

Agreement of Head-Modifier in Definiteness in Arabic

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Abstract. The syntactic category of definiteness is worthy of study by modern linguists. Recent works on the subject are almost rare; all one can find is no more than a meagre analysis of the phenomenon with regard to the noun in being definite or indefinite. This paper investigates the syntactic feature of definiteness as it spans both the noun and its modifier. In other words, an account is given as to how the head and its modifier agree in being definite or indefinite in Arabic structures. Different generative proposals are critically discussed and their shortcomings are presented. An alternative solution to this problem is suggested. Though equally plausible, this approach is believed to be more economical, thus alleviating the burden on the grammar.

The grammatical category of definiteness constitutes part of an abstract system of features that specify the *entire* NP construction in Arabic. Previous works handled this feature as specifying only the noun.

In this paper, the grammatical category of definiteness will be investigated, and a number of treatments formalizing NP agreement in Standard Arabic will be examined. More specifically, one type of structural definiteness, viz. the overt use of the definite article *al-* will be examined. It will be argued that older analyses within the generative tradition have certain shortcomings that are alleviated by applying more recent developments.⁽¹⁾

(1) Probably an equally plausible treatment would handle definiteness morphologically since Arabic is a clearly morphological language in the sense that the article may be considered as a prefix for definiteness and indefiniteness as a suffix. However, this study does not address this approach.

1.1. Definiteness as a Semantic Notion

The notion of definiteness is related to our perception of the world around us. It also depends to a large extent on certain assumptions we make about entities in this world. Thus, in our minds we hold particular ideas about particular objects or entities which are conveyed by a “a process of categorization.”⁽²⁾ For example, this or that particular object motivates us to say ‘a book’ or ‘the book,’ as in

1. I want the book for my collection.

Here, the speaker typically has a particular entity in his mind. On another occasion, the speaker may have no particular ‘book’ in mind and any book will serve his purpose of communication; thus, he would utter a sentence like

2. I want a book for my collection.

This opposition between *the: a* in English has traditionally been described as one of definiteness, and the category of definiteness has the terms definite and indefinite.⁽³⁾

1.2. Definiteness as a Grammatical Category

In Arabic, definiteness is marked on the noun, and traditional grammar distinguishes between definite and indefinite nouns. In addition to the inherently definite proper nouns, nouns are prefixed with *al-* to mark their definiteness. The absence of *al-* and the potential suffixation with *-n/* marks the indefiniteness of these nouns.

Moreover, the facts of Arabic grammar reveal another important dimension; in addition to nouns, certain classes of modifiers are also marked for definiteness. These modifiers include the adjectives and relative clauses within the NP, and they exhibit the same definiteness feature as the head noun. Consider these examples.

NP-Adjective Constructions

3. (a) al-bayt-u al-qadīm-u murīḥ-un
def-house-nom def-old-nom comfortable-nom

(2) Cf. Wallace Chafe, “Givenness, Contrastiveness, Definiteness, Subjects, Topics, and Point of View,” in *Subject and Topic*, ed. Charles Li (New York: Academic Press, 1976), p. 39.

(3) Cf. Abdel-Majid Thalji, “Definiteness: A Semantic Feature in Arabic,” to appear in *Al-Mustansiriyya Literary Review* (date unspecified).

- “The old house is comfortable”
- (b) yaskunu jadd-ī fī bayt-in qadīm-in
lives grandfather-my in house-gen old-gen
“My grandfather lives in an old house”
- (c) bi'-tu al-bayt-a al-qadīm-a
sold-I def-house-acc def-old-acc
“I sold the old house”

NP-Relative Clause Constructions

4. (a) al-bayt-u alla ʒī bi'-tu-hu qadīm-un
def-house-nom which sold-I-it old-nom
“The house which I sold is old”
- (b) 'urīdu bayt-an lā taskunu-hu al-'ašbāḥ-u
want (I) house-acc not inhabit-it def-ghosts-nom
“I want a house not inhabited by ghosts”

In sentence (3a) the adjective *qadīm* agrees with its head noun *bayt* in definiteness. In 3(b) the adjective also agrees with its head noun in indefiniteness, without the overt *al-* prefix, but with the presence of *-n* suffix. Similarly, in 3(c) the adjective exhibits agreement with its head noun in definiteness.

In sentence (4a), a copy-pronoun *alla ʒī* is present in the relative clause *alla ʒī bi'tu-hu*. This pronoun agrees with the headnoun in definiteness. In other words, definiteness agreement entirely consists of the presence or absence of *alla ʒī*. The pronoun-to-headnoun agreement exists anyhow, and it is the presence or absence of the relative particle that agrees with the definiteness status of the headnoun. By contrast, (4b) lacks the relative particle *alla ʒī*, and this is characteristic of Arabic relative clauses modifying indefinite headnouns. Such constructions cannot be preceded by a relative particle. Note the ungrammaticality of (5) below.

- 5.* 'urīdu bayt-an alla ʒī lā taskunu-hu al-'ašbāḥ-u
want (I) house-acc which not inhabit-it def-ghosts-nom
“I want a house which is not inhabited by ghosts”

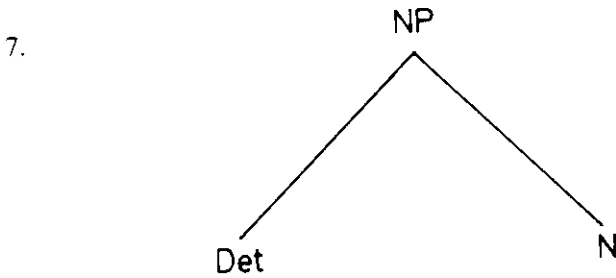
The following question may be asked at this point: How does the modifier (adjective or relative clause) inflect for the feature of definiteness?

2.1. Different Proposals

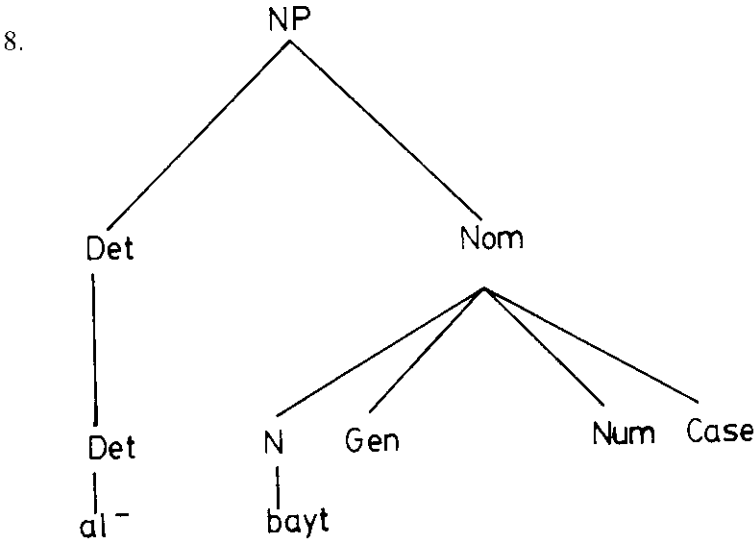
In the early version of TG, definiteness was treated as part of the determiner system within the immediate constituent framework of analysis. Chomsky's⁽⁴⁾ PS rule develops the structure of the NP as follows:

- 6. NP \longrightarrow TN
- T \longrightarrow the ...

The T stands for the class of determiners. The above rule would generate structures like



where Det is a daughter node of NP and a sister node of N. The NP *al-bayt* will have the following structure:



(4) Cf. Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), p. 25.

With the appearance of *Aspects*,⁽⁵⁾ features were introduced into syntax. A lexical category was viewed as a complex symbol (CS) in deep structure. For example, the lexical category of noun was analyzed into a CS in terms of the frame in which this category appeared. Rewrite rules which made use of complex symbols were considered as a kind of transformational grammar, rather than PS rules. Those rules were of the following form:⁽⁶⁾

$$9. [+N] \longrightarrow CS / \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Aux} + a \\ a + \text{Det} - \end{array} \right\}, \text{ where } a \text{ is a V}$$

In the braces are the syntactic features of the subcategorizational frames in which the CS appears. These constitute the selectional restriction rules for the CS of N.

Under this analysis, definiteness, gender, number, etc. are viewed as features of the CS of N. To some linguists,⁽⁷⁾ the morphological/phonological realization of

(5) Cf. Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1965), p. 114.

(6) This type of rule and other rules were used as a mechanism in the grammar, which would involve analyzing constituent features, and this is known as selectional restrictions. Thus a rule such as

$$[+N] \longrightarrow CS / \left\{ \begin{array}{l} -\text{Aux} + \\ a + \text{Det} - \end{array} \right\}, \text{ where } a \text{ is a V}$$

asserts that each feature of the preceding and following Verb is assigned to the Noun and determines an appropriate selectional subclassification of it. Briefly, such a rule would determine the choice of Verb in terms of Subject and Object, and would assign features of the Verb to the Subject and Object. Thus, the Subject would be specified as having

[pre-+ [+Abstract] . Subject, Pre-+ [+Animate] -Object

Similarly, the Object would have the following features

[post-+ [+Abstract] -Subject, Post-+ [+Animate] -Object

Evidently, the feature [pre-+ [+Animate] -Object] is irrelevant to the choice of Subject Noun, and the feature [post-+ [+Abstract] -Subject] is irrelevant to the choice of Object Noun. More serious than this is the fact that a Noun must be marked in the lexicon for the feature (pre-X-Subject] if it is marked for the feature [post-X-Object] where X is any feature. In other words, the choice of elements for the position "Subject of a Verb with Animate Subject" is the same as the choice of elements for the position "Object of a Verb with Animate Object." Animate Nouns appear in both positions. The ultimate result of this discussion is complicating the grammar. Because of this, Chomsky resorts to selecting Verbs in terms of Nouns (and similarly Adjectives in terms of Nouns) rather than conversely. Also, this kind of framework is optional.

(7) Roderic A. Jacobs and Peter S. Rosenbaum, *English Transformational Grammar* (Waltham, Mass.: Ginn and Co., 1970).

these features occurs after transformations have applied. What concerns us here is that the rule would create nodes branching from N, and these nodes would be labeled Case, Gender, Number, etc. It is on these nodes that features are copied.

This approach of feature copying does not differ much from the constituent analysis approach. Under the former, features are copied from one independent node onto another; under the latter features are copied from one lexical item onto another. The following two rules can be posited: Rule (10) corresponding to the constituent analysis approach, with definiteness being a term in the SI of the rule, and Rule (11) corresponding to the feature analysis approach.

10. NP [X Det Y Adj Z]

[Def]

1 2 3 4 5 $\xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}}$ 1 2 3 2+4 5

11. NP [X N Y Adj Z]

[Def]

1 2 3 4 5 $\xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}}$ 1 2 3 4 5

[def]

Notice that rule (11) is wrong as it copies a half unit, [def], and since Det is an independent constituent, there is no need to cite N in the rule.

The labelled bracketing is used in the structural index of the rule in order to restrict its application within the same phrasal category. In other words, the rule would not copy [def] from a N onto an Adj outside the domain of the given NP; otherwise, the output would be ungrammatical, as in (12 a) from (12 b):

12. *a. šaraḥa al-mu'allim-u dars-an al-jadīd-a

explained def-teacher-nom lesson-acc def-new-acc

"Explained the teacher *the new a lesson"

b. S [šarḥa NP₁[def-teacher-nom] NP₂ [dars-acc Adj [jadīd]] NP₂] S

Here, the adjective *jadīd* must agree with its head noun *dars* in being indefinite and in the accusative case, unlike *al-mu'allim* which is definite and in the nominative case.

Relative clauses agreeing with their head nouns in definiteness may be viewed along the same line if they are considered as sentences preceded by the relative pronoun on which the features are copied. If the head noun followed by the relative clause is indefinite, these features will not be phonologically realized. Considering the relative clause as an S necessitates adding another alternative in our above rules (10) and (11). Then these rules will account for the concord between the head noun and the relative clause. In other words, the fourth term in the above rules will be $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} \text{Adj} \\ \text{S} \end{smallmatrix} \right)$ rather than simply Adj.

It should be mentioned here that definiteness has always been treated under the constituent analysis approach. Treating definiteness as a feature under the feature copying approach has not been fully recognized yet. Even the relatively recent approach of treating grammatical categories of number, case, and definiteness — as well as other categories — in the morphology of the grammar is still a constituent analysis approach. Thus, Brown & Miller⁽⁸⁾ suggest the following constituent structure rules for the English NP.

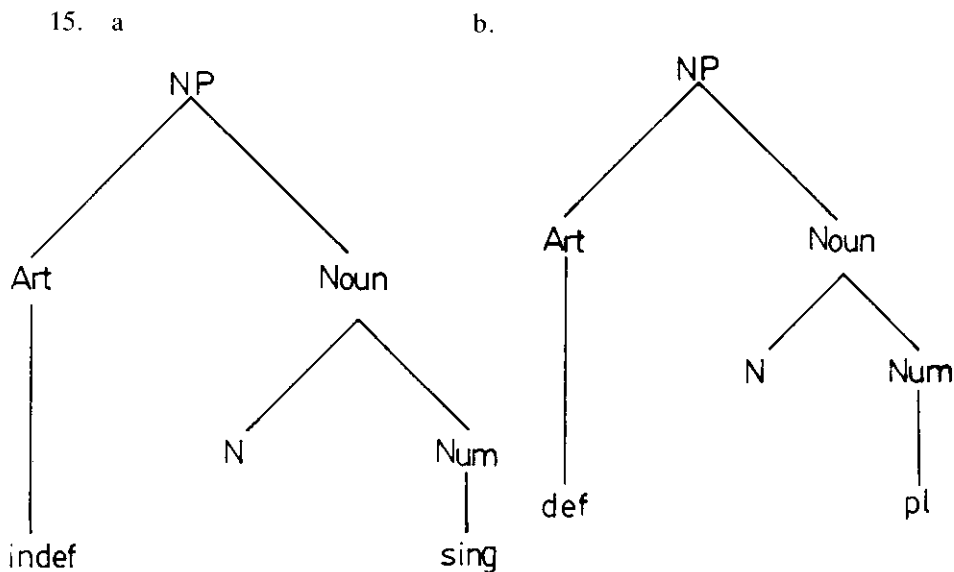
13. NP \longrightarrow Art + N
 N \longrightarrow N + Num
 Num \longrightarrow $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{sing} \\ \text{pl} \end{array} \right.$
 Art \longrightarrow $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{def} \\ \text{indef} \end{array} \right.$

They also give the following Article Noun concord rule:

14. SA: NP (Art (indef) - N - $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{sing} \\ \text{pl} \end{array} \right]$)
 SC: NP (Art (indef + $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{sing} \\ \text{pl} \end{array} \right]$) - N - $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{sing} \\ \text{pl} \end{array} \right]$)

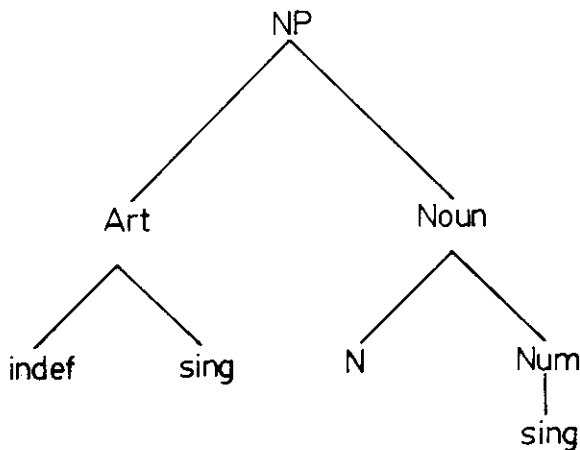
(8) Edward Keith Brown and Jim Edward Miller, *Syntax: A Linguistic Introduction to Sentence Grammar* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1980), p. 200.

Thus the constituent structure rules will generate the following trees:



The concord rule will operate on the string of (15a) to give the derived tree in (15c) below. Note that the concord rule would not operate on (15b) as it does not meet the structural analysis of the rule.

15. c.



(Note that with reference to sing being under Art, one could also argue that a plural indef has zero exponent.)

As mentioned above, the constituent analysis account is widely recognized and adopted by many linguists. The reasons for adopting this analysis are manifold: the occurrence of the article as an independent element in the Determiner system, which is the most significant reason. But even within this approach, different accounts still exist, involving where to generate the article, its place in the structural hierarchy of the NP, its closeness to the head noun, and its relation to other elements of the NP.

On pages (170) and (168) we mentioned the rule which rewrites the NP as Det N ... We may expand it as follows:

16. NP \longrightarrow Det N ($\begin{smallmatrix} \text{Adj} \\ \text{S} \end{smallmatrix}$)

in order to account for the adjective or relative clause modifier. But even this expanded rule will not cope with structures like (17) below, where we may have an adjective followed by a relative clause, and both modify the head noun:

17. al-bayt-u al-jadīd-u allaḡī naskunu-hu
 def-house-nom def-new-nom which inhabit (we) it
 "The new house which we inhabit"

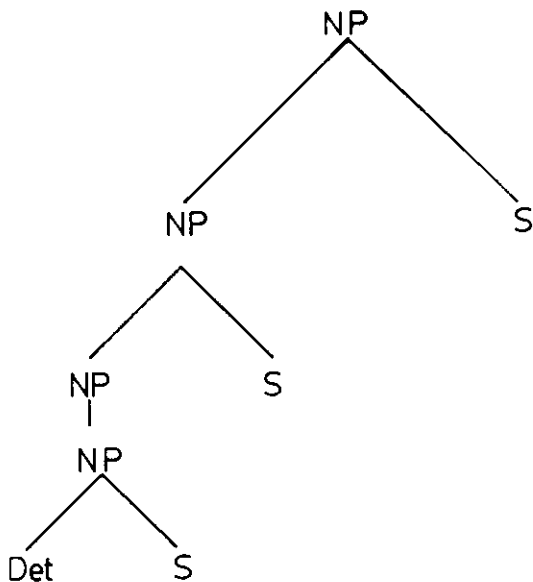
To account for such structures, the Chomsky-Adjunction⁽⁹⁾ is often suggested in the literature. This adjunction takes the form of the following rule:

18. NP \longrightarrow NP S

This recursive aspect of the rule will allow for the occurrence of multiple modifiers. Under this analysis, the Det is placed immediately to the left of the head noun. Det becomes a sister node of N, and instead of reapplying rule (18), which is the first rewriting rule for the NP, we would apply this rule and follow it with rule (6). The implication here is that we would have a number of NPs and Ss, with the lowest NP branching into Det and N, as in the following representation:

(9) Andrew Radford, ed., *Transformational Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 168.

19.

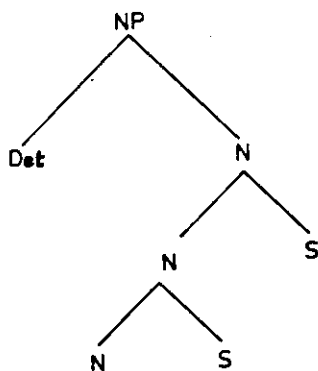


Another proposal that would cater for generating modifiers, whereby recursion is restricted to the N which branches from Rule (6), was proposed by Cullicover⁽¹⁰⁾ The rule has the following form:

20. $N \longrightarrow N S$

and the Np will have this structure

21.



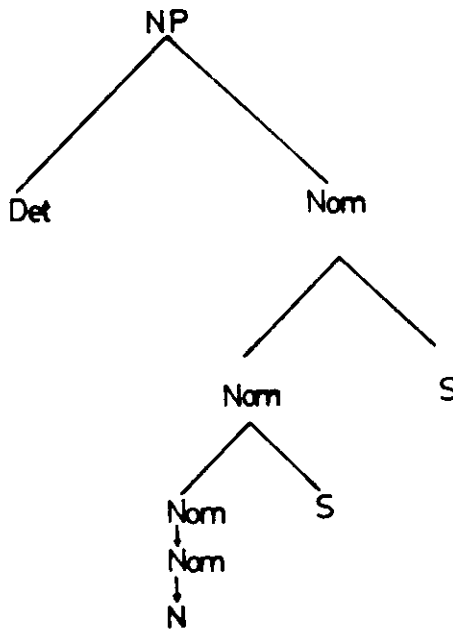
— (10) Peter Cullicover, *Syntax* (New York: Academic Press, 1976).

Still, a third proposal which posits an intermediate category (Nom) is equally valid.⁽¹¹⁾ Here, the rule for Np would branch it into Det and Nom, and Nom into N or Nom and S, as in

22. a. NP → Det Nom
 b. Nom → $\begin{cases} N \\ \text{Nom S} \end{cases}$

Recursion will be taken care of by the second term of Rule (22b) above:

23.



2.2. Implications of These Proposals

The preceding discussion leads us to the following observations:

- a. The status of definiteness varies according to these proposals. Thus, in the NP S analysis, Det is a sister node of the lowest node. In the N S and Nom S analyses, Det is a sister node of the highest nodes branching from the NP.

(11) For a discussion of the intermediate category, cf. Radford, p. 170.

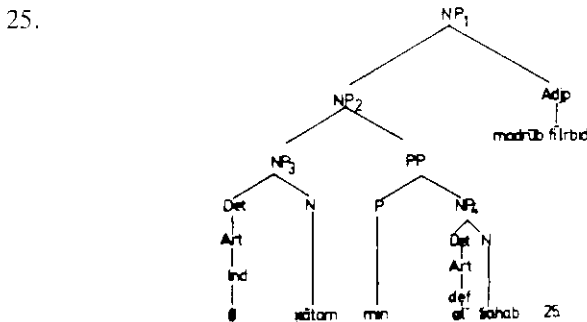
b. Such proposals are characterized by over-generation. That is to say that there would be nothing to prevent generating NPs where an adjective follows a pp-Complement, or when a relative clause precedes it. All modifiers will be derived from S, regardless of how they surface. In other words, over-generation would unnecessarily necessitate reordering transformations to arrive at the desired order of these elements, which is N-Adj – PP – S, as in this structure:

- 24. xātam-un min al-š ahab-i maḍrūb-un fī Irbid
 ring-nom from def-gold-gen minted-nom in Irbid
 "A gold ring minted in Irbid"

It should be mentioned here that adjectives appearing after the nouns are rare; they are either of the "Inspector General" type or adjective with complements: a proud father/a father proud of his son. In Arabic, they are of the Adj + complement type, in general.

The problems cited above may be avoided if some other analysis can be found, whereby modifiers are base-generated. This analysis is motivated by the peculiar behavior of adjectives in English. Adjectives in English may occur before or after the noun, and their interpretation will depend on these positions. This also justifies the generation of AdjPhs, PPs, and Relative clauses independently. The multiple occurrence of each modifier is accounted for by the X-bar theory.⁽¹²⁾ Under this analysis, the rule of head-modifier agreement as stated earlier would give bad results, especially if there are two candidates within the Np for the Adj or relative pronoun to agree with, no matter where they are generated in deep structure.

Under the NP S analysis, a NP may have the following deep structure:



(12) Ray Jackendoff, *X Theory: A Study of Phrase Structure*. Linguistic Inquiry Monograph No. 2 (Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 1977).

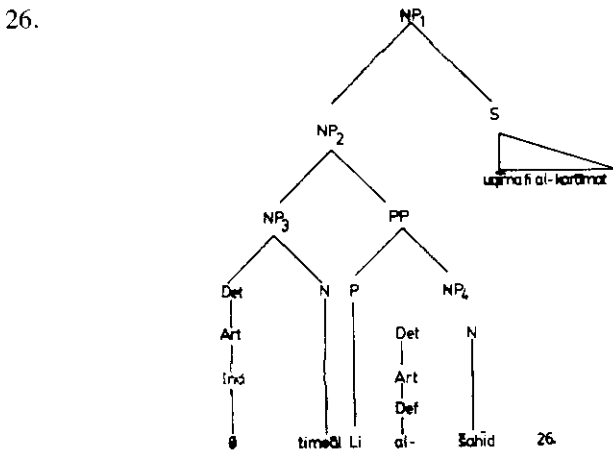
This deep structure meets the SI of rule (10) and it may apply to it to give structure (24), where the adjective *maḍrūb* is indefinite and agrees with the head noun it modifies *xātam*. However, rule (10) may also apply to (24) to yield (24a):

24. a. *xātam-un min al-ḡ ahab-i al-maḍrūbi fi Irbid*
 ring-nom from def-gold-gen def- minted-gen in Irbid
 “A gold ring which is minted in Irbid”

where *maḍrūb* wrongly agrees with the definite noun *al-ḡ ahab* in definiteness and case. Note that the sentence is not asterisked as ungrammatical, because it is correct in the sense of “a ring of such a gold that was minted in Irbid.”

In (24) the rule selects the first node Det as the second term in its SI and copies it onto the Adj (the fourth term), with the PP intervening between terms 2 and 4. In (24a) the rule picks the second node Det on the noun *al-ḡ ahab* and copies it onto the adjective. In other words, there is nothing to block the generation of (24a) by rule (10), although the adjective is structurally and semantically related to the first noun *xātam*.

The same problem is encountered when the rule operates on relative clauses. A phrase marker like (26) below may surface as (26a) or as (26b):



26. a. *timḥāl-un li al-ṣahīd-i 'uqīma fi al-Karāmat-i*
 statue-nom for def-martyr-gen erected in def-Karamat-gen
 “A marty’s monument erected in Karamat”

26. *b. timθāl-un li al-šahīd-i alla ʒ̣ ī 'uqīma fi al-karamat-i

which

Here, (26a) is the correct output since the relative clause modifies the head noun *timθāl*. (26b) is not a desired output since it appears to modify the second term *al-šahīd*, because of the presence of *alla ʒ̣ ī*.

Another problem arises when the N S and Det Nom constituent analyses are adopted. In both analyses, the Det occupies a high position in the NP structure. The problem here relates to the comparative structure where the second occurrence of the head noun and its modifier are replaced by the pro-form ʒ̣ *ālīka* “that”, as in the following example:

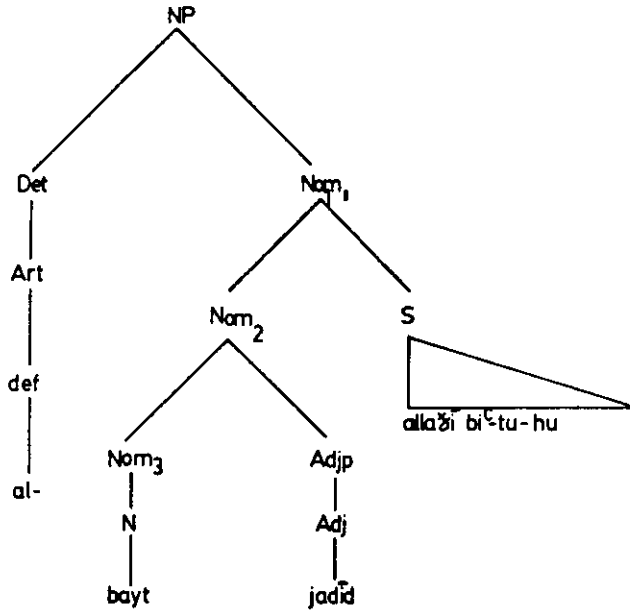
27. al-bayt-u al-jadīd-u all ʒ̣ ī ištāray-tu-hu 'awsa'-u min
 def-house-nom def-new-nom which bought-I-it larger-nom than
 ʒ̣ ālika alla ʒ̣ ī bi'-tu-hu
 that which sold-I-it
 “The new house which I bought is larger than that which I sold”

One possible interpretation of (27) is (27a) below:

27. a. al-bayt-u al-jadīd-u alla ʒ̣ ī ištāray-tu-hu 'awsa'-u
 def-house-nom def-new-nom which bought-I-it larger-nom
 min al-bayt-i al-jadīd-i alla ʒ̣ ī bi'-tu-hu
 than def-house-gen def-new-gen which sold-I-it
 “The new house which I bought is larger than the new house which I sold”

Here, the pro-form ʒ̣ *ālīka* stands for the deleted head and its modifier *al-baytu al-jadīdu*. This reading has the following phrase marker:

But, ʒ̣ *ālīka* is precisely added when the agreement rule is executed. If it is inserted, i.e., substituted, for Nom₂ in the above phrase marker, the result of this replacement or substitution will be the ungrammatical output below:



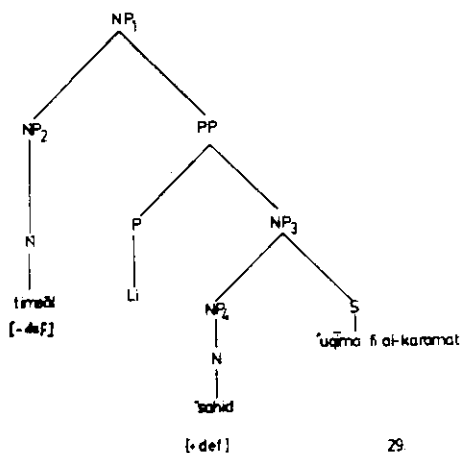
- 28.*..... min al- ḡ ālika alla ḡ ī bi'tu-hu
 than def-that which sold-I-it
 *"...than the that which I sold"

The ungrammaticality of (28) is due to the fact that ḡ ālika cannot take the article because it is inherently definite like proper nouns. This means that in order to get the correct result, we need another transformation to delete *al*-which is an unnecessary complication of the grammar.

If we adopt the N S constituent analysis, we will inevitably encounter the same problems.

The feature analysis is not any better than the constituent analysis. If definiteness is treated as a feature of the N, we will encounter the same problem as that under the previous analysis. Rule (11) will copy the feature [± def] on the adjective or relative clause. The consequence of the application of this rule is that it may result in undesired outputs, particularly in cases of NPs having two head nouns. Thus, a structure like (29) may surface as (29a) or (29b) after the application of rule (11):

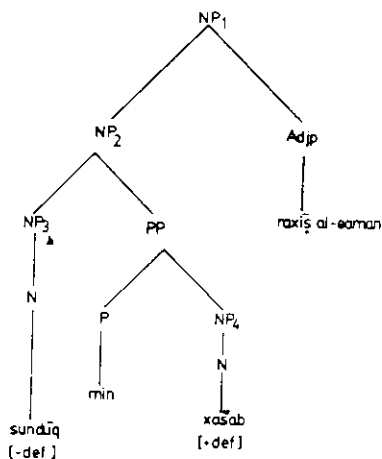
29



29. *a. timθāl-un li al-šahīd-i alla ʔ i 'uqīma fi al-Karāmat-i
 statue-nom for def-martyr-gen which erected in def-Karamat-gen
- b. timθāl-un li al-šahīd-i 'uqīma fi al-Karāmat-i
 statue-nom for def-martyr-gen erected in def-Karamat-gen.
 "A monument for the martyr erected in al-Karāmat"

Similarly, from (30) we may get (30a) or (30b):

30.



30. a. $\text{\textasciitilde{şundūq-un min al-xašab-i raxī\textasciitilde{ş-u al-}\theta\textasciitilde{aman-i}}$
 box-nom of def-wood-gen cheap-nom def-price-gen
 "A cheap wooden box"
- b. $\text{*}\text{\textasciitilde{şundūq-un min al-xašab-i al-raxī\textasciitilde{ş-i al-}\theta\textasciitilde{aman-i}}$
 box-nom of def-wood-gen def-cheap-gen def-price-gen

(Note that (30b) could be correct when the wood is cheap.)

It is obvious that rule (11) will copy the feature [def] on the adjective or relative clause, irrespective of the nouns to which these modifiers are structurally related.

Two things are clear from the foregoing discussion. The first is that a traditional treatment of concord between the head and its modifier fails to yield the desired output, regardless of whether this output is grammatical or not. The second thing is that an NP may undergo some syntactic processes with ungrammatical outputs, if certain proposals for the constituent structure of the NP are adopted, and if the traditional view is retained.

3.1. In light of the foregoing discussion, it will be necessary to look for another alternative solution, whereby definiteness is generated as a feature on the ENTIRE NP, and not on the lexical category N alone. Here, definiteness will be a feature of the whole NP constituent. In other words, we would be talking of a definite NP rather than a definite N. Once a NP is generated with this feature, all other constituents within this NP are assigned this feature specification. But the question is: Where in the NP will this feature specification be generated, if not on the N?

Chomsky in "Remarks on Nominalization" provides a plausible answer.⁽¹³⁾ Chomsky's first PS rule of any syntactic category reads as follows:

31. $X \longrightarrow \text{Spec } X \text{ (Comp)}$

where X stands for any syntactic category (NP, PP, AdjP, S) and Spec carries general features that specify the category concerned. Comp is seen as the carrier of features specifying the sentence. Jackendoff gives a full treatment of this notion in his X-bar theory. All in all, the X-bar theory no longer views the NP specifiers as being tradi-

(13) Noam Chomsky, "Remarks on Nominalization," in *Readings in English Transformational Grammar*, eds. R.A. Jacobs and P.S. Rosenbaum (Waltham, Mass.: Ginn & Company, 1970).

tional categories of determiners, but as carriers of feature specifications of the NP. We may equally assume that such features are generated in the NP-Specifier, which is seen as a system of abstract features of the NP. These specifiers will be adopted by the head noun as well as by all other modifiers within the same NP. Yet, a constraint is placed over this sifting of features from NP-Spec to the lexical elements of that NP.⁽¹⁴⁾ This constraint is needed in order to block ungrammatical outputs. Chomsky provides this constraint:

BARRIER CONDITION

“NP and S-bar are absolute barriers to government (i.e. one category cannot govern another across an intervening NP or S-bar boundary).”⁽¹⁵⁾

Put differently, the Barrier Constraint says that a feature of X (X=NP) is assigned to all relevant constituents of X which are within the domain of X, to the exclusion of Y (Y=next lower Np embedded in X). Thus, a modifier (adjective or relative clause) not dominated by an NP, i.e., not structurally related to it, cannot receive the features of that NP. The modifier will agree only with the head noun of the NP dominating it. The NP structure then may have these PS rules:

32. (i) NP → Spec Nom
 (ii) Nom → (Spec) (nom) Comp) N
 (iii) Comp → AdjP (PP) (S)

Nom is a recursive element in order to allow for the generation of multiple modifiers (Comps) of different categories. Nom is an intermediate category between the phrasal category Np and the lexical category N. This is the significant motivation for the X-bar grammar, namely to cater for intermediate categories. This is also why the X-bar grammar is preferred by linguists to the PS grammar, as the former recognizes three levels of categories N,N,N while the latter recognizes only two levels Np and N.

Under the X-bar analysis, Arabic constructions like (33) and (34) will have phrase markers like (33a) and (34a):

33. xātam-un raxīṣ-un

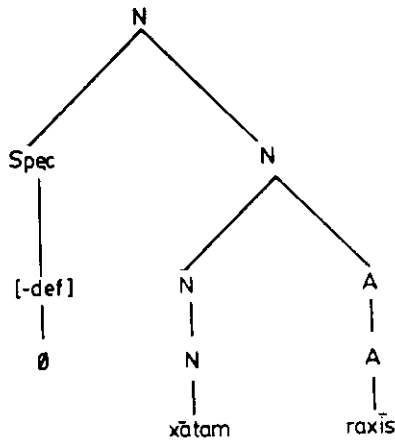
(14) Murtadha Jawad Bakir. “On the Formalization of Agreement Rules in Arabic.” *Al-Mustansiriyya Literary Review*, Al-Mustansiriyya University. 11 (1985), 5-40.

(15) Noam Chomsky, “Markedness and Core Grammar,” in *Transformational Syntax*, ed. Andrew Redford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 323.

ring-nom cheap-nom

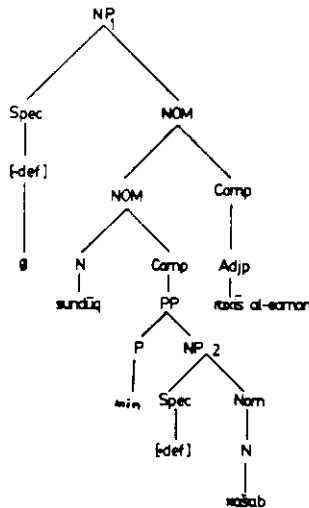
“A cheap ring”

33. a.



34. $\text{ṣundūq-un min al-xaṣab-i raxīṣ-u l-ḥaman-i}$
 box-nom of def-wood-gen cheap-nom def-price-gen
 “A cheap wooden box”

34. a.



Within the barrier constraint at work, we would get only (30a) from (30), and not (30b). The adjective *raxīš* would receive the feature specification [-def] of the highest NP because this adjective is dominated by that NP. The feature [+def] specifying NP₂ in the phrase marker will not be available for the adjective since it is not dominated by this NP. But the head noun *xašab* will receive the [+def] feature. It will not receive the feature [-def] of NP₁ because of the intervening NP node which blocks the sifting of [-def] feature down to *xašab*.

4. Summary & Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt has been made to account for the head-modifier agreement in definiteness in Arabic constructions. Different proposals have been investigated — including the traditional, early transformational, and late transformational accounts. It was shown that such accounts fail to account properly for the agreement of the head and its modifier in definiteness. Moreover, these proposals would yield unacceptable strings whose surface realizations do not correlate with their structural relations. In addition, adopting such proposals would often lead to wrong interpretations.

An alternative solution to the phenomenon of concord was looked for. This alternative analysis views definiteness as a feature of the Entire NP construction, and definiteness is seen as part of an abstract system of features that specify the NP. The application of this analysis together with the barrier constraint would yield desired outputs.

The objectionable aspects of rules (10) + (11), which relate to material dominated by PP, could also be met if a filter corresponding to the Barrier Condition (p. 19) were adopted. It could be called the “Minimal NP Constraint” and formulated as follows:

The Adjective agrees with the minimal N, where minimal N is defined in terms of Rosenbaum’s node-counting convention.

What this filter says is that the minimal N is the one separated from the *Adj* by the fewest number of nodes. Inspection will show that this gives the correct results in respect of (25), (26), (30). (29) would seem to need reformulation with the S node under PP domination if the (29b) reading is intended. It was also mentioned that another analysis is adopted by some linguists, namely that of treating all features of the NP morphologically,⁽¹⁶⁾ but I haven’t pursued this analysis here.

(16) Edward Keith Brown and Jim Edward Miller. *Syntax: A Linguistic Introduction to Sentence Structure* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1980).

التعريف كظاهرة نحوية تشمل الاسم ومتبوعه

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ملخص البحث . قلّ أن يجد المرء دراسة شافية لظاهرة التعريف كميزة نحوية للاسم ومتبوعه، سواء أكان المتبوع صفة أم شبه جملة أم جملة صلة . وكل ما يستطيع المرء أن يجده يتمثل في تناول الاسم فقط من حيث كونه معرفاً أو نكرة . تتناول هذه الدراسة مسألة التعريف كظاهرة نحوية لا تقتصر على الأسماء فقط، بل تمتد لتشمل الأسماء ومتبوعاتها، من حيث كون هذه المتبوعات واقعة تحت عمل هذه الظاهرة، وتمثيل ذلك في دخول الأداة «أل» على المتبوع أو في عدم دخولها، وتتناول الدراسة أيضاً مسألة أسماء الإشارة في الصفات المقارنة مثل «ذلك» واسم الموصول «الذي» . ونعرض في هذا المجال لأهم الطرائق النحوية التوليدية لتبيين مدى قصورها في شرح هذه الظاهرة، ثم نقدم شرحاً بديلاً لتلك الطرائق .