Word Order in Libyan Arabic

■ **Mohamed Krer***

■ **Abstract:**

The main purpose of this paper is to shed some light on word order in Libyan Arabic; one of the least known Arabic varieties in the literature of Arabic syntax. In Libya there are three dialects of Libyan Arabic: eastern, western and southern dialect. In this paper, however, I will focus on the Libyan Arabic spoken in the western part of Libya. The paper will discuss possible word orders in different types of clauses including; root clauses, finite and non-finite embedded clauses. We will see that not all word orders allowed in root clauses are possible in embedded clauses. Word order will also be investigated simple and wh-questions. The strategies followed in forming questions in Libyan Arabic will also be discussed. Each type of clauses studied in this paper will be accounted for by giving the tree-diagram representation within the Minimalist Program.

● **Keywords**: agreement; clauses; embedded; movement; root word order.

■المستخلص:

الغرض الرئيسي من هذه الورقة هو إلقاء بعض الضوء على ترتيب الكلمات في العربية الليبية ، وهى إحدى أقل اللهجات العربية شهرة في علم اللغة العربي. عدد الدراسات عن هذه اللهجة ضئيل جدا مقارنة باللهجات العربية الأخرى. هناك ثلاث لهجات فرعية في ليبيا: اللهجة الشرقية والغربية والجنوبية إلا إنني سوف أركز في هذه الورقة على اللهجة المستخدمة في الجزء الغربي من ليبيا. ستناقش الورقة ترتيب الكلمات المحتملة في أنواع مختلفة من الجمل بما في ذلك ؛ جمل جذرية ، جمل

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محدودة وغير محدودة. سنرى أنه ليست كل تراتيب الكلمات المسموح بها ﭐ الجمل الجذرية ممكنة ﭐ الجمل المضمنة. سيتم أيضًا التحقق من ترتيب الكلمات ﭐ الجمل الاستفهامية. بالإضافة الى مناقشة الاستراتيجيات المتبعة ﭐ تشكيل الجمل الاستفهامية ﭐ اللهجة الليبية. سيتم تحليل كل نوع من الجمل التي تمت دراستها ﭐ هذه الورقة حسب القواعد المتبعة ﭐ نظرية منماليست بروغرام.

● **الكلمات المفتاحية**: توافق؛ عبارات؛ مدمج؛ حركة؛ ترتيب الكلمات

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1. INTRODUCTION

The amount of literature on Libyan Arabic can hardly be mentioned compared to other Arabic spoken varieties. Libya is located in North Africa and it has borders with Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia and thus, you would expect the Arabic variety spoken in this country to have noticeable similarities with at least one of the Arabic varieties found in these adjacent countries as is the case of Algerian and Moroccan or Syrian and Lebanese Arabic. But this is not the case, there are substantial differences between Libyan Arabic and the rest of North African Arabic in terms of syntax, semantics and phonology.

It would probably be helpful to compare Libyan Arabic data with Standard Arabic data throughout this study so that readers, who are not familiar with Libyan Arabic, will have better understanding of this Arabic variety. Let us first start by looking at possible word orders in both Standard Arabic and Libyan Arabic which will reveal a major difference between them. In standard Arabic as well as in Libyan Arabic VSO (verb-subject-object) and SVO (subject-verb-object) word orders are possible as shown by the examples from Standard Arabic in (1a-b) and the examples from Libyan Arabic in (2 a-b).

(1) a- sa/ala   l-muʕallim-u   T-Taalib-a   VSO

asked-3ms the-teacher-NOM the-student -ACC

'the teacher asked the student'

b- l-muʕallim-u   sa/ala   T-Taalib-a   SVO

the-teacher-NOM asked-3ms the-student -ACC

'the teacher asked the student'

(2) a- s/al   l-astaad   T-Taalab   VSO

asked-3ms the-teacher the-student

'the teacher asked the student'

b- l-astaad   s/al   T-Taalab   SVO

the-teacher asked-3ms the-student

'the teacher asked the student'

Notice that Libyan Arabic lacks case marking inflection, which is in fact the case with most colloquial Arabic varieties. In Standard Arabic it is believed by the Arab grammarians that word order is unlimited since no ambiguity raises. Mohamed (2000) reports that, in Standard Arabic there are six possible word orders in simple declarative clauses in which ambiguity can be avoided by virtue of case marking inflection. For examples and more discussion on these possible word orders in Standard Arabic see Mohammed M. (1989 P3). In Libyan Arabic, on the other hand, because of lack of case inflection, possible word orders are limited. Subject verb agreement system, however, makes it possible to have another order in Libyan Arabic, which is VOS as shown in (3)

(3)   sa/luu   l-astaad   T-Taalaba   VOS

asked-3mp the-teacher the-students

'the students asked the teacher'

Although all the previous word orders are possible, in this paper I will discuss VSO and SVO orders only as the overt word orders in Arabic.

This paper is organized as follows. In section 2 I look at word order in root clauses and briefly discuss subject verb agreement, in section 3 I examine what word orders are allowed in embedded clauses, In section 4 I discuss yes-no questions with aim of determining whether Libyan Arabic makes use of any question particle to introduce yes-no questions, In section 5 I look at what strategies are utilized in Libyan Arabic to form wh-questions and in section 6 I conclude the paper.

2. ROOT CLAUSES

As we have already seen earlier, both VSO and SVO word orders are allowed in Libyan Arabic. The main difference between Standard Arabic and Libyan Arabic lies in the agreement between the verb and the subject. Standard Arabic exhibits an inflectional pattern in which the verb agrees with the subject fully

i.e. in person, gender and number, in the SVO word-order as illustrated by the examples in (4a-b), and agrees only partially i.e. in person and gender but not in number in the VSO order as shown by the examples in (5a-b).

(4) a- katab-a   l-/awlaad-u   d-dars-a.   VSO

             wrote-3ms the boys-NOM the lesson-ACC

             'the boys wrote the lesson'

       b- katab-at l-banaat-u   d-dars-a.   VSO

             wrote-3fs the girls-NOM the lesson-ACC

             'the girls wrote the lesson'

(5) a- l-/awlaad-u   katab-uu d-dars-a.   SVO

             the boys-NOM wrote-3mp the lesson-ACC

             'the boys wrote the lesson'

       b- l-banaat-u   katab-na d-dars-a.   SVO

             the girls-NOM wrote-3fp the lesson-ACC

             'the girls wrote the lesson'

In Libyan Arabic, on the other hand, the verb agrees with the subject in person and number no matter whether the word-order is SVO or VSO.

(6) a- kitb-uu   l-awlaad d-dars.   VSO

            wrote-3mp the boys the lesson

            'the boys wrote the lesson'

      b- kitb-uu   l-bnaat d-dars.   VSO

            wrote-3mp the girls the lesson

            'the girls wrote the lesson'

(7) a- l-awlaad kitb-uu   d-dars.   SVO

            the boys wrote-3mp the lesson

            'the boys wrote the lesson'

      b- l-bnaat kitb-uu   d-dars.   SVO

the girls wrote-3mp the lesson

'the girls wrote the lesson'

The examples in (6a) and (7a) show that the verb seems to fully agree with the subject. In (6b) and (7b), on the other hand, the verb agrees with the subject in both SVO & VSO sentences in person and number but not in gender. Notice that agreement inflection on the verb in (6) and (7) is the same, which is third person masculine plural, in spite of the gender of the subject in (6b) and (7b) is feminine. We could jump to conclusion here and argue that Libyan Arabic does not have overt gender agreement between the verb and the subject[1]. However, this does not seem to be the case. Now consider the examples in (8).

(8) a- l-wild ktab   d-dars.   SVO

         the boy wrote-3ms the lesson

         'the boy wrote the lesson'

     b- l-bint kitbit   d-dars.   SVO

         the girls wrote-3fs the lesson

         'the girl wrote the lesson'

     c- ktab   l-wild d-dars.   VSO

         wrote-3ms the boy the lesson

         'the boy wrote the lesson'

     d- kitbit   l-bint d-dars.   VSO

         wrote-3fs the girls the lesson

         'the girl wrote the lesson'

As you can see the verb fully agrees with subject even in gender in both SVO and VSO word orders. The difference between the examples in (6 &7) on one hand and the examples in (8) on the other hand is the subject plural in the first and singular in the latter. It seems then, in Libyan Arabic we have full subject verb agreement but not when the subject is plural. I will come back to the issue of subject-verb agreement asymmetry in Arabic later in the paper.

Let us now see how VSO and SVO word orders are derived. Mohammed

1 - It is worth mentioning that Libyan Arabic spoken in the east and some parts of the south, overt gender agreement can be found.

(2000), argues that subjects in Arabic start in Spec of VP (specifier of verb phrase) and then they may or may not move to Spec of TP (specifier of tense phrase). This is known as '*subject inside VP hypothesis*', According to this assumption (4a) will have the tree structure in (10a) and (5a) will have the tree structure in (10b).
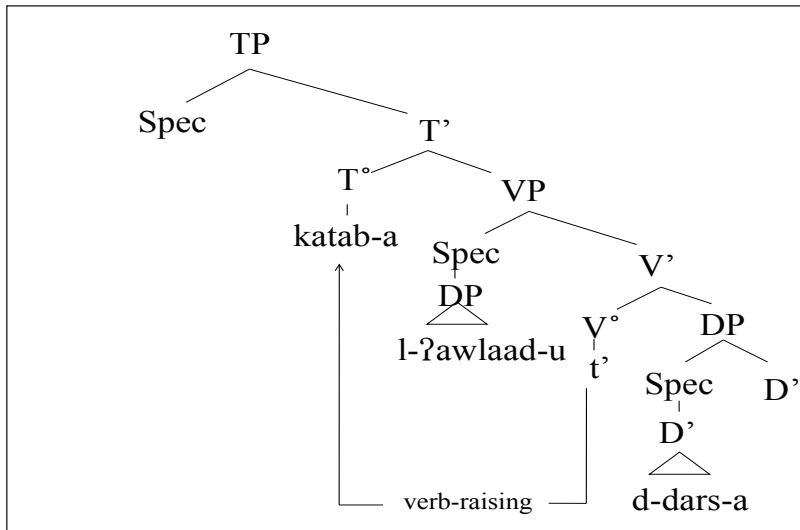

(10b)
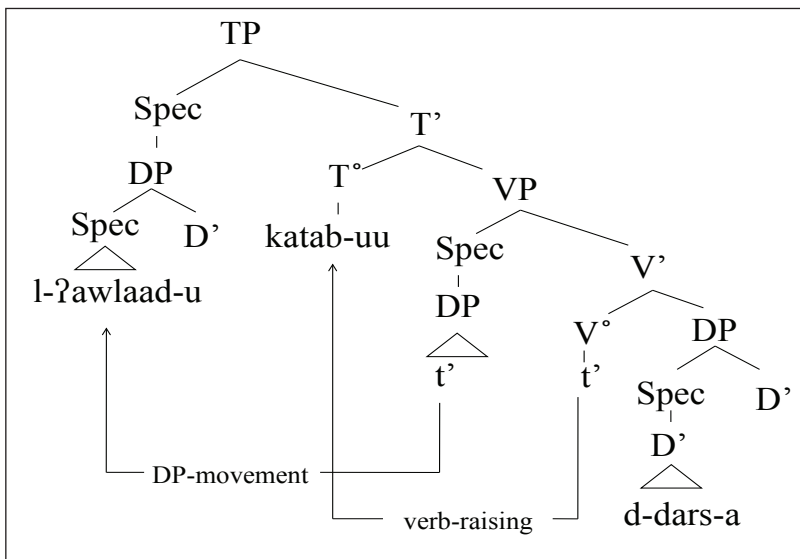
Since verbs always rise to 'T' to obtain tense and agreement in both VSO and

SVO clauses, it is the subject then which is responsible for deciding whether the word order is VSO or SVO by staying in-situ in Spec-VP or raising to Spec-TP. Following Mohammed (2000), I assume that similar to Standard Arabic, Libyan Arabic SVO clauses are derived out of VSO clauses by moving the subject from Spec-VP to Spec-TP as shown by the tree diagram in (11a) for the example in (6a) and the tree diagram in (11b) for the example in (7a).
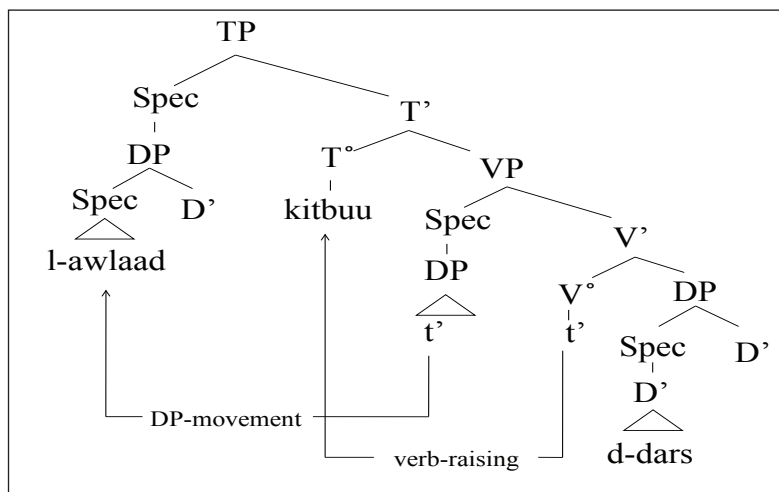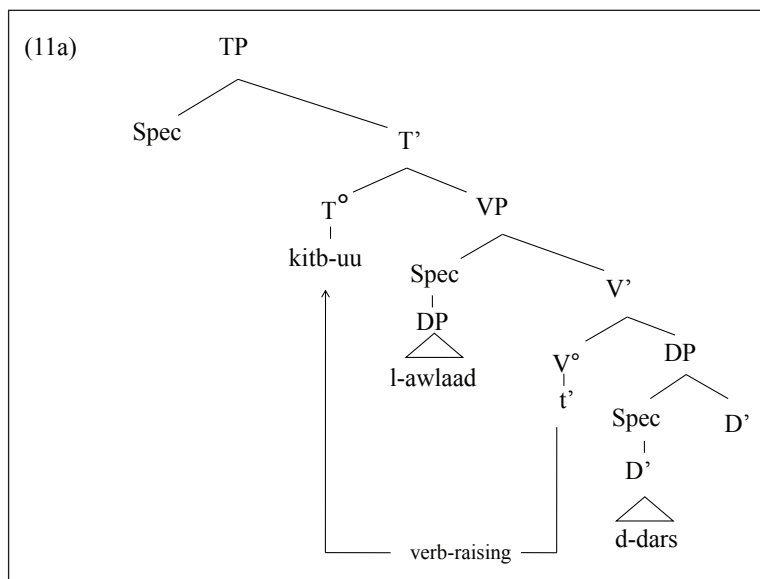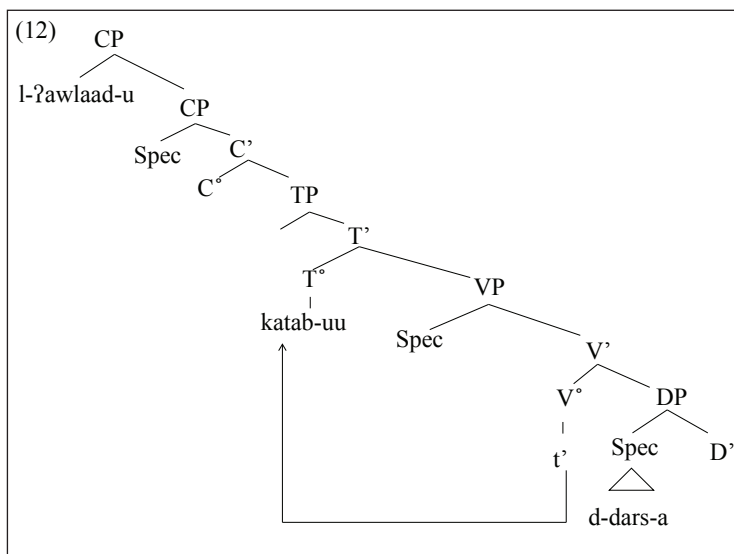

Let us now get back to agreement asymmetry in Standard Arabic and

discuss the reason why verbs agree with the subject in person, gender and number in SVO, while they agree in person, gender but not in number in VSO clauses. Mohammed (2000) suggests that the partial agreement between the subject and the verb in VSO is due to the subject is in Spec-head relation with the verb as illustrated by the tree diagram in (10a) and the full agreement in SVO sentences is because the subject is not in Spec-head relation with the verb as illustrated by the tree diagram in (10b). This analysis seems to capture the facts of agreement asymmetry in Standard Arabic fine, but not in Libyan Arabic. Recall that verbs in Libyan Arabic bear the same agreement inflections with both post and pre-verbal subjects, in other words, they have the same agreement whether they are in Spec-head relation with the subject or not. Benmamoun (2000) explains the issue of subject-verb agreement in morphological terms. He argues that in VSO order the verb and the subject merge at PF (phonetic form) and, thus, there is no need to spell out number affixation on the verb. In SVO order, on the other hand, the subject and the verb do not merge at PF and, hence, number affixation must be spelled out. This analysis is also problematic in terms of adjacency. See Ackema and Neeleman (2003) for more details.

In fact the issue of subject verb agreement in Arabic has received rather an extensive work in the literature and attracted the attention and disagreement among scholars. Discussing the literature and accounting for the agreement asymmetry in Arabic is beyond the scope of this paper.

It is worth mentioning in this section, however, that there are arguments in the literature which consider Standard Arabic as a pure VSO language and that the pre-verbal subject is a left-dislocated DP under adjunction CP (complementizer phrase) see (Ouhalla 1988), Ouhalla (1991) Krer (2004). According to this assumption, the example in (5a) will have the structure in (12).

(12)

```
        CP
       /  \
l-ʔawlaad-u  CP
           /   \
        Spec    C'
               /   \
             C°     TP
                   /   \
                  T'
                 /  \
               T°     VP
            katab-uu  / \
                   Spec  V'
                        /   \
                      V°     DP
                      |     /  \
                      t'  Spec  D'
                            △
                          d-dars-a
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According to Ouhalla (1991) the preverbal subject in (5a) is in fact a topic located in Spec-TNSP (specifier of tense phrase) and it is linked to a resumptive pro which starts in Spec of VP and then moves to Spec-AGRP (agreement phrase). He further assumes that the resumptive pro acts as the subject of the sentence.

3. EMBEDDED CLAUSES

In this section I will discuss two types of embedded clauses: finite and non-finite clauses to see what word orders are allowed and check if they are consistent with the analysis outlines above. Section 3.1 deals with finite clauses and section 3.2 deals with non-finite clauses. In each section I will start by presenting and analyzing data from Standard Arabic followed by data from Libyan Arabic.

3.1. Finite clauses

Finite clauses in Standard Arabic are introduced by one of the complementizers */inna* or */anna* (that). The choice of the complementizer is determined by the matrix verb, i.e. */inna* occurs with the matrix verb *qaala* (said) and */anna* occurs with *Danna* (thought) and other verbs (ʔafʕaal

l-quluub). Consider the following examples:

(13) a- qaala   Zayd-un /inna Öamr-an Äaadara l-manzil-a   SVO

         said-3ms Zayd-NOM that   Omar-ACC left-3ms the house-ACC

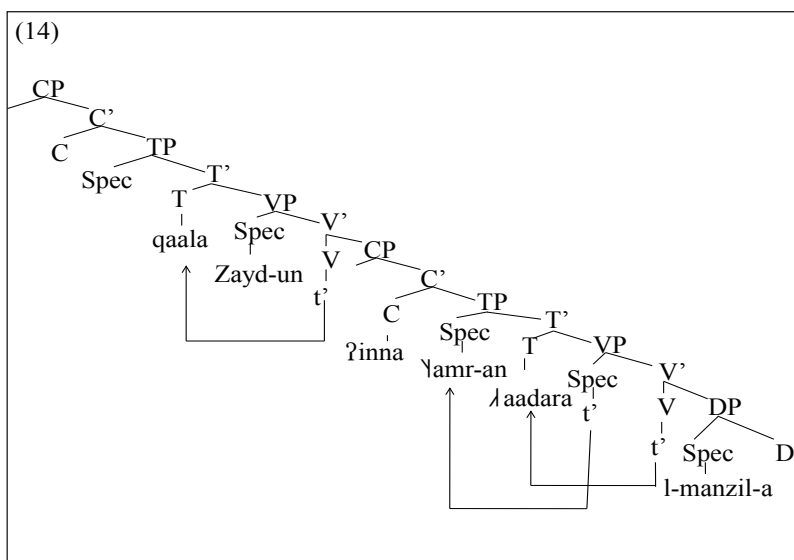'Zayd said that Omar had left the house'

    b- Danna/ħasiba Moħammad-un /anna Öaliy-an Äaadara l-manzil-a. SVO

Thought-3ms Mohammad-NOM that   Ali-ACC left-3ms the-house-ACC

       'Mohammad thought that Ali had left the house'

   c- * Danna/ħasiba Zayd-un   /anna Äaadara Öamr-an   l-manzil-a VSO

       thought-3ms Zayd-NOM that   left-3ms Omar-ACC the-house-ACC

       'Zayd tought that Omar had left the house'

    d- * qaala   Moħammad-un /inna Äaadara Öaliy-an   l-manzil-a   VSO

       said-3ms Zayd-NOM   that   left-3ms Omar-ACC house-ACC

       'Mohammad said that Ali had left the house'

The examples in (13a-d) show that word orders alternations allowed in simple declarative clauses are barred in embedded finite clauses. SVO is the only word order allowed. VSO in finite embedded clauses will result in ill-formed sentences as shown in (13c-d) This is consistent with the assumption that pre-verbal subjects are left dislocated DPs under adjunction CP. In fact these pre-verbal subjects are widely considered as topics linked to resumptive pronouns '*pro*'. For more discussion on topics and resumptive pronouns see Ouhalla (1991), Fassi Fehri (1993), Mohamed (2000), Aoun et al. (2010).

In the finite embedded clauses above both, the matrix verb in the root clause and the verb in the embedded clause, carry tense and agreement. Assuming that verbs in Arabic show tense only when they move to T, we may predict that both verbs are located under T.

(14)

CP
C'
C TP
Spec T'
T VP
qaala Spec V'
Zayd-un V CP
t' C'
C TP
ʔinna Spec T'
ʕamr-an T VP
ʎaadara Spec V'
t' V DP
t' Spec D'
l-manzil-a

The structure in (14) shows that Standard Arabic embedded finite clauses are consistent with the analyses above that verbs move to T and subjects generate in Spec-VP and. Before discussing why SVO order is not allowed in finite clauses, let us examine some data from Libyan Arabic.

Embedded finite clauses in Libyan Arabic are introduced by two complementizers: the first is the Standard Arabic */inna* and the other is *rahuu* which is not from Standard Arabic. Similar to Standard Arabic, the choice of the complementizer is determined by the matrix verbs *gaal* (said) and */aÖtaqad* (thought). The complementizer */inna* may occur with both matrix verbs *gaal* or */aÖtaqad* as shown by the examples in (15a-b), while *rahuu* occurs only with *gaal* as shown by the example in (16a-b).

(15) a- /aħmed gaal   /inna l-awlaad kusruu   r-rušin   SVO

Ahmad said-3ms that   the boys broke-3mp the-window

'Ahmad said that the boys broke the window'

b- /aħmed /aÖtaqad   /inna l-awlaad kusruu   r-rušin   SVO

Ahmad thought-3ms that   the boys broke-3mp the-window

'Ahmad thought that the boys broke the window'

(16)　a-　/aħmed gaal　　rahuu l-awlaad kusruu　r-rušin　　　　SVO

Ahmad said-3ms that　the boys broke-3mp the-window

'Ahmad said that the boys broke the window'

b- * /aħmed /aÖtaqad　rahuu l-awlaad kusruu　r-rušin　　　SVO

Ahmad thought-3ms that　the boys broke-3mp the-window

'Ahmad thought that the boys broke the window'

Similar to Standard Arabic, in Libyan Arabic embedded finite clauses SVO word order is allowed as show by the examples in (15a-b) and the example in (16a). The illformed example in (16b) confirms that the complementizer *rahuu* cannot occur with the matrix verb /aÖtaqad. VSO order, however, is not allowed, a property shared with Standard Arabic as we have seen above. This is shown by the ill-formed examples in (17a-c) below.

(17)　a- * /aħmed gaal　　/inna kusruu　l-awlaad r-rušin　　　VSO

Ahmad　said-3ms that　broke-3mp the boys the-window

'Ahmad said that the boys broke the window'

b- * /aħmed /aÖtaqad　　/inna kusruu　l-awlaad r-rušin　　VSO

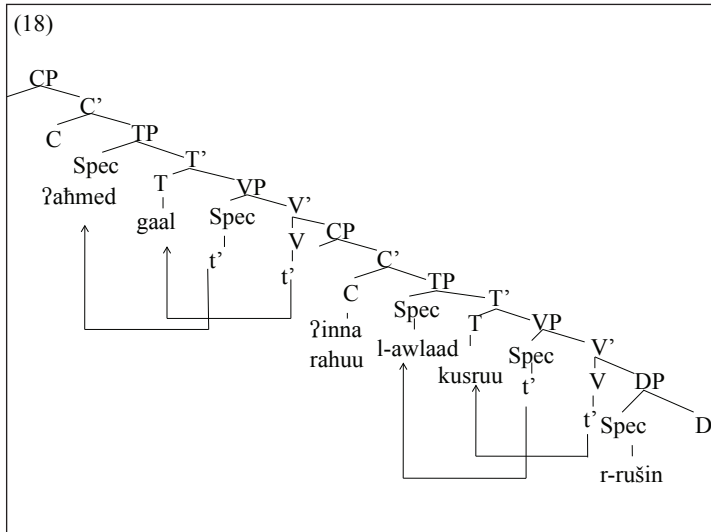Ahmad thought-3ms that　broke-3mp the boys the-window

'Ahmad thought that the boys broke the window'

c- * /aħmed gaal　　rahuu kusruu　l-awlaad r-rušin　　　VSO

Ahmad said-3ms that　broke-3mp the boys the-window

'Ahmad said that the boys broke the window'

The tree structure representation of Libyan Arabic embedded finite clauses would look like (18).

Having finished examining the data, let us now discuss the reason why VSO order is not possible in embedded finite clauses. The answer to this question is fairly simple and straightforward. In simple terms, this has to do with case assignment. To clarify this let us discuss Standard Arabic data because it has overt case marking unlike Libyan Arabic. Notice that the subjects in the embedded clauses in (13a & 13b) carry accusative case unlike subjects in root clauses which always carry nominative case. This is because the complementizers /inna and /anna assign accusative case to the subject in this type of clauses, a well known fact in traditional Arabic grammar. Based on the assumption that case assignment requires adjacency, Chomsky (2005), and since the complementizer is located in C, the subject NP must move to Spec-TP to receive accusative case. And since verbs in Arabic do not move further than T, deriving VSO order in finite embedded clauses is not applicable. For more discussion on case assignment see Ouhalla (1991, 1993), Fassi Fehri (1993), Benmamoun (2000).

3.2. Non-finite clauses

This type of clauses in Standard Arabic is introduced by the comlementizer /an (that) as shown by the examples in (19a & 20a). Opposite to finite clauses, in non-finite clauses the complementizer must be followed by the verb and thus only VSO word order allowed. This is demonstrated by the ungrammatical examples in (19b and 20b).

(19) a- Talaba   Zayd-un   /an yuÄaadera Öamr-un l-manzil-a.   VSO

      requested-3ms Zayd-NOM that leave-3ms Öamr-NOM the-house-ACC

      'Zayd requested that Öamr should leave the house'

   b- * Talaba   Zayd-un   /an Öamr-un   yuÄaadera l-manzil-a.   SVO

      requested-3ms Zayd-NOM that Omar-NOM leave-3ms the-house-ACC

      'Zayd requested that Öamr should leave the house'

(20) a- /araada   Moħammad-un /an yəftaħa Öaliy-un l-baab-a.   VSO

     wanted-3ms Mohammad-NOM that open-3ms Ali-NOM the-door-ACC

     'Mohammad wanted Ali to open the door'

   b- * /araada   Moħammad-un /an Öaliy-un yəftaħa l-baab-a.   SVO

      wanted-3ms Mohammad-NOM that Ali-NOM open-3ms the-

door-ACC

     'Mohammad wanted Ali to open the door'

Assuming that */an* does not carry similar properties as */inna* and */anna* in terms of case assignment, the post-verbal subjects in (19) and (20) does not need to move to Spec-TP to receive accusative case. Hence, VSO order is not derived in Embedded non-finite clauses. The example in (19a) will then have the structure in (21).

(21)
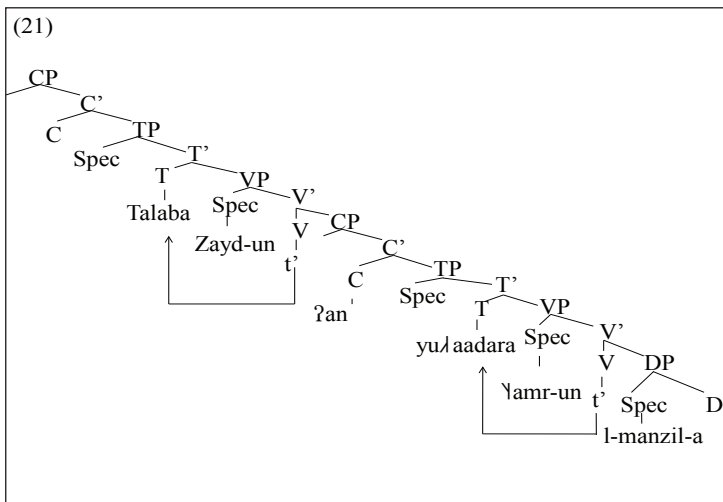
Libyan Arabic, on the other hand, does not make use of any complementizer to introduce non-finite clauses as shown by the examples in (22a & 23a). Since no overt complementizer is present in this type of clauses, we would expect no restrictions on word order. However, VSO order is not acceptable as shown by ill-formed examples in (22b & 23b).

(22) a- /aħmed yibbi   Ölii yaftaħ   l-baab   SVO

             Ahmad want-3ms Ali open-3ms the door

             'Ahmad wants Ali to open the door'

      b- * /aħmed yibbi   yaftaħ   Ölii l-baab   VSO

             Ahmad want-3ms open-3ms Ali the-door

             'Ahmed wants Ali to open the door'

(23) a- /aħmed Tlab   min Ölii yaftaħ   l-baab   SVO
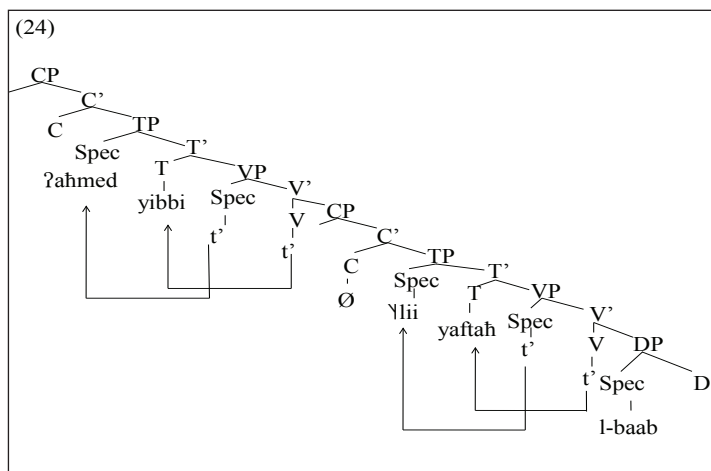
             Ahmad want-3ms from Ali open-3ms the door

             'Ahmad asked Ali to open the door'

      b- * /aħmed Tlab   min yaftaħ   Ölii l-baab   VSO

             Ahmad want-3ms from open-3ms Ali the-door

             'Ahmed asked Ali to open the door'

The tree structure representation for Libyan Arabic embedded non-finite clauses will look like (24) with null complementizer.

(24)

In the discussion above we learned that Libyan Arabic makes use of two complementizers ʔinna and *rahuu* to introduce embedded finite clauses and no complementizer in embedded non-fine clauses. We have also learned that Libyan Arabic differs from Standard Arabic in that only SVO word order is allowed in both finite and non-finite clauses.

4. QUESTIONS

This part of the study discusses word-order in a different type of sentences namely questions. Usually, converting affirmative sentences into questions affects word order. English, for example, is an SVO language, forming yes/ no questions, however, requires subject verb inversion and thus changing the word order to VSO. The same can be observed with regard to wh-questions.

4.1 Yes-No Questions

Many Arabic varieties can form yes-no questions by rising intonation alone (Mohammed 2000, Lina Choueiri 2000, Mushira Eid 1992 among others). However, standard Arabic requires an invariant question particle hal/ʔa in addition to rising intonation. Consider the following examples beginning with the question particle *hal*.

(25) a- hal ðahaba   ʔaħmad-un   ʔila l-madrasat-i?   VSO

Q went-3ms Ahmad-NOM to the-school-GEN

'Did Ahmad go to the school?'

b- * hal ʔaħmad-un   ðahaba   ʔila l-madrasat-i?   SVO

Q Ahmad-NOM went-3ms to   the-school-GEN

'Did Ahmad go to the school?

As you can observe from the examples in (25) yes-no questions introduced by the particle *hal* requires VSO order. SVO order is not acceptable as shown by the ill-formed example in (25b). Now consider the following yes/no question examples introduced with the particle ʔa.

(26) a- /a Zayd-un   ra/a   Öamr-an?   SVO

Q Zayd-NOM saw-3ms Omar-ACC

'did Zayd see Omar?'

b- /a ra/a   Zayd-un   Öamr-an?   VSO

Q saw-3ms Zayd-NOM Omar-ACC

'did Zayd see Omar?'

According to the examples in (26), VSO and SVO seem to be acceptable in yes-no questions. In Standard Arabic both question particles *hal* and *ʔa* always occurs in the initial position of the sentence. Moreover, there is no reason to assume that the verb rises to C, contrary to what is found in English, see Radford (2009). According to this assumption Standard Arabic yes-no questions, then will have the representation shown in (27).

(27)
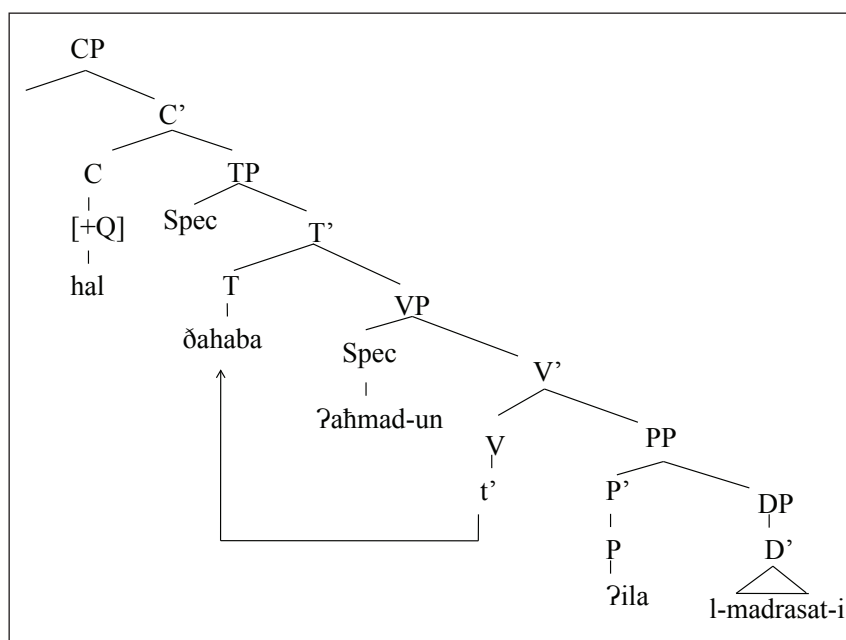
Unlike Standard Arabic, Libyan Arabic does not make use of any question particle. Subject verb inversion as well as rising intonation is the mechanism used to make yes-no questions. Consider the following examples.

(28)   a-   ʔaħmad mšaa   li-l-madrsa

Ahmad went-3ms to-the-school

'Ahmad went to school'

b-   mšaa ʔaħmad   li-l-madrsa?

Went-3ms Ahmad to-the-school

'Did Ahmad go to school'

c- * Ɂaħmad mšaa li- l-madrsa?

Ahmad went-3ms to-the-school

'Did Ahmad go to school'

The example in (28a) is declarative sentence with the SVO order. It is converted into a yes-no question by putting the verb in a position preceding the subject resulting in a VSO order as shown in (28b). The ill-formed example in (28c) shows that SVO in yes-no questions is not acceptable.[2]

Recall that verbs in Arabic rise as high as T to obtain tense and agreement and that subjects move to Spec-TP to derive SVO order or remain in Spec-VP and derive VSO order. And thus (28b) would have the representation in (11a). The representation of VSO word order in yes-no questions, however, is different as illustrated by the tree diagram in (29).

(29)
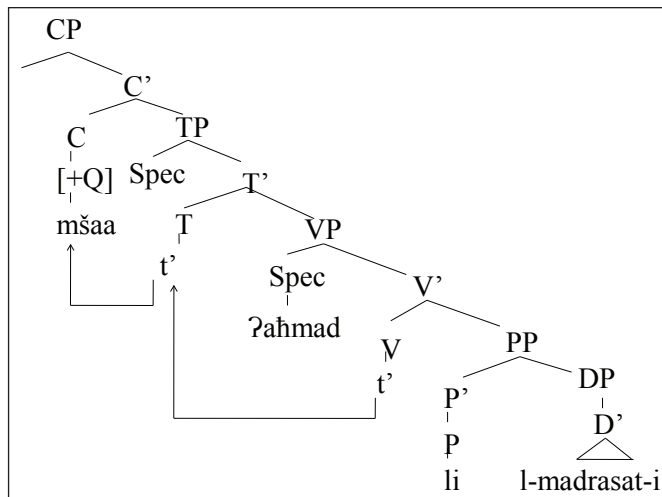
The analysis of yes-no questions in Libyan Arabic is then similar to those of English. The verb moves from T to C to satisfy the requirement of the

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2 - To some speakers (28c) is acceptable, however, this is a focus construction and thus considering the word order in these structures as SVO is inadequate. For detailed discussion on focus constructions see Shlonsky (2000) and Aoun et al (2010).

interrogative feature, see Radford (2009).

4.2 wh-questions

Wh-questions and wh-words in general is a broad topic, and because of lack of space, I will not discuss all aspects and issues of this topic. I will only discuss the strategies utilized in Libyan Arabic to form wh-questions and the word order allowed in this type of structures. For detailed discussion on wh-words in Arabic see Mohamed (2000), Fassi Fehri (2003), Aoun et al (2010).

In Arabic varieties there are two main strategies by which wh-questions are formed: a movement strategy in which the wh-word moves to the initial position of the sentence, and an in-situ strategy in which the wh-word remains in it is base-generation position, Aoun and Choueiri (1999), Wahba (1990). Now consider the following examples from Standard Arabic.

(30)　　a-　　ʔayna ðahaba　　ʔaħmad-u?

where went-3ms Ahmad-NOM

'where did Ahmad Go?'

b- * ðahaba　　ʔaħmad-u　　ʔayna?

went-3ms Ahmad-NOM where

'where did Ahmad Go?'

c- * ʔaħmad-u　　ðahaba　　ʔayna?

Ahmad-NOM went-3ms where

'where did Ahmad Go?'

d- * ʔaħmad-u　　ʔayna ðahaba?

Ahmad-NOM where went-3ms

'where did Ahmad Go?'

According to the examples in (30) wh-movement seems the only strategy followed in Standard Arabic to form wh-questions. Leaving the wh-word in-situ will result in ungrammatical sentences as shown by the examples in (30b & 30d). Now let us examine what word orders are allowed in Standard Arabic wh-questions.

(31)　　a-　　limaaða Äaadara ʔaħmad-un　　l-manzil-a?

> why   left-3ms Ahmad-NOM the-house-ACC
>
> 'why did Ahmad leave the house?'
>
> b- * limaaða ʔaħmad-un   Äaadara l-manzil-a?
>
> why   Ahmad-NOM left-3ms the-house-ACC
>
> 'why did Ahmad leave the house?'

It seems then; wh-movement in Standard Arabic requires the verb to be in a position immediately following the wh-word. In other words, only VSO word order is allowed in wh-questions. Wh-questions constructions with an SVO order will result in ungrammatical sentences as shown in (31b). According to this discussion, the tree structure of (30a) will look like (32).

(32)
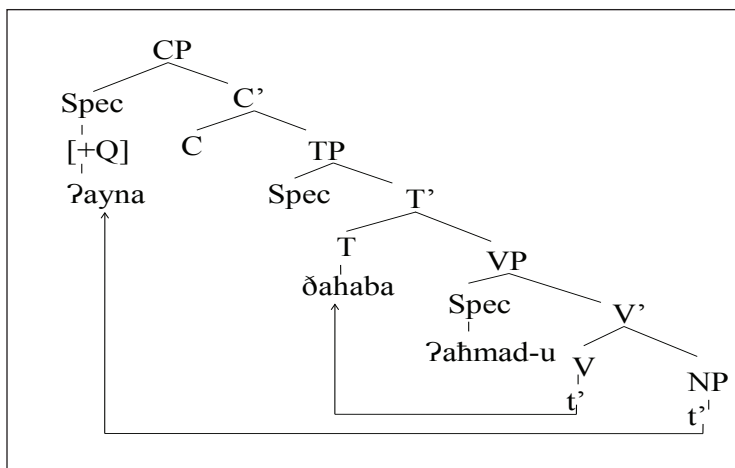
Unlike English where the auxiliary verb moves to from T to C, verbs in Standard Arabic do not move higher than T. This can be noticed in relativized wh-questions as in (33) where the relative pronoun occupies C.

(33)   man la-ði ðahaba   maʕa ʔaħmad-u?

who that went-3ms with Ahmad-NOM

'who went with Ahmad?'

Let us now see what strategies Libyan Arabic utilizes to form wh-questions. Recall that there are two strategies, movement or in-situ. Consider the following examples:

(34)   a-   wiin   mšaa   ʔaħmad?

            where went-3ms Ahmad

            'where did Ahmad Go?'

        b- * mšaa   ʔaħmad wiin?

            went-3ms Ahmad where

            'where did Ahmad Go?'

        c- * ʔaħmad mšaa   wiin?

            Ahmad went-3ms where

            'where did Ahmad Go?'

        d- * ʔaħmad wiin   mšaa?

            Ahmad where went-3ms

            'where did Ahmad Go?'

Similar to Standard Arabic, wh-questions in Libyan Arabic are formed by moving the wh-word to the initial position of the sentence. Now let us examine word order allowed in Libyan Arabic wh-questions. Consider the examples below:

(35)   a-   ʕlaaš Tlaʕ   ʔaħmad min l-ħooš?

            why left-3ms Ahmad from the-house

            'why did Ahmad leave the house?'

        b- * ʕlaaš ʔaħmad Tlaʕ   min l-ħooš?

            why Ahmad left-3ms from the-house

            'why did Ahmad leave the house?'

        c-   min illi mšaa   mʕaa ʔaħmad?

            who that went-3ms with Ahmad

            'who went with Ahmad?'

The examples in (35a-b) show that, similar to Standard Arabic, only VSO word order is allowed. SVO word order will result in an ill-formed sentence as shown by (35b). Recall that In Libyan Arabic yes-no questions move to

C to check the (+Q) feature, and thus, we would expect it to always move from T to C in interrogative constructions. This however, does not seem to be the case as shown by the example in (35c) where C is occupied by the relative pronoun. According to this argument, wh-questions in Libyan Arabic are represented by the tree diagram in (36).

(36)
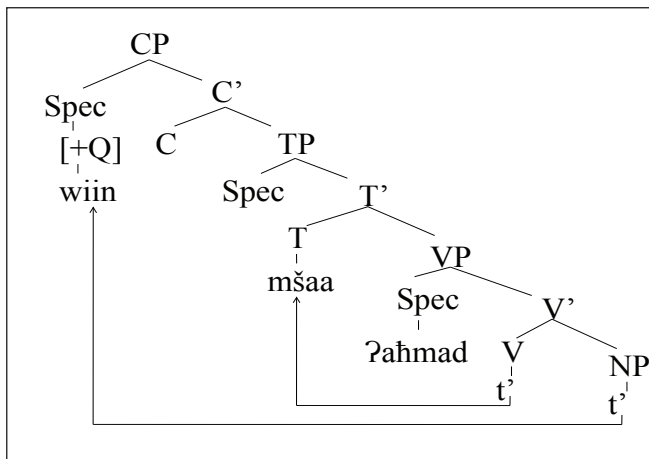
5. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have learned that in Libyan Arabic there are maximum three possible word orders in which ambiguity can be avoided by virtue of subject verb agreement, and that SVO word order can be achieved by DP-movement from Spec-VP to Spec-TP. Similar to other colloquial Arabic varieties, Libyan Arabic nouns do not inflect for case. We have also seen that verbs do not agree in gender with plural subjects with both pre-verbal and post-verbal subjects.

In embedded finite clauses two complementizers are used: the Standard Arabic */inna* and the other is *rahuu*. The complementizer */inna* may occur with both matrix verbs *gaal* and */aÖtaqad* while *rahuu* occurs only with *gaal*. In embedded non-finite clauses, on the other hand, no complementizer is used. SVO is the only word order allowed in both embedded finite and non-finite clauses.

Yes-no questions constructions in Libyan Arabic are achieved by subject-verb inversion, no particle is used. In wh-questions, the wh-word starts low

in the structure and then moves up to Spec-CP. VSO is the only word order available in both yes-no and wh-questions.

There are quite few issues need further discussion and analyses, such as the reason why some word orders which are allowed in root clauses are not possible in other types of clauses. Another issue would be the controversial pre-verbal subjects. Focus constructions also needs to be discussed in details especially in questions. Because we have limited space, these issues will be left for future research.

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