

ELOISE JELINEK

AGREEMENT, CLITICS AND FOCUS IN EGYPTIAN ARABIC*

1. INTRODUCTION

Argument structure in universal grammar presents a number of features that are determined by the topic/focus (Information Structure) articulation of the clause. There is a universal default focus structure of the sentence, where the subject is a familiar referent, topical in the context – the predication base (Sasse (1987)). In contrast, the VP or predicate is the new and focused information. There are parametric differences across languages in the use of particular grammatical devices that align syntactic structure with information structure. Commonly seen features of this kind are:

- (1) a. Subject agreement and Pro-drop.
- b. Object clitics.

Only definite (familiar and presuppositional) subjects can be Pro-dropped. These ‘missing’ but recoverable subjects are maximally backgrounded in the discourse. Object clitics raise to IP; this puts them in the domain of the sentence associated with presuppositional material (Diesing (1992)). Object clitics typically exclude contrastive stress, in line with their backgrounded status.

The central topic of this paper is the expression in Egyptian Arabic (EA) of these parametric features of argument structure, options universally available to the syntax: subject Pro-drop and the encliticization of object pronouns. I will show how the distribution of these features in EA is tied to predicate type, and how they relate to the focus structure of the clause. Predicate types in EA are defined in terms of the functional heads associated with each type. This compositional view of argument structure in the language is outlined in section 2.

Section 3 below demonstrates the dependency between agreement in the feature of person of the subject and Pro-drop. We will see that

- (2) Pro-drop in EA varies across predicate type.

The verb in EA shows subject agreement in the ϕ -features of person, number, and gender. We will also see lexical categories other than verbs that have these same syntactic properties, and other categories that exclude them.

- (3) a. ^cali fataḥ ?il-baab.
 opened(PERF:3MS) the-door
 ‘Ali opened the door.’
- b. fataḥ ?il-baab.
 opened(PERF:3MS) the-door
 ‘He opened the door.’
- (4) a. il-baab maftuuḥ.
 the-door open(MS)
 ‘The door is open.’
- b. *maftuuḥ.
 ‘it is open.’

The passive participle in (4) does not agree with the subject in the feature of person, and excludes Pro-drop; (4b) is not a sentence. Section 3 accounts for this variation of person subject agreement across lexical categories in terms of functional projections.

Section 4 deals with the encliticization of object pronouns. Object pronouns in EA show two unusual and typologically interesting traits:

- (5) a. There are no free-standing object pronouns.
 b. Object clitics are excluded with certain predicate types where object NPs may occur.

I show that this distribution of object pronouns follows from the distribution of functional categories that define predicate type. In section 5, the resumptive pronoun strategy employed in the derivation of relative clauses in EA will be reviewed. I argue that:

- (6) The distribution of resumptive pronouns in EA is determined by the constraints stated in (5).

These constraints determine the distribution of resumptive pronouns in EA, in relative clauses and focus structures. Section 6 provides some remarks on Pro-drop and object cliticization as grammaticalizations of information structure in EA, and section 7 gives a brief summary and concluding remarks.

2. THE COMPOSITIONALITY OF ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

Emmon Bach (1967) argues that the syntax of auxiliaries must be stipulated for particular languages, since their behavior does not follow from the general principles that apply to basic predicate argument structures. Since the work of Pollock (1989), a major part of current syntactic research is concerned with the functional heads or 'light' verbs associated with argument structure in Universal Grammar. Recent work in the Distributed Morphology framework, starting with Halle & Marantz (1993) has focused on the role of functional projections in the grammar. Bobaljik (1995) argues that there is cross-language variation in the inventory of functional heads that are overtly marked in Infl. Jelinek (1995) argues that languages select from a universally available set of functional heads to grammaticalize in Infl, and that these Infl projections may be separate words, or may be morphologically incorporated into an Aux constituent or the verb. Furthermore, languages may elect to combine a cluster of Inflectional features in portmanteau morphs: Tense-Voice, and Mood-Polarity are frequently seen clusters. There are various entailments among the Infl features, between Voice and Aspect, for example. The Semitic languages have presented especially interesting data for the investigation of morphosyntactic typology, since the lexical semantic features of the Semitic verb are represented in the unpronounceable consonantal root, while overt inflectional material is incorporated with this root into a morphological word at spell-out. Aside from the 'light' or auxiliary verb *kwn* and negation, inflectional heads in EA are typically part of the predicate word. (See Introduction (this volume).)

2.1. *Infl as a structured domain*

Infl is universally the domain of the sentence where argument structure is determined. Grimshaw (1990), Bittner & Hale (1996), and Jelinek (1995) argue that argument structure is in itself a structured domain, not merely a collection of features. Grimshaw draws attention to the numerous universal constraints on argument structure, and observes: "...the position taken in earlier work, that the lexicon is idiosyncratic and is acquired piece by piece, simply cannot be maintained. It fails to explain the high degree of regularity of the lexical system as well as how children come to acquire lexical information." Grimshaw argues for universal thematic and prominence hierarchies that determine argument structure. Bittner & Hale also argue that argument structure has its own configurational structure, in which case assignment takes place. The goal of this paper is to show that the distinct argument structures associated with predicate types in EA are determined by particular constellations of inflectional projections.

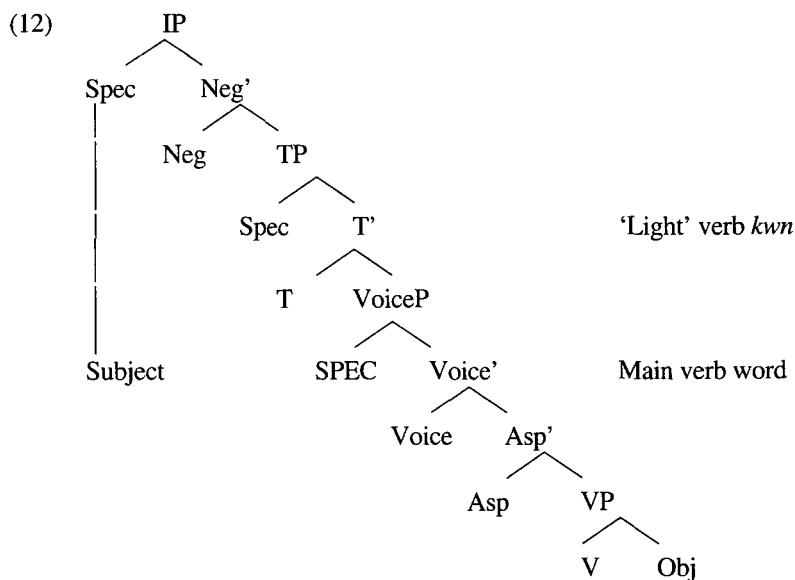
2.2. *Case and θ -role assignment*

While each verb or predicate has its particular lexical semantic structure, θ -roles associated with it are selected from a small, language universal set: Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Goal, Source, etc., as emphasized by Grimshaw (1990). Dowty (1989), (1991) identifies the basic thematic proto-roles that are manifested across

(Active, Passive) and Aspect (Perfect, Imperfect, including the Progressive and Prospective sub-types) which are incorporated into the verb word, along with subject Agr. We saw an example of a voice alternation in (7), (8) above. Varieties of the Imperfect aspect include:

- (10) bi-yiktib.
 PROG-write(IMPERF:3MS)
 'He is writing.' (Progressive)
- (11) ḥa-yiktib.
 PROSP-write(IMPERF:3MS)
 'He is going to write.' (Prospective)

For predicates with these projections, I assume the following clause structure.



2.4. Subject inflection and Voice

Subjects have traditionally been classed as external arguments of the VP, as opposed to the internal object arguments of the verb. Kratzer (1994) takes a radical departure; she argues against so-called external arguments on the grounds that arguments are universally introduced by heads, not by phrases, and that all the arguments of a head fall within its projection. In Kratzer's view, external arguments are always added by a neo-Davidsonian secondary predication, and are introduced by a functional head. Kratzer proposes that the functional projection where the subject argument is introduced be identified as Voice, and that Voice both assigns a θ -role to the external subject, and is



<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4020-0536-7>

Themes in Arabic and Hebrew Syntax

Ouhalla, J.; Shlonsky, U. (Eds.)

2002, IX, 327 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4020-0536-7