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Case Assignment between Chomsky and Sibawayhi: A Minimalist Approach

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Abstract

This dissertation deals with a number of aspects of CaseTheory in the light of two distinct schools of linguistic thought: Chomsky's Minimalist Program and Sibawayhi's ?i'maal Theory. Two areas will be closely examined: (a) multiple case checking in which double object constructions, semantic case, complement small clauses and three-place predicates are discussed (b) case checking and Agr features in Arabic adjectival clauses. As for (a), Chomsky's Minimalist Program falls short of providing a proper account of the data involved. Based on Ura's (2000:13) account, I suggest that the verb in DOCs has a feature [+multiple] which allows it to enter into a checking relations with more than one matching goal. Concerning the problem in (b), it poses a challenge for both theories. In this regard, this study argues against Doron (2005) and Melnik (2006) and provides an elaborate analysis of this unique phenomenon based on the fact that the relation between the head noun and the predicative adjective is not concord, but the entire clause consisting of the predicate adjective and its subject functions as a modifier of the head noun.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, and my grandfather, who supported me from the beginning of my studying and taught me that acquiring knowledge should always be my priority. I would like also to dedicate it to my beloved daughter *Yasmiin* and my husband *Dr. Hassan* for his great support. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to all those who believe in the value of learning

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List of Abbreviations

NOM	Nominative
ACC	Accusative
AdjP	Adjectival Phrase
Agr	Agreement
CP	Complementizer Phrase
DO	Direct Object
DOCs	Double-object Constructions
fem	Feminine
FS	Features
GEN	Genitive
IO	Indirect Object
mas	Masculine
ms	Masculine Singular
pl	Plural

Pres	Present
PrP	Predication Phrase
RP	Resumptive Pronoun
SC	Small Clause
Spec	Specifier
SUBJ	Subject
TP	Tense Phrase

List of Transliteration Symbols Used in this Dissertation

?	glottal stop
ʻ	voiced pharyngeal fricative
b	voiced bilabial stop
d	voiced dental stop
ð	voiced inter-dental fricative
D	voiced (emphatic) dental stop
ð	voiced (emphatic) inter-dental fricative
f	voiceless labio-dental fricative
ħ	voiceless pharyngeal fricative
j	voiced palatal affricate
k	voiceless velar stop
q	voiceless uvular stop
s	voiceless alveolar fricative
S	voiceless (emphatic) alveolar fricative
t	voiceless dental stop
T	voiceless (emphatic) dental stop
x	voiceless velar fricative
z	voiced alveolar fricative
θ	voiceless inter-dental fricative

Short vowels are transcribed using one vowel letter (*i, o,* and *a*), and long vowels are represented using two vowel letters (*ee, oo, aa*).

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 The Aim and Scope of the Study

The subject of this dissertation is Case Assignment between Chomsky and Sibawayhi. This study investigates mechanisms of case assignment in both Arabic and English within Chomsky's *Minimalist Program* (MP) and Sibawayhi's *?i'maal Theory*. In addition, the study provides an analysis of a number of specific structures in Arabic within the assumptions of the *MP* particularly those related to the mechanisms of case checking.

In the past few years, Chomsky (1995, 1998, and 1999) initiated a new development in the syntactic research, commonly known as *Minimalism.* The central idea of this development is that linguistic theory should make use of as few primitive notions as possible. For this reason, standard notions such as *X' Theory* and government are abandoned and replaced by more basic notions. Chomsky does not develop a fully worked-out syntactic theory. Rather, he sets out the basic principles along which such a theory should be developed.

Among the issues discussed is multiple case checking in double object constructions. By multiple case checking I mean the verb that assigns accusative case to more than one

complement. The study explains the mechanism through which accusative case is checked in multiple-accusative constructions in the light of Sibawayhi's *?i'maal* theory and Chomsky's *Minimalist Program*.

Sibawayhi and other Arab linguists study multiple accusative constructions, but they focus on the semantic classes of verbs that can occur in these constructions and the different types of complements to which these verbs assign case**.** Therefore, there is a need to reanalyze those constructions to adapt to the recent developments of syntactic theory.

In addition to double-object constructions, the dissertation also investigates Arabic complement small clauses or verbless clauses that precede a topic and a predicate. Those verbs are traditionally known as *Heart and Mind* verbs. We closely examine those verbs and try to investigate how case is checked within the *Minimalist tenets* and *?i'maal* rules.

The present study also provides a detailed coverage of Arabic participles. It is known that these participles lack tense; however, they assign case to their dependants. Thus, it is necessary to examine those constructions and understand their case assigning properities within *Minimalism*. In addition, the

study closely examines a particular construction in Arabic which is traditionally called *''n'at sababii''*. Such constructions pose a challenge to grammatical theories and the theory of Agreement in particular. In this regard, I argue against traditional accounts recently advocated by Doron (2005) and Melink (2006) whose analyses are based on concord-agreement distinctions.

The aim of this study is therefore threefold. The first goal is to point out the parametric variation between the English and Arabic in terms of case assignment. The second is to analyze these variations, and the third is to provide an account of how case is precisely checked in these constructions within a single configuration.

With a view to pursuing the objectives of this research to a logical end, the researcher has attempted several and complex systems of methodology. The following methods have been applied: the descriptive method has been applied to obtain a theoretical background and record a descriptive analysis of case-assignment in Arabic and English. An empirical method has helped in data analysis and the inclusion of the data. A comparative method has been applied to analyze case assignment in Arabic and compare it to that found in English to discuss the similarities and differences between them when necessary. An analytical method has been followed

to analyze all relevant data from which we have defined the mechanisms under which case is checked within the *Minimalist Program*.

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is a basic introduction to case checking within two linguistic schools. The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with the mechanisms of case assignment within the two approaches, namely, Chomsky's *Minimsalist Program* and Sibawayhi's *?i'maal* Theory, and introduce some background information which is needed to follow the subsequent chapters.

In chapter two, an overview of double-object constructions is presented. In chapter three, there is coverage of complement small clauses and the nature of their objects. In chapter four, a minimalist account of Arabic participial and adjectival clauses is provided. Chapter five is concluding remarks.