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# The Syntax of Left Periphery in Arabic: A Multiple Feature Inheritance Account

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the syntax of the left periphery in Arabic through the framework of Multiple Feature Inheritance (MFI). Traditional cartographic syntax assigns distinct projections (e.g., TopP, FocP) to account for discourse–related elements, but it often clashes with phase theory and standard Feature Inheritance (FI), which allows only a single transfer of features from C to T. To resolve this tension, the study applies MFI to Arabic data, arguing that features such as [Top], [Foc], and [Case] originate in C and are transferred through multiple applications of FI to intermediate heads (δ). These heads acquire functional identity – like δ–T or δ–C – based on the inherited features. This mechanism explains how topicalized DPs receive nominative case via direct probing by C, while accusative–marked DPs (in focus or base–generated topics) derive their case either through δ–C or from transitive verbs. Arabic root and embedded clauses illustrate how MFI accounts for differences in case, movement, and compatibility with wh–elements more effectively than cartographic models. The analysis provides a unified, feature–based explanation of Arabic left periphery constructions within minimalist syntax, offering insights into cross–linguistic variation, clause structure, and the interplay between discourse features and syntactic derivation in a principled and economical manner.

***Keywords:*** Multiple Feature Inheritance; Arabic Syntax; Left Periphery; Topicalization; Focus; Case Assignment; Phase Theory; Feature Inheritance

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# 1. Introduction

The syntax of the left periphery has been the focus of cartographic studies[1, 2]. Cartographic approach has been attested on the syntax of the left periphery in a number of languages such as Italian[1, 2], Chinese[3], Hebrew[4], Arabic[5, 6] and others. While the cartographic analysis of the structure of the left periphery has provided a reliable account for the interaction between syntax, discourse and pragmatics, it has created a problem for analyzing structures under Chomsky's idea of Feature Inheritance (FI)[7].

One of the major aims of this paper is to investigate the syntax of the left periphery constructions in Arabic from a phasal point of view. The general line of reasoning is that such constructions are associated with abstract features that originate in the C head of the CP. Following the Multiple Feature Inheritance proposal, it is assumed that the abstract features are transferred down to some discourse heads[8, 9]. Thus, the C head of the CP contains not only Agreement and Tense features but it also contains abstract features such as [Foc] and [Top]. Under this view, FI and Criterial Features can be covered under one umbrella – FI. In this paper, I adopt this approach to examine the role of MFI in one of the Semitic languages, Arabic[7].

The article is organized as follows. The first part of the study presents the syntax of the left periphery in Arabic; the section is subdivided into two parts. Each part deals with one left periphery construction; the first presents the grammatical basis of topicalization while the second gives an introduction to some aspects of focus. The second part reviews the approaches that have dealt with the syntax of the left periphery in Arabic and highlights the problem of the study. The third part outlines the basic mechanisms and tools of MFI. The aim of this part is to establish the theoretical framework of the current research. The next section applies the mechanisms and tools of MFI to derive left periphery constructions in Arabic. A thorough discussion is presented to evaluate the proposed reconciliation between the two approaches. The final section of this paper concludes the discussion.

# 2. Theoretical Background

Left periphery constructions have been an area of investigation in the Arabic language and its varieties[10–16]. The very first attempts have revolved around defining the basic characteristics of topicalized and focus constructions[10–16]. Other studies have focused on understanding the internal structure of such constructions[6, 9]. Furthermore, the difference between left periphery constructions in Standard Arabic and some varieties has received some attention in the literature[5, 8]. In order to understand the difference between topicalized and focused structures, I draw on the features that have been presented in the literature[17]. Doing so facilitates the way for understanding the basic properties of left periphery constructions in Arabic. In the following section, I present what makes topics in Arabic. Then, the features of focus are examined. Finally, the features of verbal occupation structures are addressed.

A topic is a presupposed piece of information that is marked by a pause. In Arabic, topics can be described in terms of a number of features[6, 10]. In his study, it defines the grammatical basis of topic constructions in Standard Arabic[6]. According to him, a DP characterized as a topic must be definite, nominative and base–generated. In the comment part, the verb must contain a resumptive pronoun that refers to the topic. Consider the example in (1) for illustration.

(1) *?al–bayt–u,* *?ištara–hu* *Ali–un*
the–house–Nom bough–it Ali–Nom
'The house, Ali bought it.'

In (1) above, it can be noticed that the noun *?al–bayt–u* 'house' is marked for definiteness by the use of the definite article *?al* 'the'. The verb *?ištara* 'bought' has an obligatory resumptive pronoun that refers to the noun ?al–bayt–u. According to (10), DPs should not always be in the nominative case to be characterized as topics. It is clear that the description of topics[3] is limited to one aspect of Arabic constructions called 'mubtada' in which nouns appear in the [Nom] case. Under his too narrow view, he does not capture all the aspects of the presupposed piece of information in the left periphery; on the other hand, other views capture the wide view of topics[4].

A topic can have the accusative case marker *–a* as it is illustrated in example (2) below.

(2) *l–kitaab–a,* *qara?–tu–hu*
the–book–Acc read–1sg–it
'The book, I read it.'

In embedded constructions, topics are marked by the accusative case. This can be illustrated by the accusative case suffix, *–a* on the word *?al–bayt* 'house' in (3) below.

(3) *ẓanna* *Salim–u* *?anna* *?al–bayt–a* *?ištara–hu* *Zayd–un*
thought Salim–Nom that the–house–Acc bought–it Zayd–Nom
'Salim thought that the house, Zayd bought it.'

Basically, what is uncontroversial about topics is that topics are always definite, base–generated and marked by a pause, and that the resumptive pronoun on verbs is obligatory.

The position of topics in relation to question operators is similar to that of Italian and other languages (1); topics occur before wh–operators in wh–constructions (cf. (4) and (5)). In (5), the wh–operator *man* 'who' comes after the topicalized noun *bayt* 'house' while in (6) the question operator originates before the topicalized noun – making the sentence ungrammatical.

(4) *A Gianni,* *che* *cosa* *gli* *hai* *detto*[1]
"To Gianni, what did you tell him?

(5) *?al–bayt–u,* *man* *?ištara–hu*[6]
the–house–Nom who bough–it
'The house, who bought it.'

(6) * *man* *?al–bayt–u* *?ištara–hu*[6]
who the–house–Nom bough–it
'The house, who bought it.'

*:ungrammatical construction

As both topics and wh–operators can be found together in the same structure, it is clear that topics and wh–operators occupy different syntactic heads in a syntactic derivation. The general agreement in the literature shows that topics are base–generated in Spec–TopP while wh–operators find their landing site in Spec–CP. However, topics originate in Spec–CP and move to occupy Spec–TopP[6]. The validity of this claim is examined in the subsequent sections.

Moreover, in the Arabic language and its varieties, topicalization is not limited to a single element of a particular type; that is to say, multiple topics can be found in the language and different elements can be topicalized – for example, adverbs and others. Example (7) below is illustrative.

(7) *ar–rajaal*, *ams*, *shaaf* *al–filim*[5]
the–man yesterday see.perf.3sg.masc the–film
'As for the man, yesterday, he saw him."

The example in (7) shows two elements that have undergone topicalization: *ar–rajaal* 'the–man'and *ams* 'yesterday'. The two topicalized elements occupy Spec–TopP.[4]

To summarize, topicalization in Arabic can be described in terms of a number of grammatical features. In root constructions, topicalized DPs appear in the nominative or the accusative case with an obligatory resumptive pronoun on verbs. Unlike root constructions, topics in embedded clauses always appear in the accusative case. Based on the relationship between topics and wh–operators, the position of topics in Arabic can be identified; they occur before wh–operators. This suggests that topics and wh–operators occupy different syntactic heads in a syntactic derivation. Furthermore, multiple topics can be found in Arabic and its varieties.

## The Basic Features of Focus in Arabic

Focus can be a new piece of information introduced in the discourse –contrastive or emphatic. Like topics, focus in Standard Arabic has been argued to enjoy a number of features[10, 11]. Moreover, Ouhalla argues that focus in Arabic can be of different types among which are sentence focus, focus markers, interrogative focus, negative focus and others[12, 13]. In this part, I introduce the basic grammatical properties of focus in Arabic and their position relative to question operators.

In root clause constructions, focus can be definite (8a) and indefinite (8b). Yet, it is not common for a definite element to be in focus. Unlike topics, focused constructions are always accusative as they are associated with a gap. The verbs of elements in focus do not have resumptive clitics in the comment part. These differences can be illustrated in (8) below.

(8) a. *?al–bayt–a* *?ištara* *Zayd–un*
the–house–Acc bought Zayd–Nom
'The house, Zayd bought (it).'
b. *SHAAY–AN* *shariba* *Zayd–un*
tea–Acc drink.3msg. Zayd–Nom
'It was TEA that Zayd drank.'

In comparison with sentence (1) above, the examples in (8) differ in that the verbs *ištara* 'bought' and *shariba* 'drank' do not have resumptive clitic pronouns that refer to the words in focus. Moreover, the focused elements are not marked by a pause.

A not settled difference between topics and focus is related to whether focused elements can be part of embedded constructions or not. Focus is not allowed in such constructions (e.g., (9))[10]. However, based on the argument, the focus in embedded constructions is acceptable (cf. (10))[11].

(9) * *?ẓunnu* *?anna* *Salim–an* *qabala* *Zayd–un*
I think that Salim–Acc met Zayd–Nom
'I think that Salim met Zayd.'

*: ungrammatical construction

(10) *ẓanan–tu* *?anna* *KITAAB–AN* *qara?–at* *Zaynab–u*[10]
believe–1sg that book–Acc read Zaynab–Nom
'I think that Salim met Zayd.'

The grammaticality of both constructions can be judged based on the relative position of foci and complementizers. I argue that focus can be allowed based on the fact that focused elements occupy a functional head lower than the C head of the CP; there is no overlap between heads in such a case. Thus, moving a constituent to a Spec–Foc position does not alter the position of the complementizers such as *?anna* 'that'.

Unlike topics, focused structures are allowed to contrast. In example (11a), the word *riwaayat–an* 'novel' is in focus position since it can be contrasted by the negative counterpart expression *la qasiidat–an* 'not poem'. This aspect of contrast cannot take place if elements are topicalized. Compare (11a) with (11b).

(11) a. *Riwaayat–an* *?allafat* *Zaynab–u* *(la* *qasiidat–an)*[12]
novel–Acc wrote.3FS Zaynab–Nom not poem–ACC
'It was a novel that Zaynab wrote (not a poem).'
b. * *?al–Riwaayat–u* *?allafat–ha* *Zaynab–u* (*la* *qasiidat–an)*
the–novel–NOM wrote.3FS.it Zaynab–Nom not poem–ACC
'The novel, Zaynab wrote (it) – not a poem.'

*: ungrammatical construction

Another difference between topics and focus is that while it is allowed to have topicalized elements in wh–constructions, focus cannot co–occur with wh–words. This can be illustrated by the ungrammaticality of example (12) below.

(12) * *?al–kitab–a* *man* *?ishtara* [6]
the–book–Acc who bought
'The book, who bought it?'

*: ungrammatical construction

The final difference between topic and focus is that while multiple topics are allowed in the language, only one element can be used as focus in the left periphery.

(13) * *AS–SAYYARA* *FAHAD* *Shara* [5]
the–car Fahad buy.perf.3sg.masc
'The car, Fahad bought'

*: ungrammatical construction

In example (11) above, two words are focalized *as–sayyara* 'the car' and *Fahad*. Since double focus is not allowed in the language, the example is not acceptable.

It is clear that topics and foci in Arabic differ from each other in a number of grammatical aspects. Generally, topicalized DPs leave a resumptive pronoun on the verb while focused DPs do not. Moreover, once they are topicalized, DPs can have either the nominative or the accusative case. Focused DPs, on the other hand, are marked by the accusative case only. Finally, while more than one element can be used as a topic, only one element can be in focus.

# 3. Approaches to the Left Periphery in Arabic

There have been several attempts to account for the structure of the left periphery in Arabic [? ]. Two major approaches have been adopted, the minimalist approach and cartography, to understand not only the relative order of the left periphery but also to pinpoint the basic mechanisms that underlie their features – how a topicalized DP gets the nominative case while a focalized DP appears with the accusative case. In this section, I present the relative order of the left periphery and the arguments that stand for/against Rizzi's cartographic approach [5] and review the proposal presented on why tropicalized DPs are nominative and not accusative [6].

A left periphery clause consists of a strict hierarchical structure [1]. The order is fixed in that a topic can come before and/or after a focus, but a focus cannot be preceded by more than one topic. To accommodate the aspects of the left periphery and to account for their force splits the CP into several heads. They go as follows: ForceP > (TopP)> FocP> (TopP)>FinP >IP [1].

As far as the topic and wh–operators interaction is concerned. Arabic follows the proposed pattern in that topics precede wh–operators (see Section 2.1 examples (4) and (5)). However, in the case of Turaif Arabic, Alshammiry argues that the "interaction between topics and focus is not as simple as Rizzi views it [5] as it is illustrated in example (14) below. Yet, apart from that, in most cases, focus and topics follow the hierarchy (see example (15)).

(14) *al–banaat* *ams* *FAHAD* *shafi–hin* [5]
the–girls yesterday Fahad see.perf.3sg.masc–them.f
'As for the girls, yesterday, FAHAD saw them.'

(15) *al–banaat* *FAHAD* *shaaf–an* [5]
the–girl–pl.f Fahad see.perf–3pl.f
'As for the girls, they saw Fahad.'

The example in (14) is derived by assuming that the topicalized expression *al–bannat* 'the girls' moves from being the Spec–SubjP to occupy the Spec position of TopP. The expression Fahad originates as the complement of the VP and it then moves from its position to occupy Spec–FocP. Alshammiry illustrates this by the derivation in **Figure 1** [5].

One of the approaches that has tackled the issue of case in topics is that of (6). Following the minimalist approach basic mechanisms, he argues that the topic *?al–bay–tu* 'the house' in example (1) above appears in the nominative case because of a special particle that is part of the Top head. Based on this idea, he claims that topicalized expressions originate essentially in Spec–CP and move to Spec–TopP, as it can be illustrated in **Figure 2** below [6].

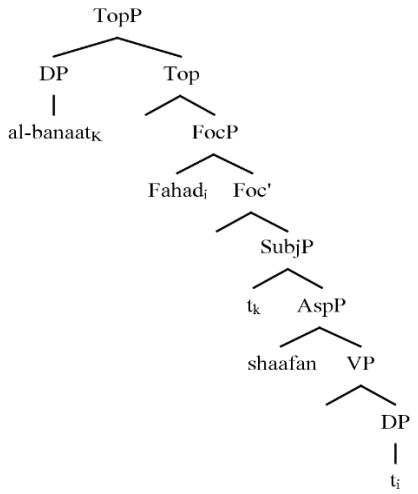


**Figure 1.** Alshmmary's Analysis[5].

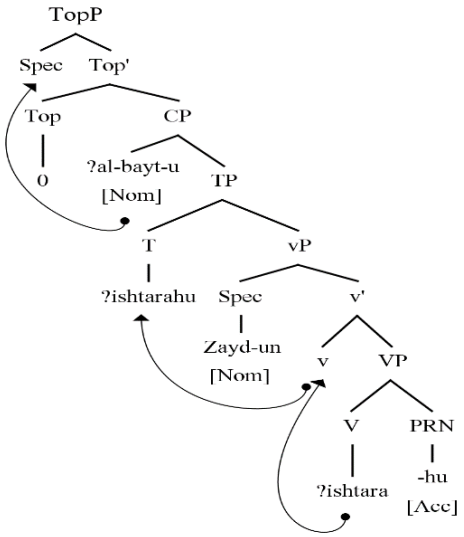


**Figure 2.** CP and move to Spec–TopP.

While Al–Shorafat gives an alternative view to account for the case, he does not explain how the Top particle, 0, gets its nominative case to value the unvalued case of the topicalized expression[6].

# 4. The Problem

The left periphery constructions in Arabic and the approaches proposed widen the gap between feature inheritance and criterial features. The first potential problem is that analyzing the left periphery constructions following a strict hierarchical order not only deviates from FI but also leaves the variation and the relative order of topics and focus without a satisfactory answer[2]. Thus, there is a need for an approach to overcome these issues. The second problem is realized by the attempts that have been proposed to explain how case is assigned to DPs in topicalized and focused constructions. Although in his attempt to overcome the problem, he[6] suggests that the nominative case is assigned by a Top particle, he complicates the idea that has been introduced by Chomsky[14] in which he suggests that features originate in the C head – C is the head from which features transfer down to other heads and not vice versa – an argument that is supported by solid evidence from different languages. Thus, the analysis does not provide any answer on the origin of the [Nom] feature of the Top particle[6]; he only assumes that it exists in that position. Moreover, he ignores the trace effect of the moved constituents; the question operator *man* in (5) cannot move to Spec–CP because of the trace left by the movement of the topicalized DP.

# 5. Multiple Feature Inheritance

The theory introduced by Phil Branigan aims to bridge the gap between two influential syntactic models: phase theory and cartographic syntax[8, 9]. Phase theory, grounded in minimalist principles, focuses on how sentences are built in stages, with specific checkpoints known as phases[17]. Cartographic syntax, on the other hand, maps out a richly detailed structure of the left periphery of clauses, identifying positions for topics, focus elements, and other discourse–related categories[18–25]. These two frameworks have often seemed incompatible, especially because phase theory favors minimalism, while cartography requires more articulated syntactic layers.

Branigan proposes a solution called Multiple Feature Inheritance. In traditional phase theory, a phase head like C transfers features—such as tense, agreement, and mood—to the next head down, typically T[8, 9]. However, in sentences where topic or focus phrases intervene between C and T, this transfer mechanism appears inadequate. Branigan suggests that feature inheritance can happen in multiple steps, allowing C to pass different sets of features to several intermediate heads. These intermediate positions begin as neutral but later become identified with specific roles like focus or topic once they receive the appropriate features.

This model makes it possible to generate complex left–peripheral structures while still adhering to the locality con-

straints of phase theory. Intermediate heads, introduced without specific functional roles, are gradually enriched through the feature inheritance process. As a result, the clause can support discourse–related elements between C and T, resolving a major limitation of earlier phase–based models. The theory explains how constructions involving contrastive focus, topicalization, and subjunctive mood selection operate within a unified derivational system.

Branigan's proposal extends the reach of phase theory without abandoning its core principles. It accounts for patterns observed in languages with rich left–peripheral structures, such as Italian and German, and helps clarify phenomena like auxiliary inversion in questions and island effects in embedded clauses. By allowing features to be inherited across multiple layers, the model offers a flexible and empirically grounded way to reconcile the minimalist architecture of syntax with the descriptive richness of cartographic analysis. Multiple Feature Inheritance (MFI). To understand how the theory works, see the illustrative derivation below in **Figure 3**.

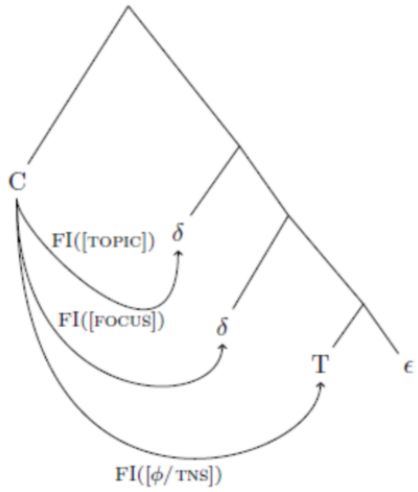


**Figure 3.** Branigan's Propsal [8].

## 6. Analysis and Discussion

In Arabic, case assignment for the left periphery constructions has been an issue of investigation. Some syntacticians have argued for a built–in nominative feature in a Top particle (see Section 3 for further details). For others, they argue that the case is assigned by the coreferential relationship between the moved element and its resumptive pronoun (9). In this section, I provide an alternative analysis for case assignment through the spirit of MFI.

First, how does a topicalized DP get its nominative case? I argue that C establishes a direct probe–goal relationship with the base–generated topicalized DP. As an active T with ϕ–complete can value u–case of subjects, based on this, I argue that an active C with a complete ϕ can value u–case of topics as well [8]. For this assumption to work, the C head should transfer a copy of its unvalued [–ϕ] to T to become active. At the same time, C should keep a copy of its unvalued [–ϕ] features to remain active during the derivation. Under this analysis, two heads are active in the derivation, C and T.

According to **Figure 3** Probe Condition, a head probe for the closest goal to value any unvalued features. If this logic is right, then a topicalized DP can value its unvalued case, [u–case] through C. To illustrate this mechanism, consider example (1), repeated in (16) below.

(16) *?al–bayt–u* *?ištara–hu* *Zayd–un*
the–house–Nom bough–it Ali–Nom
'The house, Ali bought it.'

The nominative case of *?al–bayt–u* 'the house' indicates that the DP is not originating as the complement of V. Another evidence that supports this fact is that the V has a resumptive pronoun. Thus, the unvalued case feature of the resumptive pronoun is valued through the V before it attaches to the verb as a clitic. What is left unvalued is *Zayd–un* 'Zayd' and *?al–bayt–tu* 'the house'. In order to understand how they value their unvalued case, see the derivation in **Figure 4** below.

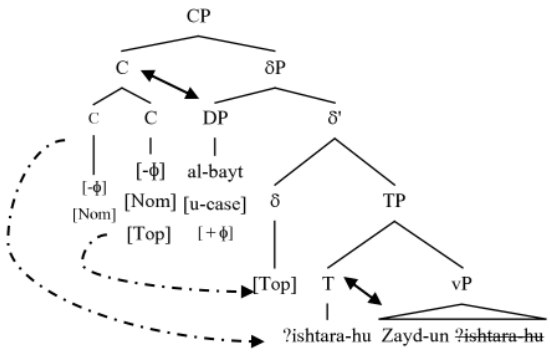


**Figure 4.** MFI and Case.

In **Figure 4**, C shares its unvalued features with T and keeps a copy for itself. T and C are active heads by the fact that they contain unvalued features and both are ϕ–complete.

As T inherits its unvalued features from C, T probes for the closest goal with an unvalued case, *Zayd*. The unvalued case of Zayd is valued and the unvalued [–ϕ] features on T are valued by those features on *Zayd*. Since C has kept a copy of its unvalued features, it remains active and probes for the closest DP to value its unvalued features. The base–generated topicalized DP *?al–bayt–tu* 'the house' is the closest DP with [u case] and valued [ϕ] features. The unvalued features are valued on both C and the DP. At this stage, the word *?al–bayt* 'the house' gets its nominative case. Once both *Zayd* and *?al–bayt* 'the house' are shipped off to the PF component, the suffixes, *–tu* and *–un* that mark the nominative case are added. I assume following the proposal [9] that the topicalized DP cannot be attracted to Spec–C because the [Ed] is transferred to δ through FI.

Secondly, why does a DP in focus have the accusative case? As focus constructions differ from topicalized ones in that they lack resumptive pronouns on their verbs, the unvalued case of DPs in focus is valued by a direct relation with a transitive head that c–commands them. This can be stated as Case Assignment Condition Figure 1. In order to see how this works under the MFI view, consider the example in (7), repeated in (17) below.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| (17) | *?al–bayt–a* | *?ištara* | *Zayd–un* |
| | the–house–Acc | bought | Zayd–Nom |
| | 'The house, Zayd bought (it).' | | |

The DP *?al–bayt* originates as the complement of the transitive verb *?ištara*. The verb values the unvalued case feature of the DP. Once a DP values its [u case] and the δ head inherits the [Foc] feature from C, the DP *?al–bayt* 'the house' moves to occupy Spec–δP in order to satisfy the [Foc] feature. Thus, the DP in focus appears with its valued accusative case feature. See the derivation in **Figure 5** below.

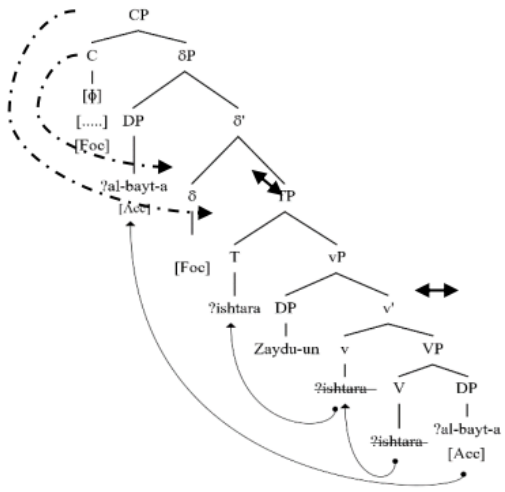


**Figure 5.** Case Assignment.

The analysis so far shows that MFI can account for case assignment for the left periphery constructions that satisfy the uncontroversial aspects of focus and topics. Does the theory cover the aspects introduced by Branigan [8]? I argue it does.

Based on Branigan, topics can be based–generated with the accusative case (cf. (2)) [8]. This leads to the third question. How can base–generated topicalized elements get the accusative case (given the fact that they are not associated with a gap and do not undergo movement)? I argue that the reason could be in part related to the Case Assignment Condition stated earlier. But, how does this work? Since I argued that the phasal head C is able to assign the [Nom] to topics once its ϕ is complete, I argue that in the derivation of topicalized elements with the [Acc] case, a transitive C must be present in the derivation and functions like the complementizer *for* in English. The C head of this type is able to receive a topicalized element in its Spec position. Thus, to distinguish between the phasal head C and this type of C, following Branigan's proposal, I refer to it as δ–C [8, 9]. The phasal head C transfers a valued [Acc.] feature to δ–C. See **Figure 6** below.

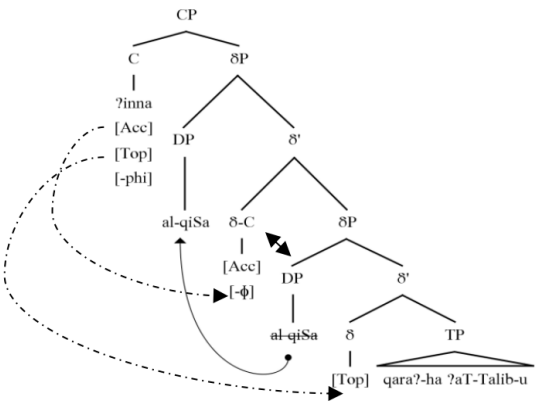


**Figure 6.** The phasal head C transfers features.

In these constructions, I propose that the topicalized noun phrases do not stay in their original positions. Instead, they move slightly upward to a position just below C, known as δ–C. In this framework, C in verbal clauses passes its features to a head–δ–C–that functions similarly to a complementizer because it can receive accusative case ([Acc]). Once C transfers the accusative case feature and its unvalued phi–features ([–ϕ]) via Feature Inheritance (FI), δ–C becomes syntactically active. It then searches for the nearest suitable goal to resolve its unvalued features. This closest goal is the determiner phrase (DP), which is originally generated in Spec–δP. Since the DP has interpretable phi–features ([+ϕ]) and an unvalued case feature ([u–case]), it qualifies as a target. Through the process of feature valuation, both the DP and δ–C have their features resolved—the DP receives accusative case, and δ–C's agreement features are defined. Finally, the DP moves to the specifier position of δ–C to satisfy δ–C's edge feature requirement.

Under this analysis, base–generated topicalized DPs are [Nom] if C establishes a direct probe–goal relation with the DP. By the same logic, the topicalized DPs become accusative if C transfers its features to δ–C and then probing takes place between δ–C and the DP. The mechanism can be summarized as follows:

(i) C >> DP = [Nom]
(ii) C > δ–C >> DP = [Acc]

A refined analysis that might give a way to overcome the obligatoriness of feature inheritance is to assume that C always transfers its features but to two different discourse heads, δ–C and δ–T. The [Acc] is transferred from C to δ–C. If δ–T appears in the derivation instead of δ–C then C would only transfer the [Nom] feature for the base–generated topicalized DP. If this logic is right then C would always transfer its features yet to different heads in the following manner (A single arrow, >, means FI. The symbol of double arrows, >>, indicates a probe–goal relation and feature valuation):

C > δ–T >> DP = [Nom] – Nominative base–generated topics
C> δ–C >> DP = [Acc] – Accusative base–generated topics

While the two proposals give the same prediction, I argue that adopting the second option would be more efficient as it gives a unified picture under which FI works in an obligatory way (for a full argument against C keeping its features, see **Figure 2**.

Finally, in order to account for (10) the argument that focus can appear in embedded constructions. Consider the derivation of example (10) below.

In **Figure 7**, the complementizer and the focus occupy different heads. C transfers its [Foc] feature to δ and its [–ϕ], [TNS] and [case] to T. T becomes active and probes for the closest DP *Zaynab*. The [u–case] of the DP, *Zayanb*, is valued by T and the unvalued [–ϕ] features of T are valued by the DP. The second DP, *kittab*, values its case feature by the transitive verb *qaraa?at*. Then, it moves to occupy Spec–δP to satisfy the [Foc] feature.

To sum up, the MFI account can give an adequate reasoning for the structure of the left periphery constructions in Arabic.

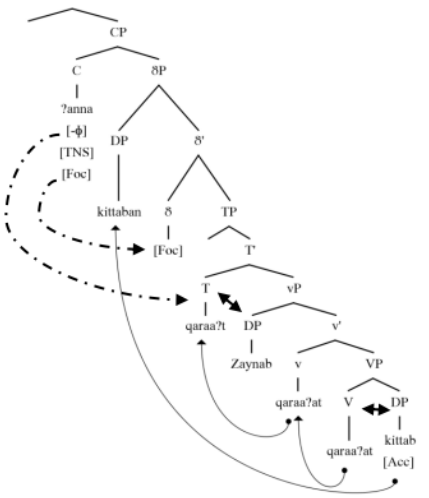


**Figure 7.** MFI and Embedded Constructions.

# 7. Conclusion

In this paper, I presented a new analysis for approaching the left periphery constructions in Arabic. Under this analysis, base–generated topics in Standard Arabic can be

marked as [Nom] or [Acc][8, 9]. The double–faced *case* of base–generated topics raises questions on the way such a case is generated in the grammar. Following the MFI approach, I illustrated that the answer is within the folds of FI and depends on the heads to which features are transferred. This logic pours out from the fact that the C head cannot determine by itself the *case* of the element. Yet, it can identify the need of the head to which C transfers its features. As T can be a target for [case] [ϕ] and [Tense] features but not [Top] and [Foc] features, I extend this logic to assume that δ–C and δ–T can be targets for [Acc] and [Nom] *case* features respectively. The *case* of focus can be determined by a direct Feature Valuation between V and the element in focus; elements in focus can also be linked with a gap in the derivation. Thus, if not in situ, focused constructions, in all cases, value their *case* before undergoing movement.

Moreover, while some left periphery constructions are left uncovered under Rizzi's analysis, these constructions are covered under the umbrella of MFI. Following the previous views[1–8], I argued that δP enters the derivation unspecified for any periphery features. The order of topics and focus relative to each other is dependent on FI. Transferring a [Top] to δ specifies the head for topicalization, while inheriting a [Foc] feature qualifies δ for focalization. Thus, the order is relative and not predetermined.

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Data is publicly available.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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