

Parameterizing the Multiple Subject Construction (MSC): evidence from Tunisian Arabic (TA)

TA observes in (1) a marked S-SVO structure in view of doubling the subject by an H-pronoun; the 3rd singular person pronoun. The H-pronoun doubles the nominal subject NP in (1a), marking it contrastive topic; in (1b) the H-pronoun is an expletive pronoun doubling the nominal subject and marking it informational focus.

(1) a. **le-wled HUWWA** mfa-: l-el-masrah, muj e-ttufla

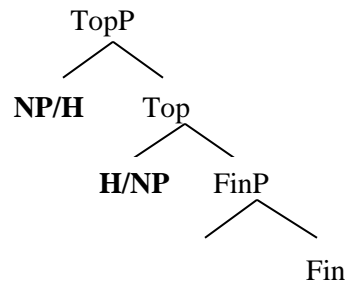
“THE BOY went to the theatre, not the girl.”

b. **huwwa le-wled** mfa-: l-el-masrah, ma:fi: ba:l-i:-f

“I had no idea whether the boy went to the theatre.”

The NP-H and H-NP sequences will be analyzed as realizations of the same syntactic structure, a MSC. The NP-H MSC has the NP in the spec(ifier) of a Top head and the H-form in the spec of the head Fin(ite), specified for Focus. The H-NP MSC has H in the spec of Top and the NP in the spec of Fin. See (2).

(2)



Icelandic displays similar constructions: (3a = (1a)); the Transitive Expletive Construction (TEC) in (3b= (1b)).

(3) a. **Strákarnir** gátu, ekki **þeir** heldur, opnað dyrnar

“The boys couldn’t open the door, either.”

b. **Það** borðuðu sennilega **margir jólasveinar** bjúgun.

“Many Christmas trolls probably ate the sausages.”

Likewise does Finnish in (4).

(4) a. **Lapset** ovat **ne-kin** tulleet kotiin b. **Sitä** ovat nämä **lapset** jo oppineet uimaan.

“The children, too, have come home.” “These children have already learned to swim.”

English, however, rules-out subject doubling.

(5) a. ***The BOY HE** went to school. b. ***He the boy** went to school.

The talk claims the differences and similarities of (1; 3; 4; 5) to correspond to parametric choices allowed by UG. It first shows that the MSCs in TA are the result spelling-out two heads, Top and Fin, marked with two features [+Top] and [+Foc], respectively, and associated with two EPP features. A [+Top] and [+Foc]-marked big DP will be argued to satisfy the EPP of both Fin and Top. English, on the contrary, to convey contrastive topic, needs just one head, Fin, with topic and focus features, coupled with just one EPP feature. This parametric variation is formulated as follows.

(6) The SpecFinP parameter:

Universal: [uTop] and [uFoc] are head features in the Fin-domain, i.e. the structural domain including Fin and the domain immediately above Fin.

Parameter: (a) [uTop] and [uFoc] are features of the same head Fin, or (b) Fin is dedicated to [uFoc].

Selecting the (b)-option entails that Top is a separate (higher) head. Assuming with Chomsky (2000) that any head can have an EPP-feature, there are separate parameters dictating whether Fin does or does not have an EPP-feature and whether the head Top does or does not have an EPP-feature. In both TA and English, Fin has an EPP-feature. English does not exhibit a MSC given option (a) of the SpecFinP parameter: [uTop] and [uFoc] are features of the same head Fin, which has an EPP-feature. This means there is in TA a separate Top head with an EPP-feature, meaning that Fin and Top both have an EPP feature that needs to be satisfied by moving or (externally) merging a constituent with their projected phrase. The MSCs in Icelandic, like TA, follow from option (b); i.e., in both languages Fin can only be [uFoc] with EPP. Icelandic, as TA, has the option to satisfy the EPP of Top by an expletive as in (1b) and in (3b), respectively. They also have the option to satisfy the EPP of the lower head, Fin, with a focused subject NP. The prediction for Finnish in view of the option (b) is that it observes (2) with the Top head bearing [uTop] with EPP and the Fin head bearing [uFin] with EPP. [+Foc]-marked subjects are attracted by the lower [uFin] head with EPP independently of the [uTop EPP]-marked Top head that attracts a [+Top]-marked subject NP or an expletive to satisfy the EPP of Top. Therefore, (6) parameterizes a MSC language against a non-MSC one.

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