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| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Splitting NegP in Standard Arabic: A Syntactic Study into VSO Word Order in Negative Sentences

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| **ABSTRACT**

This paper strives to overcome the issues of achieving a VSO word order in negated sentences in Standard Arabic. A possible solution would be to split the Negative projection into two, where the higher head hosts the negative particle, and the lower head has the ability to attract and host the verb, which falls within the scope of the negative particle. Splitting the negative projection proved to be sufficient to maintain the integrity and validity of the other theories available in the Minimalist Program. Moreover, it allows for a distinction between the A-movement operation, where verbs move over the Subject to a higher position resulting in a VSO word order, and the A'-Movement operation of a fronted Determiner Phrase (DP) is moved to the utmost left for focal purposes.

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1. Introduction

Standard Arabic is a pro-drop language with the possibility of the subject being realized in either a preverbal or postverbal position. While the theories within the Minimalist Program framework can generally provide sound syntactic representations for declarative sentences, things become a little bit shaky when those same sentences are negated. The available VSO order in declarative sentences becomes unattainable in negative sentences without breaking one or more of the pre-existing theories in the framework, such as the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC) or Structure Preservation Principle (SPP). The article begins by laying down the theoretical foundations upon which negated sentences will be analyzed. After that, all the available negative particles in Standard Arabic are run through derivations, with emphasis on how and why some of them crash. Finally, in order to circumvent the shortcomings previously identified, an alternative proposition which states that NegP should be split is forwarded and put to the test.

2. Negative Particles in Standard Arabic

La, lan, lam

The particle la, lan, and lam are believed to be a variation of the same item; where la goes into sentences in the present tense, lan is for the future, and lam is reserved for the past.

La: has the widest distribution as it can go with verbs, nouns, and even function as a coordinator.

When it is associated with a verb, the latter takes the vocalic melody jaʕal and is also in the indicative imperfective mood.

لا يأكل الولد
la: jaʔkulu l-waladu

Not eat the-boy
The boy does not eat.

لا طعام في البيت
la: tˤaʕa:ma fi: l-baɪtɪ
Not food in the-house
There is no food in the house

قرأت رواية لا جريدة
qaraʔtu riwa:jatan la: ʒari:datan
Read-I a novel not newspapers
I read a novel, not newspapers

As stated earlier, lan and lam are considered to be variations of la: lan is for the future, and lam is for the past, as the examples below show respectively:

لم ينجح البطل
lam janʒaħ l-batˤalu
not-past succeed the hero
The hero did not succeed.

لن ينجح البطل
lan janʒaħ l-batˤalu
not-future succeed the hero
The hero will not succeed.

Ma:
This particle can be used with verbal, nominal, or adjectival predicates.

ما أكل الولد طعام
ma: ʔakala l-waladu tˤaʕa:man
not the boy eat food
The boy didn't eat food

ما الرجل طبيب
ma: r-raʒulu tˤabi:bun
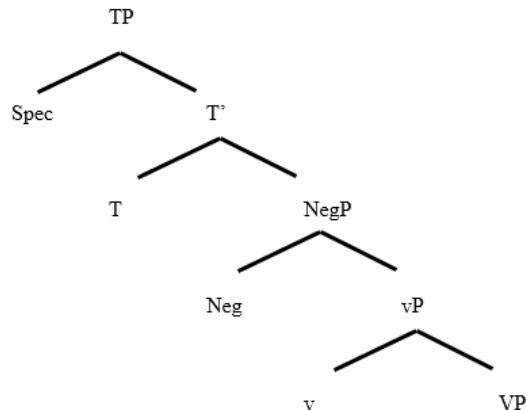not the man a doctor
the man is not a doctor

ما أحمد فقير
ma: ʔaħmadun faqi:run
not Ahmed poor
Ahmed is not poor

Laisa
There have been many proposals forwarded to account for laisa (Moutaouakil, 1989; Fassi Fehri, 1993). There is no absolute consensus about the nature of laisa and how it functions. In this article, we will abide by Moutaouakil's view on laisa, which considers it as a hybrid word between a copular verb and a negative morpheme.

ليس أحمد شاعرا
laɪsa ʔaħmadun ʃa:ʕɪran
not ahmed a poet
Ahmed is not a poet.

3. The location of NegP in Standard Arabic

Benmamoun (1992a, 2000) and Ouhalla (1994) argued that Neg heads its own projection between the TP and vP[1]:

```
                    TP
                   /  \
                Spec   T'
                      /  \
                    T     NegP
                         /  \
                       Neg    vP
                             /  \
                            v    VP
```

The tree diagram above can neatly account for la: an its tensed variants. Following Benmamoun's (2000) that verbs only move when the tense is either past or future, it follows that the tense feature on the T needs to attract the closest head that can bear its tensal feature. In the absence of NegP, the T attracts the lexical verb. On the other hand, when negation is present, the T attracts the closest tense bearing head, which happens to be la:. As a result, if the tense is the future, la:'s form is changed to lan; and if the tense is in the past, la:'s form is lam.

Moving on to the laisa, this particle was traditionally known to be a verb and was analyzed as such. However, leaning towards a more uniformed approach to negation in Standard Arabic, laisa can also head a NegP. In addition to achieving uniformity, this account would also bring laisa closer to la:; being just another variation of the default la:. Therefore, while lam and lan are la:'s variations that can carry tense, laisa, thanks to its wide range of agreement possibilities, could be la:'s variation that carries agreement (Aoun et al., 2010). The list below shows all the possible agreement constructions with laisa, and the tree diagram under the list exhibits where the agreement particle goes in [Spec; XP]

Agreement Paradigm of *laysa*

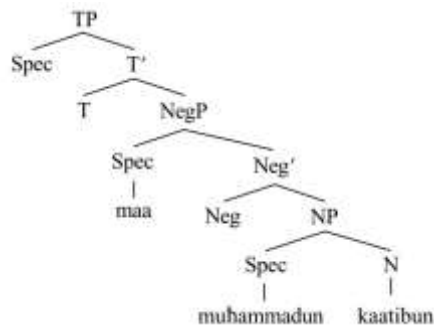| Person	Number	Gender	Affix	Neg+Affix
1	Singular	F/M	-tu	las-tu
2	S	M	-ta	las-ta
2	S	F	-ti	las-ti
3	S	M	-a	lays-a
3	S	F	-at	lays-at
2	Dual	M/F	-tumaa	las-tumaa
3	D	M	-aa	lays-aa
3	D	F	-ataa	lays-ataa
1	Plural	M/F	-naa	las-naa
2	P	M	-tum	las-tum
2	P	F	-tunna	las-tunna
3	P	M	-uu	lays-uu
3	P	F	-na	las-na

(Aoun et al., 2010)

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[1] In the original literature, the authors wrote VP instead of vP. For the sake of keeping with the most recent theoretical updates, the VP is substitute by a vP. This does not bear any consequences to the authors' proposition.
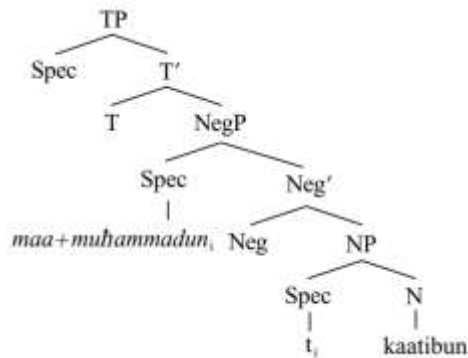
TP
Spec   T'
        T   NegP
              Neg   XP
              lais
                    Spec   X'
                    na:
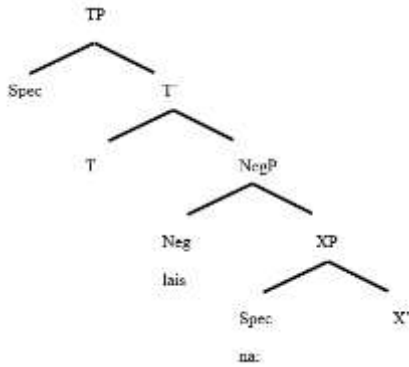
The final particle to account for is m:a. There are two competing theories in the literature.

First, Benmamoun (2000) claims that in order to keep the theory uniform, ma: should also be generated under NegP. The difference is that ma: occupies the spec of NegP and not it's head.

TP
Spec   T'
        T   NegP
              Spec   Neg'
              |
              maa   Neg   NP
                              Spec   N
                              | |
                              muhammadun   kaatibun

(Aoun et al., 2010)

Then, ma: attracts the element in [Spec; NP]

TP
Spec   T'
        T   NegP
              Spec   Neg'
              |
maa+muhammadun, Neg   NP
                              Spec   N
                              | |
   t,   kaatibun

(Aoun et al., 2010)

The issue with this account is that ma: can also occur with verbal predicates. In that case, it is the verb that gets attracted. Then, the verb would initially be in an A-position (head of VP) and move to an A' position (Spec of ma:), and in the cases where the tense is past or future, further move to an A' position (head of T). As illustrated, this results in the violation of the structure preservation principle.

The second theory was forwarded by Ouhalla (1993) and Moutaouakil (1993). The idea is ma: mirrors, in its behavior, the affirmative focus elements that are positioned in the left periphery of the clause (inna and qad). This led the formerly mentioned scholars to believe that ma: is the only particle that is not a variation of la:, and which occupies the head of a FocP with the features [NEG] and [Foc] (Ouhalla, 1993).
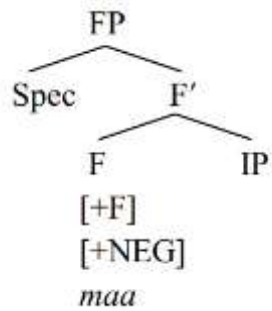
(Aoun et al., 2010)

In this way, ma: has scope over the element that undergoes contrastive focus without the necessity of a movement; which is the case when the negative contrastive focus affects the whole proposition or one constituent in the sentence. In the instances where the element bearing the contrastive focus is fronted, Ouhalla suggests that the head Foc is not overtly filled, ma: is generated with the element bearing the contrastive focus, and the whole resulting structure moves to [Spe; FocP].
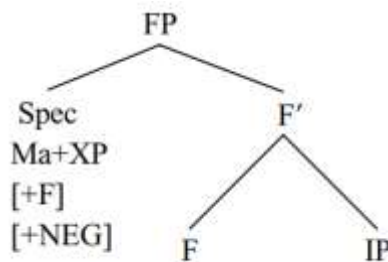

(Aoun et al., 2010)

4. Bottom-up Derivations and Feature Checking

In the Minimalist Program, sentences are said to be derived in a bottom-up fashion. "to say that a syntactic structure is derived in a bottom-up fashion is to say that the structure is built up from bottom to top, with lower parts of the structure being formed before higher parts." (Radford, 2004, p.438). That is to say, the derivation proceeds following a sequence of Merger (external or internal) operations. Simultaneously, the probe goal search is constantly active items with unvalued features would look for their matching valued features and have them checked. For example, a DP enters the derivation with its phi-features valued and interpretable but with an unvalued case feature. On the other hand, the T enters the derivation with unvalued phi-features but with a Tns that can assign a nominative case. Going from the bottom up, the DP will enter the derivation and have its case remain unvalued until the derivation reaches the T. At this point, the T functions as the probe assign the nominative case to the DP and get its own phi-features checked by that very same DP.

Building up the foundation for what is to come next, there is one important principle that should be kept in mind. Pesetsky's Earliness Principal would mean that features get checked as soon as a possible probe/goal is available.

Feature checking is relevant to this paper as it forces the subject DP to merge in the derivation after the light verb. Otherwise, in the hopes of getting a VSO word order without internally merging, one could say that the Subject DP merges externally in the [Spec; VP] position. This proposition would mean that the subject remains lower than the verb, and a VSO word order is achieved even with the introduction of negative particles. While this derives the correct word order, it does not allow for the correct feature checking operations to take place, as can be seen from the structure below.

TP

Spec   T'

T   NegP

Neg   vP

la

v   VP

DP   VP

Accusative Case   V   DP
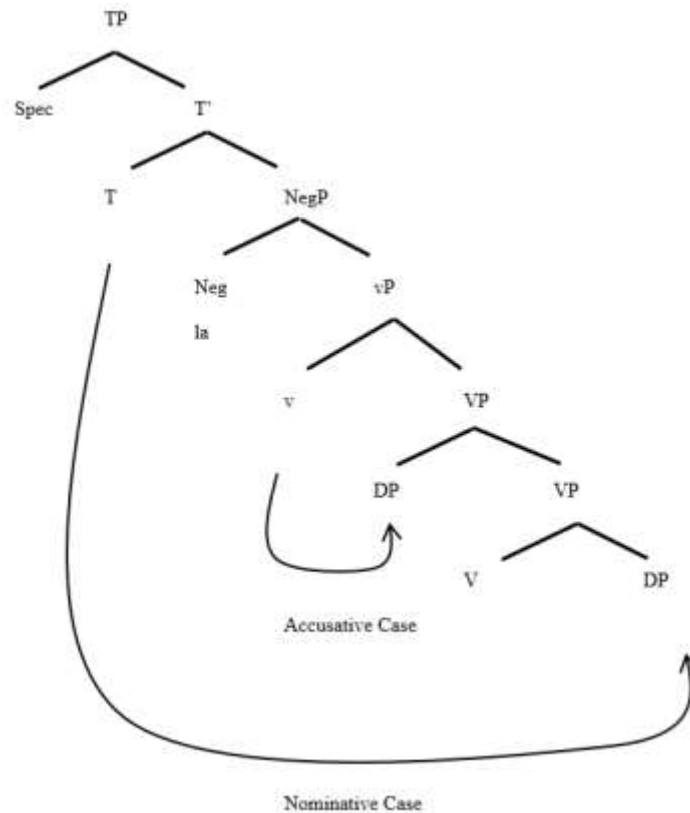
Nominative Case

Since the derivation proceeds in a bottom-up fashion and abides by the Earliness Principle, this derivation would wrongly assign Accusative Case to the subject. Moreover, later the T would also look for a probe and wrongly assign Nominative Case to the subject while breaking the Phase Impenetrability Condition. Hence, is it preferable for the subject to be in [Spec; vP], where it does not interfere with the light verb's Accusative Case assignment and gets assigned itself a Nominative Case from the T.
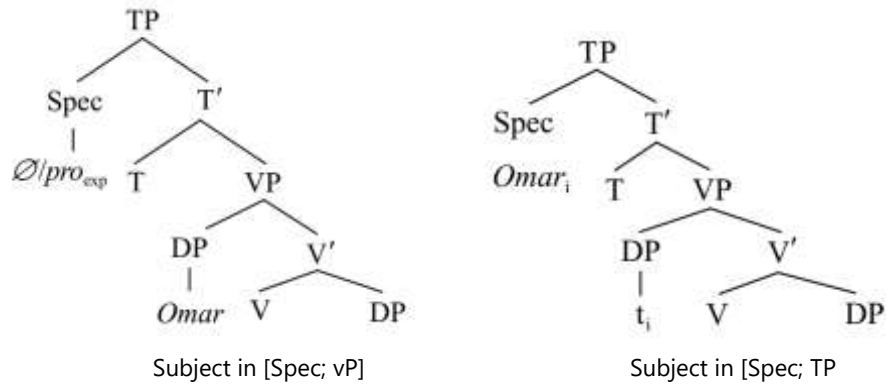
5. Subject Positions in Standard Arabic
The position of subjects in Standard Arabic has been extensively debated and raised plenty of controversies. However, there are generally two accounts that draw much of the general consensus. The first one assumes the subject can be in two positions, and the second one gives it only one fixed position.

5.1 Subject in Two Positions
This proposition is backed up by extensive literature available in Koopman's (1991) and McClosky's (1996) work. The basic premise is that there are at least two subject positions available in any clause. The first one can be found in [Spec; vP], and the second one is in [Spec; TP].

The consequence is the ability to generalize the assumption that subjects are base generated in [Spec; vP] with the option to raise to [Spec; TP] if needed. If the derivation does not move the subject, the [Spec; TP] gets a small pro coindexed with the main subject. On the other hand, if the subject is raised to [Spec; TP], there would be no need to merge a small pro. The examples[2] below, taken from Aoun et al. (2010), illustrate this point.

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[2] Note that the examples taken from Aoun et al. do not split the VP. If the vP was split, the subject would be in [Spec; vP]. This does not bear any consequences to the points this article is trying to make. However, for the sake of keeping up with the most updated forms of the theory, the VP is split unless it's taken from another source.

Subject in [Spec; vP]   Subject in [Spec; TP

5.2 Subject in One Position

This proposal purports that there is only one true subject position for subjects in Standard Arabic. All true subjects are located in [Spec; vP], and any reiteration of the subject in [Spec; TP] is either a topic, or a clitic-left dislocated element that binds the subject in [Spec; vP], as the example from Aoun et al. below illustrates:
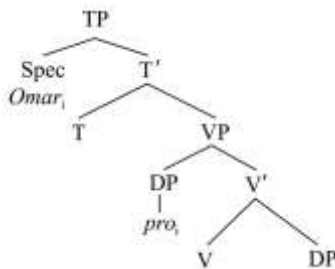
A second account that also goes in line with the proposition that there is only one genuine subject claim that subjects are always base generated in [Spec; vP] but move to [Spec; TP], which is problematic as the derived order will always be SVO. To circumvent that, this proposition claims that the verb can move to a functional category higher between the CP and TP. The example from Aoun et al. (2010) illustrates:
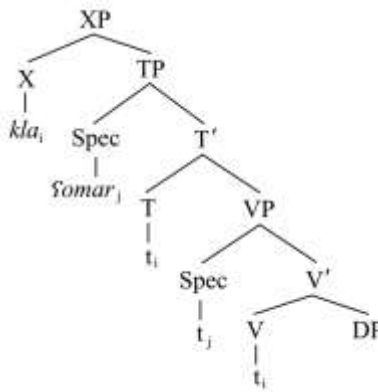
6. The Position of Subjects in this Article

Word order and subject positions in Standard Arabic have always been an area of debate with huge research potential. Since it is not the subject of this article, the paper will not dive any further into this topic. For the time being, a presentation of the article's stance on the matter and providing a brief rationale would suffice.

This article acknowledges that both [Spec; TP] and [Spec; VP] are potential subject hosts. Therefore, Standard Arabic's pro-drop could be utilized to fill all the subject gaps and keep a consistent account. Hence, the lexical subject carrying a thematic role would occupy the [Spec; vP], and the small pro coindexed with the lexical verb would occupy [Spec; TP]. This means that all sentences with a verb have a base VSO word order, and any other alterations are attained via necessary movements.

7. VSO Word Order in Negated Sentences
La: and its Variants in a VSO Word Order
- la: jaqraʔu l-waladu l-kita:ba

Abiding by all the previously mentioned theories and concepts, the derivation for the sentence below would have the following derivation:

The DP l-kita:ba merges with the lexical V jaqraʔ to form a VP, which in turn merges with a light verb v to form a v'. The head of the light verb has unvalued phi-features and can assign accusative cases. It looks for a probe and finds it in the DP below it. The features get checked, and the accusative case is assigned to the DP. Moreover, the light verb has a strong affixial nature, which forces the lexical verb to move from head V to head v. The v' merges with a DP to form a vP. The latter structure merges with a Neg to form a NegP. Going further, the NegP merges with a T to form a T'. The head T has unvalued ph-features and can assign nominative cases. It looks for a goal and finds it in [Spec; vP]. The DP l-waladu gets assigned the nominative case, and the matching features on probe T get checked. The derivation continues to merge the T' with a pro[3] subject in [Spec; TP]. The derivation is represented in the tree diagram below:
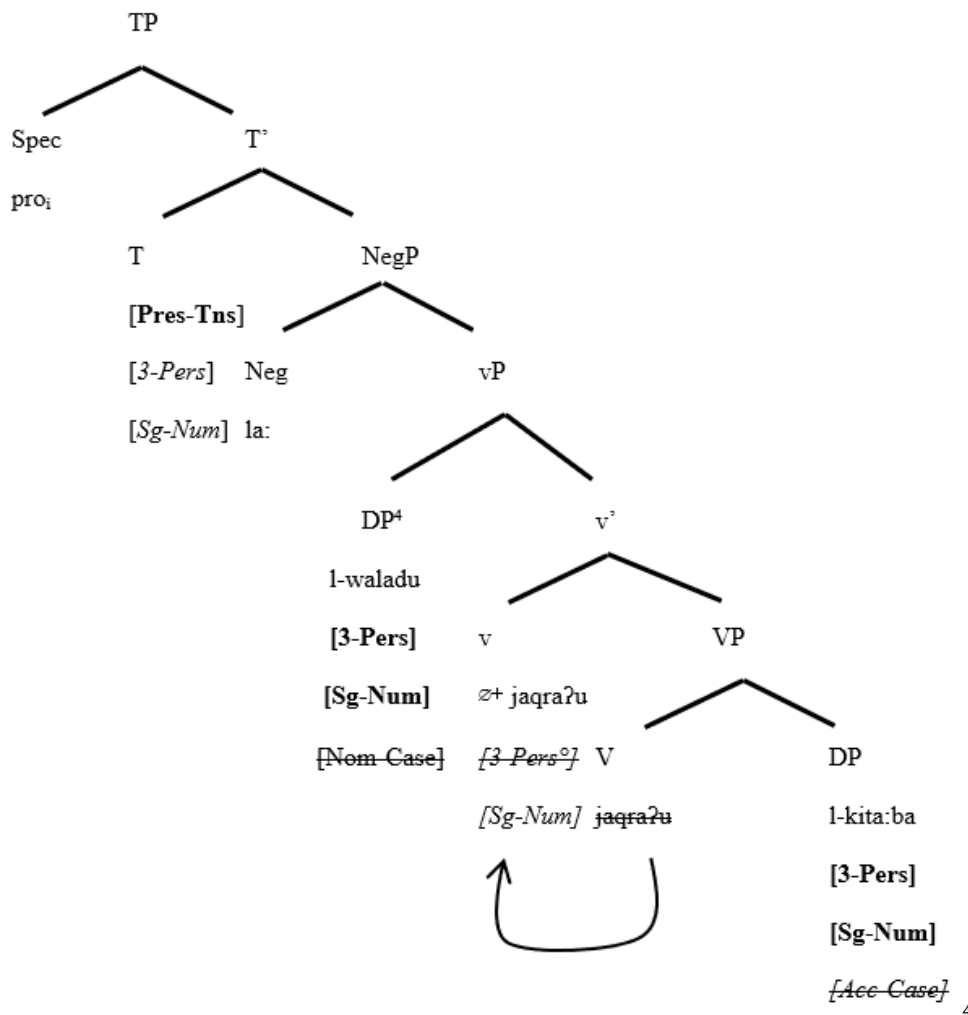
As can be seen from the tree above, the resulting structure has an ungrammatical SVO order and not the intended VSO order. The first assumption that has been challenged here is the claim that only past and feature tenses force the movement of verbs (or la). In this instantiation, the only way to derive a VSO order is by moving the verb to a head higher than the subject. However, moving the verb (or the head neg, for that matter) is not an available option in this example since the tense is the present Not only that,

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[3] Standard Arabic is a pro-drop language. Meaning that subjects can be dropped and realized via agreement or an ulterior realization in a lower position.
[4] For the sake of brevity, a DP will not be further split to its components (a D and an XP).

even if one is to ignore the previously mentioned problem and proceeds to move the verb to the head T, the result would still be problematic.

(i)   Movement must be carried out in a cyclic fashion. In this example, from head-to-head. The verb skips over the head Neg.

(ii)   Due to the issue mentioned in (i), the resulting word order in regards to the position of Neg is erroneous: jaqraʔu la: lwaladu lkita:ba; as the tree shows below:

TP
Spec   T'
proᵢ
      T   NegP
      [Pres-Tns]
      [3-Pers]   Neg   vP
      [Sg-Num]   la:
      ℊ+ jaqraʔu
                              DP   v'
                              l-waladu
                              [3-Pers]   v   VP
                              [Sg-Num]   ℊ+ jaqraʔu
                              [Nom Case]   [3 Pers°] V   DP
                                           [Sg-Num] jaqraʔu   l-kita:ba
                                                                       [3-Pers]
                                                                       [Sg-Num]
                                                                       [Acc Case]
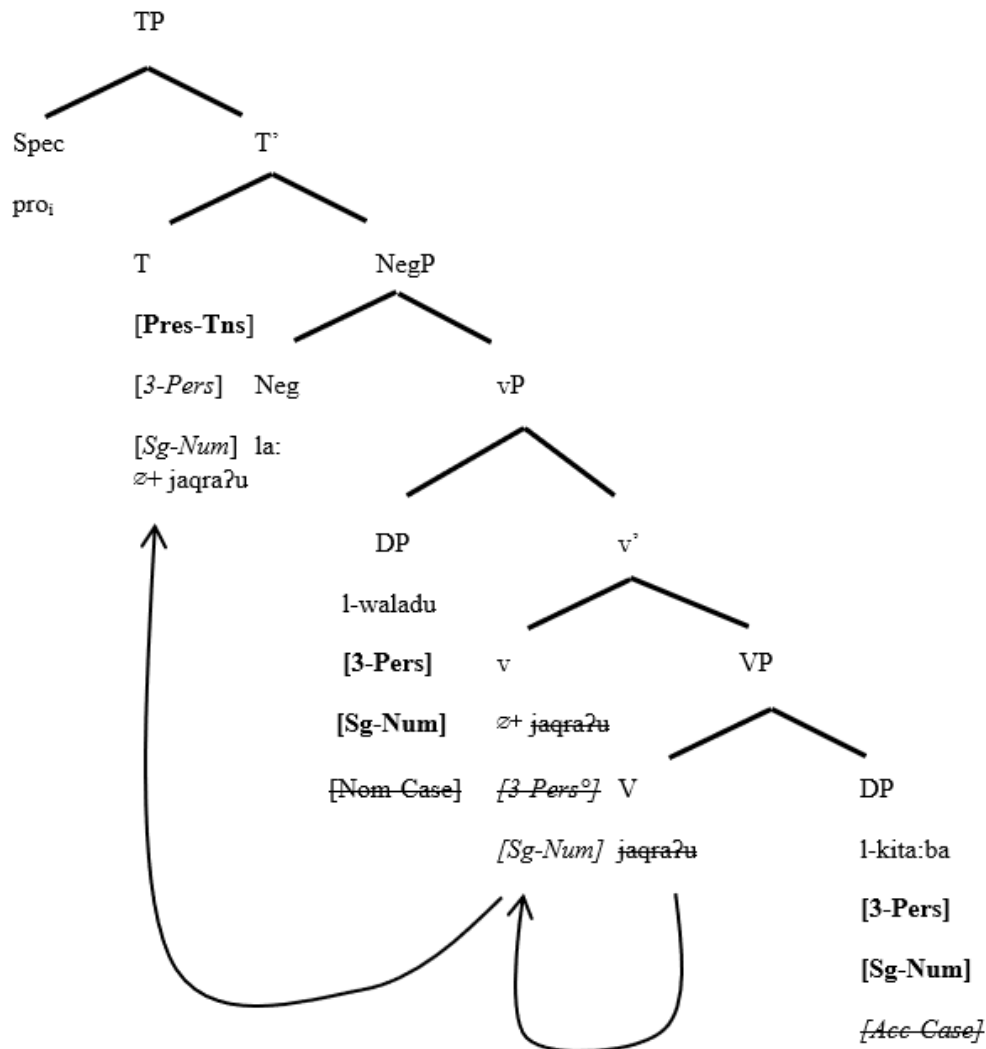
In sentences where there is no negation, moving the verb to T does result in the correct order while still breaking the no present tense movement rule.

TP

Spec   T'

pro_i

  T   vP

[Pres-Tns]

[3-Pers]

[Sg-Num]

⌀+ jaqraʔu DP   v'

     l-waladu

     [3-Pers] v   VP

     [Sg-Num] ⌀± jaqraʔu

     [Nom Case] *[3 Pers°]* V   DP

          [Sg-Num] jaqraʔu l-kita:ba

                  [3-Pers]

                  [Sg-Num

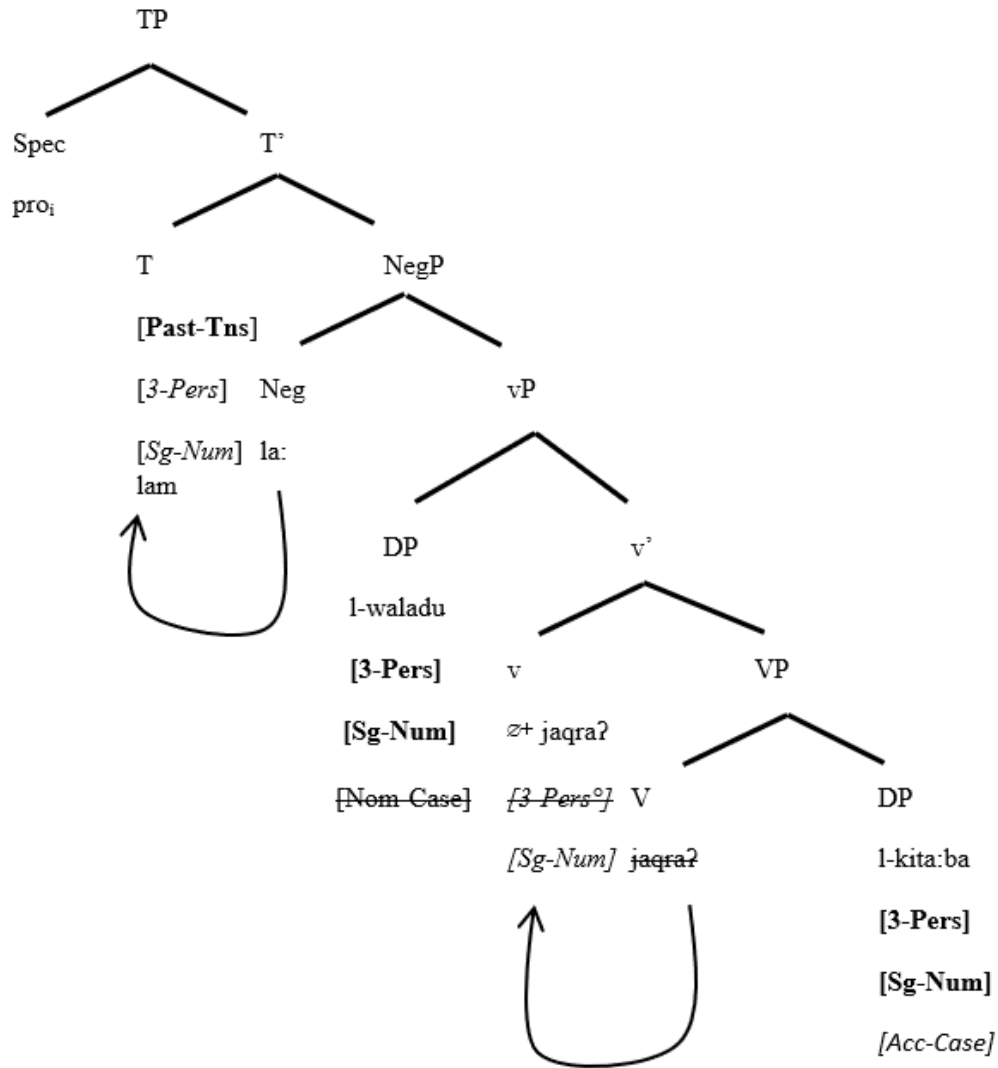   *[Acc-Case]*
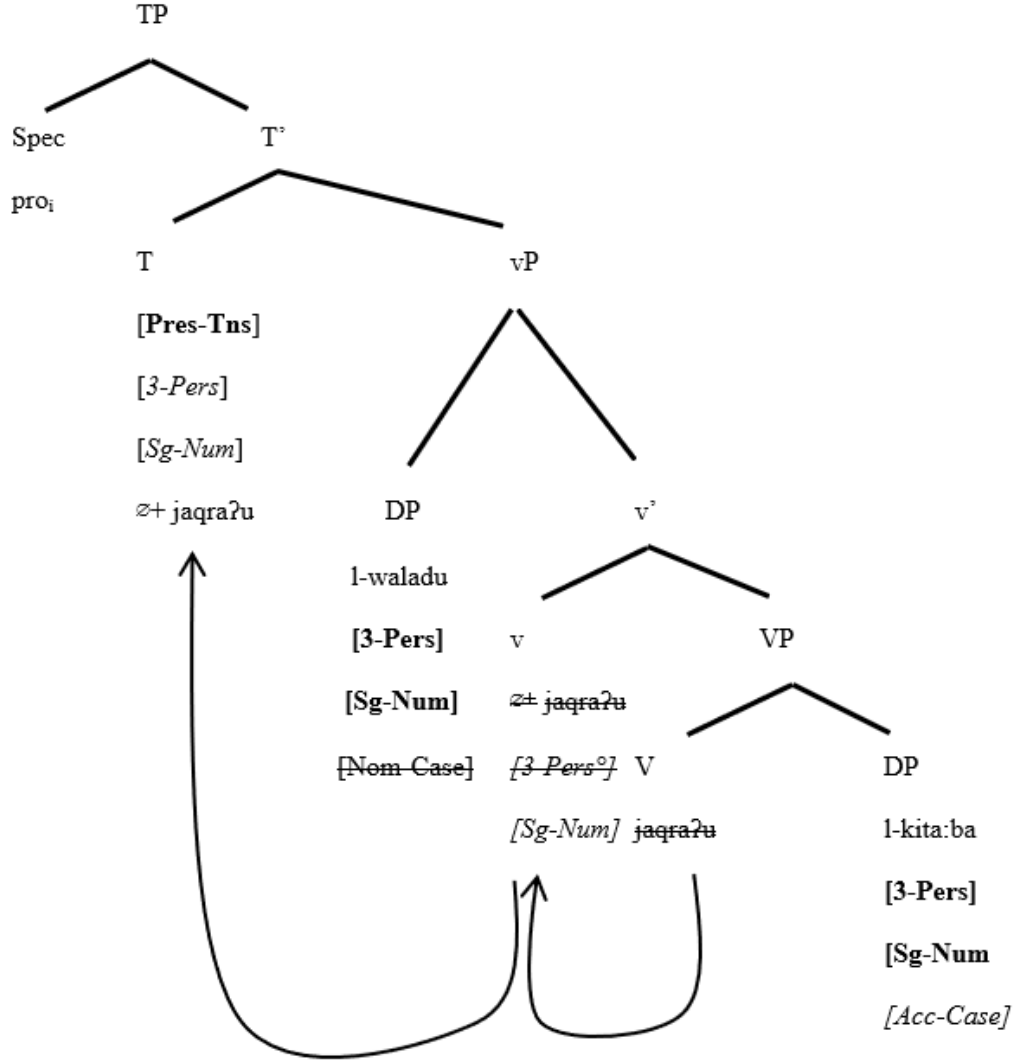
Now, moving on to the two variants lan and lam of la:.

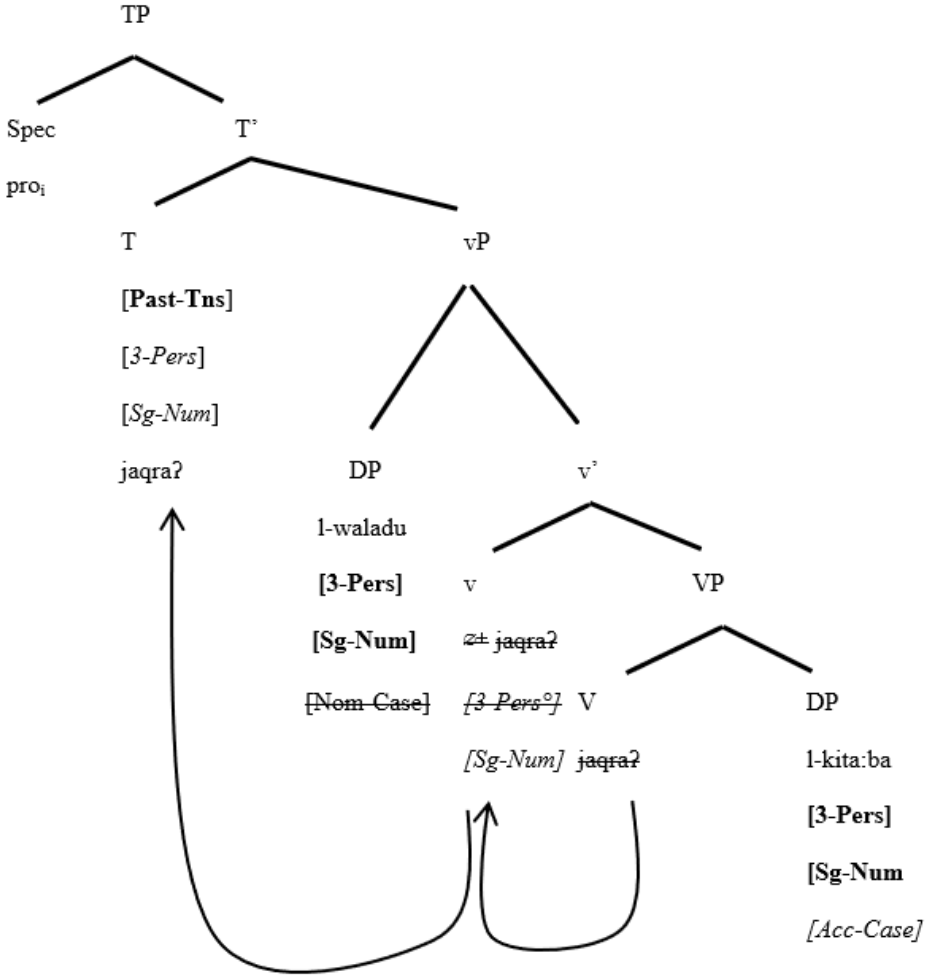-Lam jaqraʔ l-waladu l-kita:ba

-lan jaqraʔ l-waladu l-kita:ba.

Because of their similarities - save for the tense -only one analysis would be given as it can account for both.

The sentence 'lam jaqraʔ l-waladu' would have the tree representation below:

TP

Spec　　　　　T'

pro$_i$

　　T　　　　　NegP

　　[Past-Tns]

　　[3-Pers]　Neg　　　　　vP

　　[Sg-Num]　la:
　　lam

　　　　　　　　DP　　　　　v'

　　　　　　　l-waladu

　　　　　　　[3-Pers]　　v　　　　　VP

　　　　　　　[Sg-Num]　∅+ jaqra?

　　　　　　　[Nom Case]　*[3-Pers°]*　V　　　　　DP

　　　　　　　　　　　[Sg-Num]　jaqra?　　l-kita:ba

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[3-Pers]

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[Sg-Num]

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[Acc-Case]

It goes without saying that the derived word order is not the intended VSO. The sentence is derived in a similar way to the previous one, except that the tense here forces movement and attracts la: to T transforming it to lam. One item already occupying the T, the verb has no other higher head that could potentially host it and derive the VSO order.

Note that getting rid of the negation results in a grammatical sentence, as shown below:

TP
Spec   T'
pro_i
          T   vP
          [Past-Tns]
          [3-Pers]
          [Sg-Num]
          jaqra?   DP   v'
                        l-waladu
                        [3-Pers]   v   VP
                        [Sg-Num]   ~~z± jaqra?~~
                        ~~[Nom-Case]~~ ~~[3-Pers°]~~ V   DP
                                        [Sg-Num] ~~jaqra?~~   l-kita:ba
                                                                 [3-Pers]
                                                                 [Sg-Num
                                                                 [Acc-Case]

The last variant of la that we turn to now is laisa. Laisa constructions are verbless by virute. Therefore, neither VSO not SVO orders are attained when using this particle. Nevertheless, for the sake of exhaustiveness, the sentence below is given the tree and derivation below.

laɪsa l-waladu qa:rɪʔun

TP

Spec   T'

pro_i

T   NegP

[Past-Tns]

~~[3 Pers]~~   Neg   AgrP

~~[Sg Num]~~   lais

Agr   NomP

-a

DP   Nom'

l-waladu

[3-Pers]   Nom   DP

[Sg-Num]   -un   qa:ri?un

~~[Nom Case]~~ [3-Pers]   [3-Pers]

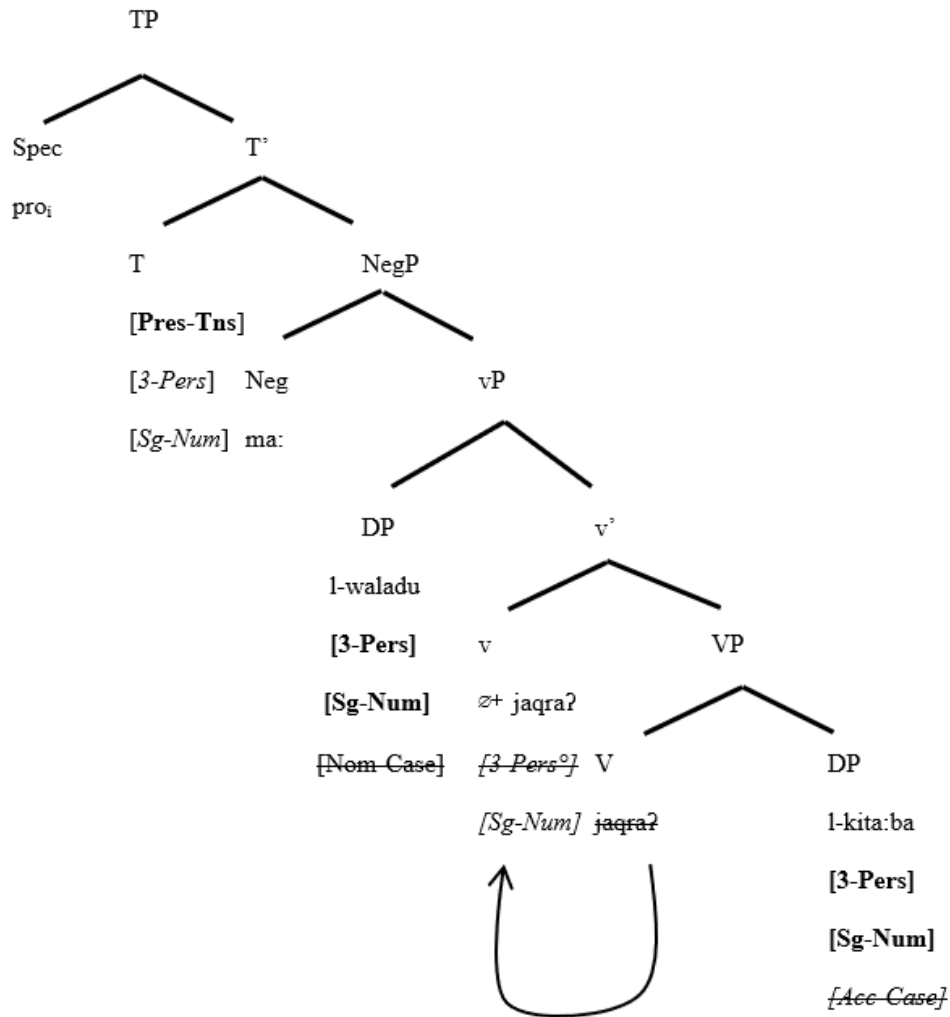~~[Sg Num]~~   [Sg-Num]

~~[Nom Case]~~
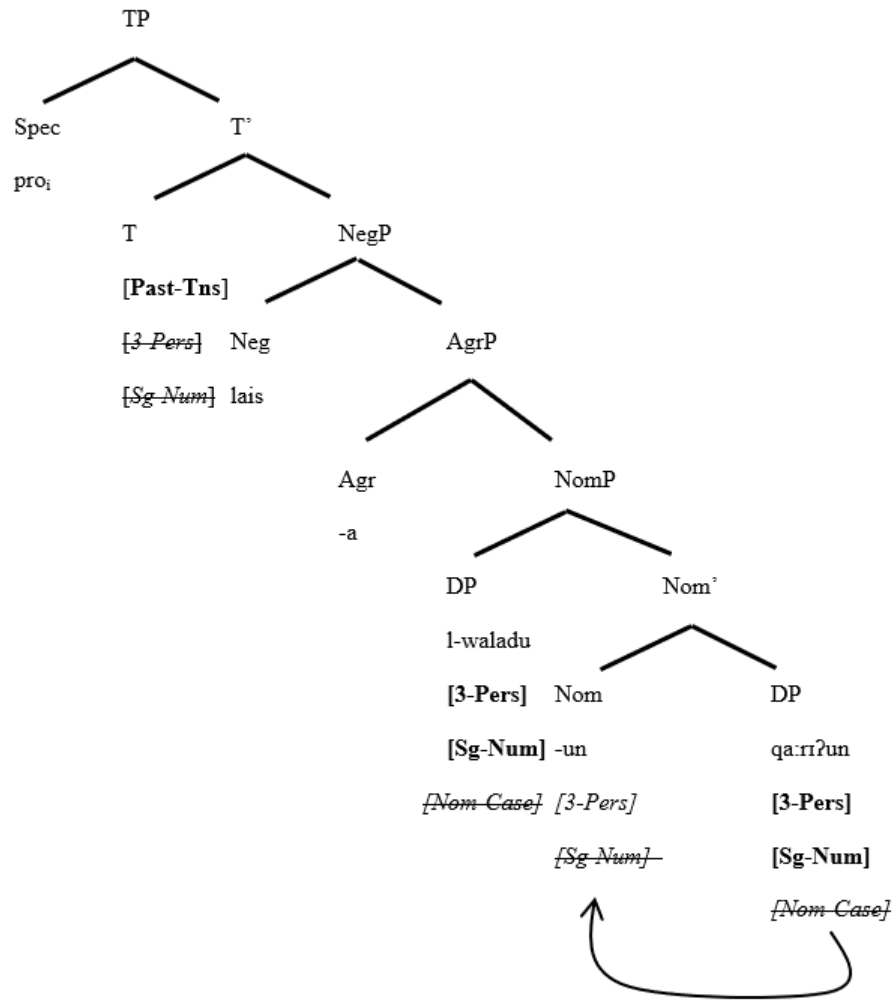
For verbless clauses, the article uses the NomP as an alternative to the PredP. Delving into the details as to why the former is better than the latter is not within the scope of this research, and the reader is advised to consult the original literature (Alazzawie, 2016).

The DP gets its nominative case and merges with the head Nom, and both items check each other's features resulting in a Nom'. The latter intermediate projection merges with its spec to form a NomP. The [Spec; NomP] is occupied by the DP l-waladu. This DP's case remains unvalued for now, and the derivation proceeds to merge with a head Agr to form an AgrP. This projection is found whenever laisa is used, and its head hosts the agreement feature between laisa and the DP l-waladu. The derivation continues merging AgrP with the head Neg bearing lais-, resulting in a NegP. The NegP merges with the head T, which looks for a goal to which it assigns a nominative case and has its features checked. The remaining DP with the unvalued case fits the profile and fulfils the T's feature requirements. The T and NegP finally merge into a TP.

8. ma: in a VSO order
As it has been discussed earlier, ma: is distinct as it does not seem to be a tensed or agreement derivative of la:. The same sentence that's been used throughout the previous section is re-used here, except for the negative particle changing to ma:. The investigation will begin by letting ma: head its own NegP projection.

- ma: jaqra?u l-waladu l-kita:ba

TP
├─ Spec
│ └─ pro_i
└─ T'
   ├─ T
   │ **[Pres-Tns]**
   │ *[3-Pers]*
   │ *[Sg-Num]*
   └─ NegP
      ├─ Neg
      │ ma:
      └─ vP
         ├─ DP
         │ l-waladu
         │ **[3-Pers]**
         │ **[Sg-Num]**
         │ [Nom Case]
         └─ v'
            ├─ v
            │ ⌀+ jaqra?
            │ *[3-Pers°]*
            │ *[Sg-Num]* jaqra?
            └─ VP
               ├─ V
               └─ DP
                  l-kita:ba
                  [3-Pers]
                  [Sg-Num]
                  [Acc Case]

The shortcomings of this treatment are similar to that of la: in all regards. That is to say, even moving the verb up to T does not save the sentence, as the negative particle will fall after the verb resulting in the wrong order.

The second alternative to account for ma: is by following Ouhalla's (1993) and Moutaouakil's claim about this negative particle mirroring the behavior of focus particles and, therefore, should be treated as such. Hence, a new projection is added above the TP. This projection does not initially host ma:. Rather, it just holds the features which eventually attract ma: and what it negates along. Therefore, ma: is believed to be base generated with the element it takes scope over during the merge external process (Aoun et al., 2010).
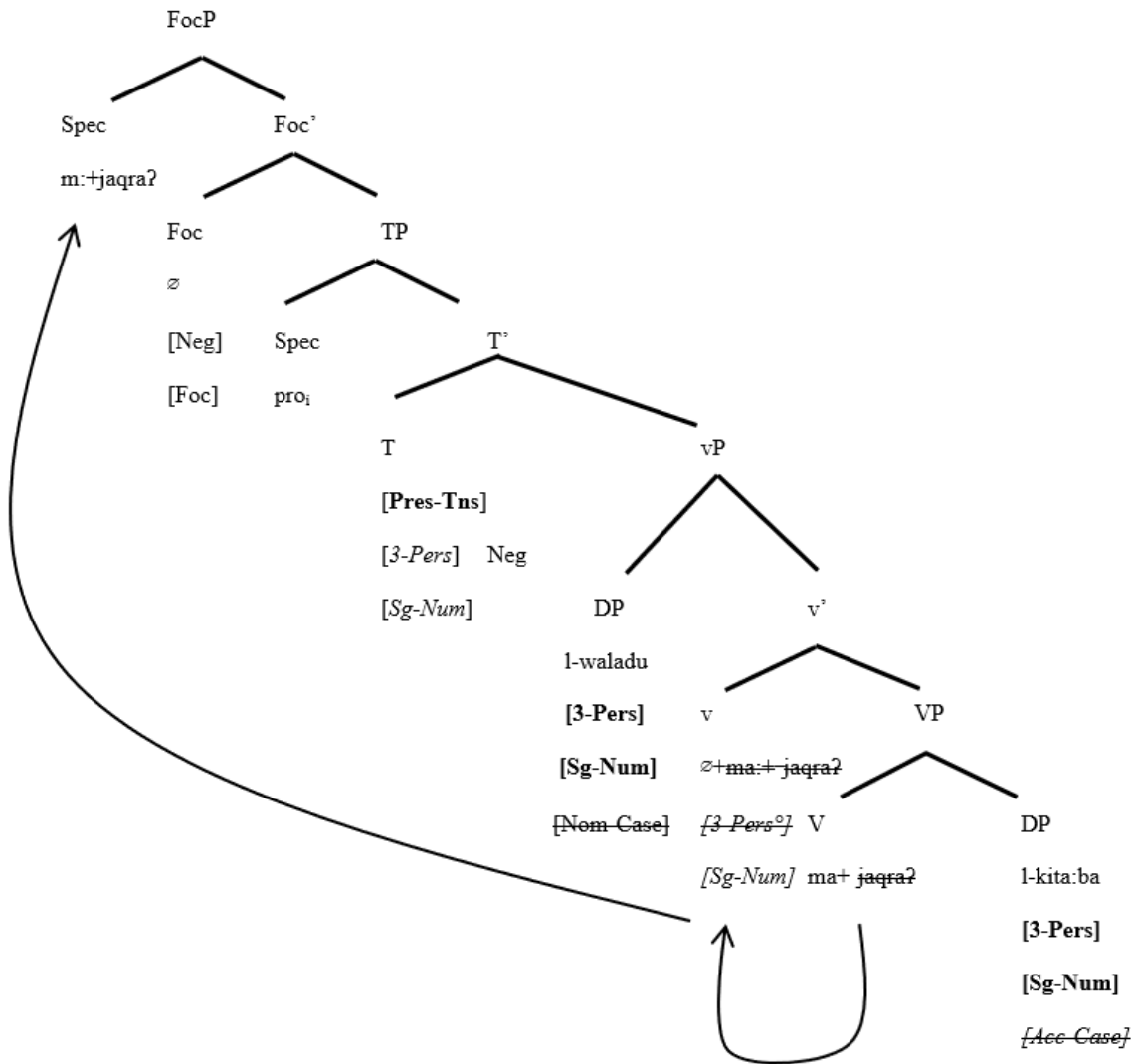
While this movement seems to derive the right VSO word order, it does break two principles in theory:
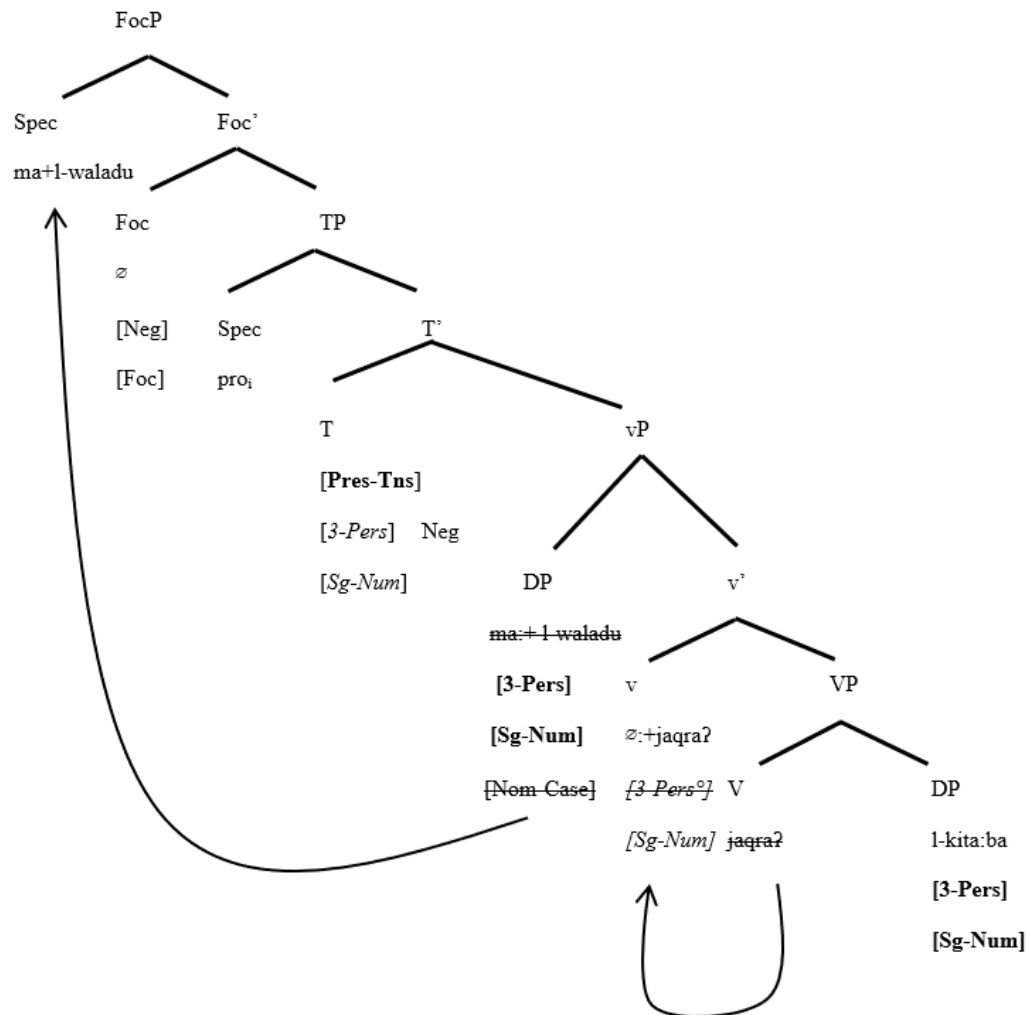
(i) Structure Preservation Principle: A head X of a projection can only move to A position; an XP projection can only move to an A' Position. (Haegeman, 2001)

In the representation above, jaqraʔ is a head which ultimately ends in an A' position that can only potentially host XPs.

(ii) Phase Impenetrability Condition: In phase α with head H, the domain of H is not accessible to operations outside α; only H and its edge are accessible to such operations. (Chomsky, 2000)

In order for the head V to land in [Spec; FocP], it must go through intermediary stations that match its type: either a head or an XP. In the current example, the V is a head and, therefore, must cyclicly move upwards using vacant head positions. Needless to say that there are no intermediary available head positions that would facilitate this movement.

Surprisingly, if one is to change the VSO order to SVO, the FocP solution works just fine, and neither of the two aforementioned principles gets violated, as it is illustrated in the tree diagram below:

FocP

Spec   Foc'

ma+l-waladu

     Foc   TP

     ∅

     [Neg]   Spec   T'

     [Foc]   pro$_i$

             T   vP

             [Pres-Tns]

             [3-Pers]   Neg

             [Sg-Num]   DP   v'

             ~~ma:+l waladu~~

             [3-Pers]   v   VP

             [Sg-Num]   ∅:+jaqraʔ

             ~~[Nom Case]~~   *[3-Pers°]* V   DP

                        [Sg-Num] ~~jaqraʔ~~   l-kita:ba

                                         [3-Pers]

                                          [Sg-Num]

9. Summary

The investigation started with la and its variants, lan, lam, and laisa, respectively. The default la: particle yields a structure that is not in the VSO order. Moving the verb to ta higher position is forbidden as it goes against the assumption that only Past and Future tenses force movement (Aoun et al., 2010). Even if one is to ignore that and proceeds to move the V to the T, the resulting structure would put the negative particle after the verb, which again results in the wrong structure. Regarding the tense variants of la:, lam and lan, this section tackled the derivation of a sentence containing lam and extrapolated the same results on lan as the two particles are fairly similar structure wise. The results showed that the final word order does not match the intended VSO. Moreover, moving the verb high to the T is not even an option now as the T is occupied by the head Neg in this case. Moving on, for expository reasons, this section gave an account of the particle laisa. As it is expected, the theories presented at the beginning of this article provided a solid derivation, and none of them was challenged. In the end, this section delt with the particle ma:. There are two possible ways in which ma: has been treated in the literature. The first one is to let it head the NegP, just like la:. This results in issues similar to those of la:. The second option is to let ma: be base generated with the element it takes scope over and have it move to a [Spec; FocP]. The right order is derived, but the movement involved in the operation violates both the Structure Preserving Principle and the Phase Impenetrability Condition.

10. Spliting NegP: Negatve Scope Phrase

As it has been demonstrated in the previous section, it proved difficult to maintain the integrity of the various theories available in the Syntactic apparatus (NegP between TP and vP, Pres-Tns not triggering movement, Feature Checking, PIC and SPP) and derive VSO order in negated sentences of Standard Arabic. A possible way to deal with all the arising issues that have been discussed throughout the article is to split the NegP into two projections: NegP and NSP, where the latter stands for Negative Scope Phrase. NSP is a strong head which attracts any item carrying a NegScope feature. This assumption will be put to the test in the following analyses.

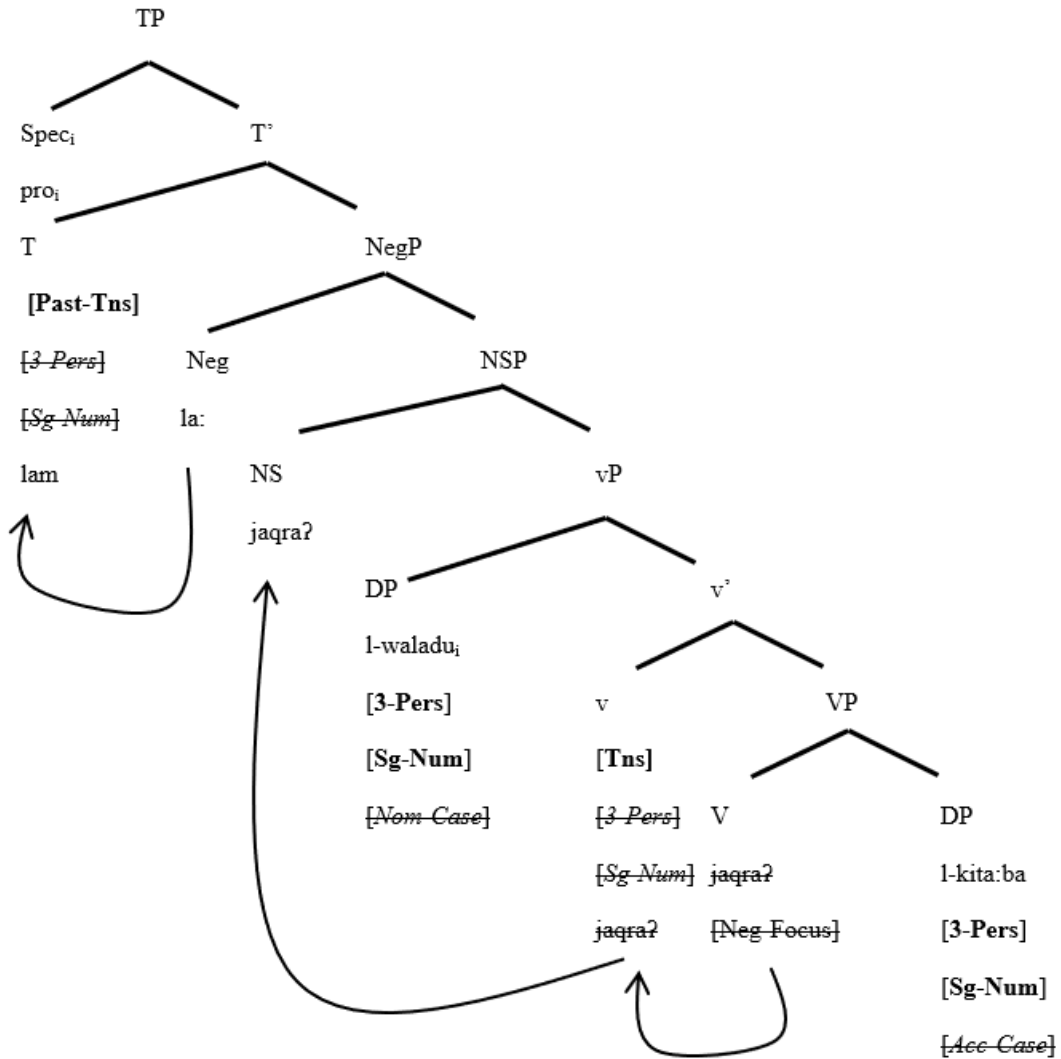### 11. NSP with la: and its Variants

To make the juxtaposition clearer and bring forward any benefits or flaws the split-NegP might have, the analyses will re-use the same sentences that have been used in the previous section.

la: jaqra?u l-waladu
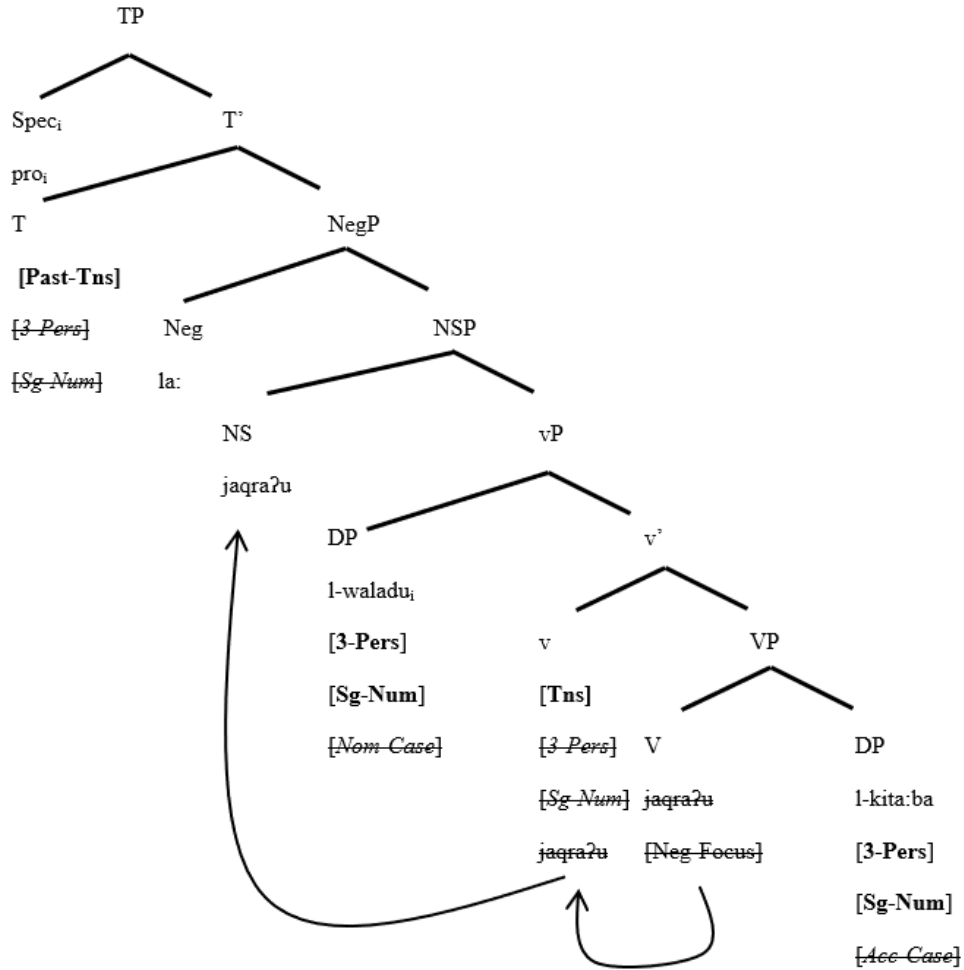
As the derivation above portrays, the derivation results in the correct word order. When the derivation merges the V externally, the [Neg-Focus] feature remains unchecked as the derivation continues. In the first movement, the verb incurrs puts it in the head v, which contains a strong null affix that attracts it. At this stage, the [Neg-Scope] feature is still unchecked until the derivation reaches the head of NSP, which attracts the verb due to its strength.

As for la:'s tensed variants, the derivation is pretty similar, except for an extra movement that brings the la: to the T, as it is shown in the tree below:

TP

Spec_i   T'

pro_i

T   NegP

[Past-Tns]

[3 Pers]   Neg   NSP

[Sg Num]   la:

lam   NS   vP

jaqraʔ

DP   v'

l-waladu_i

[3-Pers]   v   VP

[Sg-Num] **[Tns]**

[Nom Case]   [3 Pers] V   DP

               [Sg Num] jaqraʔ   l-kita:ba

               jaqraʔ [Neg Focus] **[3-Pers]**

                                [Sg-Num]

                                  [Acc Case]

Following the same flow as the previous section, the particle laisa is tackled next. As it's been noticed, only verbs can carry a [Neg-Scope) feature and be attracted to NS. Because laisa lacks a verb, there is no need to split the NegP; in the same way, the CP is not usually split unless there is a Focused element or Topicalized item.
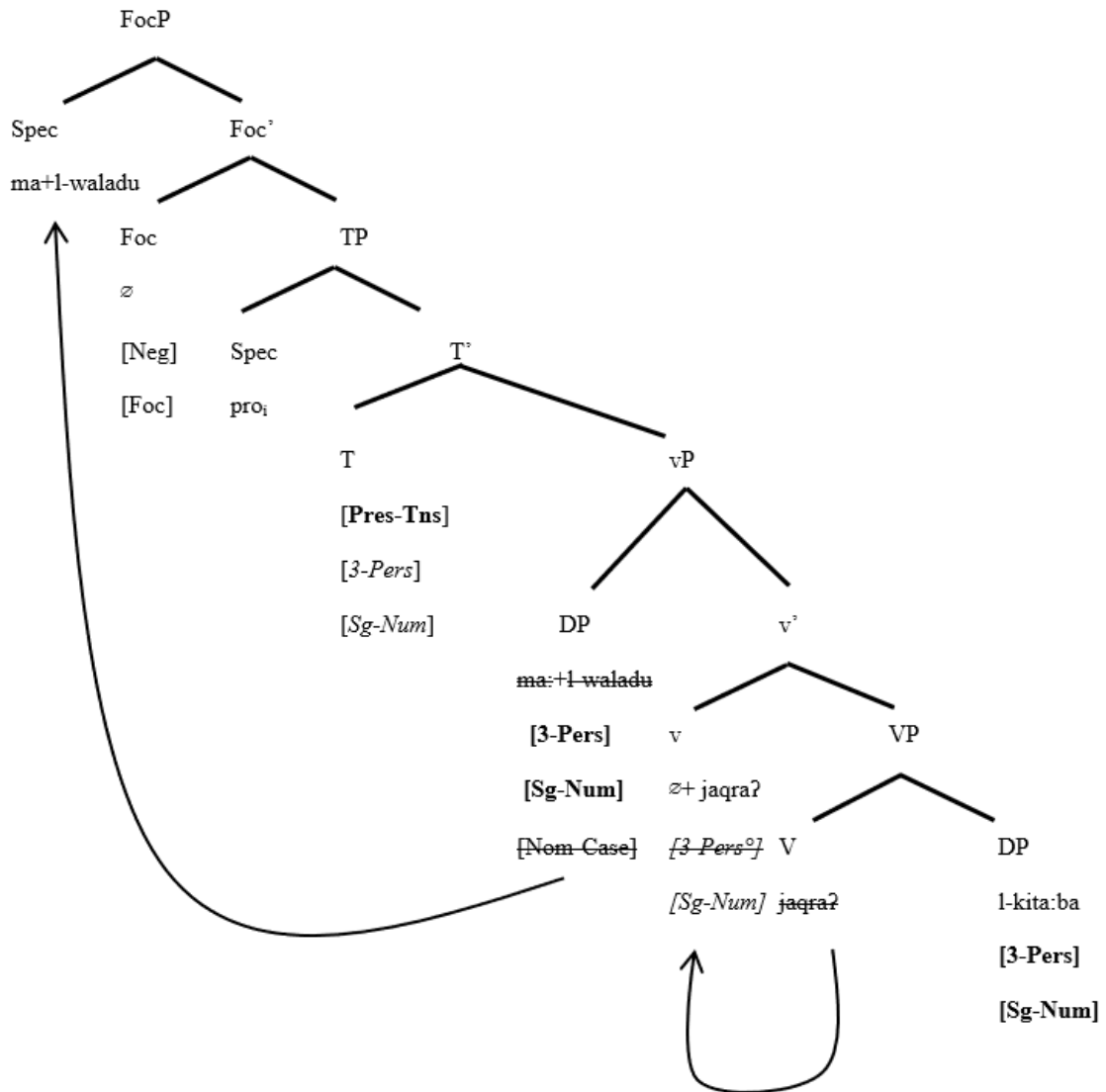
Moving on to the last particle ma:, the split-NegP proposition is tested for when ma: is heading the projection NegP.
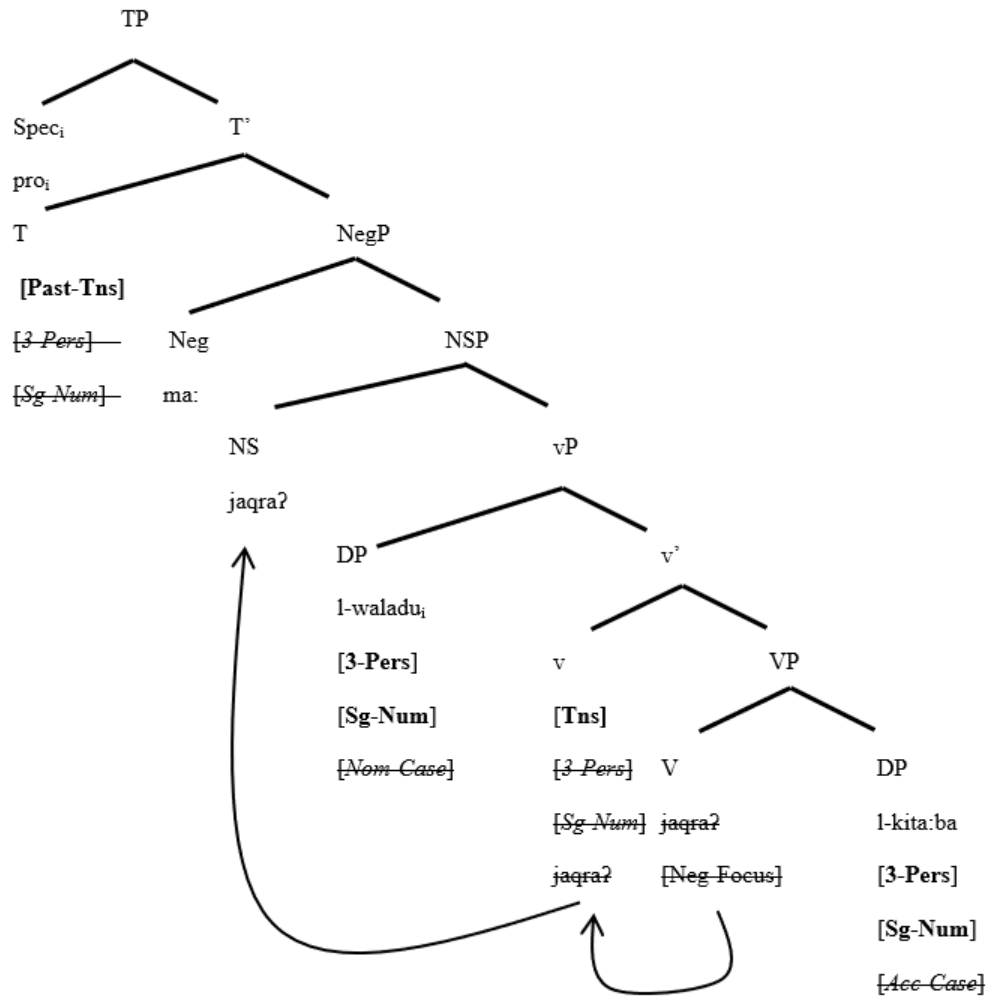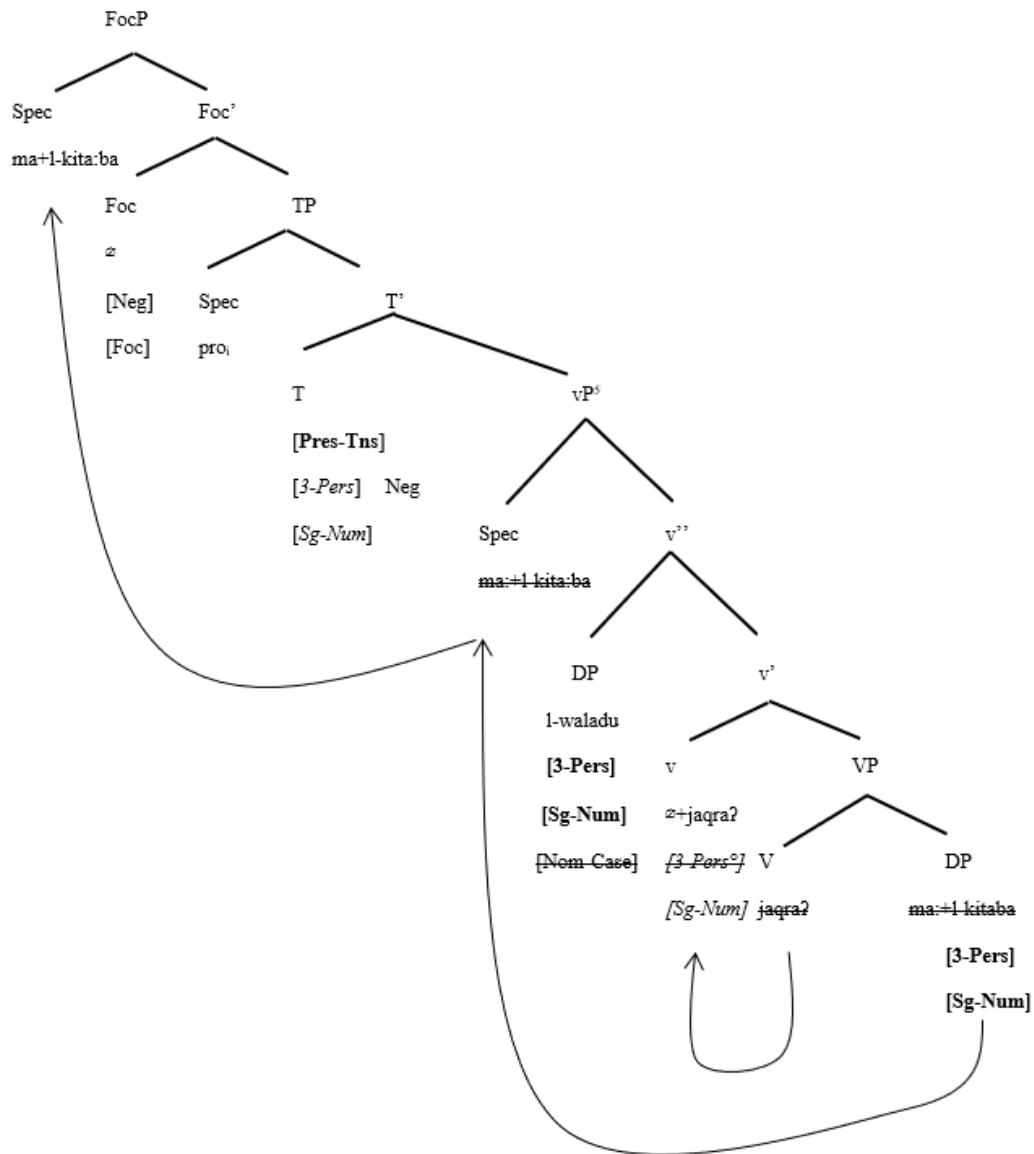
The derivation is exactly like that of la: except that the particle is ma: this time. The correct word order is derived with no issues.

As it's been hinted at with laisa, it seems that the need for splitting the NegP only arises when sentences do have a verb. Building up for what's to come next, the following nuance is added: NegP is split into NegP and NSP only when the sentence has a verb carrying a [Neg-Scope] feature. This additional requirement would allow for the co-existence between the Split-Neg proposition and Ouhalla's (1993) and Moutaouakil's (1993) ma:+XP in FocP. In other words, if the sentence has a VSO order and uses the particle ma:, the verb in the derivation will have a [Neg-Focus] feature, and the structure will have a Split NegP. However, if the derivation has a negatively contrasted XP that is fronted, which results in an SVO or OVS order, the verb does not have a [Neg-Focus] feature, and the derivation is similar to the structure previously provided (repeated below for convenience's sake).

SVO order

FocP

Spec   Foc'

ma+l-waladu

    Foc   TP

    ∅

    [Neg]   Spec   T'

    [Foc]   pro_i

         T   vP

         [Pres-Tns]

         [3-Pers]

         [Sg-Num]   DP   v'

            ~~ma:+l waladu~~

            [3-Pers]   v   VP

            [Sg-Num]   ∅+ jaqraʔ

            ~~[Nom Case]~~   *~~[3-Pers°]~~* V   DP

                      [Sg-Num] ~~jaqraʔ~~   l-kita:ba

                                     [3-Pers]

                                     [Sg-Num]

OSV order

12. Conclusion

This paper aimed to account for negation in Standard Arabic VSO word order while maintaining the integrity of other pre-existing theories in the framework, such as PCI and SPP. The findings of this article's analyses showed that a VSO order with a negative particle is unattainable without the violation of at least one principle among the available set in the framework.

This article found that the solution lies in the splitting of NegP into NegP and NSP (Negative Scope Phrase), with the head of the latter having the ability to attract verbs that carry a [Neg-Scope] feature. This amendment allowed the sentences to be derived correctly while co-existing with the rest of the other theories, as the chart below details:

Negative Particle	NegP		Split NegP	
la:	**Is the word order NegVSO?**	**What are the violated theories if NegVSO is forced?**	**Is the word order NegVSO?**	**What are the violated theories if NegVSO is forced?**
	No -The derived order is NegSVO.	-Only Past/Future force movement	**Yes**	**None**

---

[5] Another specifier position is created in order to host the moved object DP and not violate the PIC (Radford, 2004).

		-PCI -SPP		
la:/lam:	**No** **-**The derived order is NegSVO	-NegP between TP and vP -T attracts the closest tense bearing head: Neg	**Yes**	**None**
ma: as a Neg head	**-No** NegSVO	**No** -Only Past/Future force movement -PCI -SPP	**Yes**	**None**

Pro-drop languages are generally very flexible when it comes to word order, and it has always been a challenge to syntactically account for all possible variations; and/or find the canon word order. The proposed solution in this paper is of significance to the literature as it resolves the NegVSO word order issue in Standard Arabic. In addition to that, the proposed solution captures the focal dimension of negation, as it portrays how negative particles can mark focus, which is an overlooked aspect if the NegP remains unsplit.

The premise and findings of this paper are far from being complete and exhaustive. The proposition in this paper must be implemented first in the various Arabic variations (dialects), and an assessment of its reliability must be made only after that one can begin to test it cross-linguistically to see if it brings any advantages to other similar challenges in other languages.

Statements and Declarations

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

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