

ARTICLE

## On Adjectival Agreement in Standard Arabic

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### ABSTRACT

In the language of Standard Arabic, the attributive adjective, which typically occurs postnominally, must fully agree with its modified noun in four morphological features: gender, number, case, and (in)definiteness features. Several diverse attempts have been provided in the literature to account for this type of agreement in Standard Arabic, most of which are either inadequate or more complicated. Therefore, the main aim of this theoretical study is to provide an alternative simple analysis for this type of full agreement in Standard Arabic. By using a single mechanism, specifically the Feature Assignment Rule which indicates that once a category X merges with a category Y, the grammatical features of the category X are immediately copied onto the category Y and are then morphologically realized on all lexical items within the category Y, the full agreement between the Standard Arabic attributive adjective and its modified noun in the four morphological features can be straightforwardly accounted for. More specifically, when the noun phrase (NP) merges with its modifying adjective (AP), the grammatical features of the NP are immediately copied onto the AP and then realized on the adjective head located within the AP. Unlike the previous analyses, the proposed analysis in the current study has the merit of being both simpler and more economical.

**Keywords:** Adjectives; Modifiers; Agreement; Standard Arabic; Theoretical Study

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# 1. Introduction

From a descriptive standpoint, adjectives in Standard Arabic <sup>1</sup> (SA) <sup>2</sup> have a number of main uses, for instance an attributive adjective as in (1.a), a predicative adjective as in (1.b), and a comparative adjective as in (1.c). The attributive

adjective, which is the subject matter of the current work, is a descriptive word that expresses more information about the noun it modifies. In example (1.a), the adjective *ldzadiida* ‘new’ describes the noun *lkitaaba* ‘the book’ that it modifies as being new.

(1)

a) ?al-walad-u qara?-a l-kitaab-a **l-dzadiid-a**  
 the-boy-NOM read.PST-3.Masc.Sg the-book.Masc.Sg-ACC the-new.Masc.Sg- ACC  
 ‘The boy read the new book.’

b) ?al-walad-u **sa?iid-u-n**  
 the-boy-NOM happy.Masc.Sg-NOM-Indef  
 ‘The boy is happy.’

c) ?al-walad-u **?akbar-u** min l-bint-i  
 the-boy-NOM older-NOM than the-girl-GEN  
 ‘The boy is older than the girl.’

As can be seen in (1.a), the attributive adjective in SA typically occurs postnominally<sup>[1-4]</sup>. That is, the SA attributive adjective always follows the modified noun.

Ungrammaticality would be produced if the SA attributive adjective was positioned preminally, as illustrated in (2).

(2) \* ?al-walad-u qara?-a **l-dzadiid-a** l-kitaab-a  
 the-boy-NOM read.PST-3.Masc.Sg the-new.Masc.Sg- ACC the-book.Masc.Sg-ACC  
 ‘The boy read the new book.’

In addition to its well-known subject-verb agreement, SA has an adjectival agreement. To illustrate, the attributive adjective in SA must fully agree with the modified noun in

four morphological features: -features <sup>3</sup> (i.e., gender and number), case, and (in)definiteness, as shown in (3&4) <sup>4</sup>. As pointed out by Ryding<sup>[4]</sup>, in SA “adjectives mirror the in-

<sup>1</sup>Standard Arabic (SA) is a form of the Arabic language in addition to the other two forms: Classical Arabic and vernacular dialects. It is used everywhere in the Arabic world, particularly in schools, governments, and media.

<sup>2</sup>The following abbreviations are used in this paper: 3 = third person, A/a = adjective, ACC = Accusative, agr/Agr = agreement, AP/aP/AdjP = adjective phrase, D = determiner, Def = definiteness, DegP = degree phrase, DP = determiner phrase, EPP = extended projection principle, F = functional, Fem = feminine, GEN/Gen = genitive, Indef = indefinite, Infl<sub>a</sub> = inflection, KP = Case phrase, Masc = masculine, MSA = Modern Standard Arabic, N/n = noun, NOM = nominative, NP/np/nP = noun phrase, Num = number, NumP = number phrase, PF = phonetic form, Pl = plural, pro = pronoun, PST = past, SA = Standard Arabic, Sg = singular, Spec = specifier, T = tense, v/V = verb, vP/VP = verb phrase.

<sup>3</sup>In the literature, it has been stated that adjectives do not generally inflect for a person feature in almost all languages, such as Swahili, Spanish, and Hindi (see<sup>[5-8]</sup>). As can be observed throughout the SA data reported in this study, SA attributive adjectives never inflect for a person feature.

<sup>4</sup>There is an exception to this type of agreement. In SA, the feminine singular adjectives must be used to modify the nonhuman plural nouns (i.e., *Broken Plural Nouns*), as shown in (i). As pointed out by Cadora<sup>[9]</sup> and Kremers<sup>[3]</sup>, this is a deflected agreement; the SA nonhuman plural nouns always trigger feminine singular in almost all concord relationships. This different type of agreement that broken plural nouns exhibit is beyond the scope of this paper due to the fact that broken plural nouns in SA have idiosyncratic morphological and syntactic properties.

(i) ?ista?ar-tu **kutub-a-n** dzadiid-at-a-n min l-maktab-at-i  
 borrowed-I books.Nonhuman Pl-ACC-Indef new-Fem.Sg-ACC-Indef from t-library-Fem.Sg-GEN  
 ‘I borrowed new books from the library.’

flectional categories of the nouns that they modify” (p. 241). The examples in (3) show that the postnominal attributive adjectives agree with their modified nouns in gender, number, case, and definiteness, whereas the examples in (4) show that the postnominal attributive adjectives agree with their modified nouns in gender, number, case, and indefiniteness.

(3)

a) *ʔal-walad-u qaraʔ-a l-kitaab-a l-dzadiid-a*  
 the-boy-NOM read.PST-3.Masc.Sg the-book.Masc.Sg-ACC the-new.Masc.Sg-ACC  
 ‘The boy read the new book.’

b) *ʔaʔ-ʔaalib-aat-u l-dzadiid-aat-u ʁaadar-na mubakir-an*  
 the-student-Fem.PI-NOM the-new-Fem.PI-NOM leave.PST-3.Fem.PI early-ACC  
 ‘The new students left early.’

c) *ʔal-laaʕib-uuna l-dzadiid-uuna ʔakal-uu ʔ-ʔaʕaam-a*  
 the-player-Masc.PI.NOM the-new-Masc.PI.NOM eat.PST-3.Masc.PI the-food-ACC  
 ‘The new players ate the food.’

(4)

a) *ʔal-walad-u qaraʔ-a kitaab-a-n dzadiid-a-n*  
 the-boy-NOM read.PST-3.Masc.Sg book.Masc.Sg-ACC-Indef new.Masc.Sg-ACC-Indef  
 ‘The boy read a new book.’

b) *ʔal-bint-u katab-at qiʕ-at-a-n ʔawiil-at-a-n*  
 the-girl-NOM write.PST-3.Fem.Sg story-Fem.Sg-ACC-Indef long-Fem.Sg-ACC-Indef  
 ‘The girl wrote a long story.’

It should be noted that this agreement between the SA attributive adjective and its modified noun is strict. If the attributive adjective fails to agree with its modified noun in any of these four morphological features, the sentence will be considered ungrammatical, as illustrated in (5). In (5.a) the attributive adjective fails to agree with its modified noun in the morphological case, in (5.b) the attributive adjective fails to agree with its modified noun in gender, in (5.c) the attributive adjective fails to agree with its modified noun in number, and in (5.d) the attributive adjective fails to agree with its modified noun in definiteness.

(5)

a) \* *ʔal-laaʕib-uuna l-dzadiid-iina ʔakal-uu ʔ-ʔaʕaam-a*  
 the-player-Masc.PI.NOM the-new-Masc.PI.ACC eat.PST-3.Masc.PI the-food-ACC  
 ‘The new players ate the food.’

b) \* *ʔal-laaʕib-uuna l-dzadiid-aat-u ʔakal-uu ʔ-ʔaʕaam-a*  
 the-player-Masc.PI.NOM the-new-Fem.PI-NOM eat.PST-3.Masc.PI the-food-ACC  
 ‘The new players ate the food.’

c) \* *ʔal-laaʕib-uuna l-dzadiid-u ʔakal-uu ʔ-ʔaʕaam-a*  
 the-player-Masc.PI.NOM the-new.Masc.Sg-NOM eat.PST-3.Masc.PI the-food-ACC  
 ‘The new players ate the food.’

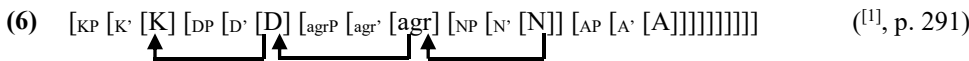
d) \* *ʔal-walad-u qaraʔ-a l-kitaab-a dzadiid-a-n*  
 the-boy-NOM read.PST-3.Masc.Sg the-book.Masc.Sg-ACC new.Masc.Sg-ACC-Indef  
 ‘The boy read the new book.’

The main goal of this paper is to provide an analysis for the full agreement between the attributive adjectives and their modified nouns in SA. In SA, the phenomenon of the adjectival agreement has received little attention compared to the phenomenon of the subject-verb agreement, which has been largely discussed in the literature (see e.g.,<sup>[10-14]</sup>). Therefore, the SA adjectival agreement is worth an in-depth examination. As will be elucidated at a later stage in the current work, the full agreement between the SA attributive adjective and its modified noun can be straightforwardly accounted for by using a single mechanism, namely the *Feature Assignment Rule*<sup>[15]</sup>, which states that once X merges with Y, the grammatical features of X are immediately copied onto Y and are then morphologically realized on all lexical items within Y.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section (2) discusses some of the most prominent previous analyses to the adjectival agreement in SA. Section (3) lays out the theoretical framework to be used in the proposed analysis. Section (4) presents my analysis of the SA adjectival agreement. Section (5) concludes this work and suggests directions for future research.

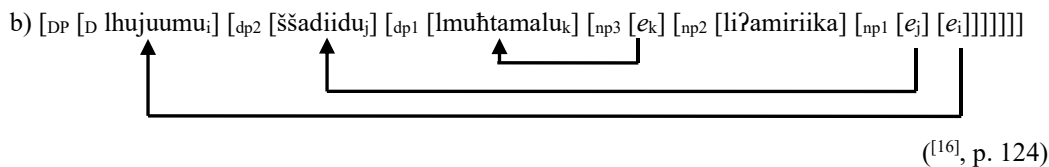
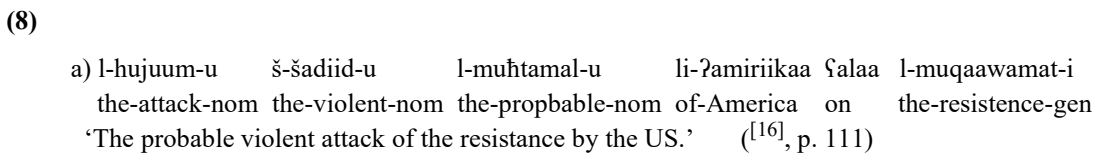
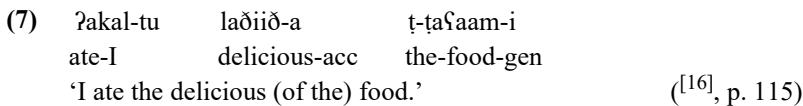
## 2. Previous Analyses for Arabic Adjectival Agreement

In the literature, there have been several diverse attempts to account for the SA adjectival agreement. This section reviews only the most prominent analyses for the SA adjectival agreement and points out any shortcomings that each may have. To begin with, Alshamrani<sup>[1]</sup> suggests the structure in (6) for the Arabic attributive adjective and its modified NP. He argues that the Case phrase (KP) is the maximal projection of Arabic NPs. The head N moves first to the head agr(ment) for -features, then to the head D(eterminer), and finally lands in the head K. All of its features (i.e., -features, case, and (in)definiteness) thereupon percolate down to its modifying adjective. This explains how the morphological features of the noun show up on the attributive adjective in Arabic. As a matter of fact, this analysis of Alshamrani<sup>[1]</sup>, which assumes multiple instances of movements and projections, seems to be very complicated. In section (4), it will be shown that it is possible to account for the SA adjectival agreement without these complicated assumptions.



In his detailed study on Arabic adjectives, Fassi-Fehri<sup>[16]</sup> argues that Arabic is a type of Adjective-Noun language, not a type of Noun-Adjective language because of the possibility of having prenominal adjectives in Arabic, as

shown in (7). In order to derive the Noun-Adjective order in Arabic, Fassi-Fehri<sup>[16]</sup> suggests that the head N moves to a position higher than the AP, as illustrated in (8). The head D has a Case feature that attracts the movement of the head N.



As can be seen in (8.b), Fassi-Fehri<sup>[16]</sup> also suggests that the AP, which is base-generated in the Specifier-np, moves within the DP and this movement is motivated by the richness of the inflectional morphology on the Arabic adjectives. In order for the attributive adjective to value its gender and number features, the AP must raise to the specifier of a functional projection, namely the Specifier-dp. As shown in (8.b), the higher AP moves first to the Specifier-dp1, then the lower AP moves to the Specifier-dp2, and so on. Based on this analysis, Fassi-Fehri<sup>[16]</sup> assumes that adjectives in Arabic are like nouns in that they receive Case and definiteness specifications, and they need to be headed by articles. He strongly argues against the analyses that propose that articles show up on adjectives via agreement.

Notwithstanding that this work of Fassi-Fehri<sup>[16]</sup> makes useful insight into the structure of Arabic adjectives, it has several issues. First, the most productive position for Arabic attributive adjectives is postnominal, rather than prenominal. The prenominal adjectives discussed in his study, as in (7), are actually nouns more than adjectives. As he points out, these prenominal APs can be replaced with typical NPs

and do receive a structural Case. They also have a different interpretation (i.e., a partitive interpretation) from that of the modifying adjectives. Second, there is no apparent and robust motivation for the projection of the dp in the structure of Arabic attributive adjective. Fassi-Fehri<sup>[16]</sup> states that he uses this functional projection for no theoretical intention. Lastly, the assumption that adjectives are like nouns in that they receive a structural Case needs further clarification. How is it possible to have the same morphological case on both the NP and its modifying adjective?

In his analysis for the adjectival agreement in Arabic, Kremers<sup>[3]</sup> first assumes that the AP is headed by a degree phrase (DegP), as proposed by Abney<sup>[17]</sup> and Zwarts<sup>[18]</sup>. He basically argues that in Arabic the modifying adjective, such as *l?ahmaru* ‘the red’ in (9.a), has a covert subject, namely the D *pro* (i.e., a null pronoun) that is base-generated as a complement of the adjective, as illustrated in (10). This *pro* is a covert resumptive pronoun that refers back to the head noun. The overt subject *wad?h* ‘face’ of the adjective *d?amiilan* ‘beautiful’ in (9.b) provides evidence for the presence of the covert subject of the adjective in (9.a).

(9)

a) al-baytu l-?ahmaru  
the-house the-red  
‘The red house’

b) ra?aytu mra?a-t-an dzamiil-an wad?h-u-haa  
I.saw woman-Fem-ACC.Indef beautiful.Masc-ACC.Indef face.Masc-NOM-her  
Litt: ‘I saw a woman beautiful her face.’  
‘I saw a woman with a beautiful face.’

(<sup>[3]</sup>, p. 6&8)

(10) [D [D al (the)] [Deg [Deg ?ahmar (red)] [Infla [D pro] [Infla [Infla ?ahmar-(red)] [A [A ?ahmar-(red)] [D pro]]]]]]]  
(<sup>[3]</sup>, p. 6)

As can be seen in (10), the subject *pro* raises to the Specifier- Infl<sub>a</sub> and the adjective raises to the head Infl<sub>a</sub>; thus, the agreement takes place between them. The adjective then raises higher to the head Deg. Kremers<sup>[3]</sup> suggests that after merging the AP with its modified NP, the nominal D binds the adjectival D, as demonstrated in (11). The features of the nom-

inal D (i.e., -features, case, and (in)definiteness) are thereupon transferred to the adjectival D. Consequently, all these transferred features are reflected on the resumptive null *pro*, which is bound by the adjectival D. Lastly, the adjective receives the same features through an agreement with this null *pro*, rather than through a direct agreement with the modified NP.

(11)

a) al-baytu [DegP l-?abyadu pro]  
the-house the-white  
‘The white house’

b) [Dn [Dn al (the)] [Num [Da [Da al (the)] [Deg ?abyad (white) *pro*]] [Num [Num (SG)] [N bayt (house)]]]]

(<sup>[3]</sup>, p. 7&9)

Although this proposal of Kremers<sup>[3]</sup> is a good attempt to account for the Arabic adjectival agreement, it has two problems. The first problem is that the assumption of the presence of the covert subject in the structure of Arabic modifying adjectives has not been well-motivated. The examples that Kremers<sup>[3]</sup> provided in (9) are totally different. In example (9.b), the attributive adjective *dzamiilan* ‘beautiful’ does not modify the NP *mra?at* ‘woman’; it, however, modifies the NP *wad?h* ‘face’, which is a property of that woman. The entire determiner phrase (DP) that contains both the adjective and its modified NP modifies the NP *mra?at* ‘woman’. This indicates that the adjective in this sentence should agree with its modified NP *wad?h* ‘face’, not with the NP *mra?at* ‘woman’. Conversely, the attributive adjective *?ahmar* ‘red’ in example (9.a) directly modifies the NP *bayt* ‘house’; hence,

there is no need for the assumption of the presence of the null *pro*. The adjective should agree directly with its modified NP in this type of structure. The other problem is that the assumption of the presence of two Ds in the structure of Arabic modifying adjectives makes the structure more complicated. As will be shown in section (4), it is possible to straightforwardly account for the SA adjectival agreement without these unessential assumptions.

Ouhalla<sup>[19]</sup> also presents an analysis for the SA adjectival agreement via the operation Agree<sup>[20, 21]</sup>, which establishes a Probe-Goal relation between two syntactic objects. He first assumes that the attributive AdjP, like *jamiilat* ‘pretty’ in example (12), occurs inside a D[Ag] and its modified noun is a DP subject that occupies the Specifier-AdjP, as demonstrated in the derivation (13).

(12) al-bint-u            al-jamiil-at-u  
 the-girl-NOM      the-pretty-Fem.Sg-NOM  
 ‘The pretty girl’

(<sup>[19]</sup>, p. 324)

(13)

a) [DP D[uDef, Nom] [FP F[Ag] [AdjP [DP al [Def, uCase] [bint]] [Adj' jamiilat] .....  
 b) [DP D[Def, Nom] [FP [DP al [Def, Nom] [bint]] [F' [jamiilat] + F[Ag] [AdjP] ..... [Adj' .....  
 c) [DP [DP D[Def, Nom] [bint]] [D' D[Def, Nom] [FP [jamiilat] + F[Ag] [AdjP] ..... [Adj' .....]

(<sup>[19]</sup>, p. 325)

As can be seen in the derivation (13), Ouhalla<sup>[19]</sup> suggests that the subject DP enters an Agree relation with the head F[Ag]; this results in the valuation of the gender and number features of the head F[Ag]. The subject DP then raises to the Specifier-FP and the adjective head raises to the head F[Ag]. Next, the subject DP with a valued definiteness feature but an unvalued case feature enters an Agree relation with the outer D[Ag], which bears an unvalued definiteness feature and a case feature that has been already valued from outside. This results in the valuation of the definiteness feature of the outer D[Ag] and the case feature of the subject DP. Lastly, the subject DP raises to the Specifier-D[Ag] to satisfy the EPP feature. Actually, this analysis of Ouhalla<sup>[19]</sup> accounts for the SA adjectival agreement in a very complex

way as it assumes the presence of multiple instances of raisings and projections. This may be ascribed to the fact that Ouhalla<sup>[19]</sup> has attempted to provide a unified analysis for several diverse types of agreement in SA.

Lastly, Winchester<sup>[22]</sup> assumes that the basic structure of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) DPs consists of a root merged with the head n(oun) that introduces a gender feature, as shown in (14). This n is merged with the head Num(ber) that introduces a number feature. The number phrase (NumP) then merges with the head D that bears a definiteness feature. He assumes that the root raises to the head n, then to the head Num, and lastly combines as a complex head in D. This raising combines gender, number, and definiteness features, as well as the unvalued case feature, on the head D.

(14) [DP [ROOT + n + Num + D] [NumP [nP]]] ([22], p. 5)

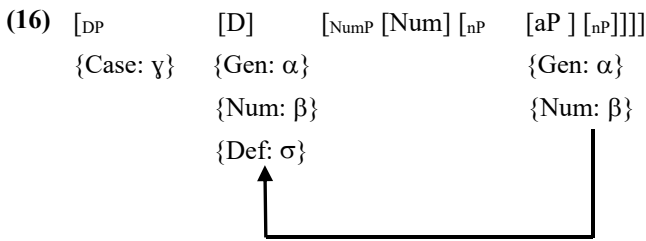
Winchester<sup>[22]</sup> also assumes that the adjective phrase (aP), which is composed of a root and the head a(djective), adjoins to the nP. Since attributive adjectives in MSA always agree with their modified nouns in -features, Winchester<sup>[22]</sup>

suggests that the aP is a probe with unvalued gender and number features. The structure of the DP that contains both the attributive adjective and its modified noun is illustrated in (15).

(15) [DP [D] [NumP [Num] [nP [aP [a + ROOT]] [nP [n + ROOT]]]] ([22], p. 5)

Winchester<sup>[22]</sup> has used a split approach to analyze the adjectival agreement in MSA. In general, he proposes that the -feature agreement can be accounted for via the syntactic operation, Bidirectional Agree<sup>[6, 23]</sup>, while the definiteness and case agreement can be accounted for via the morphological operations, the AGR insertion and the Feature Copying<sup>[24]</sup>. To

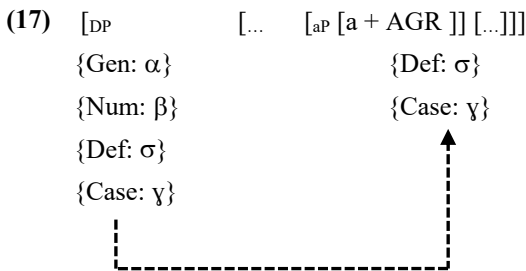
illustrate, based on the assumption of the Bidirectional Agree, which states that agreement occurs when a probe c-commands a goal or vice versa, Winchester<sup>[22]</sup> suggests that Agree takes place between the aP, which is a probe with unvalued gender and number features, and the head D, as shown in (16). This results in the valuation of gender and number features of the aP.



([22], p. 7)

As for the definiteness and case agreement, Winchester<sup>[22]</sup> assumes that an AGR node is inserted as a sister to the node a at phonetic form (PF). This AGR node bears unvalued definiteness and case features that are valued by

copying the relevant features from DP onto the AGR node, as demonstrated in (17). This operation of Feature Copying occurs only if the DP dominates the aP that contains the AGR node and no other head bearing these features intervenes.



([22], p. 12)

Though this analysis of Winchester<sup>[22]</sup> presents a good attempt to explain the adjectival agreement in MSA, it seems to be complicated. Using two different mechanisms (i.e., the syntactic operation of Bidirectional Agree and the morphological operations of AGR insertion and Feature Copying) to account for the phenomenon of the adjectival agreement in MSA is less conceptually desirable. As will be shown in the current work, using a single mechanism to account for

this type of agreement in SA is highly preferable.

To summarize, this section reviews a number of diverse analyses proposed for the adjectival agreement in Arabic. It has been pointed out that these analyses are inadequate and have several shortcomings. Before presenting my analysis for the SA adjectival agreement in section (4), the next section lays out the main theoretical assumption to be used in this proposed analysis.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical framework to be employed in the analysis of the SA adjectival agreement. To illustrate, the proposed analysis in the current work for

the SA adjectival agreement rests mainly on the *Feature Assignment Rule* (FAR), which has been initially suggested by Pesetsky<sup>[15]</sup> to account for case markers on Russian DPs. As described by Pesetsky<sup>[15]</sup>, this rule consists of two key parts, as shown in (18).

**(18) Feature Assignment Rule (FAR):**

- a) **Copying:** when  $\alpha$  merges with  $\beta$ , forming  $[\alpha \ \beta]$ , the grammatical features of  $\alpha$  are immediately copied onto  $\beta$ .
- b) **Realization:** ..... and are realized as morphology on all lexical items dominated by  $\beta$ .

([15], p. 8)

The first part of the rule simply states that when the item A merges with the item B, and then A dominates both A and B, the grammatical features that A has are immediately copied onto B. The second part of the rule states that these copied features onto B are thereupon morphologically realized on all lexical elements within the item B. In the next section, it will be revealed that the FAR makes very useful insight into the analysis of the SA adjectival agreement.

first analysis suggests that the attributive adjective is base-generated prenominally and the N-A order can be derived through the noun movement to a position higher than that of the attributive adjective (see, e.g.,<sup>[16, 25, 26]</sup>). In contrast, the other analysis proposes that the Arabic attributive adjective is base-generated postnominally<sup>[1, 2]</sup>. In the current work, I follow the latter analysis and assume that the SA modifying adjectives are base-generated postnominally, as demonstrated in (19). This latter analysis is more economical (see, e.g.,<sup>[27, 28]</sup>) since it does not require multiple instances of raising, as discussed above in the analyses of Fassi-Fehri<sup>[16]</sup> and Kremers<sup>[3]</sup>. It also makes the analysis of the SA noun-adjective agreement simpler and more elegant.

### 4. Analysis for SA Adjectival Agreement

In the literature, two lines of analyses have been put forward about the structure of attributive adjectives. The

**(19)**

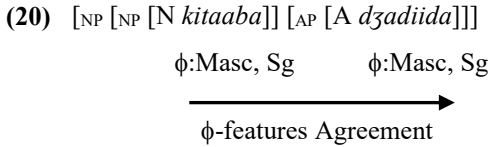
- a) ?al-walad-u      qara?-a                      l-kitaab-a                      l-dzadiid-a  
 the-boy-NOM    read.PST-3.Masc.Sg    the-book.Masc.Sg-ACC    the-new.Masc.Sg-ACC  
 ‘The boy read the new book.’
- b) [DP [D l] [NP [NP [N kitaaba]] [AP [A dzadiida]]]]

As can be seen in structure (19.b), the AP *dzadiida* ‘new’ first merges with its modified NP *kitaaba* ‘book’. Then, the NP that contains both the AP and its modified NP merges with the head D and hence forms a DP. It can be observed that there is no any type of raising in this simple structure.

Having sketchily discussed the structure of the SA attributive adjective, it is time now to explain how the agreement takes place between the SA attributive adjective and its modified noun in the four morphological features: -features (i.e., gender and number), case, and (in)definiteness. Us-

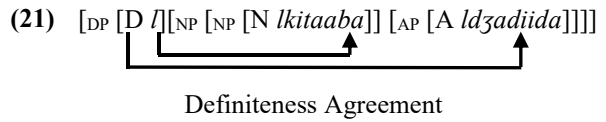
ing the FAR proposed by Pesetsky<sup>[15]</sup>, I suggest that when the NP merges with its modifying AP and hence forms an NP, the -features (i.e., gender (masculine or feminine) and number (singular, dual, or plural)) of the modified NP are immediately copied onto the AP and then realized on the adjective head dominated by the AP. The structure in (20) demonstrates how the agreement in gender and number between the AP *dzadiida* ‘new’ and its modified NP *kitaaba* ‘book’ in (19.a) is obtained. Both of them bear the masculine singular features.



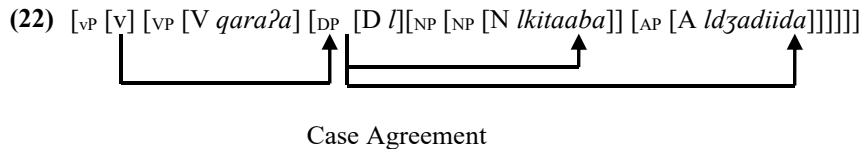


As for the (in)definiteness agreement between the SA attributive adjective and its modified NP, I suggest that as soon as the head D, which may contain either a definite or indefinite article, merges with the maximal NP, which contains both the NP and its modifying AP, the article in the head D is immediately copied onto this maximal NP. Since the NP and its modifying AP are the only lexical categories within this maximal NP, the article in the head D is realized on both of them. The structure in (21) illustrates how the definite article *l-* ‘the’ shows up on both the NP *lkitaaba* ‘the book’ and its modifying AP *ldzadiida* ‘the new’ in example (19.a). As pointed out by Danon<sup>[6]</sup>, the definiteness agreement should not be considered part of the universal  $\phi$ -feature agreement. So far, it can be observed that the agreement in  $\phi$ -features and (in)definiteness between the SA attributive adjective and its modified NP can be straightforwardly accounted for by using the same single mechanism, namely the FAR; there is no need for the multiple complicated instances of raising, as proposed in the

analyses of Fassi-Fehri<sup>[16]</sup> and Kremers<sup>[3]</sup>.



The last point that needs to be addressed is the case agreement between the SA attributive adjective and its modified NP. As well established in the framework of the Minimalist Program<sup>[20, 21, 27]</sup>, the head *v* assigns an accusative case to the closest DP in its c-command domain, and the head *T* assigns a nominative case to the closest DP in its c-command domain (for further discussion on case assignment, see<sup>[16, 20, 21, 29–32]</sup>). On the basis of this approach, I propose that once the DP obtains the required case feature, either accusative or nominative, this feature is then realized on all lexical categories contained in this DP. Since the NP and its modifying AP are the only lexical categories within this DP, the obtained case feature shows up on both of them. This explains why in SA the NP and its modifying AP always bear the same morphological case. The structure in (22) demonstrates how the morphological accusative case */-a/*, which the DP obtains from the head *v*, shows up on both the NP *lkitaaba* ‘the book’ and its modifying AP *ldzadiida* ‘the new’ in example (19.a).



It should be pointed out that the case feature is not realized on the head D because this head is a functional item, not a lexical item. As stated in the second part of the FAR, the grammatical feature is realized only on lexical items.

In short, the agreement between the SA NP and its modifying AP in the  $\phi$ -features, case, and (in)definiteness can be straightforwardly accounted for by using a single mechanism, specifically the FAR. This analysis has numerous merits. First, it accounts for the SA adjectival agreement in a simpler and more elegant way. Second, it does not need multiple instances of raising, as suggested by some of the previous analyses. Lastly, the case agreement has been approached without resorting to the complicated assumptions that have been made in some of the earlier analyses.

## 5. Conclusions

In SA, the postnominal attributive adjective has to fully agree with its modified noun in four grammatical features, namely gender, number, case, and (in)definiteness. The present study attempted to provide a simpler account for this type of full agreement in SA. By using the FAR<sup>[15]</sup>, it has been proposed that once the noun phrase merges with its modifying adjective, the grammatical features of this NP are directly copied onto the AP and then appeared on the adjective head within the AP. This analysis has the merit of being simpler and more economical; it does not require multiple instances of raisings and projections as suggested by the earlier analyses.

Due to the scope of this study, two points have been left for future research. The first point is related to the unsystematic agreement pattern that SA attributive adjectives show with their modified broken plural nouns. As briefly indicated in footnote (4), in SA the attributive adjective that modifies the broken plural noun must be always feminine singular. This type of defected agreement actually requires an in-depth examination. The other point concerns the adjectival agreement in the various Arabic varieties. It is recommended to examine whether the various Arabic varieties exhibit the same adjectival agreement observed in SA. Such a work may help obtain a better and comprehensive understanding of the adjectival agreement in Arabic syntax.

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Not applicable.

## Data Availability Statement

Data can be given upon a reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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