On topic and focus in Standard Arabic

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ABSTRACT

Adopting the Cartography research program (Rizzi, 1997, 2001, 2004), the present work investigates the CP layer in Standard Arabic (SA); specifically, the nature and position of topicalized and object focused phrases in the left periphery. The paper also seeks to establish that in fact subjects, like objects and obliques, can also topicalize, the difference being that the pronoun is optionally lexically expressed in subject-topicalization. The 'Subject' initial-DP will be treated as a topic located high up in the clausal structure - in the specifier position of the Top node above Foc. Elements in this position fill a special pragmatic sense and discourse role of being presumed, given and identifiable topics rather than an argument or a thematic function.

Building on Rizzi's (2004) and Ouhalla's (1997) proposals that generate moved objects and *wh*-phrases in [Spec, Foc], two focus positions will be posited for SA – one is located immediately above *v*P and the second is right below TopP. It will be proposed that object movement over the subject is triggered by the [F] feature on Foc and derives the VOS order. Triggered by the higher [F] feature, the raised object and the raised *wh*-word can raise again to the higher [Spec, Foc]. It is concluded that the position occupied by topicalized DP's differs from that of focused DP's. In particular, SA topics occupy a higher position in the left periphery, namely [Spec, TopP].

1. Introduction

One of the most controversial issues in the syntax of Arabic has been the status of constituents in the left periphery (Soltan, 2007; Benmamoun, 2000; Hoyt, 2006; Doron and Heycock, 1999; Plunkett,1993). The controversy is around the argument (A) versus non-argument (A-bar, A') status of the position hosting constituents of the left-periphery, and the topic versus focus status accorded to them. Although topic and focus prominence is often regarded as one of the characteristic properties of SA sentences (Shlonsky, 2000; Ouhalla, 1997), the construction is more common and more pervasive in the language than previously considered, showing both a topic in co-reference relation with a pronoun in subject, object and oblique positions.

Using the fully articulated CP analysis of Rizzi (1997, 2001, 2004), and building on the works cited above, it will be argued that the SA left periphery should be divided into sub-layers. The Force projection selects the mood of the clause, the Topic layer is the home for topicalized

phrases, the Focus projection houses focused constituents, and the FinP projection selects the finiteness of the sentence. The paper is structured as follows: Section two briefly presents the theoretical apparatus underpinning the discussion. Section three reviews literature relevant to the present work. Sections (4.1 and 4.2) discuss the mechanisms by which DP's are placed in the periphery of the clause, in pre-TP positions – topicalization and focusing as well as the pragmatics and discourse related functions of these structures. Section (4.3) investigates the focalizing function of the morpheme *ʔinna*. Section (4.4) discusses the structures introduced by the force marker *laʕalla*. Sections (4.5–4.10) seven analyze topics and focus phrases, their derivation and their order of co-occurrence.

2. Model

The detailed structure that Rizzi (1997, p. 291) proposes for the C-system is given below (Fig. 1):

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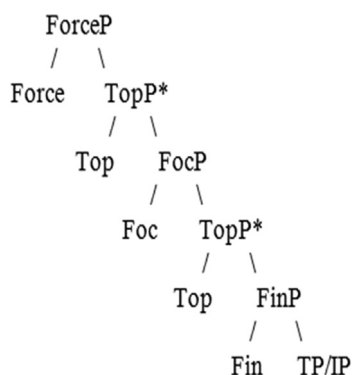*E-mail address:* abdulkhaliq@unizwa.edu.om.

Fig. 1. Structure proposed for the C-system, adapted from Rizzi (1997, p. 291).

The highest projection of the left periphery represents the juncture between discourse and the inflectional system. As such, FinP relates to agreement and inflectional features of the lower IP domain. What C does is that it serves as the interface between two clauses – the VP above and the IP/TP below, which the CP includes. Viewed from above, the C indicates the type of clause (whether it is declarative, interrogative, comparative, adverbial, or relative). Viewed from below, C signals the finiteness of the TP or rather its ± finite feature. For example, *that* in English combines with finite clauses and *for* combines with non-finite clauses. In Rizzi's system, this sensitivity to the finiteness of the sentence is marked by Fin heading the FinP layer in the structure above.

Focus, however is not a recursive process. This is expected, according to Rizzi, given the interpretation of sentential focus in that the specifier of Foc is being focused, whereas the complement of FocP which represents the informational structure is being presupposed. Evidence will follow (section 4) of how phrases can be placed in between the Force projection and the Finiteness projection, arguing for the position that CP must at least be split up into two. The justification will be developed further that Arabic allows for more than one element to be dislocated.

3. Related work

Left-dislocation and focus constructions are a common phenomenon in Standard Arabic. Both phenomena do not only occur but are also prevalent in Standard Arabic and across the dialects. As has been noted by a number of researchers (Fassi Fehri, 1993; Ouhalla and Shlonsky, 2002; Aoun et al., 2010), a topic DP displays definiteness effects – the DP must be definite, specific and referentially strong, that is, carrying enough information for the listener to identify its referent in a given situation. The DP is linked or bound to a pronominal element in a thematic position inside the lower predications, such as subject, object, or oblique. The construction is sometimes analyzed as Clitic Left-dislocation (Soltan, 2007). Consider the following examples from (Bakir, 1980:60–61): (A comma corresponding to a phonological break will be placed after the topic in the example sentences throughout the paper.)[1]

(2)		
(a)	hind-un, samiʿa-ha muḥammad-un.	
	Hind.Fsg-nom hear.perf.3Msg-pn3Fsg Mohammad.Msg-nom	
	'Hind, Mohammad heard her.'	
(b)	ʾaš-šāriʿ-u, qābaltu sālim-an fi-hi.	
	the-street.Msg-nom, meet.perf.1sg Salim.Msg-acc in-pn3Msg	
	'The street, I meet Salim on it.'	
(c)	fātimat-u, ʾištaraytu kitāb-a-ha l-ams-a	

(continued on next column)

	Fatima.Fsg-nom buy.perf.1sg book-acc-pn3Fsg the-yesterday-acc	
	'Fatima, I bought her book yesterday.'	
(d)	ʾal-muʿallimūna, ḏahabu ʾila buyūt-i-him.	
	the-teachers.Mpl.nom go.perf.3Mpl to houses-gen-pn3Mpl	
	'The teachers, they went to their houses.'	

The DPs are placed in the left-most periphery where they are said to receive the pragmatic and discourse function Topic although there is no special morpheme (at least overtly) that announces this function. There is, however, an intonation reset between the topic and the report, announcing the speaker's assumption that the referent is identifiable by the addressee. Noteworthy is that the topics are linked to a corresponding pronoun in object position (a), in oblique position in (b), attached to the preposition *fi* "in", in oblique position in (c) and (d). It is attached to the noun *kitāb-a* in (c) and to the noun *buyūt-i*, as the second member of a construct state in the latter two. In each case, the DP receives a pragmatic function "in that the relation it sets up is linked to the situational context" (Moutouakil, 1989, P. 18). In each example, the Topic DP introduces the entity about which the lower report predicates some attribute in the given situation. For instance, the DP *fātimat-u* in (c) refers to the individual about whom *ʾištaraytu kitāb-a-ha l-ams-a* "I bought her book yesterday" is predicated. The DP receives the Topic pragmatic function by virtue of the communicative situation wherein the interlocutor is uttering (c) in response to "What happened to Fatima?" in a conversation.

Building on the literature on preverbal nominal clauses Doron and Heycock (1999), Doron and Heycock (2003) and Alexopoulou et al. (2004), Hoyt (2006) concludes that Arabic is a topic-prominent[2] language in contrast to a subject-prominent language like English. This is a common way of arranging a sentence in Arabic, and a generally used pattern in the language with the topic introduced first, and then evaluated or described or commented on.

As concerns the question whether the DP is base-generated in its surface position or moved to it, based on a number of diagnostic tests, Alazzawie (1990), Plunkett (1993) and Soltan (2007) argue for a base-generation analysis. This is motivated by the fact that the DP can be separated by an island from its corresponding pronoun. To illustrate consider the sentences:

(3)				
(a)	saafar-a	Zayd-un	wa	ʕaliyy-un
	traveled.3ms	Zayd-nom	and	Ali-Nom
	'Zayd and Ali traveled.'			
(b)	Zayd-un	saafar-a	huwwa	wa ʕliyy-un
	Zayd-NOM	traveled 3sms	he	and Ali-NOM
	'Zayd, he and Ali came.			
(c)	* Zayd-un	saafar-a	wa	ʕliyy-un
	Zayd-NOM	traveled 3ms	and	Ali-NOM
	'Zayd, he and Ali came.'			

The DP in (a) is post-verbal and appears as a subject in a coordinate structure. For this DP to be dislocated, a corresponding overt pronoun *huwwa* has to surface in subject position inside the coordinate structure as shown in (b). Thus, (c) where the DP is not associated with a pronoun is ruled out. This is taken as evidence for a base-generation analysis rather than movement associating the DP with the pronoun.

The relationship between the DP and the pronoun representing it can hold across more than one Complex NP, as in the following example from Alazzawie (1990): 99):

(4)

Hasan-u-n, ša:had-tu [al-marʔat-a [allati ta-ʕrif-u		[al-fatat-a [allati tu-ḥib-u-hu]]]]
Hasan-nom saw-1sg the-woman-acc who 3sgf-know-ind		the-girl-acc who 3sgf-like-ind-ob cl
"As for Hasan, I saw the woman who knows the girl who likes him"		

Aoun et al. (2001) argue for the view that third person lexical pronouns can be used to resume a Left-dislocated subjects in Lebanese Arabic. In their view, the following are examples of a Left-dislocated subject related to an overtly realized resumptive:

(5)

(a)	ha-l-muttahame	ʕrəfto	ʔənno	hiyye	nḥabsit	
	this-the-suspect.sf	know.2pl	that	she	imprisoned.sf	
	'This suspect, you know that she was imprisoned.'					
(b)	ha-l-muttahame	šəfto	l-maḥamme	yalli	byaʕrif	ʔənno
	this-the-suspect.sf	saw.2pl	the-attorney	that	know.ms	that
	hiyye	harabit				
	she	ran.away.fs				
	'This suspect, you saw the attorney that knows that she ran away.'					

In the above examples the DP is linked to a strong pronoun in the comment part in (a) and inside a Complex NP in (b). Similar patterns occur in Iraqi Arabic:

(6)

(a)	l-radʒul haaða, simʕna ʔəinnu huwwa baʕ l-bet
	the-man this heard-1pl that he sold-ms the-house
	'This man, we heard that he sold the house.'
(b)	l-radʒul haaða, simʕna l-qiṣa ʔəinnu huwwa baʕ l-bet
	the-man this heard-1pl the-story that he sold-ms the-house
	'This man, we heard the story that he sold the house.'

Explicitness of the resumptive *huwwa* in subject position is shown above; its co-reference relationship with the sentence-initial DP holds across a Complex NP island in (b).

It has also been reported in the literature on Left-dislocation/Topicalization (Bakir, 1980; Alazzawie, 1990) that more than one DP can be dislocated in the left periphery as shown:

(7)

(a)	hind-un, sālim-un, taḍribu-hu.
	Hind.Fsg-nom Salim.Msg-nom beat.imperf.3Fsg-pn3Msg
	'Hind, Salim, she beats him.' (Bakir, 1980:165)
(b)	muḥammad-un, ʼas-sayyārat-u, ʼuχt-u-hu, bāʕa-ha la-ha.
	Muhammad-nom the-car.Fsg-nom sister -nom-pn3Msg sell.perf.3Msg-pn3Fsg to-pn3Fsg
	'Mohammad, the car, his sister, he sold it to her.' (Bakir, 1980:169)
(c)	Zayd-un, ʔaχ-u-hu, ʔakram-tu-hu
	Zayd-nom brother-nom-his honored-1 sg-him
	"As for Zayd, his brother, I honored him" (Alazzawie, 1990: 94)
(d)	Zayd-un, sadi:qat-u,-hui jalas-tu fi bayt-i-ha
	Zayd-nom friend-nom-gen cl sat-1 sg in house-gen-her
	"As for Zayd, as for his friend, I sat in her house" " (Alazzawie, 1990: 106)

Based on a set of differences between preverbal DP's in SA, Ouhalla (1997) draws a distinction between Topics and focused phrases 'f-phrases'. He notes that Topics are nominative, base-generated and associated with resumptives. Focused DP's, however, carry the Case of the original position, result from movement to the specifier of a functional projection, and link to a gap. The DP's *al-riwaayat-u* and *Laylaa* receive the pragmatic function of Topics:

(8)

(continued)

(a)	al-riwaayat-u,	ʔallafat-ha Zaynab-u
	the-novel-NOM	wrote3FS-it Zayna
	"(As for) the novel, Zaynab wrote it."	
(b)	Laylaa,	ʕashiqah-aa Qays-un
	Laylaa	loved3MS-her Qays-NOM
	"(As for) Laylaa, Qays loved her."(Ouhalla, 1997: P. 12)	

The DP's *RIWAAYAT-AN* and *LAYLAA* receive the pragmatic function of focus and attention-drawing in the following cases:

(9)

(a)	RIWAAYAT-AN	ʔallafat	Zaynab-u
	novel-ACC	wrote3FS	Zaynab-NOM
	"It was a NOVEL that Zaynab wrote." (Ouhalla, 1997: P. 11)		
(b)	LAYLAA	ʕashiqah	Qays-un
	Laylaa	loved3MS	Qays-NOM
	"It was LAYLAA that Qays loved."		

The focus interpretation is confirmed by the negative sequence [laa + DP] added to the sentences, often employed as a test to specify the focus pragmatic function:

(10)

(a)	RIWAAYAT-AN ʔallafat Zaynab-u (laa QASIIDAT-AN).
	novel-ACC wrote3FS Zaynab-NOM not poem-ACC
	"It was a NOVEL that Zaynab wrote (not a POEM)."
(b)	LAYLAA ʕashiqah Qays-un (laa ZAYNAB-A).
	Laylaa loved3MS Qays-NOM not Zaynab-ACC
	"It was LAYLAA that Qays loved (not Zaynab)."

Ouhalla (1997) notes other important differences between the two DP's, among them: Topics represent old information already familiar to, and discussed by, the participants in the conversational exchange; this is not so with focused phrases, Topics do not bear focal stress unlike focused phrases, and the Topic constituent is separated from the rest of the clause by a pause marked orthographically by a comma while focus is not. Thus, the information provided by the Topic in (8) is presupposed shared knowledge of the participants.

Building on the contrast between Topics and Focus Phrases, Ouhalla concludes that Topics either "generated in a left-peripheral Top position or are adjoined to the upper most functional projection, as shown:

(11)

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              FP
             /  \
       TOP-XP    FP
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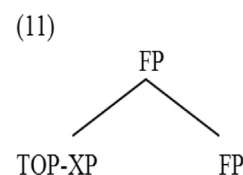
As for the position of 'f-phrases', they are said to target the specifier

position of a separate functional head, namely F projecting FP (Focus Phrase). This implies that "preposed *f*-phrases and wh-phrases occupy the same position, namely SpecFP" (Ouhalla (1997), P, 15).

Moutouakil (1989), in an analysis "cast in the framework of Functional Grammar" (P. 2) treats the DP *qasidatan* as an example of contrastive focus:

(12)
qasidatan ʔallaftu (laa kitäban)
poem-acc wrote-1s not book-acc
'It was a poem I wrote (not a book)' (Moutouakil, 1989: P. 1)

The communicative goal of the speaker by fronting the DP focus is to correct the information available to the addressee. This is clearly indicated above by the negative expansion "laa kitäban", used as a diagnosis for this function.

It has been observed that the elements *that* and *for* in finite contexts behave like *che*, as (13), suggesting that they fill the Force, not the Fin position:[3]

(13)
(a)   She maintains that Irish stew she sort of likes t.
(b)   ... for Irish stew I sort of like.

Radford (2006, p. 210) argues in favor of an analysis where "topicalised constituents occupy the specifier position within a Topic Phrase." He provides the following examples:

(14)
SPEAKER A: The demonstrators have been looting shops and setting fire to cars
SPEAKER B: *That kind of behaviour*, we cannot tolerate in a civilised society

That kind of behaviour is the topic of the discourse, and, to be interpreted as such, has moved into Spec-Top.

(15)
(a)   He had seen something truly evil – prisoners being ritually raped, tortured and mutilated.
(b)   He prayed *that atrocities like those, never again would he witness*

The constituent *atrocities like those* is topicalized, or "preposed in order to mark it as the topic of the sentence" (Radford (2006, p. 210)). The constituent *never again* is focused, or preposed to Spec-Foc in order to mark it as the focus of the sentence. The heads, Top and Foc, are associated with an Edge Feature (EF) which forces them to project specifier positions hosting Topics and Focus. This is shown in the structure below adapted from Radford (2006, p. 211):
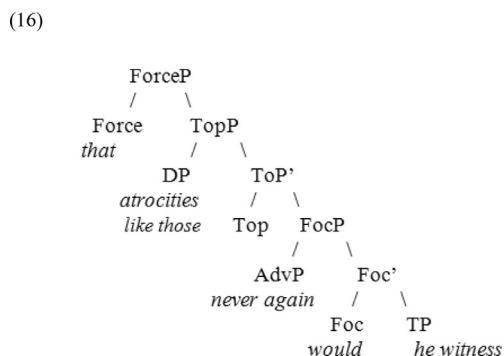
(16)

Some languages like Korean (Hetland, 2007), mark the topic of the categorical judgment by the suffix –*nun*, and Japanese (Kuroda, 1972) by the suffix –*wa*. As concerns Arabic, the categorical-thetic distinction is presumably reflected in the syntax by the word order SVO, with S being topical. SVO thus reflects the categorical reading/judgment, whereas the VSO order is a topicless and a new information, as reflected in the thetic reading. For example, the post-verbal DP of VSO order in (18 below) receives thetic interpretation, where the focus is on the verbal event, not on the participants. As a thetic judgment, the sentence simply reports a situation, affirming the eventuality of writing the lesson.

4. Analysis

4.1. Multiple left-dislocated topics

The structure proposed by Rizzi (see section 2 above) assumes that Topic is a recursive category; that is, there is no limit to the number of topics. It is, however, subject to pragmatic and performance restrictions. This feature is corroborated in contexts where both the subject and the object DPs are topicalized, as in (17). A bracketed structure for each example is also given below:

(17)
(a)   al-tulaab-u,   al-dars-u,   katab-uu-hu
        The-students-NOM   the-lesson-NOM   wrote-3MP-it
        'The students, they wrote the lesson'
        [ForceP [Force ø [TopP al-tulaab-u [TopP al-dars-u [Top[FinP [Fin [vP ya-ktib-u l-ttulaab-a l-dars-a]]]]]]]]

(b)   al-dars-u,   al-tulaab-u,   katab-uu-hu
        the-lesson-NOM   the-students-NOM   wrote-3MP-it
        'The lesson, the students, they wrote it'
        [ForceP [Force ø [TopP al-dars-u [TopP al-tulaab-u [Top[FinP [Fin [vP ya-ktib-u l-ttulaab-a l-dars-a]]]]]]]]

The topic marker is phonetically empty in these cases but phonetic expression is also available in topic construction in the language to be discussed in (sections 4.3 and 4.4). The basic non-dislocated order of the sentence is:

(18)
kataba   al-tulaab-u   al-dars-a
wrote-3sg   The-students-NOM   the-lesson-acc
'The students wrote the lesson'

The three sentences in (17–18) describe the same situation but in different ways. As a thetic judgment, sentence (18) is a mere description of perceiving a situation. However, sentences in (17-17), as a categorical judgment, first draws attention to the students, and then says that the property of writing the lesson is attributed to the students, or linked to them.

Note that the surface order of the DPs is flexible; it is not fixed as pointed out in Soltan (2007: 78). The two topics may appear in either order. The examples show that SA allows multiple specifiers in the periphery to the left of the thematic subject. Given the CP system adopted here and the relevant periphery being the functional Top head, both DPs would be merged in multiple Specs of Top. Thus, the semantic effects of the DPs arise from their merger in this peripheral position for being discourse topics at the level of interpretation.

In fact, three DP's can appear dislocated at the periphery in both verbal and verbless sentences:

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[3] The finite complementizers of English *that* and *for* also behave like the Arabic finite complementizer *ʔinna* to be discussed in section 4.3.

(19) **Three DPs at the periphery in verbal sentences**

(a) al-rajul-u   ibn-u-hu   jalas-a   fi l-dari
the-man-NOM son-NOM-his sat-perf-3SM in-the-house gen

(b) al-muʕallim-u   al-tullab-u   kutub-u-hum lam ya-stalim-uu-ha
the-teacher-NOM the-students-NOM books-NOM-their not imperf-receive-3MP-them

(c) al-rajul-u   ibn-u-hu   zawjat-u-hu qaraʔa-t   al-kitaab-a
the-man-NOM son-NOM-his wife-nom-his read-past-F the-book-ACC

(20) **Three DPs at the periphery in verbless sentences**

(a)	al-bayt-u	ṣaaḥib-u-hu	ʔibn-u-hu	kasuul-u-n
	the-house-NOM	owner-NOM-his	son-NOM-his	lazy-NOM-NUNATION
(b)	al-jaamiʕt-u	mudiir-u-ha	walad-u-hu	ʕaaq-u-n
	the-university-NOM	chancellor-NOM-its	son-NOM-his	rebellious-NOM-NUNATION

What this reveals is that the left periphery is not a single position as traditionally conceived, but rather 'a zone' wherein items act as "the interface between a propositional content (expressed by the IP) and the superordinate structure (a higher clause or, possibly, the articulation of discourse, if we consider a root clause)" (Rizzi, 1997, P. 283).

4.2. Dislocated subjects as topics occupying specifier of top

Based on the differences between Topics and *f*-phrases discussed in the literature review, Ouhalla (1997) analyzes the DP ZAYNAB-u in the following example as an f-phrase, a focused subject:

(21)

ZAYNAB-u,	a'llafat	al-qaSidat-a
Zaynab-nom	wrote.3fs	the-poem-ace
"It was Zaynab who wrote the poem."		

In his view, *ZAYNAB-u* has moved from the subject position in Spec *v*P to Spec FP as a preposed f-phrase since it has maintained the nominative Case and is not associated with a resumptive pronoun. However, a resumptive can optionally lexicalize as *hiyya* agreeing with DP in person, gender and number. It is not forced to lexicalize because of the pro-drop parameter operative in the language. Nominative 3rd person pronouns in SA do not appear cliticized onto the head but as independent full forms. This indicates that this preverbal noun phrase is a Left-dislocated subject on a par with Dislocated non-subjects in that they are Topics (Cf. Alazzawie, 1990 and Plunkett, 1993 for a similar view). This view is further supported by the dislocated version (22a) of the basic sentence (22b) displaying a preverbal plural noun phrase:

(22)

(a)	al-tulaab-u,	katab-uu	al-dars-a
	The-students-NOM	wrote-3pl	the-lesson-acc
	'The students, they wrote the lesson'		
(b)	kataba	al-tulaab-u	al-dars-a
	wrote-3sg	the-students-NOM	the-lesson-acc
	'The students wrote the lesson'		

The topic DP *al-tulaab-u* (22a) is most naturally interpreted as relating to the understood subject attached to the verb. The lexical expression of an independent subject pronoun is normally overridden by the pro-drop parameter of SA, though full realization as *hum* 'they' is also possible as in (23). The pronominal clitic –*uu* fully agreeing with *al-tulaab-u* is obligatory as evidence below:

(23)

al-tulaab-u,	**hum** katab-uu	al-dars-a
The-students-NOM	**they** wrote-3pl	the-lesson-acc
'the students, they wrote the lesson'		

(24)

*al-tulaab-u,	kataba	al-dars-a
The-students-NOM	wrote	the-lesson-acc

With number agreement missing, the sentence in (24) is ungrammatical.

Justification for positing a Topic position in the left periphery in SA as distinct from the subject position comes from cases like the following:

(25)

al-tulaab-u,	al-imtiḥan-a	katab-a-hu	al-muʕallim-u	la-hum
the-students-NOM	the-exam-ACC	wrote-3sgm-it	the-teacher-NOM	for-them
'As for the students, it is the exam that the teacher wrote for them.'				

The focused DP and the verb (assumed to be raised to T) intervene between the Topic and the TP node. Therefore, within the framework adopted in this paper, Left-dislocated subjects are treated as topics filling [Spec, TopP] in ways identical to Dislocated non-subjects. The topic marker is not phonetically realized in the above cases but it can be utilized to mark the topic construction as below.

4.3. The complementizer ʔinna as a Force and Topic marker

A SA style topic structure of frequent occurrence is the construction introduced by the root clause topic and force morpheme ʔinna translatable as the English phrase 'as for' or 'regarding'. Typical examples are provided below:

(26)

(a)	ʔinna Faatimat-a,	najah-at	fi l-imtihan-i
	As for Faatima-ACC	passed-3sgf	in the-exam-GEN
	'As for Faatima, she passed in the exam.'		
(b)	ʔinna l-imtihan-a,	najah-at	Faatimat-u	fi-hi
	As for the-exam-ACC	passed-3sgf	Faatimat-NOM	in-it
	'As for the exam, Faatima passed in it.'			
(c)	ʔinna	l-imtihaan-a	katab-at-hu	Faatimat-u
	As for	the-exam-ACC	wrote-3sgf-it	Faatimat-NOM
	'As for the exam, Faatima wrote it.'			
(d)	ʔinna Faatimat-a	najah-a	ʔaχ-u-ha	fi li-imtihaan-i
	As for Faatima-ACC	passed-3sgm	brother-NOM-her	in the-exam-GEN
	'As for Faatima, her brother passed it.'			

The examples illustrate DP focalization in root clauses wherein the DP is placed in the left-most position following ʔinna and are related to a corresponding null subject pronoun (a), oblique pronoun attached to a preposition (b), object pronoun attached to a verb (d) and to a genitive pronoun attached to a noun (d). In each case, ʔinna types the clause as tensed, indicative, declarative and finite, and it focuses the clause as a whole, not a particular constituent or expression within it (Cf. Ouhalla, 1997 who describes this morpheme as a sentence-focus marker and its merger assigns a focus interpretation to the clause).

ʔinna is arguably the most common device to mark a DP as fully referential and readily identifiable. A DP is presented in this manner when it is mentioned for the second time within the discourse, and thus

the speaker assumes that he/she is referring to an entity that the addressee would be able to locate and identify. It introduces a pragmatic assertion consisting of two components. The first is a topic the knowledge and awareness of which, as stated, are in the possession of the addressee, and thus typically associated with old or given information. The second is a predication ascribing to, and imparting new knowledge about, the topic shared by the participants in a given setting.

Notice that the focalized DP significantly follows the morpheme *ʔinna* in root and embedded contexts. It is useful to indicate that this morpheme is not a filler parallel to a pause which can be inserted at any syntactic boundary. This implies that a constituent which cannot follow this morpheme is not a topic. it also indicates that the structural position of the DP must be below the force marker *ʔinna*, possibly in [Spec, TopP] as will be discussed shortly.

Given that the verb is located between the Topic and the TP periphery, the last three examples also demonstrate that the Topic and the subject are distinct positions.

It should be noted that while typically DPs follow *ʔinna* in the periphery, other categories may also appear in the periphery area. Clustering at the upper end of the tree are phrases, such as a PP bracketed in (a), both a PP and a DP (b), and a combination of three categories PP, DP and another DP, coexisting in the same structure (c), all of which are presumably due to topicalization/left-dislocation. SA is thus considered a topic-prominent language (Hoyt, 2006).

(27)			
(a)	ʔinna [ₚₚfi l-bayt-i], qaabal-tu al-mudarris-a		
	As for in the-house-GEN met-1sg the-teacher-ACC		
(b)	ʔinna [ₚₚfi l-bayt-i]	al-mudarris-a	qaabal-tu-hu
	As for in the-house-GEN	the-teacher-ACC	met-1sg-him
(c)	ʔinna [ₚₚfi l-bayt-i]	al-mudarris-a	ʕaliyy-u-n qaabal-a-hu
	As for in the-house-GEN	the-teacher-ACC	Ali-NOM-NUN met-3sgm-him

Again, these structures contain three elements in the following order:

  i. the force marker *ʔinna*
 ii. the topic typically a DP but it can be a PP as above adjacent to the marker
iii. the comment which is a predication

As is apparent from the data below, the order of the categories is free:

(27)				
(a)	ʔinna	al-mudarris-a	fi l-bayt-i	qaabal-tu-hu
	As for	the-teacher-ACC	in the-house-GEN	met-1sgm
	'As for the teacher, I met him in the house.'			
(b)	ʔinna	al-mudarris-a	ʕaliyy-u-n	fi l-bayt-i	qaabala-hu
	As for	the-teacher-ACC	Ali-NOM-NUN	in the-house-GEN	met-3sgm-him
	As for the teacher, Ali, in the house met him.'				
(c)	ʔinna	ʕaliyy-a-n	al-mudarris-u	fi l-bayt-i	qaabal-a-hu
	As for	Ali-ACC-NUN	the-teacher-NOM	in the-house-GEN	met-3sgm-him
	As for Ali, the teacher, in the house met him.'				

As can be seen, such SA clauses activate unusual and pragmatically marked constituent order employed only in special contexts, such as when a specific piece of information is either being questioned or denied or not in the possession of the addressee. Under such special circumstances, two topicalized DP's and a focused PP are presented, unusually highlighted and contrasted. Thus, employing *ʔinna* coupled with focalization destroys an otherwise discourse unmarked or a neutral and basic clause:

(28)			
qaabal-a	ʕaliyy-u-n	al-mudarris-a	fi l-bayt-i
met-3sgm	Ali-NOM-NUN	the-teacher-ACC	in the-house-GEN
'Ali met the teacher in the house.'			

Shlonsky (2000) argues that the morpheme glossed ACC is, in fact, not a Case feature, rather it is a [+F] nominal feature having the same phonetic shape as accusative Case. Shlonsky proposes that the complementizer *ʔinna/ʔanna* carries force features requiring it to move to the Force head. As a consequence, a DP like *al-mudarris-a* is merged in [Spec, TopP] where the [+F] feature is checked. This view lends support for the assertive pragmatic nature of phrases in this position and for the SV(O) restriction imposed by the Force head, barring VS(O) order.

The morphological marking on the post-*ʔinna* DP is widely assumed to be an accusative Case but this seems to be dubious as it is assigned to topics which are characteristically nominative:

(29)					
(a)	samiʕ-tu	ʔanna	al-muqaawil-a	al-bayt-u	ištara-a-hu
	heard-I	that	the-contractor-ACC	the-house-NOM	bought-3sgm-it
	'I heard that the contractor, the house, he bought.'				
(b)	samiʕ-tu	ʔanna	al-bayt-a	al-muqaawil-u	ištara-hu
	heard-I	that	the-house-ACC	the-contractor-NOM	bought-3sgm-it
	'I heard that the house, the contractor, he bought.'				

Each sentence contains two topics the first of which shows what is perceived as accusative *-a* whereas the second shows the nominative. The topichood of the DP bearing the suffix *–a* is supported by a host of properties characteristic of topics, such as association with a resumptive, sensitivity to islands and reporting shared information (see section 4.6 below; see also Rizzi, 1997 who hold that resumption by a pronoun is characteristic of topics only, not of foci). Hence, this morpheme suffix seems to be a fossilized form marking the topic which happen to have the same shape as the accusative Case similar to the fossilized suffix on some adjuncts in SA.

The morpheme *ʔinna* seems to emphasize the whole proposition rather than a single constituent, and signals the topic of information structure.

4.4. The complementizer *laʕalla* as a Force and Topic marker

This subsection looks at another force-marking complementizer which shares the following properties with *ʔinna*:

a. It takes a finite declarative clausal complement.
b. It cannot be followed by a verb.
c. It is typically followed by a DP in the accusative Case.

In terms of structure and discourse functions of Force and Topic, *laʕlla* (glossed as hopefully in the examples below) behaves like *ʔinna*, allowing multiple positions in the periphery area:

(30)				
(a)	laʕalla	al-mudarris-a	ʕaliyy-u-n	fi l-bayt-i qaabal-a-hu
	hopefully	the-teacher-ACC	Ali-NOM-Nunation	in the-house-GEN-3sg-him
	'Hopefully, (it is) the teacher that Ali met in the house.'			
(b)	laʕalla ʕaliyy-a-n Hopefully Ali-ACC-Nunation the-teacher-NOM	al-mudarris-u	fi l-bayt-i in the-house-GEN	qaabal-a-hu met-3sg-him
	'Hopefully, (it is) Ali that the teacher met in the house.'			

ʔinna and *laʕalla* differ in terms of their illocutionary properties. *ʔinna* performs an assertion and confirmation illocutionary function while *laʕalla* indicates hope. The speaker hopes that *Ali* has met the teacher. The illocutionary meaning of both can be paraphrased as illocutionary verbs, *ʔuʔakkidu* (confirm) and *ʔaʔmalu* (hope), respectively, as shown:

(31)		
(a)	ʔuʔakkidu ʔanna al-mudarris-a ʕaliyy-u-n fi l-bayt-i qaabala-hu	
	I confirm that	
(b)	ʔaʔmalu ʔanna al-mudarris-a ʕaliyy-u-n fi l-bayt-i qaabala-hu	
	I hope that	

Their illocutionary nature is confirmed by the fact that they cannot occur together with an illocutionary verb expressing assertion and hope, respectively, as indicated by the following ungrammatical sentences:

(32)		
(a)	*ʔuʔakkidu ʔinna al-mudarris-a ʕaliyy-u-n fi l-bayt-i qaabala-hu	
	I confirm indeed	
(b)	*ʔaʔmalu laʕalla al-mudarris-a ʕaliyy-u-n fi l-bayt-i qaabala-hu	
	I hope	

The verb *ʔuʔakkidu* and *ʔinna* cannot co-occur (32a). The same behavior is shown in (32b), the verb *ʔaʔmalu* and *laʕalla* cannot co-occur.

In addition to being in complementary distribution with illocutionary verbs having the same expressive meaning, it is also useful to indicate that both *ʔinna* and *laʕalla* are speaker-oriented.

The illocutionary function can also be highlighted by the imposition on the choice of adverbs, such as *ʔinshallah* expressing the same attitude:

(33)	
(a)	laʕalla al-mudarris-a ʔinshallahu ʕaliyy-u-n fi l-bayt-i qaabala-hu
(b)	*laʕalla al-mudarris-a lisuuʔ ilḥaḍi ʕaliyy-u-n fi l-bayt-i qaabala-hu
	Unfortunately

The semantics of the adverb *lisuuʔ ilḥaḍi* 'unfortunately' in (b) is not compatible with the illocutionary force of *laʕalla*.

4.5. Testing topic and focus phrases

Some of the diagnostic tests (cf. Bakir, 1980; Fassi Fehri, 1993; Ouhalla, 1994; Aoun et al., 2010) which are used to distinguish Topic DP's from Focused DP's are the following:[4]

A. Topic DP's must be definite, specific and referentially strong (Fassi Fehri, 1993) but focused DP's can be indefinite and non-specific:

(34)			
(a)	al-kursiy-u,	al-walad-u,	kasara-**hu**
	the-chair-NOM	the-boy-NOM	broke-3SM-it
	'The chair, the boy, he broke it.'		
(b)	*kursiy-u-n	al-walad-u	kasara-**hu**
	chair-NOM-NUNATION	the-boy-NOM	broke-3SM-it
	'*A chair, the boy, he broke it.'		

Definiteness of the DP is presumably required to provide full referential content for the pronoun via co-indexing so that the link is fully interpreted at the interface.

B. Only topic DP's, not focused DP's are resumed by a pronoun (Rizzi, 1997). The resumptive pronoun –hu is boldfaced and glossed as 'it' in the examples above.

C. A topic DP can be used in the format "ʔmmaa ….. fa", having the rough English approximation "As for X, X/Z did Y":

(35)				
(a)	ʔmmaa	al-taalib-u,	fa-nadʒaḥ-a	fi	l-imtiḥaan-i
	As for	the-student-NOM	passed-3SM	in	the-exam-GEN
	'As for the student, he passed the exam.'			
(b)	*ʔmmaa taalib-u, fa-nadʒaḥ-a fi l-imtiḥaan-i			
	'*As for a student, he passed the exam.'			

D. topic DP's can appear before focused DP's whether *wh*-DP's (a) or question elements (b); the reverse order in (c and d) is disallowed:

(36)			
(a)	al-taalib-u,	ʔayna	safar-uu
	the-students-NOM	where	traveled-3MP
	'As for the students, where did they travel?'		
(b)	al-taalib-u,	hal	safar-uu
	the-students-NOM	Q	traveled-3MP
	'As for the students, did they travel?'		
(c)	*ʔayna	al-taalib-u	safar-uu
	where	the-students-NOM	traveled-3MP
(d)	*hal	al-taalib-u,	safar-uu
	Q	the-students-NOM	traveled-3MP

This contrast constitutes evidence that FocP is generated below TopP in SA clause structure.

4.6. Derivation of topics and f-phrases

It has been reported in the literature (Cf. review of Related work, section 3 above) that neither wh-phrases nor *f*-phrases can be preposed across Left-dislocated Topics, implying that the first two construction result from movement whereas the latter is derived through base-generation. Focus phrases and *wh*-questions are island sensitive, widely taken to indicate movement. Note that *f*-phrases cannot relate to a gap inside a Complex NP (a), or inside an adjunct (b) or inside a *wh*-island (c):

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[4] The authors cited provide extensive discussion of a host of other differences between the two constructions.

(37)

(a)	*samiʕ-tu	ʔanna	haða	al-radʒul-a	saafar-ta	duuna ʔan	tuwwadiʕa
	heard-I	that	this	the-man-ACC	traveled-2sgm	without that	farewell
	'I heard that this man you traveled without saying farewell to.'						
(b)	*samiʕ-tu ʔanna Zayd-a-n		saafar-ta	duuna	ʔan	tuwwadiʕa	
	heard-I that Zayd-ACC-NUN		traveled-2sgm	without	that	farewell	
	'I heard that Zayd you traveled without saying farewell to.'						
(c)	*samiʕ-tu ʔanna Zayd-a-n		ya-ʕrif-uu-na	ʔayy-a	ʔimraʔt-i-n raʔ-at		
	heard-I that Zayd-ACC-NUN imperf-know-3plm-ind which-ACC woman-GEN saw-3f						
	'I heard that Zayd they know which woman saw.'						

These facts are commonly accounted for by positing that *f*-phrases like *wh*-phrases are generated by movement to [Spec, FocP]. Within Rizzi's split-CP system adopted here, this position is associated with [+wh/Q] feature. Therefore, these phrases must move to check this feature.

On the other hand, as noted by other researchers (Cf. literature review), the relation between a Topic and its associated clitic within the embedded clause consistently violates island conditions as the complex NP (a), the Adjunct Condition (b) and the Wh-Island Condition (c):

(38)

(a) samiʕ-tu ʔanna Zayd-a-n saafar-ta duuna ʔan tu-wwadiʕa-hu
    heard-I that Zayd-ACC-NUN traveled-2sgm without that 2p-farewell-him
    'I heard that Zayd, you traveled without saying farewell to him.'

(b) samiʕ-tu ʔanna haða al-radʒul-a qaabal-ta al-bint-a allati ḍarab-at-hu
    heard-I that this the-man-ACC met-2sgm the-girl-ACC who hit-3sgf him
    'I heard that this man you met the girl who hit him.'

(c) samiʕ-tu ʔanna haða al-radʒul-a ya-ʕrif-uu-na ʔayy-a bint-i-n ḍarab-at-hu
    heard-I that this the-man-ACC imerf-know-3mp which woman-GEN-NUN hit-3sf him
    'I heard that this man they know which girl hit him.'

These facts are consistent with a base-generation analysis wherein the Topic DP occupies [Spec, TopP] as it will be argued later.

4.7. Order of –wh(Non-wh) focus with respect to topic

In this section, the occurrence of sentence-initial focused non-*wh*-phrases (-*wh* phrases) in relation to Topics is investigated. When both a topic and a focus are expressed in the same sentence, the focus must follow the Topic (a); the ungrammaticality of (c) shows that a Focus cannot precede a Topic:

(39)

(a)	al-muʕallim-u,	al-taaliba-t-a	šaahad-a	fi l-ḥadiiqat-i
	the-teacher-NOM	the-student-F-ACC	saw-sgm	in the-park
	'The teacher saw the student'			
(b)	al-taaliba-t-a	šaahad-a	al-muʕallim-u	fi l-ḥadiiqat-i
	the-student-F-ACC	saw-sgm	the-teacher-NOM	in the-park-GEN
	The student, the teacher saw in the park'			
(c)	*al-taaliba-t-a	al-muʕallim-u	šaahad-a	fi l-ḥadiiqat-i
	the-teacher-ACC	the-student-F-NOM	saw-3sgm	in the-park-GEN

The above shows that while OVS word order is acceptable where the object *al-taaliba-t-a* is focused, OSV order is ungrammatical when the same object is focused. In other words, like other initial preverbal DP's, *al-muʕallim-u* must preceded the fronted focused constituent such as moved objects. It must also precede question words arguing for its status

as Topic rather than a subject, as will be discussed later. This ordering restriction is describable in terms of the adjacency requirement (Shlonsky, 2000) which states that focused phrases in SA must follow Left-dislocated Topics.

The topicality of the DP *al-muʕallim-u* is confirmed by not only being definite, identifiable and referentially strong but also by embedding it within the 'as-for format' expressed in SA as *ʔamma …fa*: which houses only definite topics and clearly signals their pragmatic motivation; an indefinite DP cannot occur:

(40)

ʔmma al-muʕallim-u	fa-šaahad-a	al-taaliba-t-a	fi l-ḥadiiqat-i
As for the-teacher-NOM	then-saw-3sgm	the-student-F-ACC	in the-park-GEN
'As for the teacher, he saw the student in the park.'			

Indefinite DP's cannot be so embedded:

(41)

*ʔmma muʕallim-u-n	fa-šaahad-a	al-taaliba-t-a	fi l-ḥadiiqat-i
As for the-teacher-NOM-indef	then-saw-3sgm	the-student-F-ACC	in the-park-GEN

The contrastive topicalization function here is clear in that it announces a shift of topic within a discourse.

The adjacency constraint also describes the strict verb-subject ordering in SA preposed *wh*-questions discussed in the next section.

4.8. Order of wh focus with respect to topic

The order of wh-questions in relation to Topic parallels the order witnessed above of non-wh-fronting in relation to Topics in that the Topic is strictly in the topmost position:

(42)

(a)	man šaahad-a		al-muʕallim-u	fi l-ḥadiiqat-i
	who saw-3sgm		the-teacher-NOM	in the-park-GEN
	'Who did the teacher see in the park?'			
(b)	*man al-muʕallim-u		šaahad-a	fi l-ḥadiiqat-i
	who the-teacher-NOM		saw-3sgm	in the-park-GEN
	'Who did the teacher see in the park?'			
(c)	al-muʕallim-u, mataa šaahad-at-hu al-šurtiyy-at-u		fi l-ḥadiiqat-i	
	the-teacher-NOM when saw-3sgf-him the-police-f-NOM		in the-park-GEN	
	As for the teacher, when did the female police officer saw him in the park?'			
(d)	*mataa al-muʕallim-u, šaahad-at-hu al-šurtiyy-at-u		fi l-ḥadiiqat-i	
	when the-teacher-NOM saw-3sgf-him the-police-f-NOM in the-park-GEN			
	'When, as for the teacher, did the female police officer saw him in the park?'			

Comparing the sentences above, it becomes obvious that the ungrammaticality of the examples lies in fronting a *wh*-question across a

topic. This can also be explained in terms of the intervention effects if the preverbal DP is assumed to be merged in an A-bar position, such as [Spec, TopP] (Cf. Soltan, 2007, P. 53 for a similar proposal). No such violation occurs in (a and c) as the Topic is strictly left-peripheral in the higher projection [Spec, TopP] and the focalized element below it in [Spec, FocP].

4.9. Incompatibility of f-phrases and hal

The restriction on the focus-driven preposing of both *wh*-questions and non-questions appears to parallel yes/no questions introduced by the question/focus morpheme *hal*, as shown:

(43)

(a)	hal	katab-a	al-walad-u	al-wajib-a
	Q	wrote-3sgm	the-boy-NOM	the-homework-ACC
	'Did the boy write the homework?'			
(b)	al-walad-u,	hal	katab-a	al-wajib-a
	the-boy-NOM	Q	wrote-3sgm	the-homework-ACC
(c)	*al-wajib-a	hal	katab-a	al-walad-u
	the-homework-ACC	Q	wrote-3sgm	the-boy-NOM
(d)	*hal	al-walad-u	katab-a	al-wajib-a
	Q	the-boy-NOM	wrote-3sgm	the-homework-ACC
(e)	*hal	al-wajib-a	katab-a	al-walad-u
	Q	the-homework-ACC	wrote-3sgm	the-boy-NOM

Comparing the sentences above, it becomes evident that the yes/no question *hal* must be followed by the verb thus (a) and (b) are grammatical. The morpheme *hal* may follow Topic (b) but the opposite order is disallowed (d), and *hal* cannot combine with Focus in the same clause(c and e). The fact that *hal* and *f*-phrases do not co-occur suggests that they target the same position [Spec, FocP] position. This replicates the facts observed in Italian wherein focus and *wh*-elements target the same position, namely [Spec Foc]. The fronting of *hal* or f-phrases over a Topic phrase is not permitted. This is in line with Rizzi's (2001) analysis of *wh*- and *f*-phrases in Italian root clauses that they target and occupy the same position – [Spec, FocP]. The fact that a Topic cannot follow *hal* suggests that *hal* obligatorily moves to [Spec, FocP] on a par with other *wh*-expressions. Consequently, hal and other wh-elements are two faces of the same coin, the coin being focus. The presence of the A′-Topic in (d) blocks *hal* from legitimately moving to [Spec, FocP]. The cases in (c and e) demonstrate that interrogative formation employing *hal* is a subclass of focus and focus categories cannot be stacked unlike topics.

To conclude this section, the left periphery in SA projects independent positions for Topic and focus; the former is recursive – a topic can be embedded under another whereas the latter is not. The two positions are ordered as follows:

Top* > Foc … [_FinP_

4.10. Incompatibilty of f-phrases and question DP's

This section deals with focalized DP's and their interaction with *wh*-questions. Typical examples are:

(44)

(a)	al-walad-a	qaabal-at	al-bint-u	fi l-hadiiqat-i
	the-boy-ACC	met-3sf	the-girl-NOM	in the-park-GEN
(b)	ʔayna qaabal-at	al-bint-u	al-walad-a	
	where met-3sf	the-girl-NOM	the-boy-ACC	

The focused DP object (a) and the adjunct (b) have moved across the subject to [Spec, FocP]. In contrast to the examples above, it

would be ungrammatical to have the two constituents, *f*-phrases and *wh*-elements together in a single clause. Only one of them can be merged:

(45)

(a)	*ʔayna	al-walad-a	qaabal-at	al-bint-u
	where	the-boy-ACC	met-3sf	the-girl-NOM
(b)	* al-walad-a	ʔayna	qaabal-at	al-bint-u
	the-boy-ACC	where	met-3sf	the-girl-NOM

The question word *ʔayna* relates to an adjunct but arguments also cannot co-occur with *f*-phrases:

(46)

(a)	al-kurat-a	ʔaʕta-a	al-walad-u	l-l-bint-i
	the-ball-ACC	gave-3sm	the-boy	to-the-girl-GEN
(b)	*man al-kurat-a	ʔaʕta-a	l-l-bint-i	
	who-the-ball-ACC	gave-3sm	to-the-girl-GEN	
(c)	* al-kurat-a	man ʔaʕta-a	li-l-bint-GEN	
	the-ball-ACC	who gave-3sm	to-the-the-girl	

From these examples, it can be seen that *wh*-questions whether adjuncts or arguments cannot occur before or after focalized DP's. This is consistent with observations of researchers on the left periphery such as Bakir (1980), Ouhalla (1997), and Shlonsky (2000) noting that a focalized DP retains its original Case, relates to a gap, obeys island conditions, may be definite or indefinite and reports new information. This set of properties is significantly associated with the focalized DP's *al-walad-a* and *al-kurat-a* as shown with respect to parallel cases in SA discussed earlier. Since the two DP's (moved objects and *wh*-questions) are mutually exclusive and since both are focalized (in fact must bear focal stress), they must be positioned in [Spec, FocP] within Rizzi's design of the left-periphery. As predicted, in this design focalized elements cannot be multiple.

The focus interpretation of the moved object DP can be tested by associating it with negative continuation (Ouhalla, 1997):

(47)

al-walad-a	qaabal-at	al-bint-u	fi l-hadiiqat-i	(laa al-rajul-a)
the-boy-ACC	met-3sf	the-girl-NOM	in the-park-GEN	(not the-man-ACC)

SA also allows contrastive focus post-verbally or rather VP internally:

(48)

qaabal-at	al-walad-a	al-bint-u	fi l-hadiiqat-i	(laa al-rajul-a)
met-3sf	the-boy-ACC	the-girl-NOM	in the-park-GEN	(not the-man-ACC)

Note how the added linguistic context determines the interpretation. The negative expansion shows that the post-verbal moved DP has contrastive focus interpretation on a par with focus in [Spec, FocP]. Considering the similarities between the two focused DP's, it can be concluded that SA exhibits a *vp*-external focus position in addition to the Top-external position already identified as [Spec, FocP].

The parallelism between *wh*-questions and focused objects in terms of the availability of two focus positions can be seen in the following cases:

(49)

(a)	man qaabal-at	al-bint-u
	who met-3sf	the-girl-NOM
	'Who did the girl meet?'	
(b)	qaabal-at	man al-bint-u
	met-3sf	who the-girl-NOM
	'Who did the girl meet?'	

As stated above, the position targeted by the *wh*-question word *man* in (a) is [Spec, FocP] commonly identified as an A′-position hosting the [+Q/

wh] feature. The question word in (b) seems also to target an A′-position. Sentences such as (b) constitute the sort of evidence for the existence of a second focus position at the periphery of the Foc projection above *v*P.

The structure is simplified by not showing the specifier projections of the heads Top, T and *v*.

(50)
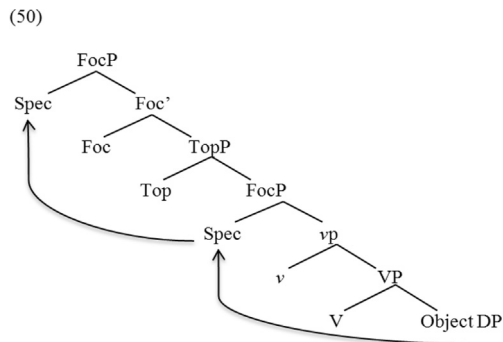
The proposal that the object DP moves to the specifier position provides a straight account of the fact that, in focus structures, it ends up positioned at the left-most edge of FocP outside *v*P as the lower arrow indicates. The verb (or rather the consonantal root) originates under V inside VP, and the subject is assumed to be positioned in the specifier of *v*P. After the verb moves to *v* and then to T, thereby ending up positioned before the object, the discourse marked VOS order is derived.

5. Conclusion

The paper presented an analysis in terms of the tenants of the Split-CP Hypothesis of two types of structures where DP's are found in the left periphery – topicalization and focusing. The constructions convey a special pragmatic sense and a particular information structure at variance in some way with expected information. On the basis of a host of distinguishing properties, the initial so-called subject is analyzed as being topicalized in [Spec, TopP] from a subject position inside the clause. It is argued that the topic phrase exists as an independent node exclusive to the clause periphery below force and distinguishably above focus. In [Spec, TopP], it is construed as a topic phrase as suggested in research on this issue of Arabic syntax (Bakir, 1980; Fassi-Fehri, 1993 among others). As obvious from the unusual constituent ordering, pragmatically marked information is being communicated, such as given, old, presupposed, topic, identifiable and referential.

Building on the similarities between question formation and object preposing, a distinct and additional focus projection is posited at the periphery of *v*P to host focused moved DP's. It is concluded that both, being sub-classes of focus, target [Spec, FocP] from which position, they may raise to the higher [Spec, FocP]. Such movement of *wh*-phrases and of object phrases is focus-driven, specifically by the [F] feature associated with lower and upper [Spec, FocP]. Phrases landing in the lower [Spec, FocP] are attracted by the higher [F] feature and thus eligible for raising to the upper [Spec, FocP]. The familiar Verb raising to *v* and subsequently to T across the subject assumed to be merged in [Spec, *v*P] derives the VOS order. This order wherein the object constituent is fronted announces and shapes our understanding that the object is pragmatically marked for rhetorical emphasis and prominence in the language.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Abdulkhaliq Alazzawie: Conceived and designed the analysis; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed analysis tools or data;

Wrote the paper.

Competing interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

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