

The Low IP Area in Arabic: Somber Prospects

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Abstract

In this paper we present empirical evidence which takes issue with the existence of a discourse-laden low IP, harking back to [Cecchetto \(1999\)](#), [Villalba \(2000\)](#) and [Belletti \(2001, 2004\)](#), among others. In particular, we argue that right dislocation in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), *qua* a discursive articulation, is at odds with the argument that there is an information-structural area sandwiched between IP and vP, and in favour of a clause-external analysis which locates right-dislocated phrases IP-externally. This claim is based on inspecting the properties of right dislocated elements in MSA relative to binding under Condition C, licensing negative polarity items, agreement alternation and wide focus. The analysis crucially proves to present a unified account of focus in MSA, where we maintain that the apparent complexity and diversity of focus in this language is illusory, and epiphenomenal, emerging from the interaction of focus expressions and right dislocation, *viz.*, focalization in MSA occurs in situ, specifically in the rightmost position, with string-initial focus and string-internal focus being taken to be a reflex of an interfering right dislocation process targeting an IP-external position. The resulting outcome thus strongly lends support to [Samek-Lodovici's \(2006\)](#) model of a focus-less split CP, and likewise casts a shadow of a doubt on the viability of the cartographic approach to MSA *à la* [Ouhalla \(1994a, 1997\)](#) and [Shlonsky \(2000\)](#).

KEYWORDS: Modern Standard Arabic, information structure, right dislocation, focus, Split CP.

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1 Stage-setting

It is well-known in typological research that basic word order in natural languages can be rearranged under multiple permutations to satisfy discursive goals. Since at least [Stalnaker \(1978\)](#), it has been widely acknowledged that discursive communication is underlain by the speaker and the hearer's 'Common Ground': the idea that the communicative participants in a given speech community share a set of propositions for a certain context. It is sometimes the case, however, that these propositions diverge in a significant manner, wherein the flux of information must be packaged or structured ([Halliday 1967](#); [Chafe 1976](#)) so as to keep human communication more informative and efficient. This can be implemented by signalling what part of proposition is already salient in the surrounding context, and which informational part is already missed in the hearer's knowledge store ([Eilam 2011](#)). Two information-structural notions are argued to play a crucial role in this process of information packaging: TOPIC and FOCUS. At the risk of oversimplification, it can be said that while the former denotes presupposed information, the latter feeds discourse by new information. For a fine-grained characterization of these notions, see among others [Lambrecht \(1994\)](#); [Krifka \(2008\)](#); [Schwabe and Winkler \(2007\)](#); [Frascarelli \(2000\)](#); [Rizzi \(1997\)](#); [Zubizarreta \(1998\)](#); [Erteschik-Shir \(1997, 2007\)](#); [Eilam \(2011\)](#).

From a discursive point of view, MSA implements a variety of strategies to express new information. One way of implementing this is to exploit accentuation via placing a prominent pitch on a grammatical element (but see section 5 for a possible qualification speculating that focus in MSA is correlated to a stress-driven operation which targets a rightmost position). Importantly, intonational prominence indicating focus in Arabic is not correlated to a dedicated syntactic projection since it can occur clause-finally (1a) clause-medially (1b) and clause-initially (1c). Here and throughout, small caps indicate pitch accents.

(1) CONTEXT: Did you give the winner a car?

- a. Laa. aṯtyitu alfaiza BAYT-AN
No. (I) gave the winner-ACC house-ACC
'No. I gave the winner a house'

- b. Laa. aṯtyitu-hu BAYT-AN, li alfaizi
No. (I) gave house-ACC to the winner-GEN
'No I gave the winner a house'

- c. Laa. BAYT-AN aʕtyitu ʔl-faiz-a
 No house-ACC (I) gave the winner-ACC
 'No. I gave the winner a house.' (Alzayid 2022: 147)

If we examine the linear order of the sentences depicted in (1), we can observe that focal element, flagged by the indirect object, is not correlated to an invariant position. The example depicted in (1b) features a case of Clitic Right Dislocation (CLRD), where the indirect object occurring with a pronominal clitic in the main clause is displaced rightmost. The comma is not an orthographic marker, but rather it is a phonological device to highlight a pause in the intonational contour of the sentence (Cruschina 2010).¹ An interesting question which is in need of an explanation is why Arabic has such a mosaic variation relative to the realization of focus, compared to other languages, where focal elements are argued to remain in-situ as in English (2), or occur in a dedicated syntactic projection as in Hungarian (3).

- (2) *CHIPS_i, I ate t_i (compare the grammatical 'I ate CHIPS') (Weir 2014: 186)
- (3) JANOST_i hivtak meg t_i
 Janos.ACC invite.3PL PERF
 'They invited Janos' (Horvath 2000: 201)

Over the past decades, information-structural notions, along with their syntactic, semantic and intonational properties, have spawned a wealth of proposals with varying theoretical commitments. More specifically, a hotly-debated question in the generative literature concerns the level of grammar where discourse-related notions are realized. According to one line of inquiry, information structural-notions are orthogonal to narrow syntax, and they are best relegated to LF for interpretation (Rochemont 1986). Another line of inquiry argues for an independent component of information structure in the grammar (Vallduví 1993; Erteschik-Shir 1997; Zubizarreta 1998). All of these accounts, differences in implementation aside, deny the assumption that discourse related-notions are encoded in the syntax proper. This position has been revived more recently by Chomsky (2008) where it is argued that UG does not encode

¹I assume in keeping with Frascarelli (2000: 37) that dislocated elements are mapped into a separate intonational phrase. This can be formalized as illustrated in (i)

- (i) Prosodic Extraposition
 The ϕ containing [+F] constituent is the only ϕ within sentential I. What precedes or follows is mapped into independent Is.

According to this formulation, dislocated elements are mapped into independent Intonational Phrases (Is) represented in the main text by the obligatory presence of orthographic commas. On the other hand, Phonological Phrase ϕ containing the [+Focus] constituent is included within an independent and separate Intonational Phrase.

between IP and vP (Belletti 2001, 2004; Cecchetto 1999; Villalba 2000). A rough representation of the low IP analysis is depicted in (5).

(5) [IP [TopP [FocP [TopP [vP]]]]]

In this paper we motivate an analysis (harking back to a cluster of precursors rooted in the syntax of the Italian right periphery, namely, Samek-Lodovici (2006, 2009, 2015); Frascarelli (2000, 2004); Cardinaletti (2002)), arguing that the existence of a low periphery in MSA is not a valid solution, since there is ample evidence speaking against this analytic choice. This position crucially has non-trivial consequences when one considers cases of focus expressions in MSA of the sort depicted in (1). As it will transpire later on, the focus strategy in Arabic is invariably correlated to occur rightmost, with clause-internal focus and clausal-initial focus being a side effect of a productive process of right dislocation (see Samek-Lodovici 2006 for an innovative implantation of this idea to account for the mixed distribution of focus in Italian). That being said, this paper presents a simplified view of the mixed distribution of focus in MSA by deriving it from a single rightmost position which is blurred by right dislocation resulting in the apparent complex distribution.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. §2 presents empirical evidence that right dislocation in MSA is best analyzed as an IP-external operation by examining right dislocated elements relative to binding, negative polarity licensing, agreement alternation, and the interaction of right dislocation and wide focus; all of these pieces of evidence converge to argue against the viability of the low IP analysis as far as right dislocation in MSA is concerned. In §3 we take up the varied distribution of focus in MSA, maintaining that a unified analysis can be pursued where instances of clause-internal and clause-initial focus are shown to invariably occur rightmost, and their apparent non-finality status is argued to be imputable to an interfering IP-external right dislocation. This analysis crucially turns out to prove the uniformity of focus in MSA, thereby displaying compatibility with English and Hungarian, and at the same time presenting a straightforward answer to the licensing conditions underlying right dislocated elements (i.e. post focus elements) when focus is not in a string-final position. More recently, Jarrah and Abusalim (2021) and Alshamari and Jarrah (2022) argue for the existence of discourse-oriented projections between TP and vP in Jordanian Arabic and Najdi Arabic respectively. We present a discussion of these accounts in §4, where we argue that our proposal—based on the claim that Arabic does not exhibit the properties of the low IP— extends to them readily, unless one is ready to make *ad hoc* assumptions. §5 summarizes the paper and explores some general consequences of our proposal.

2 Right Dislocation in MSA

Right Dislocation (RD) in MSA is a syntactic construction where a grammatical element is detached to the right of the matrix clause, which furthermore can apply to any syntactic category as shown below in (6). For an exhaustive characterization of RD in MSA, see [Alzayid \(2022\)](#).³ Note that the examples might be somehow marked, but they are certainly not marked as ungrammatical (here and throughout, translation of our examples involving dislocation is given without dislocation to highlight the intended meaning and at the same time present a grammatical English sentence).

- (6) a. raʔytu-hu, zayid-an
saw him, Zaid
'I saw Zaid' [DP]
- b. tahadaθ-tu mʕa zaid-en biʕʔniha, biʕʔn tilkə ʔl masʔləh
talked-1SG with Zaid-GEN about it, about that the matter
'I talked to Zaid about that matter.' [PP]
- c. zayid-un laysə kəðalika, karim-un bima fih-i alkifayt-u
Zaid-NOM is not like that, generous-NOM very enough
'Zaid is not very generous.' [AP]
- d. qad qultu-ha mirar-an, biʔna Zayid-an karim-un
have said it many times, that Zaid generous
'I have said many times that Zaid is generous .' [CP]
- e. baʕda tanawalika li qadhain-i sayðharu ðalika ʕalik-a, qad tagawzta alhada fi
after your drinking to two cups will-appear that on-you, have exceeded the limit in
ʔlfrabi
drinking
'After two cups you will appear to exceed the drinking limit.' [TP]

³According to [Aoun et al. \(2010: 193\)](#), only DPs can be doubled by an overt pronominal as in (6a), due to the claim that "there are no clitics that correspond to another type of phrase". Clitic doubling of DPs, however, are not always necessary even if there is a viable one, as shown the example in (i) where the DP is right dislocated, and is correlated to the main clause via an intermediary of a pro subject (see [Cardinaletti \(2002\)](#) for a strong case against null clitics).

- (i) Zaid-un ʔmara biʕʔn yaqu:mu bi məsəhi l-farʕə l-ʕmal-a
Zaid order that do with sweep the-street, the-workers
'Zaid ordered the workers to sweep the street.'

That being said, it would be inaccurate to invariably connect right dislocation of DPs to clitic doubling for the fact that clitic doubling is not always mandatory for the sake of well-formed dislocation of DPs.

The question then concerns the optimal analysis of RD. In fact, the phenomenology of dislocation has received mounting attention over the past years, along with an exploded wealth of proposals (for a nice overview, see [López 2016](#); [Fernández-Sánchez and Ott 2020](#)). Restricting myself to RD, the proposals on this sentential area, though not vast, are diverse with a clashing views. See [Samek-Lodovici \(2015\)](#) for relevant discussion. Three lines of inquiry suggest themselves. According to one proposal, the right-dislocated element is located in a position external to TP, with disagreements on how this operation should be derived. Under a base-generated account, it is argued that right-dislocated elements are externally merged where it appears in the clause ([De Cat 2002](#); [Frascarelli 2004](#)). Under a movement approach to right dislocation, on the other hand, it is maintained that right dislocated elements undergo movement presumably from the thematic domain ([Vallduví 1993](#); [Samek-Lodovici 2006](#)). A third analytic approach, which constitutes the core axis of this paper, argues for a middle position of right-dislocated elements, in the area comprised between TP and vP. Interestingly, although these proposals vary in a significant way, they share a common assumption: RD is a monoclausal structure. This monoclausal analysis, however, has been subjected to criticism with proposals arguing for the claim that RD is best analyzed as a biclausal configuration ([Ott and De Vries 2014](#); [Fernández-Sánchez 2020](#)) and "the author, 2022". For space reasons, we hasten to add though that we shall remain agnostic about the elliptical analysis of RD in this paper, but see [Den Dikken and Surányi \(2017\)](#) for a critique of works along these lines.

One of the seminal works in the literature on dislocation is that of [Vallduví \(1993\)](#), where it is argued that Left Dislocation (LD) and (RD) behave similarly modulo word order. In particular, LD is conceived to be the mirror of RD: while LD is argued to be left adjoined, RD is simply the opposite where right dislocated elements are analyzed as involving right adjunction. This has come to be known in the literature as 'the mirror hypothesis' after [Cecchetto \(1999\)](#). A rough representation of this analysis is given in (7).



Conversely, a thread running through clause-internal analyses is the claim that RD and LD are structurally distinct, and hence the mirror hypothesis is to be rejected. The early explicit characterization of this position can be found in [Villalba's \(1999; 2000\)](#) the '*split topic hypothesis*', which maintains that LD (i.e. external topic) is best analysed as a TP-external operation, while RD (i.e. internal topic) is best derived TP-internally (see [Feldhausen 2010](#) for an analysis along these lines). This analysis more or less

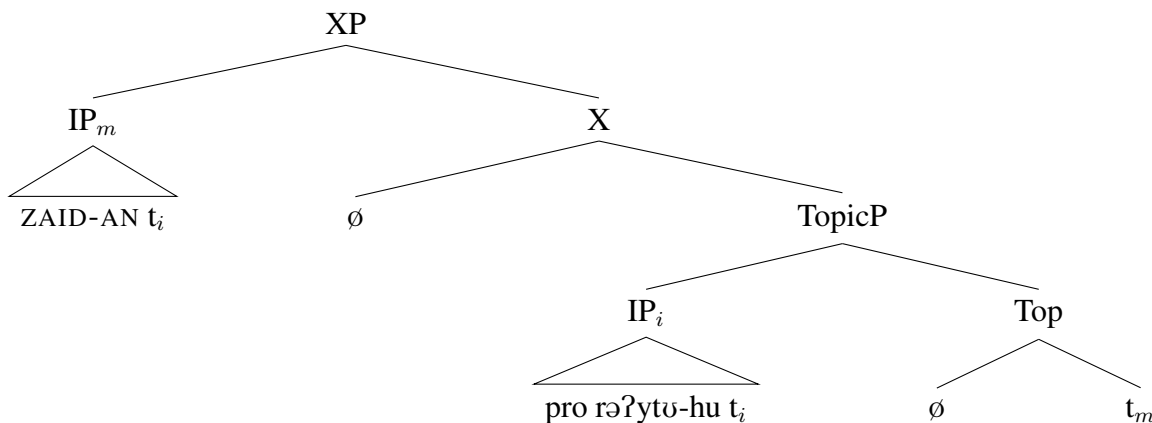
assumes that LD asymmetrically c-commands RD. A rough representation of this derivational dichotomy is sketched in (8).

- (8) [CP [ExtTopP [TP [NegP [IntFocP [IntTopP [vP]]]]]]

This position has further been seconded by [Cecchetto \(1999\)](#), [López \(2003, 2009\)](#) and [Fernández-Sánchez \(2017, 2020\)](#). The datum of this analysis goes that there are a number of asymmetries underlying RD and LD which cannot be accounted for by recourse to an adjunction analysis *à la* [Vallduví \(1993\)](#).⁴

Apart from the mirror hypothesis, we would examine in the rest of this paper the plausibility of the clause-external analysis of RD when applied to MSA. Concretely, the proposed analysis of RD in MSA would have the representation depicted in (9) illustrating the sentence shown in (6a)

- (9) a. [TopP Zaid_i [IP raʔytu-hu t_i]]
 b. [XP [IP raʔytu-hu t_i]_m [TopP Zaid_i t_m]]



According to this analysis, drawn from [Samek-Lodovici \(2006\)](#) *apud* [Cecchetto \(1999\)](#), the dislocated element undergoes movement to SpecTopic, followed then by raising of the remnant IP. Note that while the proposed analysis seems similar to that of clause-internal analyses *à la* [Cecchetto \(1999\)](#), it diverges in non-trivial ways. Specifically, the proposed analysis advocates the idea that RD is IP-external with the dislocated elements being not c-commanded by I, contrary to versions of clause-internal analyses which argue that RD is IP-internal with the dislocated elements either being c-commanded by I ([Cecchetto](#)

⁴While these authors agree on the unviability of the mirror hypothesis, they disagree in non-trivial ways, however. In particular, [Cecchetto \(1999\)](#) assume the RD element to be below the T-head, specifically in the Spec of a VP peripheral topic phrase, while [Villalba \(2000\)](#) argues for a structural position targeting the Spec of an internal topic phrase. In contrast, [López \(2009\)](#) advocates the idea that RD is an A-movement process which occurs in the Spec of vP. Diverging from all of these monoclausal accounts, however, [Fernández-Sánchez \(2017, 2020\)](#) maintains that RD is best analyzed as a biclausal articulation.

1999) or staying in situ within the skeleton of IP (Kayne 1994). As it will transpire in the remainder of this section, the behavior of RD in MSA relative to the properties of binding under Condition C, licensing negative polarity items, agreement alternation and wide focus converges in showing that RD in MSA is anathema to a clause-internal analysis, and supportive of an external-clause analysis.

2.1 Binding

Since at least van Riemsdijk and Williams (1981) and Freidin (1986), it has been argued that there is a derivational asymmetry with respect to LF-reconstruction under condition C. In particular, while reconstruction in (10a) is at play with the pronoun displaying a jointness effect relative to the proper name (i.e. they may be construed to be coreferential), this is not the case in (10b), where reconstruction is not operative giving rise to the fact that *John* cannot behave as an antecedent (i.e. there is a disjoint reference holding between the pronoun and the proper name).

- (10) Complement/adjunct asymmetry (Freidin 1986: 179)
- a. Which report [that John revised] did he submit?
 - b. Which report [that John was incompetent] did he submit?

Lebeaux (1988) interprets this asymmetry to be a difference in the derivational history underlying complements and adjuncts relative to Condition C (see also Sauerland 1998; Fox 1999; Takahashi and Hulsey 2009 among others). More specifically, the constituent *that John was incompetent* acts as a complement of *submit*, and must be visible at the level of deep structure. On the claim that binding conditions apply at LF, a Principle C violation would ensue if reconstruction is operative, since the R-expression would be c-commanded by the pronoun. In (10b), by contrast, the CP *that John revised* is a relative clause being assigned an adjuncthood status. Given the fact that it is an adjunct, it is maintained that adjuncts are not merged until after *wh*-movement (i.e. Late merge), obviating a Condition C violation under reconstruction. Incidentally, this asymmetry is further argued to hold between complements and adjuncts within the minimalist theorizing (Chomsky 1995: 204f). What is relevant to the ongoing discussion is that this asymmetry is employed to support the clause-internal analysis of RD by locating RD in a clause internal position (Cecchetto 1999; Villalba 2000), the impetus for this position being the (anti)reconstruction effects exhibited by RD and LD: while LD displays an argument-adjunct asymmetry, RD does not exhibit such an effect. Samek-Lodovici (2006), nonetheless, reduplicates the same test and concludes that

the proposed asymmetry is dubious, giving rise to the claim that RD does exhibit a complement-adjunct asymmetry, and hence a clause-external position is to be preferred, a position which holds true of RD in MSA as we show shortly. Before going into the data, a crucial detour on the logic of this test with respect to the loci of RD is in order.⁵

According to this diagnostic, the anti(reconstruction) effects can be probed into by constructing examples containing two ingredients: (1) a matrix clause involving a null subject *pro*, and (2) a dislocated object followed by a CP which involves a definite subject (Feldhausen 2010: p.137).⁶ At this juncture, two divergent claims can be made to this effect. On the one hand, proponents of the clause-external analysis *à la* Samek-Lodovici (2006) maintain that a relation of coreference between *pro* and the subject would not obtain as far as the CP complement is concerned, the reason being that the CP complement undergoes reconstruction leaving a copy which enters into a c-command relation with the null subject *pro*, inducing a Condition C violation. This state of affairs, however, does not hold true of adjuncts (i.e. relative clauses). In particular, since the CP is an adjunct, it is not inserted until after the dislocation of the object (late adjunction), *viz.*, the relative clause does not reconstruct, thereby the subject of the CP does not stand in the c-commanding domain of *pro*, obviating a Condition C violation. A rough schematic representation of the clause-external analysis of right dislocation with respect to this distinction is shown in (11), adapted from Feldhausen (2010: p.137).

⁵Without further ado, a crucial remark is in order. When introducing the dichotomy adjuncts and complements with the former involving a late merge operation under reconstruction for Condition C, Lebeaux (1988) bases this contrast on a reformulation of the Projection Principle according to which the arguments must be present at all stages of a derivation. Though the proposal of late merger operations, or as technically termed 'counter-cyclic processes', does not go unchallenged in the literature as illicit ones (see Bianchi 1995; Lasnik 2003; Safir 1999 among others). The common denominator is that this operation violates the so-called Extension Condition. Chomsky (2019: p.267) for instance, retracting from his position argued for in 1995, echos this challenge so clearly, where late merge operations are taken to be "... completely unacceptable, because it involves operations that are complex, unmotivated, they have nothing to do with the goal we think we ought to obtain, something like the Strong Minimalist Thesis (SMT)". Incidentally, this challenge has recently been put into experimental works (Bruening and Al Khalaf 2019), where the celebrated distinction being argued to hold between adjuncts and complements in reconstruction for Condition C is maintained to be not affirmative as it is typically claimed. Nonetheless, this result should not be taken at face value, since this distinction does still stand for a number of speakers. As noted by Sportiche (2019), even though this distinction has recently been a matter of debate, "such asymmetries are robust for many speakers (including me) in many languages, but not for all speakers (in any language?); this suggests that the presence of at least one uncontrolled variable". It is striking, though, that despite their supposedly recalcitrant nature, counter-cyclic processes do still unearth new domains of research and investigation, in a rather interesting fashion, from upward-probing Agree (Baker 2008; Bjorkman and Zeijlstra 2019) and delayed probing (Zeller 2015) to the very recent proposal that late adjunction is maintained to be an obligatory process as an indispensable explanatory tool (Zyman 2022). Interestingly moreover, there is a nascent line of thought piggybacking on research on language acquisition advocates the claim that late acquisition of relative clauses, canonical constructions epitomizing the late merger process, is attested, and hence the plausibility of counter-cyclicity as a psychologically real concept is an optimal path to follow. See among others Diessel (2004); Tomasello (2005).

⁶The definite subject is indeed an important factor to control for, an issue which does go unnoticed by Cecchetto (1999), concluding that the adjunct case would reconstruct giving rise to ungrammaticality. As correctly pointed out by Samek-Lodovici (2006), crediting an anonymous reviewer, the optimal test to diagnose the complement-adjunct asymmetry must involve referential expressions since employing an indefinite subject *à la* Cecchetto (1999) would definitely blur the picture with respect to the complement-adjunct asymmetry due to the claim that the quantificational nature of indefinites would give rise to the concomitant quantifier raising and operator binding operations.

- (11) a. Complement: [_{TP} pro clitic [Det N [_{CP} that Subj ...]]]
 b. Adjunct: [_{TP} pro clitic [Det N ...]]

On the other hand, internal-clause analyses à la [Cecchetto \(1999\)](#) and [Villalba \(2000\)](#) maintain that the asymmetry does not hold between complements and adjuncts, and hence it is expected that a Condition C violation would incur across the board, since RD is invariably located below TP, resulting in a configuration where the *pro* subject would c-command the R-expression. A rough representation of the clause-external analysis concerning the dichotomy adjuncts and complements is depicted in (12).

- (12) a. Complement: [_{TP} pro clitic [Det N [_{CP} that Subj ...]]]
 b. Adjunct: [_{TP} pro clitic [Det N [_{CP} that Subj ...]]]

As far as MSA is concerned, we maintain that the clause-external analysis has a primacy over the internal-clause one since the former captures the relevant data. By way of illustration, consider the following pair featuring instances of RD with an adjunct in (13a) and a complement in (13b). Note that the specificational particle *ʔʕni* 'namely', though optional, is typically entertained to specify previously undetermined discourse proposition. See [Onea and Volodina \(2011\)](#) for a discussion on discourse particles of this ilk.

- (13) a. *pro*₁ la: yəkdʊ yahtəfiðʊ bi-ha, ʔʕni, təlka ʔlʕuhu:d-a allti qatəʕ-ha Zayid-un₁ fi
 (He) no never keep with-it, namely, those promises-ACC that make-it Zayid-NOM in
 ɪʒtɪməʕeɪ-nə ʔ-lmad^ʕi
 meeting-our the-previous
 'Zayid never keeps the promises that he makes in our previous meeting'
- b. **pro*₁ laa yəkdʊ yahtəfiðʊ bi-ha, ʔʕni, təlka ʔlʕuhu:d-a altati qatəʕ-ha Zayid-un₁
 (He) no never keep with-it, namely, those promises-ACC which make-it Zayid-NOM
 biʔna-hu sa-ykoun ameena-n
 that-him will-be faithful-ACC
 'Zayid never keeps the promises that he will be faithful'

In the (a) sentence as shown in (13), the CP is characterized as a relative clause, signaling the fact that it is assigned an adjuncthood status. After [Chomsky \(1995\)](#), adjunction can be postponed derivationally. On the face of this, it can be concluded the the CP in (13a) has been merged late in the derivation, specifically after dislocation of the object. Crucially, this amounts to the conclusion that establishing a c-command relation between the *pro* subject in the matrix clause and the subject contained with the relative clause is not a possibility (i.e. a violation of Condition C is nullified), the reason being that the whole relative

clause never stands at any point of the derivation in the c-commanding domain of the I-head. In short, a coreference reading is given a green light as per this scenario. Conversely, the (b) sentence as exemplified in (13) turns to be ungrammatical for the fact that the CP is an argument which can be reconstructed into the launching site. As such, a c-command relation can be established between the *pro* subject and the trace left behind when the subject in the lower clause undergoes reconstruction, inducing a grammaticality violation as per Condition C.

What the foregoing discussion suggests, therefore, is that the clause-external analysis of RD in MSA is a viable option, contrary to the clause-internal one, since there is indeed a systematic contrast at play underlying the behaviour of adjuncts and arguments in the context of RD. This contrast, therefore, points out that right dislocated elements in MSA are merged clause-externally for they stand in the outer c-commanding domain of the *pro* subject in the matrix clause. Under analyses arguing for the low IP, however, this contrast would be unexpected, incorrectly concluding that the two sentences depicted in (13) should be given an equal grammatical status, contrary to fact.

2.2 Negative polarity licensing

The external-TP analysis of RD is further reinforced by the behaviour of Negative Polarity Items (NPIs). NPIs are a class of lexical categories which must be in the scope domain of Neg-words for the sake of licensing (see [Zanuttini 1991, 1997](#); [Moscati 2006](#); [Giannakidou 2006](#); and [Alqassas 2021](#) for a recent overview of the phenomenon of polarity sensitivity in Arabic). The datum is that the presence of Neg-markers, which we assume to be cliticized to the I-head after [Belletti \(1990\)](#), is obligatory as a licensing condition on NPIs, which is represented by starred parentheses. If this condition is not met (i.e. in case the Neg-marker is left out) a grammaticality violation would incur (14).

- (14) *(lam) yaftari ?ayya fay?
 NEG.PAST buy.3MSG.PFV any thing
 'He did not buy anything' ([Alqassas 2021](#): 38)

Of great interest for current purposes is that the question of licensing NPIs proves to be crucial in locating the structural position of RD in MSA. In particular, as far as back [Calabrese \(1992\)](#), NPIs resist right-dislocation. Interestingly, this predication proves to borne out in MSA. We show this by manipulating the example depicted in (14) as illustrated in (15), where NPIs are blocked from RD.

- (15) *(lam) yaftari-ha, ʔayya fayʔ
 NEG.PAST buy.3MSG-PFV-it, any thing
 Intended meaning: 'He did not buy anything'

Indeed, that is what is expected under a clause-external analysis: since NPIs are merged TP-externally, there is not a way for the NPI to be c-commanded by the Neg-marker. There is one possible opposing (and indeed recurrent) claim to debunk this argument, however. Specifically, it can be argued that RD is a grammatical strategy to mark topichood and givenness in the pragmatic sense (Bocci 2013), and hence it follows that the inability of NPIs to be right-dislocated is due to the claim that they are at odds with the very nature of topics which must involve presupposition and givenness, among other delicate characterizations of topics. This confounding claim, nonetheless, does not stand to scrutiny for the fact that there are languages, where right dislocation is shown to be lower than I, allowing for NPIs to be right-dislocated. Catalan is a case in point (Villalba 2000; Feldhausen 2010) as exemplified in (16).

- (16) Certament no ho VOLIA, de veure ningú durant uns dies
 certainly not CL want.1SG.PST, of see.INF nobody during a day.PL
 'I definitely did not wish to see anybody for a few days' (Feldhausen 2010: 135)

As it stands, the failure of NPI licensing is independent of the informational nature of right dislocation, thereby suggesting that the restriction on NPIs licensing does follow from syntactic requirements (defined in a c-command relation holding between the licensor and the licensee), which is orthogonal to information structure (Samek-Lodovici 2015).

In fact, a thread running through the literature on clitics shows that what is referred to as 'atypical topics' (Alzayid 2022) such as indefinites and quantifiers, and by extension NPIs, can be licensed by clitics in long-distance dependencies such as CLRD. The datum goes that the presence of clitics would impose a specific interpretation of these rather recalcitrant topics, and hence they can be CLRD-ed. See among others, Cinque (1990); Dobrovie-Sorin (1990); De Cat (2007); Suñer (1988); Kallulli (2000); Dimitrova-Vulchanova and Hellan (1999); Gutiérrez-Rexach (2000, 2001, 2002). If on track, this lends further support that the failure of NPIs licensing is syntax-centred, and it has nothing to do with any informational considerations. After all, clitics are present and the prediction is that a specific reading of the doubled NPI would be granted, thereby salvaging the sentence in (15). This, however, turns out to be not the case.

2.3 Agreement

Another piece of evidence speaking in favor of an external-clause analysis of RD in MSA comes from agreement alternations in this language (see [Fernández 2013](#) for an earlier observation). As is well known, MAS displays agreement alternations: while SVO order exhibits full agreement between subject and verb, VSO order, on the contrary, displays only partial agreement ([Fassi Fehri 1993](#); [Ouhalla 1994b](#); [Soltan 2007](#); [Al-Balushi 2011](#)). This is illustrated in (17)

(17) a. raʔa-a l-ʔawlaad-u Zaid-an
saw.3SG the-boys-NOM Zaid-ACC
'The boys saw Zaid'

b. l-ʔawlaad-u raʔu-u Zaid-an
the-boys-NOM saw.3PL Zaid-ACC
'The boys saw Zaid'

([Ouhalla 1994b](#))

Of special interest here is the fact that when the subject in MSA undergoes right dislocation, the verb exhibits rich agreement morphology ([Ouhalla 1994b](#): 54). This is evident from the contrast shown in (18).

(18) a. raʔu-u Zaid-an, l-ʔawlaad-u
saw.3PL Zaid-ACC, the-boys-NOM
'The boys saw Zaid'

b. *raʔa-a Zaid-an, l-ʔawlaad-u
saw.3SG Zaid-ACC, the-boys-NOM
'The boys saw Zaid'

Under the assumption that movement to specIP is agreement motivated ([Chomsky 2001](#); [Miyagawa 2010](#)), contrary to the proposals assuming that movement to specIP is case-triggered, ([Epstein and Seely 1999](#); [Boeckx 2000](#)), this contrast is explained by assuming that the right dislocated subject in (18a) is not below I as per the clause-internal analysis ([Kayne 1994](#); [Cecchetto 1999](#)), but instead it goes through specIP to check agreement features. Another analysis explaining the contrast in (18) is to assume that the rich agreement is triggered by an clause-external analysis of RD ([Cardinaletti 2002](#)): the subject is simultaneously dislocated clause-externally and doubled by a bound form on the verb in the core IP, which it serves to identify *pro* arguments ([Fassi Fehri 1993](#)). Overall, whatever the mechanism responsible for

the rich agreement attested for (18a), it is not compatible with the predictions of clause-internal analyses.

2.4 Right dislocation and wide focus

A problematic aspect for the analyses arguing for a clause-internal of RD arises when considering examples from MSA where RD interacts with wide-focus. By way of illustration, consider the example in (19).

- (19) Hind-un ʔʔtat-hu LI-ZAID-EN, l-kitaba
Hind-NOM give.3SG-it to-Zaid-GEN, DET.book-ACC
'Hind gave Zaid the book'

According to [Cecchetto \(1999: 58\)](#), sentences of the sort depicted in (19) would have the following derivation (for convenience, we omit the the verb position, pronominal clitic and agreement domain).

- (20) [IP Hind-un₁ [FocP LI-ZAID-EN₂ [TopP l-kitaba₃ [vP 1_t 2_t 3_t]]]]

As per this representation, the right dislocated object would undergo movement to the specifier of a topic-dedicated position in the low periphery of the clause, whereas the indirect object undergoes movement to specFocus. The preverbal subject in turn would move higher to sit in SpecIP. Crucially, this representation is only compatible with a question like *who did you give the book to?* which triggers a narrow focus reading for the indirect object. What is left unexplained though is the fact that the sentence in (19) is still amenable to an interpretation where the whole IP is focused module the right dislocated element, as a potential answer to a question like *what happened to the book?*. This scenario is indeed a straightforward disconfirmation of clause-internal analyses, since the focused constituent is the whole IP, which structurally sits higher up, above the intermediate position hosting foci in the low periphery (see [Samek-Lodovici 2015](#) and [Fernández-Sánchez 2020](#) for an observation along these lines).

2.5 Interim conclusion

Summarizing thus far, RD in MSA is better analyzed as IP-external. This analysis is backed up by examining the behaviour of RD-ed elements relative to binding under Condition C, NPI licensing, agreement alternation, and wide focus. In the next section, we take up focus in MSA arguing that the mixed distribution of focus cannot be accounted for without examining the role played by an IP-external right dislocation process in giving rise to the complex distribution of foci in MSA. In particular, the main argument to be

advocated in section 3 is that focalization in MSA occurs in situ, with other variants of focus being caused by a productive process of right dislocation. In other words, when right dislocation applies to constituents involving foci elements, the focused element would be extracted from the right dislocating phrase to occur to its left in linear terms, amounting to apparent cases of focus movement. This interaction as a consequence is what causes foci in MSA to appear in different positions, a state of affairs which is dependant on what constituent is affected by right dislocation (Samek-Lodovici 2015).

3 Towards a unified analysis of focus in MSA

Continuing the discussion adumbrated in §1, focalization in MSA is an everywhere process, appearing in clause-initial, clause-internal and final position. This is evident from the examples shown in (21), repeated for convenience from (1), the three sentences being felicitous responses to the statement *you gave the winner a car*, and the indirect object being invariably focalized.

- (21) a. Laa. aṭtyitu alfaiza BAYT-AN
 No. (I) gave the winner-ACC house-ACC
 'No. I gave the winner a house'
- b. Laa. aṭtyitu-hu BAYT-AN, li alfaizi
 No. (I) gave house-ACC to the winner-GEN
 'No I gave the winner a house'
- c. Laa. BAYT-AN aṭtyitu ?l-faiz-a
 No house-ACC (I) gave the winner-ACC
 'No. I gave the winner a house.'

A hallmark of the cartographic literature is the claim that different positions made available to focus in Arabic are interpreted as involving distinct syntactic locations. Ouhalla (1997: p.137), *apud* Moutaouakil (1989), for instance reports the examples in (22) showing that focus phrases in MSA can be found either in situ as in (22a), or preposed leftmost to the initial slot of the sentence (22b).

- (22) a. ?allafat Zaynab-u RIWWYAT-AN
 wrote.3FS Zaynab-NOM novel-ACC
 'Zaynab wrote a NOVEL.'

- b. RIWWYAT-AN, ʔallafat Zaynab-u
 novel-ACC wrote.3FS Zaynab-NOM
 'It was a NOVEL that Zaynab wrote.' (Ouhalla 1997: 11)

Ouhalla maintains that despite the fact that the two sentences are truth-conditionally equivalent, but they are imputable to a difference in pragmatic import: while the in-situ focus denotes new information, the preposed one is conceived to be an instance of contrastive focus. According to Ouhalla, this dichotomous pragmatic import can be further interpreted derivationally in that while contrastive focus undergoes movement to a dedicated focus projection in the C-area of the clause, this is not the case for focus denoting new information which remains in situ. Likewise, this has been argued to hold in Italian (Belletti 2001, 2004; Rizzi 1997, 2004; Samek-Lodovici 2009).⁷ Although illuminating, Ouhalla's account falls short of accounting for why focus phrases has such a variation in distribution. Furthermore, that a certain focus phrase is limited to a dedicated single position is not accurate either, for the fact that contrastive focus can appear in a variety of positions, as shown in the examples depicted in (21). Under the analysis of Ouhalla (1997), moreover, it is predicted that the distribution of focus in Arabic behave in a conformist fashion such that overlapping is not a possibility. As it stands, this is not in line with data shown in (21), which proves that the distribution of Arabic focus phrases definitely does overlap, undermining a possible strict positioning of focus phrases in MSA (see Bakir 2011 for a similar observation that the cartography program falls short of accounting for data from Iraqi Arabic, which displays highly mixed distribution of foci).

The question which arises then: is there a possibility for focus in MSA to receive a unified analysis? Inspired by Samek-Lodovici (2006, 2009, 2015), I argue that a unified analysis of focus in MSA is possible, *viz.*, focus in MSA invariably occurs rightmost with cases of internal focus being a by-product of a right dislocation process of backgrounded elements which target the clause external area. The right dislocation analysis will be further extended to left-peripheral cases of the kind depicted in (21c), a confounding case which at first blush constitutes an argument for a dedicated focus projection *à la* Ouhalla (1997). Nonetheless, we maintain that left-peripheral focus patterns with a right-dislocated IP as internal ones do, thereby ensuring that focalization in MSA remains in situ, and at the same time accounting for the properties of left-peripheral focus relative to a plethora of configurations such as *wh*-extraction, the

⁷Incidentally, the dichotomy information focus (i.e. presentational focus) and contrastive focus (i.e. identificational focus) has been popularized by Kiss (1998) who provides a battery of arguments in favour of this dichotomy. See, however, Brunetti (2003, 2004) for a rebuttal of the idea that there are two distinct types of focus with distinct properties in Italian, a position which prtheoretically can extend to MSA. Since this paper is not about this distinction *per se*, I am obliged to leave it to future research.

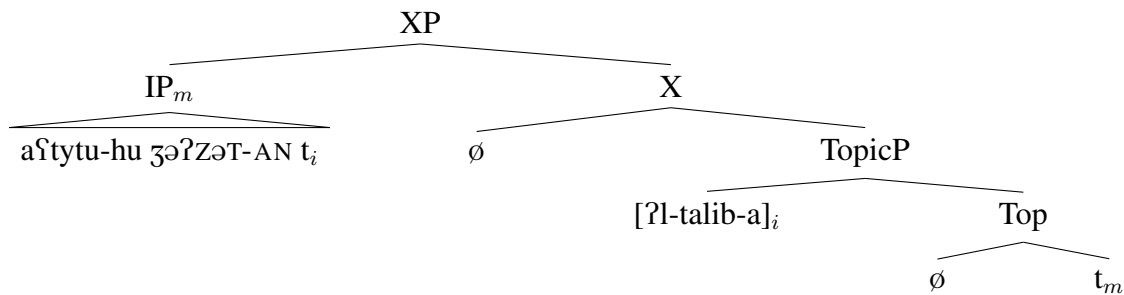
licensing of NPIs and fragment answers.

3.1 Focus-internal in MSA

Under the proposed analysis, the sentence shown in (23) would have the derivation in (24), adapted with a slight modification from Samek-Lodovici (2006: p.848).

- (23) aʕtytu-hu ʒəʔZəT-AN, ʔl-talib-a.
 give-him PRESENT-ACC, al-student-ACC
 'I gave the student a present'

(24)



To begin with, the representation in (24) assumes that the right dislocated element is IP-external relative to string-medial focus, an analysis which is backed up with empirical evidence. An immediate evidence for the externality of the right dislocated element is the fact that MSA disallows clitic doubling within a clause (Alzayid 2022). As illustrated by the example in (23a) below, the clitic and the doubled element cannot cooccur in the same clause since this would yield an ungrammatical output, in contradistinction to some Levantine Arabic varieties such as Lebanese Arabic and Palestinian Arabic, which allow for this configuration (Shlonsky 1997; Aoun 1999). In contrast, this is not the case when the doubled element is dislocated to a position external to the core IP as in (23b).

- (25) a. *raaʔa-ha Zayid-un Hind-an
 saw.3SG-her Zayid-NOM Hind-ACC
 'Zaid saw Hind'
- b. raaʔa-ha Zayid-un, Hind-an
 saw.3SG-her Zayid-NOM, Hind-ACC
 'Zaid saw Hind'

As pointed out by Alzayid (2022), a clause-external analysis along these lines provides a straightforward

account for the differences between right dislocation and instances of an argument-predicate configuration with respect to clitic doubling in MSA. Elements partaking in an argument-predicate configuration cannot be doubled because they are clause-internal, while right dislocated elements can be clitic-doubled because they are clause-external.

Having established the externality of right dislocated elements with respect to clause-internal focus, we are now in a position to examine the position of focus. Interestingly, what appears is a similarity between clause-final and clause-external focus as in (26b) and (26b), the two focal elements, the structural appearance aside, being restricted to occur rightmost module right dislocation. Crucially, this similar identity is the impetus for our claim that clause-internal focus exhibits the properties of rightmost focus. A piece of evidence speaking in favor of this claim comes from the behaviour of the focused subject as shown in (26a) epitomizing a case of a felicitous answer in a dislocation-free structure where focus occurs rightmost. Interestingly, this behaviour is exactly copied for the sentence depicted in (26b), such that the subject must occur rightmost in both cases, the difference being a right dislocation process applied in (26b), amounting to an apparent conclusion that focus does not occur rightmost. Note that a strong predication of the proposed analysis is that focalization occurs in situ, specifically in the rightmost position. This prediction is born out as shown by the ungrammaticality of (26c): the focused subject is extracted from its in situ position to an IP-external position, inducing a grammaticality violation.

CONTEXT: My mother told me that Muhammed took the students to the school.

- (26) a. la ʔkð-ahum ʔilaa al-madrast-ti Zaid-UN
 No, took-them to the school-GEN Zayid-NOM
 'No, Zaid took them to the school'
- b. la, ʔkð-ahum ʔilaa al-madrast-ti Zaid-UN, al tullab-a
 No, took-them to the school-GEN Zayid-NOM, the-students-ACC
 'No, Zaid took them to the school'
- c. *la, ʔkð-ahum ʔilaa al-madrast-ti al tullab-a Zaid-UN
 No, took-them to the school-GEN, the-students-ACC Zayid-NOM
 'No, Zaid took them to the school'

The rightmost analysis of clause-internal focus in MSA can be further corroborated when constructing sentences involving focused NPIs in an internal position. In particular, the loci of focus for

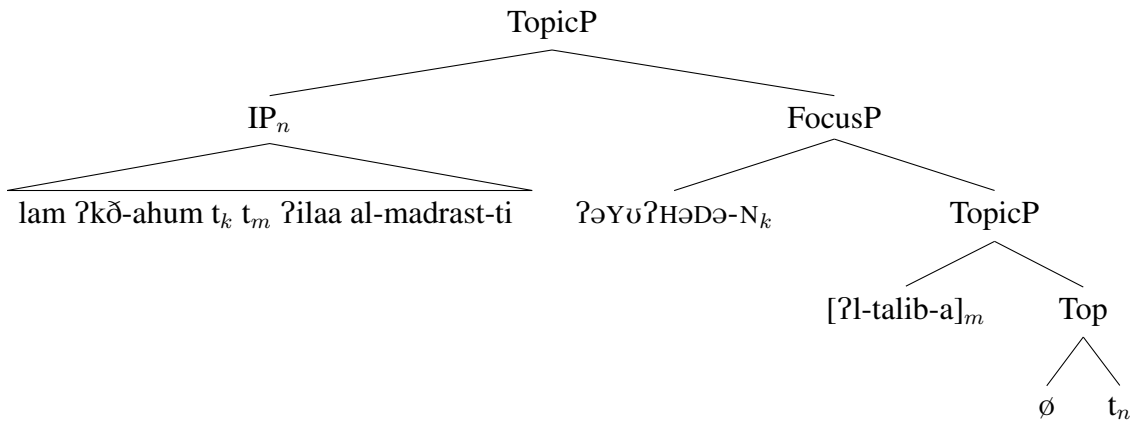
clause-internal focus and clause-external focus expressions invariably remains within the IP skeleton of the clause, as illustrated in (27a) and (27b): clause-final focus must be positioned below the I-head as a requirement on licensing focused NPIs, otherwise NPIs could not be licensed by a c-commanding Neg-marker as per the licensing condition regulating NPIs. By the same token, this is the exact case for non-final focus where focus must be within the c-commanding domain of a Neg-marker (i.e. below the I-head). If one manipulates the sentence (27b) for the focused NPI to occur IP-externally as in (27c), this evidently would give rise to an ungrammatical output as predicated by the proposed analysis: (i) the focused NPI is not in the c-commanding domain of the Neg-marker, and (ii) focalization does not occur in its invariant in-situ position in the rightmost slot of the clause.

CONTEXT: My mother told me that Muhammed took the students to the school.

- (27) a. la lam ʔkð-ahum ʔilaa al-madrast-ti ʔəYʊ ʔHəDə-N
 No, NEG took-them to the school-GEN any one
 'No, nobody took them to the school'
- b. la lam ʔkð-ahum ʔilaa al-madrast-ti ʔəYʊ ʔHəDə-N, al tullab-a
 No, NEG took-them to the school-GEN any one, the-students-ACC
 'No, Zaid took them to the school'
- c. *la lam ʔkð-ahum ʔilaa al-madrast-ti al tullab-a, ʔəYʊ ʔHəDə-N
 No, NEG took-them to the school-GEN the-students-ACC any one

Surveying the empirical landscape so far, what foregoing discussion suggests is that the behaviour of clause-internal focus and clause-external focus is indeed anathema to the proposals made *à la* Rizzi (1997), specifically the analysis arguing for a low IP (Belletti 2001, 2004) to derive information structural notions. Under such a line of thought, it is maintained that any syntactic element appearing before focus must be positioned higher in the phrase marker, specifically in the higher topic projection as illustrated in (28) for the sentence in (27b).

(28)



This is problematic, though, for the fact that this analysis would incorrectly predict that the licensing condition underlying NPIs would be nullified (i.e., the NPI is not in the c-commanding domain of the Neg-marker because the neg-marker is too deeply embedded within the IP constituent), giving rise to the claim that sentences of the kind shown in (27a) would be assigned an ungrammatical status, contrary to fact.⁸ Yet, the proposed analysis as per the phrase marker in (24) circumvents this problem altogether. In particular, the focused NPI subject is invariably positioned under the I-head, thereby ensuring that NPIs are perfectly licensed, regardless of whether the subject partakes in a dislocation-free structure as in (27a) or in a dislocation-involving form as in (27b), since this detail is orthogonal to the proposed analysis in this paper.

To wrap up, a templatic analysis of focus expressions in MSA involving a strict cascade of projection does not seem to be on the right track given the problems alluded to earlier, and hence the proposed analysis is to be preferred. For one thing, the proposed analysis makes perfect predictions by assimilating clause-internal focus and clause-final focus under one invariant position which happens to occur rightmost in MSA. This is indeed a step forward towards a unified analysis of focus expressions in MSA. In the next subsection, we take up a real confounding case as far as the proposed analysis is concerned (i.e. clause-initial focus), where we argue at length that the right-dislocation analysis of focus expressions proposed

⁸LF reconstruction is not a viable option as far as NPIs in MSA are concerned, since NPIs in this language are only licensed under a strict c-command relation at the surface form, a property which holds across languages (Dikken et al. 2000; Samek-Lodovici 2015). For example, wh-extraction of the negative object (i) is ungrammatical even though the object is reconstructed under c-command. If the negative object displays reconstruction effects, we would predict that it leaves a silent copy in the original position (written in small caps in the LF representation below) for the neg-maker to bind, giving rise to a well-formed LF chain; but this is not the case, and hence the sentence is given an ungrammatical status.

- (i) *la dirastu mən lam tagraə
no study who (you) didn't read?

LF chain : [no study] who you did not read [NO STUDY]

Incidentally, it seems that this is a general property of Arabic relative to reconstruction effects. As pointed out by "the author: 2022", MSA is too restrictive that reconstruction effects attested to arise for bound anaphora (Condition A of Binding theory) and bound variables do not obtain at LF, but at the surface form with Condition C being the only exception to this effect.

in this paper can neatly extend to this case as well.

3.2 Focus-initial in MSA

Perhaps the recalcitrant case with respect to the rightmost analysis of focus can be found in configurations where focus occurs leftmost as in (29).

CONTEXT: whom did you see?

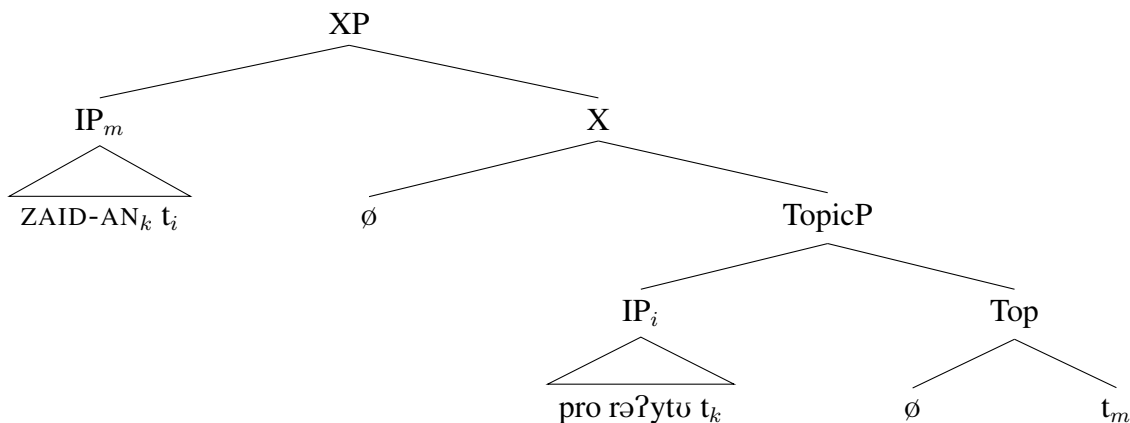
- (29) ZAYID-AN rəʔytʊ
 Zaid-ACC (I) saw.1SG
 'I saw Zaid.'

At first blush, this lends credence to the analysis *à la* Ouhalla (1997); Shlonsky (2000) according to which focus undergoes movement from IP to a dedicated position in the left periphery, and from there it can c-command any of the constituents to its right.

- (30) [_{Focp} ZAYID-AN₁] [_{IP} pro rəʔytʊ t₁]

Given the fact that Arabic exhibits a highly productive process of right dislocation, the rightmost analysis of focus will be shown to have perfect predictions if one considers the behaviour of string-initial focus relative to NPI licensing, *wh*-elements and fragment answers. Crucially, and in stark contradistinction to the left peripheral analyses of string-initial focus, instances of clause-initial focus in MSA under the rightmost analysis do not c-command any of the constituents to its right. This is schematized in (31) for the sentence depicted in (29).

- (31)



The object ZAID-AN is marked by the question as having a focus denotation, while the whole IP clause is interpreted as denoting a discourse-given property following [Schwarzschild's \(1999\)](#) model of givenness, making the IP a possible candidate for right dislocation.⁹ That being the case, the derivation of sentences of the kind depicted in (29) goes as follows: the focused element undergoes focus fronting to a TP-adjoined position following [Samek-Lodovici \(2009\)](#). This move, triggered by the focal status of the object, will consequently evacuate a position for the IP to be right-dislocated, followed by a crucial step in the derivation grounded in a remnant movement of the outer IP into XP, yielding the final word order. Crucially, initial foci is apparent since it remains rightmost in its IP, and does not occur in the c-commanding domain of the material to its right. Note furthermore that despite remnant movement is typically met with suspicion in the literature as an *ad hoc* and unmotivated mechanism, but this type of movement needs not be stipulated under the proposed analysis, since it proves to be backed up by the empirical properties of the relevant constructions.

A piece of evidence in favour of the right dislocation analysis of string-initial focus in MSA, contrary to the left peripheral analysis as per the cartography program comes from the behaviour of Neg-words and NPIs. As the example in (32) shows, preverbal negative subjects in MSA can cooccur with a focused postverbal NPI .

- (32) mʔ ahadun rʔaa AYA ʃAYYAN
 NEG one saw any thing
 'Nobody saw anything'

To obtain a grammatical focus reading of the clause-initial negative subject, however, the core IP cannot

⁹A crucial postscript is in order. [Schwarzschild \(1999\)](#) maintains that discourse-given phrases can be lumped together with focused phrases. As the following correspondence shows, the sentence in (i) and (ii) are similar modulo focus marking targeting 'RED'. According to [Schwarzschild's](#) model, the entire sentence on (ii) is discourse-given due to the claim that its existential F-closure is entailed by (i) even if the adjective contained in the complement phrase in (ii) is contrastively focused.

- (i) John ate a green apple.
 (ii) No, John ate a RED apple.

Accordingly, [Schwarzschild](#) proposes the informal definition of Given as depicted in (iii).

- (iii) An utterance U counts as *Given* iff it has a salient Antecedent A and
- a. If U is type e, then A and U corefer
 - b. otherwise: modulo \exists -type shifting, A entails the Existential F-closure of U.

contain any other neg-word or NPI as in (33a); otherwise, this would give rise to an ungrammatical output as shown (33b).

CONTEXT: it seems that the students did not see the teacher.

- (33) a. Mʔ AHADUN rʔaa al-mudaress-a
 NEG one saw DEF-teacher-ACC
 'Nobody saw the teacher'.
- b. *Mʔ AHADUN, rʔaa ʔya fayyan
 NEG one saw any thing
 'Nobody saw anything'.

Under the right dislocation analysis of clause-initial focus, this contrast ceases to be mysterious, or is just expected. In particular, the NPI complement in (33b) cannot be c-commanded by the negative subject since the former occurs outside the c-commanding domain of the latter. This contrast is elegantly captured by proposing remnant movement whose function is to provide a principled explanation for the contrast in terms of the c-command relation holding between non-dislocated elements as in (33a) and their dislocated counterparts in (33b). Quite the reverse, under the analysis of clause-initial focus presupposing a predetermined focus movement operation to the left periphery, where the fronted focus c-commands the rest of the clause to its right *à la* Ouhalla (1994a, 1997), this contrast remains totally mysterious. Note, crucially, that the NPI in (33a) does occur in situ within its IP (see the representation in (24)). Given our assumption that IP is an optimal candidate for right dislocation, the focused NPI would have to evacuate its position within the IP due to its incompatibility with the informational import of the IP (i.e. the IP is targeted by right dislocation with a discourse-given interpretation).

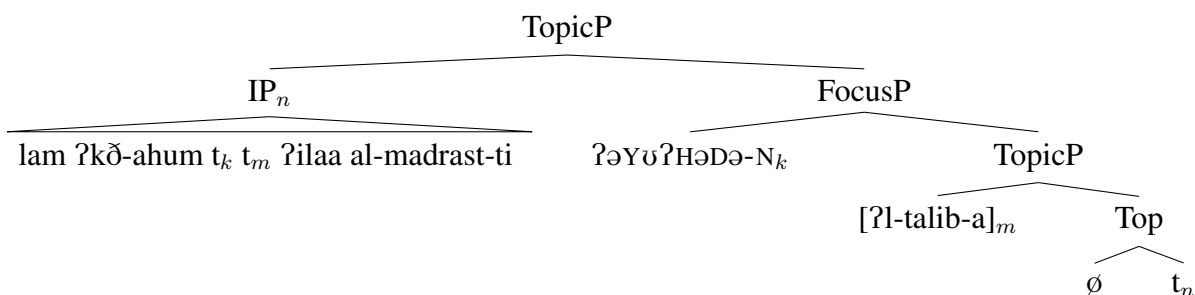
To strengthen our argument that focalization occurs in situ in MSA even for cases where focus is clause-initial, contrary to the predictions of the cartography program, let us further examine the behaviour of focused NPIs, which must be licensed by a suitable c-commanding licenser when positioned postverbally and lower than I as in (34); this licensing condition is not required anymore when focused NPIs occur preverbally (35).

- (34) a. lam yughani ʔYAU AHƏDƏ-N
 NEG sing any body
 'nobody sung.'

- b. lam naraa ʔAYU AHADEN
 NEG saw any body
 'We did not see anybody.'
- (35) a. ma AHƏDƏ-UN ghanaa
 NEG NOBODY sang
 'Nobody sang.'
- b. ma ʔHAD-UN rʔyna
 NEG NOBODY sang
 'We did not see anybody.'

Under the proposed analysis, the focused in situ NPI in (34) occurs in the c-commanding domain of a suitable licenser, and hence the licensing condition is met. As for cases of preverbal focused NPI, the result is as expected since they occur above I where the presence of a licenser is not required. This pattern is not expected according to analyses *à la* Belletti (2004) where the postverbal foci as in (34) would have the same position as the preverbal one as in (35). In addition to this unexpected prediction, analyses arguing for left-peripheral focus would expect that licensing for focused NPI is unnecessary, and even impossible (Cardinaletti 2002; Samek-Lodovici 2006, 2015; Brunetti 2004; Cheng and Downing 2009). This is evident as shown by the representation in (36), repeated from (28) for convenience, epitomizing the analysis of NPIs as per clause-internal analyses: the Neg-marker is too deeply embedded with the IP phrase precluding a c-command relation with the NPI to be established, thereby predicating incorrectly that sentences of the kind shown in (34) would be given an ungrammatical status, contrary to fact.

(36)



Another piece of evidence comes from the interaction between focal elements and *wh*-phrases in MSA. As far back as Shlonsky (2000), it has been argued that focus is incompatible with *wh*-phrases in MSA as shown by the contrast between (37) and (38).

- (37) ayna qaabala ʔaalid-un saalim-an?
 where met.3SG Khalid-NOM Salim-ACC

'Where did Khalid meet Salim?'

- (38) *ayna saalim-an qaabala xaalid-un?
 where Salim-ACC met.3SG Khalid-NOM
 'Where was it Salim that Khalid met?'

According to [Shlonsky](#), the contrast can be explained by recourse to the uniqueness of focus projection as per the cartographic templates in that only one focal element can be realized in the sentence.¹⁰ In his parlance, a *wh*-phrase is "a subclass of focalization and a focus cannot be embedded under another focus" ([Shlonsky 2000](#): p.330).¹¹ Until this point, one would conclude that this is the case across the board, but the picture is not as straightforward as it appears. More specifically, *wh*-interrogatives can be dislocated to the right of clause-initial focus as in (39) if they denote given information in the pragmatic sense, and most importantly are uttered by an intonational contour which is compatible with non-interrogatives in that they receive the intonation typical of right dislocated elements (see among others, [Pesetsky \(1987\)](#), [Cinque \(1990\)](#), [Dobrovie-Sorin \(1990\)](#) [Iatridou \(1995\)](#) on the claim that *wh*-operators can have discourse presupposed status if they are endowed with semantic features having to do with (D)iscourse-Linking; and see [Samek-Lodovici \(2015\)](#) for a detailed discussion on the prosody of right dislocated interrogatives).¹²

¹⁰This is not accurate though, since multi foci within a clause is widely attested across languages ([Krifka 1992](#); [Beck and Vasishth 2009](#); [Wagner 2020](#)). MSA is in fact a case in point as shown by the example illustrated in (i), where two foci can be realized in the same clause.

- (i) maʕa ZAYID-EN laʕpt HIND-UN
 with Zayid-GEN played Hind-NOM
 'Hind played with Zaid' (As an answer to the question 'who played with whom?')

¹¹Though see [Ouhalla \(1994a](#): p.68) for the claim that the uniqueness of focus projection is not what at stake to account for the observed contrast. In particular, the ungrammaticality of sentences of the sort depicted in (38) is attributed to the argument that focus fronting requires a subject-verb inversion in MSA.

¹²This claim essentially goes against a longstanding assumption in the literature that *wh*-phrases are invariably foci ([Culicover and Rochemont 1983](#); [Rochemont 1986](#); [Lambrecht 1994](#)) among others. But this assumption should not be taken at face value if one treats *wh*-phrases as only semantic foci ([Vallduví and Vilkuna 1998](#)) to the extent that they only trigger alternatives: a set of potentials corresponding to the *wh*-phrase (for recent overviews on the semantics of foci, see [Krifka \(2006\)](#); [Beaver and Clark \(2009\)](#)). As correctly pointed out by [Eilam \(2011\)](#), the reason why *wh*-phrases are taken to be foci is due to their formal parallelism with non-*wh*-phrases foci from a crosslinguistic perspective. For one thing, *wh*-phrases and foci follow a strict ordering relative to their instantiation in the clause, as is the case attested in Basque ([Arregi 2002](#)): the object must undergoes movement to maintain adjacency of the subject *wh*-phrase/focus relative to the verb.

- (i) a. Jon₁ senek t₁ ikusi rau?
 Jon.ABC who.ERG see.PRF AUX.PR
 'Who saw John?'
 b. *senek Jon ikusi rau?
 who.ERG Jon.ABC see.PRF AUX.PR
 'Who saw John?' ([Arregi 2002](#): 173)

Nonetheless, topic-denoting particles could provide indirect evidence that *wh*-phrases can be topics under certain conditions (see [Eilam 2011](#) for a battery of arguments for the claim that *wh*-phrases can be topics, contrary to the widely held assumption that this is not the case). Japanese is a prominent case in point to this effect as pointed out by [Miyagawa \(1987\)](#). Specifically, Japanese is well known for having the topic-denoting particle 'wa' which can cooccur with a *wh*-phrase as illustrated below

- (39) a. ʔʊrɪdu ʔan ʔəʕrəfa fi madinat-i L-RIYADH tahdid-an, man raʔa l-malik-a, lisa fi
 want to know in city-GEN DET-Riyadh specifically, who saw the-king-ACC, not in
 JEDDAH
 Jeddah
 'I want to know who saw the king in Riyadh, not Jeddah'

The question is: how is this possible? One analysis which must be ruled out is the claim a la [Shlonsky \(1997\)](#) that *wh*-phrases and focal elements do not cooccur, since this is not the case as evidenced by the sentence illustrated in (39). The inescapable explanation thus is to argue that the supposedly incompatibility between *wh*-phrase and focal elements is only apparent. More specifically, given our claim that clause-initial focus evacuates its position for the sake of right dislocation of post-focus constituents to a clause-external position, the optimal predication is that the right dislocated configuration, flagged by the *wh*-interrogative in (39), is not embedded under focus contra [Shlonsky's](#) analysis. Put otherwise, clause-initial focus is positioned within its TP where a *c*-command relation would not be established with constituents to its right including dislocated *wh*-interrogatives. As it stands, this refutes the widely-held claim advocated by the cartography approach to information structure that focus and *wh*-phrases do not cooccur, amounting to a conclusion that the sentence in (39) would be given an ungrammatical status contrary to fact.

Another piece of evidence corroborating the proposed analysis of focus expressions in MSA comes from sentential fragments. From an information-structural perspective, the standard assumption is that ellipsis in fragment answers involves retaining focal elements. According to [Merchant \(2004\)](#), fragments of the kind illustrated in (40a) belong to indivisible syntax, which is best analyzed as involving a whole TP undergoing ellipsis at PF. For the sake of obviating the so-called 'non-constituent ellipsis' which go against a standard assumption that syntactic operation only target constituents, [Merchant \(2004\)](#) resorts to a model of ellipsis which involves two steps: the fragment moves to the left periphery, and then the whole TP within which the fragment is generated gets deleted. Under this approach, non-constituent ellipsis is

(see [Paul and Whitman 2017](#) for a recent review).

- (ii) dare-wa kite, dare-wa konakta no?
 who-TOP came.GER who-TOP didn't.come Q
 'Who came, and who didn't?' ([Miyagawa 1987](#): 186)

As per [Miyagawa \(1987\)](#), a *wh*-phrase can be flagged by *wa*- under contextual conditions having to do with discourse anaphoricity: there is a set of possible answers to the question which can be retrieved by the speaker and the hearer in the conversational context. At any rate, *wh*-topics are still possible under certain discursive conditions lending support to our discussion in the main text that *wh*-phrases can be right dislocated element with an information-structural notion rooted in topicality (for a fine-grained informational characterization of right dislocated elements, see among others [Lambrecht \(1994\)](#); [Ziv \(1994\)](#)).

obviated since the deletion process would target a TP constituent (see [Algryani 2012](#); [Alzayid 2022](#) for a PF-truncated analysis of fragments in Arabic *à la Merchant 2004*).

(40) maḏa kataba Zayid-un?
 What wrote.3SG Zaid-NOM
 ‘what did Zayid write’

a. rawaytt-an
 novel-ACC

(41) [_{CP} rawaytt-an₁ [_{TP} Zayid-un kataba-t_r]]

Recasting this claim in accordance with the proposed analysis, the emerging picture converges to present a supporting case for the rightmost analysis of focus: the focused fragment occurs rightmost within IP. Given the fact that the IP denotes given information by virtue of being already introduced in the question, the fragment undergoes movement to the left periphery followed by a deletion process targeting the remnant IP. In a sense, the fragment evacuates its position from the IP before ellipsis due to a mismatch in the information-structural import between the core IP and the fragment. Interestingly, this behaviour falls out straightforwardly under the proposed analysis: clause-initial focus evacuates its position within the IP before right dislocating the IP due to the information-structural mismatch underlying the relevant elements. Crucially, this claim gives further evidence that the seemingly non-finality of focus in MSA is actually blurred by some interfering factors which yield a word order where focus is located non-finally at the surface form.

4 A short note on the low IP in Arabic varieties

Before concluding this paper, a couple of remarks on the plausibility of the low IP analysis for Arabic varieties are in order. In particular, [Jarrah and Abusalim \(2021\)](#) and [Alshamari and Jarrah \(2022\)](#) argue for the existence of discourse-oriented projections between TP and vP in Jordanian Arabic (JA) and Najdi Arabic (NA) respectively. We argue instead in this sketchy section that our proposal- based on the claim that there are somber prospects for the low IP analysis when applied to Arabic- can successfully extend to them. To begin with, NA and JA exhibit what is termed ‘Clitic-Object Construction’ as in (42), while JA, to the exclusion to NA, has an attested construction dubbed ‘Object-Clitic Doubling’ as in (43) ([Alshamari and Jarrah 2022](#)).

- (42) a. ʔas-sa:jig ʔistalam-*(ah) ʔar-uxsah
 DEF-driver receive.PST.3SG.M-3SG.F DEF-licence
 'The licence, the driver received it.' NA
- b. ʔif-fufe:r ʔistalam-ha *(ʔar-)ruxsah
 DEF-driver receive.PST.3SGM-3SG.F DEF-licence
 'The licence, the driver received it.' JA

(Alshamari and Jarrah 2022: 6)

- (43) fhimt-ha la-1-ʔimʔalme
 understand.PST.1SG-3SG.F to-DEF-teacher.F
 'I understand the teacher' JA

(Alshamari and Jarrah 2022: 18 *apud* Shlonsky 1997: 195)

As correctly pointed out by Alshamari and Jarrah (2022: 17), sentences of the kind illustrated in (42) are similar to CLRD in NA, though they stop fleshing out an account along these lines, lumping together the constructions in (42) and (43) as similar ones. In contrast, Jarrah and Abusalim (2021) remain silent on this matter altogether. Yet, a thread running through the literature on clitic-resumed constructions shows that there is a dichotomy between (42) and (43) taking the former as a case of CLRD, while the latter is taken to be an example of Clitic Doubling (CD), a construction which is widely attested in Levantine Arabic including JA. Incidentally, CLRD is easily recognizable thanks to a terminological definition of dislocation suggested by Lambrecht (2001: 1050). As per this definition, dislocation is characterized by there being a constituent which typically behaves as an argument within a predicate-argument structure, and can instead occur outside the boundaries of the core IP, either to its left (i.e. Left Dislocation), or to its right (i.e. Right Dislocation). Lambrecht further points out that this definition concomitantly involves four criteria: (i) extra clausal position of a constituent, (ii) possible alternative intra-clausal position, (iii) pronominal coindexation, (iv) special prosody. Although these criteria do not constitute necessary conditions for the sake of marking a given configuration as a dislocated one (except for the criterion depicted in (i) which is taken by Lambrecht as constitutive of dislocation), they squarely apply to NA and JA barring the prosody of dislocation. More specifically, a cataphoric argumental clitic is obligatory (as shown by the starred parentheses), which is simultaneously related to a constituent occurring outside the boundaries of the phrase containing the predicate (i.e. IP) in accord with the criteria (i), (ii) and (iii).¹³

¹³There has been much debate in the literature concerning the nature of clitics (Culbertson 2010). On one hand, clitics are better analyzed as arguments-bearing elements projecting in a thematic position (Kayne 1975; Rizzi 1986). On the other hand, clitics are seen as affixal agreement markers (Borer 1984; Suárez 1988; Aoun 1999). For fine-tune differences between pronominal affixes and agreement affixes, see Bresnan and Mchombo 1987; Corbett 2006. For MSA, the argumental analysis of clitics partaking in dislocation constructions seems to be on the track, see among others Fassi Fehri 1993; Musabhien 2008; Amer 2015; Alzayid 2022.

This is not the case, however, when it comes to talking about CD which exhibits properties setting it apart from related structures such as CLRD (Anagnostopoulou 2006). A prime feature of CD is that the clitic can cooccur with the DP argument in an IP-internal position without inducing a violation of θ -Criterion as evidenced by (43). What is more, CD is known to comply with the so-called 'Kayne's Generalization' according to which CD requires the presence of a preposition preceding the doubled element. The example in (43) illustrates this point from JA, where the preposition *la* intimately precedes the doubled element. A further illustrative feature of CD is that it only instantiates DPs in its derivation, in contrast to CLRD which exhibits flexibility with respect to employing different kinds of phrases as shown in the examples from MSA depicted earlier in (6). Overall, the emerging picture points out that CD and CLRD should be seen as distinct phenomena with well-defined differences. For an exhaustive discussion of these differences, see among others, Jaeggli 1986; Suñer 1988; Schneider-Zioga 1994; Cinque 1990; Iatridou 1995; Anagnostopoulou 1994, 2006; Kechagias 2011; Fernández-Sánchez 2020, and Alzayid (2022) for relevant discussion on MSA.

Having established the existence of CLRD in NA and JA, we are now in a position to tackle the question of the derivation. One possible analysis is to argue that CLRD (i.e. Clitic Object Construction *à la* Alshamari and Jarrah's parlance) in NA and JA is IP-internal, an argument which is implicitly advocated by Alshamari and Jarrah (2022: 17), citing Cecchetto (1999), as a cogent one. This claim, however, does not stand to scrutiny. For the sake of brevity, we present three pieces of evidence. A first piece of evidence comes once again from the behaviour of NPIs. To begin with, NPIs in JA (44a) and NA (44b) are licensed under a structural condition defined in a c-command relation between neg-word and NPI (i.e. the NPI must be in the c-command domain of the neg-word).

- (44) a. Maryam *(ma)-hallat walaw suʔa:l
 Mary NEG-answered.3SF even question
 'Mary did not answer any question.' (Alsarayreh 2012: 9)
- b. Fahd *(ma) ʕmur yru:h l-Dubai
 Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
 'Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai.' (Alshammari 2016: 2)

Yet, as expected by the proposed analysis, NPIs cannot be right dislocated in NA and JA as exemplified in (45).

- (45) a. *Maryam ma-hallat-ha, walaw suʔa:l
 Mary NEG-answered.3SF-it even question
 'Mary did not answer any question.'

- b. *Fahd ma yru:h l-Dubai, ʕmur
 Fahd NEG go.PRES to-Dubai, NPI-3SM
 'Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai.'

Barring *ad hoc* assumptions, this can be accounted for by locating right dislocated elements IP-externally. More specifically, the NPI in (45) does not stand in the c-commanding domain of the neg-word, giving rise to a failure in establishing the required c-command relation between the neg-word and the NPI. Under clause-internal analyses of RD assuming RD-ed elements to be invariably below I, the failure of NPI licensing is not predicated.

In contradistinction to MSA, Arabic varieties, JA and NA included, full agreement obtains regardless of word order alternation (Aoun et al. 2010).

- (46) a. ʃafu l-wəlad Zaid
 saw.3PL DEF-boys Zaid
 'The boys saw Zaid'

- b. l-wəlad ʃafu Zaid
 DEF-boys saw.3PL Zaid
 'The boys saw Zaid'

JA (Sondos Aoudah p.c.)

- (47) a. ʃafu l-bazari:n Zaid
 saw.3PL DEF-boys Zaid
 'The boys saw Zaid'

- b. l-bazari:n ʃafu Zaid
 DEF-boys saw.3PL Zaid
 'The boys saw Zaid'

NA (Hamad Alshammari p.c.)

What is relevant to the ongoing discussion is that both NA and JA display rich agreement in VOS orders, in that the verb exhibits full agreement when the subject undergoes right dislocation, militating against the claim that Arabic VOS orders display only partial agreement between the subject and the verb (Benmamoun and Lorimor 2006). Note that the subject in (48) and (49) is right-dislocated because it follows a VP with a thematic bound form cliticized on the verb which satisfies the valency of the predicate).

- (48) a. ʃafu Zaid, l-wəlad
 saw.3PL Zaid DEF-boys
 'The boys saw Zaid'

- b. *ʃaf Zaid, l-wəlad
 saw.3SG Zaid DEF-boys
 'The boys saw Zaid' JA
- (49) a. ʃafu Zaid, l-bazari:n
 saw.3PL Zaid, DEF-boys
 'The boys saw Zaid'
- b. *ʃaf Zaid, l-bazari:n
 saw.3SG Zaid, DEF-boys
 'The boys saw Zaid' NA

A cogent analysis, which is independently advocated by [Cardinaletti \(2002\)](#), is to assume that rich agreement in (48a) and (49a) follows from the presence of a preverbal pronominal *pro* doubling the dislocated subject, and at the same time giving rise to agreement with I as with the preverbal subjects depicted in (46b) and (47b). See also [Samek-Lodovici \(2015\)](#) for an analysis along these lines for data from Italian. An alternative straightforward analysis is to simply assume the adjuncthood of the subject (and hence an IP-external analysis) in that there is no room for this element in the skeleton of the core IP, unless one is ready to make stipulations to savage the θ -Criterion and [Chomsky's \(1965\)](#) Sub-categorization principle. The optimal path to follow therefore is to assume that the dislocated subject stands in a position external to IP.

A last piece of evidence speaking in favour of an external-IP analysis comes from the interaction of *wh*-phrases and foci in JA and NA. By way of illustration, consider the examples in (50).

- (50) a. bɪdɪ ʔəʃrəf fi AMMAN, mɪ:n ʃaf l-malik-a, mʊʃ fi IRBID
 want know in Amman, who saw the-king, not in Irbid
 'I want to know who saw the king in Amman, not Irbid.' JA (Sondos Aoudah p.c.)
- b. ʔəʃrəf bi RIYADH, min alli ʃaf l-malik, mahu bi JEDDAH
 want know in Riyadh, who saw the-king, not in Jeddah
 'I want to know who saw the king in Riyadh, not Jeddah.' NA (Bader Alharbi p.c.)

As shown in §3.2, this behaviour is at odds with the predictions of the cartography program which presupposes that *wh*-phrases and foci cannot cooccur ([Shlonsky 2000](#)). Under an IP-external analysis of RD, this behaviour is expected. In particular, given our assumption that RD-ed elements, flagged here by *wh*-phrases, are generated IP externally, the *wh*-phrase is not embedded under another focus. It is thus the onus of proponents of the internal-IP analysis of RD to explain how the interaction between *wh*-phrases

and foci is possible without inducing ill-formed strings.

Completing our discussion of the plausibility of the low IP in JA and NA, we conclude by pointing out that the low IP analysis as in [Alshamari and Jarrah \(2022\)](#) and [Jarrah and Abusalim \(2021\)](#) is indeed attractive since it proposes a completely novel analysis of RD in Arabic, where RD-elements are located in an intermediate position in the area between IP and vP. Given serious drawbacks alluded to earlier, however, their proposal is rejected pending an analysis of how these empirical glitches can be tackled.

5 Concluding Remarks

In accord with one of the main tenets of an earlier generative theorizing according to which the notion of grammatical construction is seen to be a 'taxonomic artifact' ([Chomsky 1993](#); [Aoun 1999](#)), a screw of interrelated phenomena explained by examining the interaction of relevant general principles, the main aim of this paper is to examine the plausibility of the low IP area in MSA by exploring the behaviour of RD in MSA, a productive process which can be applied to multiple syntactic categories. As we argue in this paper, this grammatical mechanism is best analyzed as a clause-external operation through the examination of plethora of tests such as binding under Condition C, licensing NPI, agreement alternation and wide focus. Taken together, these diagnostics present a serious disconfirmation of internal-clause analyses, and most important, prove to have far-reaching repercussions when interacting with focus. Broadly speaking, this interaction can be stated by recourse to the generalization in (51) intended to capture the mixed distribution of focus in MSA in a unified fashion ([Samek-Lodovici 2006](#)).

(51) *The Distribution of Focus Generalization in MSA*

Focus in MSA invariably occurs rightmost module right dislocation.

Interestingly, the consequences of the generalization depicted in (51) is far from trivial as far as the cartographic approach to MSA is concerned. One crucial consequence is that positing a rigid cascade of information-structural notions where focus would be projected in a single fixed position [Ouhalla \(1997\)](#) and [Shlonsky \(1997\)](#) should be abandoned. For one thing, this position would run into serious contradictions when considering the behaviour of NPI relative to focus in MSA. Under such a position, focus must be lower than the T-head for a grammatical licensing of NPI, and it must simultaneously be in an IP-external position to capture cases of string-initial focus as discussed in §3.2. Moreover, the cartography approach to MSA is shown to make predictions which are not born out and should therefore be rejected. A

case of point the is the claim that string-initial focus and *wh*-phrases share the same projections, where we argue that this is apparent under the proposed analysis, thereby strongly suggesting that the relative order of projections in the left periphery along with concomitant constraints should be reevaluated. See among others [Abels \(2012\)](#) for the claim that the unattested order of the Italian left periphery can be accounted for by the locality of movement recast in Relativized Minimality (RM) terms.

One issue which we have not examined within the confines of this paper is the trigger question. In particular, in addition to the role of right dislocation in implementing the rightmost focus analysis argued for in this paper, can we delineate further independent triggers which can be conceived to be a culprit for this unified position of focus in MSA. Capitalizing on suggestions made by [Zubizarreta \(1998\)](#); [Szendrői \(2001\)](#); [Hamlaoui and Szendrői \(2017\)](#); [Hamlaoui and Szendrői \(2015\)](#); [Samek-Lodovici \(2015\)](#); [Szendrői \(2017\)](#), we speculate that the rightmost focus in MSA can be an instance of a stress-driven operation, focal elements being rightmost to comply with a stress-assignment rule according to which there is a one-to-one mapping between a structural position, which happens to be rightmost, and stress assignment. Put it otherwise, stress is right-aligned giving rise to the assumption that focus would target the position which will occupy the rightmost phonological phrase inside the intonational phrase as per the syntax-prosody mapping; an observation which can be explicitly stated following [Szendrői's \(2001; 2017\) Stress-Focus Correspondence Principle](#). A consequence of this analysis is that focus in MSA remains in situ except for cases where focus is clause-initial. Under this scenario, focus is forced to evacuate its position either to escape a discourse-given import leaving the unfocused elements as marked distressed ([Samek-Lodovici 2015](#)) or as a strategy to mark the domain of contrast ([Neeleman et al. 2009](#)), thereby obviating the need to assume a feature-based movement targeting specFocuP as per the cartography program. What remains to be seen though how focus can materialize its prosodic contour while remaining in an in-situ position. One possible answer is to assume that focus need not undergo movement to derive the relevant prosodic feature, particularly when one makes a reference to [Rooth's \(1992\) Alternative Semantics](#) according to which the prosody of focus can be successfully calculated in in-situ positions ([Wagner 2020](#)).

Many questions remain concerning the intricacies of the realization of focus in Arabic varieties. To be sure, my aim has not been so much as to attempt a wide-scope characterization of focus for Arabic as a whole as to propose a unified analysis of the mixed distribution of focus in MSA relative to RD. It remains to be seen though how this analysis can be extended to a broad spectrum of Arabic varieties, and the never-ending hope, as always, is that this endeavour should be read as a step forward to fill this lacuna.

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