dialectal variation: the Tamimi ‘NOM’ is the Conj -u of a NONRE undergoing inversion at LF (2a), the Hijazi ‘OBL’ is the Conj -u doing so overtly: as such, it head-raises to the F -i, yielding wi (> i), with subsequent ‘restoration’ of the basic word order (2b). It will be also shown that ‘ACC’ can be explained along the same lines of ‘OBL’. The NONRE analysis derives the unavailability of Spec-to-Spec raising of NP too. In the derivation until ConjP, this kind of raising if involving coordination of two modifiers (= NONREs) would leave them in an asyntactic configuration of coordination (8), but UG disallows asyntactic coordination of two NONREs (Platzack 2000 and (9)). When FP is merged, predicate inversion forbids Spec-to-Spec raising of just NP across its inverted predicate (den Dikken 2006). Finally, the NONRE analysis derives the contrast noyes case (1a-b) in a simple way - this is the traditional contrast: ‘apposition’ (= reduced NONRE with covert Conj; Ross 1967) vs. NONRE.

3. Conclusions: An antisymmetric approach to predicate inversion improves our understanding of the syntax of the Arabic DP and of the debated issue of its case. This approach also reveals that all the Arabic adnominal markers are copulae\Relator recursively embedded into Arabic DP:

[OpSUBj I-R [PRED baabSUBj uR [PRED OpSUBj I-R saghihiPRED]]] = lit. ‘the-door the-little’, ie ‘the little door’
(1) a. Moroccan Arabic (Ihsane 2003: 269)  
   lā-wladīblā l-ziwiin-imāl l-xamsaqī haduā  
   the-boys the-handsome-PL the-five these  
   'these five handsome boys'  
   b. Old Arabic (Koran XVI: 103)  
   līsaan-umān  'arabiyy-umān mubiinā  
   language-NOM-n Arabic-NOM-n clear  
   'clear Arabic language'  

(2) Old Arabic (a., b.: SharH al-MufaSSal: III, 56, 70; c.: Wright 1896: II, 86)  
   a. yaa fusāq-i l-khaabīth  
      wicked.man-NOM the-evil  
      'O evil man!' (Tamimi dialects)  
   b. yaa faisāq-i l-khaabīthah  
      wicked.woman-OBL the-evil  
      'O evil woman!' (Hijazi dialects)  
   c. yaa sayyid-a  l-wuHuush  
      lord-ACC beasts  
      'O lord of the beasts!'  

(3) Tripolitanian Arabic (Barth 1913: 90)  
   o lāyīd-lī wuHuush  
   lord-ACC beasts  
   'these'  

(4) a. English (Ross 1967: 435)  
   a. Enrico, and he is the smartest of us all, ...  
   b. Cali oo Maryam la hadlayá  
   Cali and Maryam with speaking.is  
   'Cali, who is talking to Maryam, ...'  

(5) Classical Arabic (Wright 1896: II, 286-287)  
   (a.: Moroccan Arabic, Benmamoun 2000: 85)  
   jaa-a-niī  'akh-uu-ka (wa-huwa) Zayd  
   'your brother (, which is) Zayd came to me'  
   b. [Neg] maNeg ṭayktabV shNeg] = not (-writes-) not  
   [Conj] uConj kāPRN waConj] = and (-you-) and  
   came-me brother-NOM-you (and-he) Zayd  
   'your brother (, which is) Zayd came to me'  

(6) a. [WP [NP tDP N] Agr+W [ArgP DP t t ]]  
   b. [ConjP [NP tNONRE N] Agr+Conj [ArgP NONRE t t ]]  

(7) a. * [Comp līsaanNP 0x+u [NONRE n mubiin]] [XP tNP lx [ConjP tNP 0y+u [NONRE n 'arabī]... (cp. (1b))  

(8) "Swedish (Platzack 2000: 290)"  
   Min far, som du traeffade igar, och "*oeh" som du gillade  
   My father that you met yesterday and that you liked  
   'My father, who you met yesterday and who you liked'  

4. References:  