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# A Phrasal Movement Analysis of the Najdi Arabic Pronominal Possessive DP

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*Abstract*—**This paper mainly investigates the syntactic structure of possessive pronominal noun phrases in Najdi Arabic (henceforth, NA) formed through the use of pronominal possessors. Unlike the traditional viewpoint in Semitic syntax, where pronominal possessors are treated as heads instantiating their own maximal projections (Shlonsky, 1997; Alrasheedi, 2019), the paper argues that pronominal possessors are DPs in the complement position of the NP. In light of Shlonsky's (2004, 2012, 2017, 2020) phrasal movement analysis of Semitic noun phrases, the paper proposes that pronominal possessors in NA occupy the same structural position as lexical possessors in construct state nominal phrases. The paper assumes that the postnominal modifier(s) ordering exhibited in this variety of Arabic is a reflex of the phrasal snowballing movement of the NP via the Spec of dedicated Functional Projections (FPs) to the Spec of Determiner Phrase (DP) in a similar fashion to Shlonsky's proposal. The surface linear order (NP>AP1>AP2) is derived via raising NP (the noun + the pronominal possessor) from its base-generation position upwards, pied-piping any c-commanding categories en route to Spec DP.**

*Index Terms*—**Najdi Arabic, phrasal movement, pronominal possession, syntactic derivation, postnominal modifiers**

## I. Introduction

The syntax of (possessive) noun phrases has been extensively studied across a wide range of natural languages, including English (Lyons, 1986; Dixon, 2010), Hebrew (Hazout, 1990, 2000; Siloni, 1996, 1997; Shlonsky, 1997, 2004, 2012; Ben-Meir, 2024), Arabic (Fassi Fehri, 1993, 1999; Shlonsky, 2004, 2012, 2017, 2020; Ouhalla, 2009, 2011; Ouwaydah & Shlonsky, 2016; Alrasheedi, 2019; Hallman, 2022), Scandinavian languages (Delsing, 1993; Julien, 2005), Italian (Adamson, 2024), Romanian (Comilescu, 1995; Cinque, 2004), Bantu (Achiri-Taboh, 2024) and Bulgarian (Krapova & Cinque, 2013, 2018), among many others. One of the main reasons for investigating such constructions has been attributed to the fact that these constructions make available an interesting domain, where syntax interacts, in several aspects, with the modules of semantics, morphology, and phonology. For instance, possessive constructions contain a semantic relation between the different parts constituting these constructions (De Wit, 1997). Such a semantically driven relation has been addressed by many scholars within various syntactic and semantic accounts. In the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008), the possessive relation has been treated as a realisation of the [+POSS] feature (see, e.g., Vermeulen, 2005). Moreover, these constructions have been taken as a window for analysing how functional projections are derived, given that possessive constructions are part of the functional projection of Determiner Phrase (cf. Abney, 1987; Parrott, 2020; Abner, 2021). On the other hand, less cross-linguistic agreement has been reached for a unified analysis of possessive constructions in natural languages, especially in terms of their internal structure.

Against the above general background, the current paper specifically addresses synthetic possessive constructions in NA formed through the use of a pronominal possessor suffixed to a nominal host. The paper aims to offer one unified structure for the two manifestations of synthetic possession in this Arabic variety, proposing a phrasal movement analysis of them, in light of Shlonsky's (2004, et seq.) approach. To achieve this, the paper first investigates the possessive DP construction formed by the suffixation of a pronominal possessor to the head noun. The paper then compares this construction with the other type of synthetic possessive construction in Semitic syntax, i.e., the construct state, where two nouns are juxtaposed without any intervening elements, and both constitute one NP. In so doing, the paper is important since it addresses synthetic possession, showing that both types can be uniformly assigned one analysis, which in the literature on the syntax of synthetic possession has been analysed differently (cf. Shlonsky, 1997; Alrasheedi, 2019). Reviewing the existing literature, there is not a single work in Arabic syntax which closely examines the idea that pronominal possessors can be derived from the same base merge position of lexical possessors within a roll-up phrasal movement analysis (à la Shlonsky, 2004). The current paper therefore aims to fill in this gap in Semitic literature.

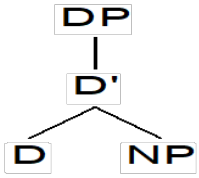
The paper is organised as follows. Section II presents some relevant theoretical background on Abney's (1987) DP Hypothesis and (possessive) noun phrases within the Minimalist Program. Section III gives the basic descriptive facts necessary for the discussion of the paper. Section IV provides a brief account of the few studies on pronominal possessors, which have previously been put forward in the pertinent literature. This is followed by a detailed account of

a proposal made by Shlonsky (2004, 2012, and subsequent work) on Semitic noun phrases, discussing its main theoretical assumptions and suggesting further amendments to it. This section then offers an analysis of pronominal possessors, proposing that they occupy the same structural position as lexical possessors, along the lines of Shlonsky (2004, et seq.). Section V concludes the paper.

## II. Nouns Phrases: Theoretical Background and Basic Assumptions

The study of noun phrases and their syntactic relations with one another has been widely investigated in literature since the first stages of contemporary syntactic theory (see Chomsky, 1965, 1970). Additionally, the internal structure of noun phrases has been addressed in different languages attempting to reach a cross-linguistic generalisation with respect to their derivations and the conceptual relations they maintain (Giorgi & Longobardi, 1991; Ritter, 1991; Rijkhoff, 2002). Several approaches have been proposed to account for their syntactic relations, emphasising the fact that noun phrases are rich in their functional categories as well as the syntactic operations involved in the extended nominal projection. These observations on noun phrases have culminated in Abney's (1987) DP hypothesis, which is an important work on noun phrases, their internal structure, and the relations they exhibit. Within this hypothesis, a noun phrase has been treated like a clause, which is headed by a functional category, D° (Determiner), instantiating its own maximal projection (DP). D° is assumed to be the base-generation position of (in)definite articles in natural languages. Consider the following tree in (1):

(1)




The generalised internal structure of DP (adapted from Siloni, 1997, p. 6)

Abney's (1987) DP hypothesis, which the current work adopts, has gained empirical and cross-linguistic evidence as it provides an elegant account of parametrisation within natural languages. For instance, it has been suggested under the DP hypothesis that the head noun overtly raises to the head of the DP in Semitic languages (cf. Fassi Fehri, 1987; Siloni, 1990; Ritter, 1991), whereas noun-raising is not present in some other languages like English (see Abney, 1987; Longobardi, 1996).

DP has attracted much attention within generative minimalist theory (Chomsky, 1995, and subsequent work). Two factors are primarily responsible for this attention. First, several studies introduce a rich structure of DP stipulating several functional projections inside a single DP (Cinque, 2002; Shlonsky, 2004). Some projections are dedicated to accommodate specific elements (viz. NP's) movement upwards due to certain features on D°, including the EPP feature (Chomsky, 2001; Alexiadou, 2001). Secondly, revolutionising the idea that movement is motivated by certain features on heads, the Minimalist Program considers the DP as a fertile research domain given its richness of features. For instance, the definiteness of the DP is viewed as a DEF feature and the possessive relation is interpreted as a POSS feature.

## III. Pronominal Possessive DPs in NA: Basic Description and Overview

Like other Arabic varieties, there are two ways to form synthetic possessive constructions in NA: (a) by using a pronominal possessor or (b) through the use of a construct state. As for the first type, possessive DP constructions are formed synthetically by using specific pronominal possessors which must be suffixed to the host noun, as the examples in Table 1 show.

Table 1
Pronominal Possessors in NA

| Pronominal Possessors | φ-features | Example |
|---|---|---|
| -uh | 3SG.M | walad-uh |
| -ha | 3SG.F | walad-ha |
| -i | 1SG | walad-i |
| -ak | 2SG | walad-ak |
| -na | 1PL | walad-na |
| -kin | 2PL.F | walad-kin |
| -kum | 2PL.M | walad-kum |
| -hin | 3PL.F | walad-hin |
| -hum | 3PL.M | walad-hum |

It should be noted that the possessum in this type of possessive construction serves as the head noun, which precedes the pronominal possessor and the latter appears attached to the end of the nominal phrase, as shown in (2a). If the reverse order is maintained, the construction would be ungrammatical, as shown by the example in (2b) below.

(2) a. aχoo-i
brother-my
'my brother'
b.*i-aχoo
my-brother
intended meaning: 'my brother'

Any nominal modifier describing the possessum must appear to the right of the possessive construction, as in (3). This means that the nominal modifier can neither intervene between the possessum and the possessive marker nor precede them. This is confirmed by the ungrammaticality of the examples in (4a, b).

(3) aχoo-i atˤ-tˤawiil
brother-my DEF-tall
'my tall brother'

(4) a.*aχoo atˤ-tˤawiil-i
brother DEF-tall-my
intended meaning: 'my tall brother'
b.*atˤ-tˤawiil aχoo-i
DEF-tall brother-my
intended meaning: 'my tall brother'

Besides the fact that immediate adjacency between the possessum and the possessive marker must be obtained, postnominal modifiers must be definite as well. If postnominal modifiers appear without the definite article *al* 'the', the construction would be ill-formed as shown in (5).

(5) *aχoo-i tˤawiil
brother-my tall
intended meaning: 'my tall brother'

Another characteristic of the pronominal possessive DP construction is that postnominal modifiers obligatorily show agreement with the possessum, as illustrated in (6).

(6) a. walad-ak al-kabiir (*al-kabirah)
son-your DEF-old.SG.M DEF-old.SG.F
'your old son'
b. awlaad-ak al-kbaar (*al-kabiir)
sons-your DEF-old.PL.M DEF-old.SG.M
'your old sons'

The other way to form possessive constructions synthetically in NA is through the use of a construct state, which consists of a possessum and a lexical possessor, as illustrated by the following example.

(7) mafatiiħ al-bint
keys DEF-girl
'The girl's keys'

As is the case with synthetic possessive constructions formed via pronominal possessors, the construct state members must be juxtaposed (cf. (7) and (2) above). The possessor DP, or the associate of the construct state, must be definite in order to render the construction possessive. It can be definite by prefixation of the definite article (*al*) as in (7) or by being a proper name, which is definite on its own as in (8).

(8) mafatiiħ Ali
keys Ali
'Ali's keys'

In such asyndetic possessive constructions, postnominal modifiers must agree in gender and number with the possessum as shown in (9).

(9) kitaab al-banaat al-aħmar
book.SG.M DEF-girls DEF-red.SG.M
'The girls' red book'

In (9), the postnominal modifier *alaħmar* 'red' agrees in number and gender with the possessum *kitaab* 'book' rather than the lexical possessor *albanaat* 'the girls'. Recall that this is also true of pronominal possessives, where postnominal modifiers show agreement with the possessum (see 6a, b). Nominal modifiers must be definite in construct state nominal phrases and nothing can intervene between the possessum and the possessor in the same fashion as pronominal possessives discussed above.

## IV. Pronominal Possessive DPs in NA: A Syntactic Analysis

### *A. Syntactic Positions and Features: Setting the Scene*

Based on the main assumptions of phrase structure rules (cf. Jackendoff, 1977; Chomsky, 1995; Giusti, 2002), several works in the literature assume that possessive markers can be X° heads or XP arguments, i.e., having phrasal or head status (see, e.g., Fassi Fehri, 1993, p. 96ff, 1999; Shlonsky, 1994, 1997: Ch. 9; Ghomeshi, 1996; Dimitrova-Vulchanova, 2000; Stateva, 2002; Bögel & Butt, 2013). Under this assumption, the pronominal possessor can be either a head of X° category or a DP argument. On the contrary, definite articles are unanimously assumed to be X° heads base-generated in D°, as pointed out in the previous section (III). It may seem at this point that it is plausible to suggest that the definite article occupies the same syntactic position as the pronominal possessor given that the former cannot be prefixed to a noun, which has already been suffixed with the latter, as shown in the example below. However, a number of studies in the literature on syntax show that the definite article co-occurs with a pronominal possessor within the same DP cross-linguistically (see, e.g., Alexiadou et al., 2007 in this regard).

(10) *al-aχoo-i
DEF-brother-my
Intended meaning: 'my brother'

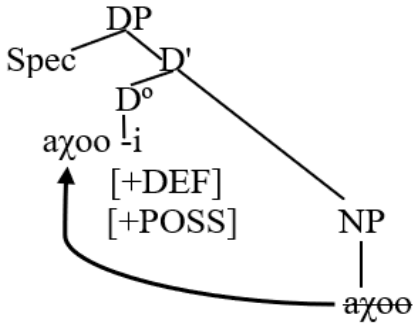
The observation that the presence of the pronominal possessor *–i* in (10) prevents the prefixation of the definite article *al* 'the' must then be attributed to a different reason where the complimentary distribution is precluded. The definite article and the pronominal possessor behave differently with respect to the noun. While the pronominal possessor obligatorily appears to the right of its nominal host, the definite article *al* 'the' must occupy a position to its left. In terms of their featural bundle, the definite article *al* 'the' is an overt realisation of [+DEF] feature, whereas the featural make-up of the pronominal possessor bears [+DEF] and [+POSS], with the understanding that the [+POSS] feature gives the whole DP a possessive interpretation. The evidence that the pronominal possessor bears [+DEF] feature comes from the fact that any nominal modifier must appear with the definite article *al* 'the', otherwise, the resulting construction is ungrammatical. Consider the following ill-formed example:[1]

(11) *aχoo-i tˁawiil
brother-my tall
intended meaning: 'my tall brother'

Given the assumption that a noun may move inside the DP, several works on Arabic have proposed that nouns are merged in a lower position relative to nominal modifiers (Fassi Fehri, 1993, 1998, 1999, 2012; Hoyt, 2008; Kremers, 2003, *inter alia*). The assumption that a noun is merged in a position where it c-commands nominal modifiers is not plausible, since it results in the wrong order of nominal modifiers. Relevant here is that nouns are not endowed with [+DEF] nor [+POSS]. The definite possessive reading the nouns might maintain is basically attributed to the functional heads housing the nouns (Giusti, 2002). As for the derivation, a number of proposals have been made in the literature to account for the syntax of pronominal possessors and their morphosyntactic behaviour (see, among others, Fassi Fehri, 1993; Plunkett, 1996). According to these proposals, the structure of the pronominal possessive DP in (12) below would be as given in (13), where the pronominal possessor *-i* 'my' heads the functional category D° of the DP projection whose complement is the NP.

(12) aχoo-i
brother-my
'my brother'

(13)

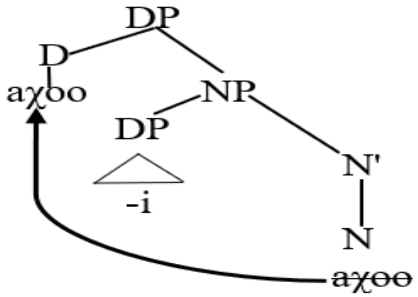



[1] It should be noted that (11) is a well-formed construction if a subject-predicate reading is enforced, as shown by the following sentence:
(i) aχoo-i tˁawiil
brother-my tall
'My brother is tall.'
Given the fact that this work is primarily concerned with postnominal adjectives within the nominal phrase (and not within the clause), cases like (11) are beyond the scope of this study.

As shown in the simplified structure in (13), the pronominal possessive DP is derived via head movement of the noun *aχoo* adjoining to the left of the pronominal possessor *-i* in the D° head.[2] The question arising here is the motivation for the movement of the noun *aχoo* as a head to the category D° heading the whole the DP. According to the current trends of the Minimalist Program, movement is seen as a last resort where the derivation would, otherwise, crash (Chomsky, 1995, 2000, 2001). In relation to this, there are a number of works which point out that the definiteness spreading is the driving force for the N-to-D movement (see Ritter, 1991; Borer, 1996; Danon, 2008; Bardeas, 2009; Shormani, 2016 for discussion of the definiteness spreading phenomenon).

A number of similar proposals have been advanced in the Semitic literature (see, especially, Shlonsky, 1997, p. 183; Fassi Fehri, 1999). These works develop a rather similar analysis for Hebrew and Arabic pronominal possessives. The basic idea carried out by these works is that the pronominal possessor is merged as a DP in specifier position of the noun phrase and the possessum moves from N to D. According to this proposal, the pronominal possessive DP in (12), starts its derivation as follows. The noun *aχoo* 'brother' first merges with the NP, whose specifier houses the pronominal possessor DP *-i* 'my' merging next. The NP is subsequently merged with the DP before the N undergoes movement and remerges with it at D, as shown in (14).

(14)




Note that both analyses adopt head movement operation in order to account for the structure of possessive pronominal noun phrases. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that Shlonsky (2004, and subsequent work) has abandoned head movement analysis in favour of phrasal movement analysis. This is in line with most of the recent literature on syntax which argues that syntactic derivations involve phrasal movement, rather than head movement (see, for example, Sichel, 2002, 2003; Cinque, 2004, 2005, 2010, pp. 37-41; Shlonsky, 2012, 2017, 2020; Kahnemuyipour, 2014; Mathieu et al., 2017; Tahir, 2018; Ntelitheos, 2022; Kučerová & Szczegielniak, 2023). This is further discussed in section (B) below. We have thus far summarised how the possessive pronominal construction is traditionally derived in the literature on Semitic. Note, however, that this is an oversimplification of the syntactic structure of pronominal possessive phrases. The above structures do not discuss, among other issues, how the pronominal possessive construction with more than one postnominal modifier is derived. This is discussed in the next section.

*B. Pronominal Possessive DPs and Nominal Modifiers: A Roll-Up Phrasal Movement Analysis*

The analyses presented above do not discuss cases where the pronominal possessive DP is followed by nominal modifiers, which agree in number and gender with the noun to which the pronominal possessor is attached. As mentioned in the previous section, any nominal modifier must first appear postnominally and second be definite. The following example illustrates this point again.

(15) aχoo-i at$^{ˤ}$-t$^{ˤ}$awiil
brother-my DEF-tall
'my tall brother'

Let us now consider how to account for the position of nominal modifiers within the pronominal possessive constructions in NA. It is generally assumed in the literature that nominal modifiers in Arabic (and related languages) enter the derivation in a position, where they c-command the noun (see Ritter, 1991; Siloni, 1997, 2002; Fassi Fehri 1998, 1999; Benmamoun, 2000; Kremers, 2003; Shlonsky, 2004). Crucial here is the observation known as the mirror image (Justice, 1987; Fassi Fehri, 1999; Cinque, 2000, 2005; Shlonsky, 2004). Studies on the DP internal structure indicate that the hierarchical order of nominal modifiers is not arbitrary but rather subject to fixed word order, which is widely attested across languages, i.e., adjectives serialization is strictly ordered universally (see Greenberg, 1963, 1966; Sproat & Shih, 1988; Fassi Fehri, 1993, 1999; Cinque, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2010; Rijkhoff, 2002; Shlonsky, 2004; Pereltsvaig, 2006; to name just a few). For example, the ordering of serialized adjectives denoting an object is taken as follows (adapted from Pereltsvaig, 2006, p. 4):

(16) (Partial) hierarchy for languages with prenominal adjectives
EVALUATING COMMENT > SIZE > HEIGHT > SPEED > WIDTH > WEIGHT > TEMPERATURE> AGE > SHAPE > COLOR > NATIONALITY/PROVENANCE > MATRIAL

[2] It is generally agreed in generative syntactic theory that at least two different syntactic categories occur in the nominal phrase: lexical (NP) and a number of functional categories (DP, and/or NumP, FP, PossP, etc.).

In NA and other Semitic languages, the surface order between the nominal modifiers is held to the reverse with respect to English. This means that they do not have the same order as that in English but rather appear in its mirror image. For instance, the English construction *my tall brown brother* is translated into NA as in (17), although the former is what comports with adjectives serialization in most natural languages (see Cinque, 2005).

(17) aχoo-i al-asmar atˁ-tˁawiil
brother-my DEF-brown DEF-tall
'my tall brown brother'

What supports the idea that NA and other Semitic languages exhibit the mirror image phenomenon is that the rightmost adjective has scope over the leftmost adjective, once again in a reverse order to that in other languages, including English (cf. Pereltsvaig, 2006, p. 5). This observation demonstrates that the surface order is not a reflex of the underlying structure of nominal modifiers, but rather indicative of certain movement (cf. Kayne, 1994).

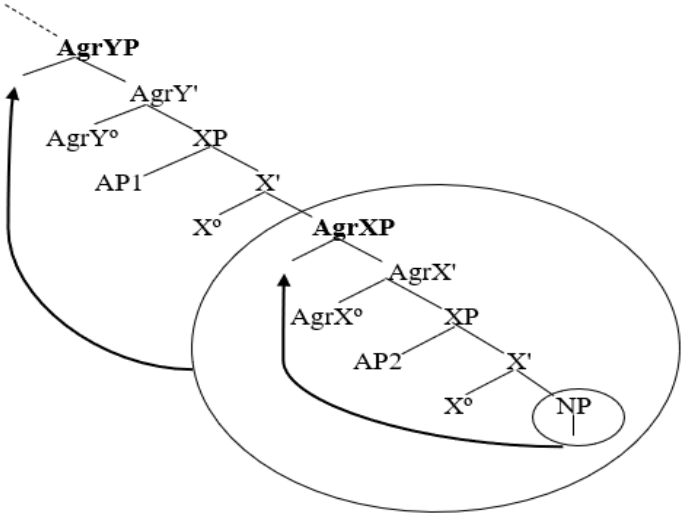
There have been several proposals advanced in the literature on Semitic to account for the position of postnominal modifiers with respect to the noun (see, e.g., Fassi Fehri, 1998, 1999; Benmamoun, 2000; Sichel, 2002; Shlonsky, 2004). What is important for us at this point is Shlonsky's (2004) proposal of phrasal movement despite the fact that this account has received some criticism from a few studies (most notably Pereltsvaig, 2006).[3] However, the reliability of phrasal movement as approach in accounting for DP-related facts, in world's languages in general (cf. Cinque, 2000, 2005, 2010; Mathieu et al., 2017; Tahir, 2018; Ntelitheos, 2022) and Semitic languages in particular (cf. Sichel, 2002, 2003; Shlonsky, 2012, 2017, 2020), has been widely attested. In what follows, we will provide a detailed discussion of Shlonsky's (2004) approach and present certain amendments as the discussion progresses.

Shlonsky (2004) introduces a syntactic analysis of the noun phrase with respect to other accompanying modifiers such as adjectives, numerals and demonstratives within the same DP. Unlike the previous analyses, Shlonsky posits a phrasal movement analysis of word order in Hebrew and Arabic noun phrases, pointing out that N-raising does not make available a convincing or reliable account with respect to the position of nominal modifiers in relation to the head of the noun phrase. According to Shlonsky (2004), head movement operation fails to account for the derivation of the Semitic noun phrase and must, therefore, be derived via phrasal movement. This is in line with the vast literature on syntax, which demonstrates that phrasal movement is superior to head movement cross-linguistically (see, for instance, Chomsky, 2000, 2001; Cinque, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2010; Koopman & Szabolcsi, 2000; Giusti, 2002; Sichel, 2002, 2003; Laenzlinger, 2005; Dehé & Samek-Lodovici, 2009; Shlonsky, 2006, 2012, 2017, 2020; Kahnemuyipour, 2014; Ouwaydah & Shlonsky, 2016; Mathieu et al., 2017; Tahir, 2018; Ntelitheos, 2022; Kučerová & Szczegielniak, 2023). Shlonsky also postulates that only heads which are able to move alone are those which do not assign genitive Case. In order to account for the inverse constituent order within nominal phrases, Shlonsky goes on to propose a ''roll-up'' or ''snowballing'' phrasal movement analysis.[4] He argues that in the first step, the lexical NP moves into the Spec of a higher functional projection AgrXP directly c-commanding the projection, which includes the modifying adjective above the noun phrase. In the second step, it is not the same NP moving but, instead, the whole AgrXP whose Spec is filled by the noun phrase. Similarly, this phrasal snowballing movement is repeated with the presence of any new nominal modifier up until specific point in the derivation. Based on Shlonsky's (2004) proposal, the schematic representation of the movement would be as follows.

[3] Criticism of Shlonsky's (2004) phrasal movement analysis depends mostly on its inaccurate prediction of heavy adjectives position (i.e., those containing many parts), the position of the PP complement within the DP and the position of the prenominal and postnominal modifiers in relation to the noun (Pereltsvaig, 2006). However, these issues have been proven to be less-harmful to the general reliability of this proposal since many of these points have been refuted (see Shlonsky himself, 2006), and this proposal is further refined in order to accommodate other language facts (see Shlonsky, 2012, 2017, 2020).

[4] The idea of phrasal movement is not new in generative syntax; it has already been coined in the literature (see, for instance, Taraldsen 2000 on application of this type of movement within the verbal domain). Shlonsky (2004) essentially extends this type of movement to the nominal domain.

(18)

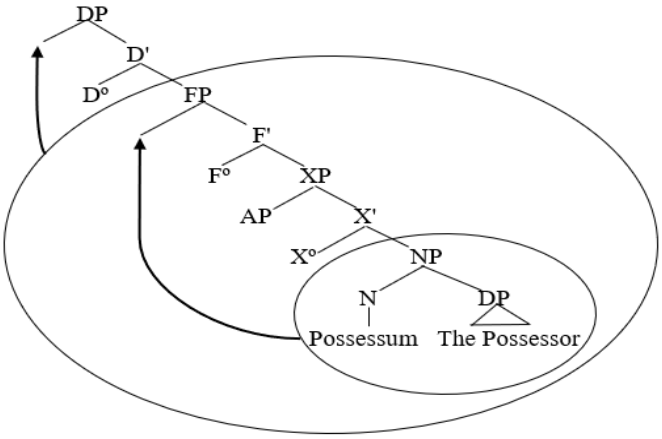



Before proceeding any further, it should be mentioned that the question whether the nominal modifier is merged as an AP housed in the specifier position of a dedicated functional category XP or whether the functional category itself is headed by the nominal modifier has been the focus of much debate in the literature (cf. Ritter, 1991; Cinque, 1994, 2005, 2010; Fassi Fehri, 1993, 1998, 1999; Borer, 1996; Siloni, 1997; Kremers, 2003; Shlonsky, 2004, 2012). The former assumption, though, is adopted in this paper whereby XPs make merging sites available for modifying adjectives to show up as APs in the Spec position of a null functional category X (cf. Cinque, 2005, 2010 for detailed discussion).

Going back to the structure in (18), Shlonsky (2004), in his original proposal, argues for the existence of agreement functional projections appearing in boldface, which are specifically dedicated to valuing/checking purposes. Within these projections, the noun phrase checks the uninterpretable φ-features of adjective(s), resulting in agreement in number and gender between the noun phrase and its modifying adjective(s), an assumption confirmed by NA data (see the examples in 6 & 9 above). As referred to above, nominal modifiers must agree in φ-features with the noun they modify. However, Shlonsky (2012) further refines this proposal by abandoning the AgrP projections mechanism in favour of probe/goal agreement operation. Given this proposal, the raised NP probes downwards within its c-commanding domain and finds the goal (the nominal adjective), establishing Agree with it. The uninterpretable φ-features of the adjective get valued by the matching features on the probe, resulting in an agreement suffix realized on the adjective. This agreement is thus accounted for within the nominal phrase. In view of this and following Cinque (2005, p. 317, 2010), it is assumed in what follows that AgrXP and AgrYP are replaced by dedicated Functional Projections (FPs) above NP. FPs, hence, provide landing sites for the noun phrase after having moved above the APs, as will be seen shortly.

Another issue to be examined now is the derivation of construct states by roll-up phrasal movement. Up until this point, we have not discussed how DPs with lexical possessors are derived. This is especially important because DPs with pronominal possessors presumably have the same syntactic structure as that of lexical possessors. Within Shlonsky's (2004) proposal of phrasal movement, simple nouns and construct states are derived slightly different since the latter contains a complement DP, a lexical possessor. According to this proposal, the head noun of a construct state is a genitive Case-assigning head; hence the inability of the possessor to move away from the possessum is seen as a consequence of this Case-related relation between the head noun and its complement (Shlonsky, 2004, p. 1506). Under this assumption, the obligatory linearization maintained between the two members of the construct state is a phonological manifestation of the genitive Case assignment. The nominal construction is a phrasal element raised leftwards to an intermediate specifier position of a dedicated functional projection, and from there, it moves to Spec DP. Based on Shlonsky's discussion, the structure of the construct state would be as follows:

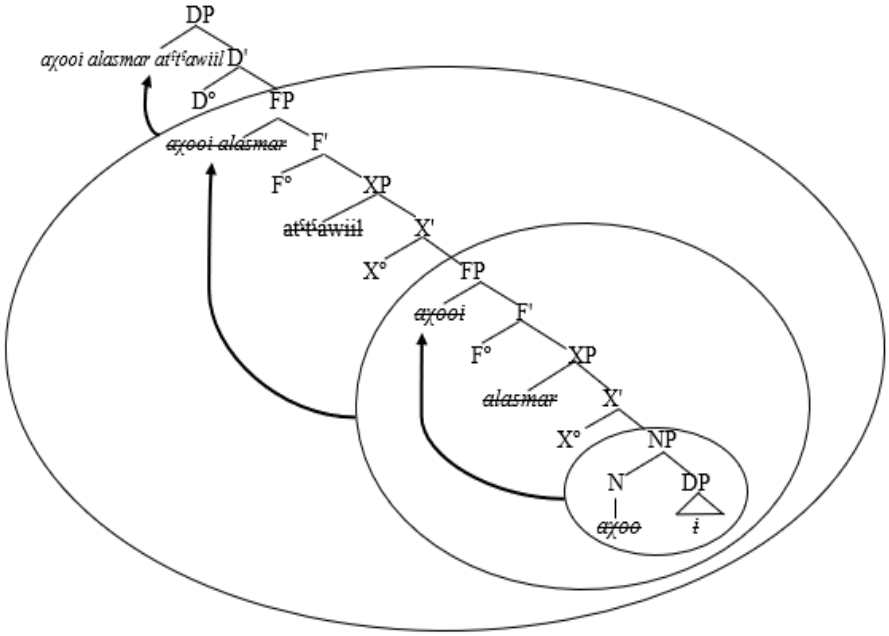
(19)




It should be pointed out that when the nominal modifier appears to the right of the noun phrase, it is the noun phrase itself which has raised to the left of the modifier, moving from Spec to Spec and pied-piping any categories on its way, exactly in the same way the noun phrase undergoes a cyclic movement upwards to occupy the Spec position of the DP (see 19). As a result, the inverse order of post-nominal material is accounted for (Shlonsky, 2004).

Having established the relevant theoretical assumptions of Shlonsky's (2004, 2012) proposal of roll-up phrasal movement and the suggested adjustments to it, this proposal is extended here to the construction in (17) to capture how the surface order is achieved with respect to the noun phrase and nominal modifiers within the pronominal possessive DP in NA. Consider the schematic representation in (20).

(20)



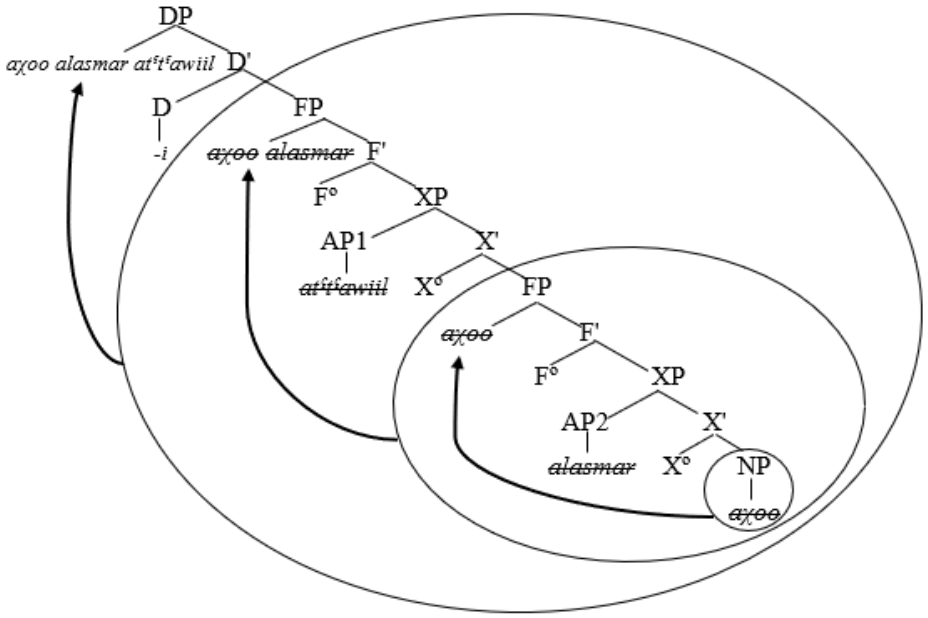

Given this structure, the author assumes that the pronominal possessor *-i* 'my' is base-generated low in the structure as a DP in the complement position of the NP. Shlonsky (2004, and subsequent work) does not discuss how a DP with a pronominal possessor is derived. However, as suggested above, the pronominal possessor *-i* 'my' can plausibly be base-generated in the complement position of the NP in a similar fashion to Shlonsky's proposal of DPs with lexical possessors. Along the lines of Shlonsky (2004) and Cinque (2005, 2010), the author assumes further that each XP housing the nominal modifier is subsequently dominated by an FP within the nominal phrase in NA. This means that when the possessive pronominal noun phrase is modified by two nominal modifiers, the derivation recurs: resulting in the second adjective being merged in the specifier position of another XP category which is, in turn, dominated by a higher functional category FP merging on top, whose specifier will eventually serve to house the raised NP constituents. Going back to the derivation in (20), *aχoo* first merges with the pronominal possessor DP *-i*, forming NP, which in turn merges with a null functional category (X). This is followed by the merger of the first postnominal modifier *alasmar* in the specifier of XP. The NP *aχoo-i* is subsequently merged above XP, in Spec, FP where Spec serves to accommodate NP after the latter has moved to it. At this point of the derivation, the whole FP *aχooi alasmar* starts rolling up to the Spec of FP above the second postnominal modifier *atˤtˤawiil*. Next, the whole possessive nominal phrase *aχooi alasmar*

*atˤtˤawiil* is further raised in a snowballing pattern to Spec, DP. Notice that the NP *aχoo-i* has undergone phrasal movement pied-piping all the categories that dominates it in a roll-up fashion, making, in effect, nominal modifiers in reversal order and eventually moving the entire construction to Spec DP.

The analysis outlined in (20) immediately raises the question as to why the noun phrase undergoes a cyclic movement upwards to occupy the specifier position of the DP. This movement can plausibly be attributed to an EPP feature on the functional category Dº. Following Chomsky (2000, 2001, 2008) and Biberauer et al. (2014), the author assumes that the head D of the DP holds an EPP feature, which attracts the NP and any other category it contains to its specifier. Due to this feature, the Spec position of the DP must be lexicalized; otherwise, the derivation crashes. The unvalued EPP feature on D is an uninterpretable feature, which does not contribute to the semantics of the given construction. As a result, it must be valued and deleted before the derivation is transferred to the LF interface (see Chomsky, 1995, 2000, 2001). This requirement is imposed by a UG constraint called the principle of *Full Interpretation* (FI), which ensures that a derivation converges at LF and PF. Likewise, if a derivation has uninterpretable feature(s) which remained unvalued and undeleted, the resulting derivation violates the principle of FI and causes the derivation to crash at LF.

Before closing the discussion, another competitive analysis is shown by the structure in (21), where the pronominal possessor occupies the higher D category and the movement of the noun together with the nominal modifiers proceeds in a similar fashion to the derivation in (20). Consider the following structural representation.

(21)




At face value, the analysis above seems to account for the facts of the pronominal possessive DP in NA. However, a closer examination of the analysis in (21) reveals that it is not plausible for NA, since it suffers from some drawbacks. First, the pronominal possessor argument is a head, in the representation shown. Such an analysis would, therefore, pose the following question: Is the theta-role assigned to a head? The answer appears to be negative. That there is a theta-role assigned to a DP is clearest with deverbal nominal phrases, but the syntactic theory entails that all DPs have a theta role (cf. Chomsky, 1981; Hazout, 1990; Fassi Fehri, 1993; Siloni, 1997; Baker, 2004; Borer, 2005, 2012, 2014). Additionally, in the current analysis, we cannot assume that the whole construction moves to the specifier of the DP headed by the pronominal possessor, even if we assume that it undergoes movement to Spec, DP to satisfy the EPP feature on the functional head D. In so doing, the pronominal possessor *-i* will be left stranded, since it does not attach to the nominal host *aχoo*, yielding the ill-formed word order as shown in (22).

(22) *aχoo al-asmar atˤ-tˤawiil-i
brother DEF-brown DEF-tall-my
intended meaning: 'my tall brown brother'

Given these observations, the analysis in (20) appears to be more promising as compared with the alternative analysis represented above in (21), where the pronominal possessor is merged higher in the structure as the head of DP. The latter analysis encounters theoretical problems and results in an ill-formed word order as discussed above, hence is simply ruled out.

## V. Conclusions

The paper discussed the syntax of pronominal possessive DPs in NA formed through the use of pronominal possessors, providing a roll-up phrasal movement analysis to them, along the lines of Shlonsky (2004). Drawing on Shlonsky (2004, 2012, 2017, 2020), the paper proposed that pronominal possessors in NA are merged in the same structural position as lexical possessors in construct state nominal phrases. Given the fact that APs in this variety of Arabic appear in post-nominal positions, i.e., it is not possible for them to occur pre-nominally which is the reverse order of that in English, the paper assumed that the surface linear order of the NA pronominal possessive DP (the noun + the pronominal possessor > Adj) is derived by phrasal movement of the NP to the Spec of dedicated functional projections, rather than head movement. We have seen that the position of the pronominal possessive DP in relation to nominal modifiers can be straightforwardly derived via phrasal movement, which enables postnominal adjectives to move to various landing sites along the nominal spine. It is assumed that the NP undergoes phrasal movement pied-piping all the categories that dominates it in a roll-up fashion, which has the effect of making nominal modifiers to appear in postnominal positions, thereby restoring the original surface word order. Phrasal movement analysis thus provides a straightforward account for the syntactic properties of pronominal possessors and postnominal modifiers in NA possessive DP structures.

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