Case theory in Standard Arabic: A dependent case approach

<u>The issue</u>: Generative accounts of structural case licensing/assignment in Standard Arabic (SA) all hold that structural accusative (ACC) case is the result of an Agree relation between a functional head v* (light verb) (or Aspect) and an object determiner phrase (DP) (Benmamoun 1999, 2000, Ouhalla 2005, Aoun, Benmamoun and Choueiri 2010, Mohammed 2000, Rahhali 2003, Soltan 2007, Al-Balushi 2011). While these agreement-based accounts of case can explain the ACC of the theme object with process nominals in (1), they fail to explain the genitive (GEN) case of the theme object with process nominals in control structures such as (2):

(1)   ʔaqlaqa-nii   [DP ntiqaad-u   r-rajul-i   **l-mašruuʔ-a**]
        annoyed-me   criticizing-NOM   the-man-GEN   the-project-ACC
        'The man's criticizing the project annoyed me.' (Fassi Fehri 1993, ex. 60a: 239)

(2).   y-uriidu [DP ntiqaad-a   *PRO*   **r-rajul-i**/*l-rajul-a]
        he-wants   criticizing-ACC   the-man-GEN/the-man-ACC
        bi-qaswat-in/*l-qaasiy-a
        with-bitterness-GEN/the-bitter-ACC
        'He wants to bitterly criticize the man.' (adapted from Fassi Fehri 1993, ex. 65a: 242)

Given that process nominals in SA are internally verbs but externally nouns (see Fassi Fehri 1993: 232-269), agreement-based accounts of case would hold that the process nominal in (1) projects an external argument, hence a v*P, before being nominalized, and ACC on the theme object is the result of an Agree relation with v*. However, these accounts cannot explain why the theme object in (2) receives GEN even though the process nominal projects an external argument, hence a v*P witnesses its compatibility with a modifying adverbial phrase but not a modifying adjectival phrase.

<u>Fassi Fehri's (1993) account:</u> Fassi Fehri (1993:242-243) accounts for (2) through his proposed condition on case discharge in (3):

(3) "Object Case is discharged only if subject Case is discharged" (Fassi Fehri 1993: 243).

He claims that the theme object in (1) receives ACC from V presumably because the case of the agent subject is discharged as GEN. To account for (2), Fassi Fehri claims that *PRO* is caseless; it cannot absorb the GEN case assigned by D. As a result, the theme object fails to receive ACC, and is assigned GEN by D.

<u>Problems with Fassi Fehri's (1993) account:</u> Fassi Fehri's (1993) account explains the facts in (1) and (2) properly. However, as it stands, the condition in (3) does not have any theoretical status because it is a filter, which is not grounded in a theory of case assignment. Fassi Fehri (1993, fn. 31: 278) claims that the condition in (3) is analogous to the case tier approach of Yip, Maling and Jackendoff (1987). However, in Yip et al.'s (1987) theory, (i) cases in a case tier (NOM, ACC) are mapped onto grammatical functions (GFs=subject, object) in a separate tier by principles of association, (ii) the notion of domain of case assignment is central, (iii) *PRO* receives case, and (iv) sentences (S), but not v*Ps, supply a case tier. On the other hand, in Fassi Fehri's (1993) account, (i) condition (3) neither maps cases onto GFs nor refers to domains of case assignment, (ii) *PRO* doesn't receive case, and (iii) the account implies that the case hierarchy applies at VP (v*P in current theories) as well as S.

<u>Proposal:</u> I show that Fassi Fehri's (1993) insight can be accommodated within Baker's (2015) theory of dependent case, where (1-2) can be accounted for using the rule (parameter) in (4):

(4) "If NP1[noun phrase] is c-commanded by NP2, and both are in the same domain (TP or VP), assign NP1 case Y" (Baker 2015: 139). Case Y covers ACC in SA. To account for (1), I claim that DP in SA is a "hard" phase in the sense of Baker (2015), where "hard" means that the material inside D is inaccessible to the domains outside D. Some support for the DP as a hard phase comes from its status as a subject in (1). At the insertion of D, which hosts the process nominal, its complement is sent to Spell-Out, the point in the derivation, where case and word order are calculated (á la Baker 2015). Two NPs are available in the domain; and the agent subject is a case competitor in the sense of Baker (2015: 201); therefore, the theme object receives the dependent ACC. At the insertion of D in (2), its complement is sent to Spell-Out. In this domain, two NPs are available, but *PRO* is not a case competitor in the sense of Baker (2015: 201); therefore, the theme object is assigned GEN by D. I also show that other structures in SA such as double object constructions, exceptional case marking structures, and structures with participials can also be accounted for using (4).

<u>Conclusion:</u> In addition to being successful where the dominant agreement-based accounts fail, the proposed analysis has the further advantage of situating case assignment in SA within the general theory of Phases (Chomsky 2008).

Subfield: Syntax

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