NegP Located Above TP: Evidence from Standard Arabic (SA) and Saudi Northern Region Dialect of Arabic (SNRDA)

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Abstract

The paper examines the properties of sentential negation in Standard Arabic (henceforth SA) and Saudi Northern Region Dialect of Arabic (henceforth SNRDA), focusing on similarities and differences in use and distribution (Note 1). In this paper, I propose that that the sentential negation facts of standard and dialectal versions of Arabic receive a unified account despite their apparent differences. I provide some empirical and conceptual evidence of the workability for the Neg-Above-T analysis over the Neg-Below-T analysis. NegP cannot remain lower than TP in Standard Arabic as the language employs V-to-T raising to drive the VSO from SVO word order. NegP in SNRDA should be higher than TP as it precedes non-verbal predicates (nominals, adjetivals, prepositionals, and adverbials) and some TP/CP located elements (expletive/ (indefinite) pronominal subjects and the future tense expressing element raah, and adverbials hosting pronoun subject clitics like umri/uh.

Keywords: predicate, merger, verbal negation, tensed negatives, nonverbal negation

1. Introduction

Negation is a crosslinguistic phenomenon that renders the statement negative by adding negative particles. Bloom (1970) claims that children during language acquisition learn how to produce and distinguish between two basic sentences: the affirmative and the negative. Negation has attracted more attention from the scholars in linguistics over the last few decades owing to the fact that languages exhibit a range of variation in terms of the negation pattern, the negation status, and the position in the clausal structure. The current study has come in line with growing research attempts towards developing a syntactic/morphosyntactic account to capture the facts of sentential negation patterns across languages, such as French (Rowlett, 1998), Dutch (Zeijlstra, 2004), Standard Arabic (Bahloul, 1996; Benmamoun, 2000; Eid, 1991; Fassi Fehri, 1993; Ouhalla & Shlonsky, 2002) extended to modern dialects of Arabic like Moroccan Arabic (Benmamoun, 2000), Egyptian Arabic (Soltan, 2014, 2017), Kuwaiti Arabic (Alsalem, 2012; Brustad, 2000), Yemeni Arabic (Ahmed, 2012; Benmamoun & Al Ashahi, 2014; Qafisheh, 1996), Libyan Arabic (Algryani, 2016), and Jordanian Arabic (Alsarayreh, 2012), Hijazi Arabic (Alzahrani, 2015); Najdi Arabic (Binturki, 2015), among others.

The data used in this study were of two types: primary data and secondary data. The primary data were collected from native speakers of Arabic from the northern region of Saudi Arabia, particularly from Rafha and its neighboring towns like Arar, Hafar Al-Batin, Aluwayqilah and Sakaka. The secondary data were collected from the reference grammar books of Standard Arabic (Haywood & Nahmad, 1965; Wright, 1995; Ryding, 2005).

Standard Arabic is the uniform variety of Arabic which is used all over the Arabic speaking world in literary works, as well as in the media, viz. magazines, newspapers, radio and television broadcasts, business, personal letters and in some songs.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the competing proposals available in the literature for positing NegP in the clausal structure, namely Neg-below-T and Neg-above-T, highlighting the merits and demerits of each proposal. Section 3 discusses how Neg-above-T analysis gains more empirical and theoretical support from SNRDA and other Arabic dialects. Section 4 concludes the paper. In the remaining part of this introduction, I examine the distribution and the use of negative elements in Standard Arabic and SNRDA and also demonstrate that the differences between the two versions of Arabic are superficial and apparent.
1.1 Distribution of Sentential Negation in Standard Arabic

SA uses five different particles to express sentential negation: the invariant particle *maa*, the particle *laa* and its tense-inflected counterparts *lam*, *lan* and the agreement-inflected particle *laysa*. The inflected tensed particles *lam* and *lan* always indicate the past tense and the future tense interpretations respectively. The particle *laysa* is marked only for subject agreement. Following the previous studies on negation of Standard Arabic (Benmamoun, 2000; Ouhalla & Shlonsky, 2002), the negative elements in SA can be divided in terms of their morphosyntactic properties into three groups: (1) negation with *laa*, *lam* and *lan*; (2) negation with *maa*; and (3) negation with *laysa*.

1.1.1 First group: *laa*, *lam*, *lan*

Putting the negatives *laa*, *lam* and *lan* under one group follows from Benmamoun’s (2000) assumption that *laa* is a default form from which *lam* and *lan* are derived. All these negative forms co-occur only with imperfective forms of verbs; *laa* carries the present tense (1), *lam* the past tense (2), and *lan* the future tense (3).

1) at-tulaab-u laa/*lam/*lan ya-drus-uun
the-students-nom Neg/neg.past/neg.fut 3M-study.IPV.3MPL.IND
‘The students do not study/are not studying.’

2) at-tulaab-u *laa/lam/*lan ya-drus-uu
the-students-nom Neg/neg.past/neg.fut 3M-study.IPV.3MPL.IND
‘The students did not study.’

3) at-tulaab-u *laa/*lam/lan ya-drus-uu
the-students.NOM Neg/neg.past/neg.fut 3M-study.IPV-MPL.SBJV
‘The students will not study.’

The above examples show that the particles *laa*, *lam* and *lan* occur with verbal forms only in the imperfective and not with the perfective verb forms. *laa* appears with indicative imperfective to indicate the present tense and cannot be used for the future or past tense. *lam* occurs with the jussive imperfective and indicates the past tense. *lan* appears with the subjunctive imperfective and expresses the future tense. Thus, *lam* and *lan* are negative particles which carry temporal information, namely tense. Moreover, substituting imperfective verb forms (1–3) with perfective ones would lead to ungrammaticality as in (4).

4) * At-tulaab-u laa/ lam/lan ya-drus-uu
the-students-nom Neg/Neg.past/Neg.fut study.PFV.3MPL
‘The students do/did/will not study.’

Moreover, the negative elements in this group must be adjacent to imperfective verb forms and that explains why the sentence in (5) is ungrammatical.

5) *laa* at-tulaab-u ya-drus-uu-n
Neg the-students-nom 3M-study.IPV.3MPL.IND
‘The students do not study.’

In addition, *laa* has a special feature in that it negates the existence of something absolute, referred to as absolute negation (Ryding, 2005) as in (6).

6) laa ahada fii al-bayit-i
Neg one in the-house-gen
‘No one is in the house.’

1.1.2 Second Group: *maa*

The particle *maa* negates both imperfective and perfective verb forms and does not inflect with any tense.

7) *maa* ya-saafiru/saafara muhammad-un
Neg travel.IPV.3SGM/travel.PFV.3SGM Mohammad-Nom
‘Mohammed does/did not travel.’
The above example shows that \textit{maa}, unlike \textit{la} and its variants, can occur with both imperfective and perfective verb forms. In addition, the particle \textit{maa}, unlike \textit{la} and its variants, can occur with verbless sentences as illustrated in (8).

8) \ldots \textit{maa} haða bashr-an \ldots Neg this man-Acc
\hspace{1cm} `This is not a man.' \hspace{1cm} \textit{Excerpted from the Holy Quran, Surat Yusuf [verse 31]}
\textit{maa} muhammad-un muhandis-un
Neg Mohammed-Nom engineer-Nom
\hspace{1cm} `Mohammed is not an engineer.'

1.1.3 Third Group: \textit{laysa}

\textit{laysa} is the only verbal negative element that can assign case in SA. \textit{laysa}, like \textit{laa}, occurs only with the imperfective verb forms and receives a present tense interpretation. However, it differs from \textit{laa} and its variants in that it is not required to be adjacent to the verb, as shown in (9).

9) \textit{laysa} khalid-un ya-ktub-u aš-šiṣr-a
neg.3MS Khalid-Nom 3M-write.IPFV-3MSG  the-poetry-Acc
\hspace{1cm} `Khalid does not write/is not writing poetry.'

Moreover, the particle \textit{laysa}, unlike other negative elements, has to agree with its subject as illustrated in paradigm (10).

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{N&G} & \textbf{SG} & \textbf{DU} & \textbf{PL} \\
\hline
1 & lastu & - & lasnaa \\
2M & lasta & lastumaa & lastum \\
2F & lasti & lastumaa & lastunna \\
3M & laysa & laysaa & laysuu \\
3F & laysat & laysataa & lasna \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textit{laysa} can occur with nonverbal sentences, namely verbless sentences, as it is the case with the negative particle \textit{maa}. However, it differs from \textit{maa} in that it assigns an accusative case to its predicate; the contrast is shown in example (11).

11) \textit{laysa} muhammad-un muhandis-an
Neg.3SM Mohammed-nom engineer-Acc
\hspace{1cm} `Mohammed is not an engineer.'
\textit{maa} muhammad-un muhandis-un
Neg.3SM Mohammed-nom engineer-Nom
\hspace{1cm} `Mohammed is not an engineer.'

Crucially, \textit{laysa} differs from other negative elements excluding \textit{maa} in that it can occur in both verbal and nonverbal sentences.

1.2 Distribution of Sentential Negation in SNRDA

SNRDA uses three negative particles: \textit{maa}, \textit{mua/mee}, and \textit{laa}. The distribution of these elements is given as follows.

1.2.1 The Negative Particle \textit{maa}

First, the particle \textit{maa} is often associated with verbal negation. It precedes the two types of verb forms: perfective verbs as in (12) and imperfective verbs as in (13). It also precedes the auxiliary expressing the future tense \textit{raa} as shown in (14).

12) at-tulaab \textit{maa} ya-drus-uu-n
the-students Neg 3M-study.IPFV.3MPL-IND
\hspace{1cm} `The students do not study/are not studying.'
13) at-tulaab maa daras-u
the-students Neg study

‘The students did not study.’

14) at-tulaab maa raah yadrus-u-n
the-students Neg Aux.fut 3M-study.IPFV-MPL.IND

‘The students will not study.’

The above examples show that the particle maa in SNRDA can appear in all possible verbal contexts where the two groups of negatives (laa, lam, lan) and (maa) in SA can occur. It can appear in place of laa for the present tense interpretation, lam for past tense interpretation, and lan for future tense interpretation. However, it differs from those elements in SA in that it is never inflected with tense because the tense in SNRDA is expressed either on a verb or by an auxiliary element; past and present tenses appear on the main verb, but future tense by a separate element, namely raah ‘Aux.fut’.

Second, the negative particle maa can precede and host the pronominal subject as an enclitic. The paradigm given in (15) illustrates all possible mergers of Neg+Pronominal in SNRDA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neg + Pronominal</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maani</td>
<td>Neg.I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mant</td>
<td>Neg.you.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manti</td>
<td>Neg.you.F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maahu</td>
<td>Neg.he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maahi</td>
<td>Neg.she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maahna</td>
<td>Neg.we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maantum</td>
<td>Neg.you.PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maahum</td>
<td>Neg.they.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maahin</td>
<td>Neg.they.F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Third, the negative element maa can precede an adverbial hosting a pronoun as in (16).

16) maa ʕumri sawyt zay kiðaa
Neg ever-me did like this

‘I have not ever done like this.’

1.2.2 The Negative Particle muu/mee

The particle muu/mee is used with nonverbal negation where the variant mee is restricted in use to a singular feminine form. However, muu, for native speakers of some modern dialects, is still an option to be used in the case of the singular feminine predicate (Note 2). Thus, the particle muu/mee negates verbless sentences such as nominal predicates as in (17), adjectival predicates as in (18), and prepositional predicates as in (19).

17) alwald muu šaaįr
the boy Neg poet

‘The boy is not a poet.’

18) albint mee šaatˤirah
the-girl Neg.F clever.F

‘The girl is not clever.’

19) almudiir muu bi-almaktab
the-manager Neg in-the-office

‘The manager is not in the office.’

The above examples reveal that the particle muu/mee behaves like the particle laysa in SA in that they are associated with nonverbal negation, namely verbless sentences such as nominal, adjectival and prepositional predicates.
1.2.3 The Particle laa

The particle laa in SNRDA retains the main usage of laa in SA in that it is used for negating imperatives (negative command) as in (20).

20) a) laa tasakir albaab
    Neg close the door
    ‘Don’t close the door.’

b) laa tasawi kiibaa
    Neg do so
    ‘Don’t do so.’

However, it differs from laa of SA in that it cannot be used to negate imperfective verbs expressing present interpretation and that is why (21) is ungrammatical or at least weird in SNRDA.

21) */? attulaab laa yadrusun
    the-students Neg study/are studying
    ‘Students do not study/are not studying.’

For the sentence (21) to be grammatical, the particle maa needs to be used instead of laa. The particle laa in SNRDA cannot negate the imperfective verb form with indicative mood as laa does in SA. It is restricted to negating the imperfective verb form with jussive (imperative) mood.

2. Location of NegP in Clausal Structure: Competing Analyses

There has been a consensus in the literature of sentential negation (Aoun et al., 2010; Benmamoun, 2000; Haegeman, 1995; Ouali & Fortin, 2007; Ouhalla, 1990; Pollock, 1989; Zanuttini, 1997) that a negative element shall head its own projection, i.e., Neg Projection (NegP) in the clausal structure. However, the position of NegP with respect to other projections in the clause structure remains a point of contention.

Two competing proposals on the location of NegP can be significantly identified for both standard and dialectal Arabic versions. The first proposal, advanced in (Aoun et al., 2010; Benmamoun, 2000; Ouhalla & Shlonsky, 2002), argues that Neg must be positioned lower than T. The second, advanced in (Diesing & Jelinek, 1995; Soltan, 2007; Zanuttini, 1997), argues that Neg must be positioned higher than T. The two proposals throughout the paper are referred to as Neg-below-T [NBT] analysis and Neg-above-T [NAT] analysis respectively.

2.1 Neg-Below-T Analysis [NBT Analysis]

The analysis (Aoun et al., 2010; Benmamoun, 2000; Ouhalla & Shlonsky, 2002) proposes that NegP occurs lower than TP, specifically between TP and the predicate (VP /NP/AP/PP) as structurally shown in (22).

22)
Standard Arabic can be captured under the Minimalist Program if the NBT analysis is adopted. The perfective verb form raises to Neg head where it merges with the negative particle as a potential checker, valuing the [+D] feature of Neg. Then, the complex head [Neg-V] moves to T to have the verb feature [+V] checked against the head T. The postulation of the Neg projection between T and V follows from three conceptual and empirical arguments. The first argument is that negatives lam and lan in Standard Arabic carry the temporal information: past tense interpretation (23b) and future tense interpretation (23c) respectively.

23) a) at-tulaab-u laa ya-drus-uu-n
    the-students-Nom Neg 3M-study. IPFV.3MPL.IND
    ‘The students do not study/are not studying.’

   b) at-tulaab-u lam ya-drus-uu
    the-students-Nom Neg.past 3M-study.IPFV.3MPL.JUSS
    ‘The students did not study.’

   c) at-tulaab-u lan ya-drus-uu
    the-students.Nom Neg.fut 3M-study. IPFV-MPL.SBJV
    ‘The students will not study.’

Since the default form of negative laa in (23a) occurs only in present tense interpretation, it is not assumed to involve V-to-T raising via Neg. Under the approach, example (23a) is structurally represented as in (24).

24) 

By contrast, the negative laa gets tensed as a byproduct of V-to-T raising through Neg, resulting in negative expressing past tense lam or negative expressing future tense lan. The derivations of the tensed negatives lam in (23b) and lan in (23c) are roughly represented as in (25a) and (25b) respectively.

25) a) 

Merger: laa+T(Past) = lam
b)

**Merger:** laa+T(Fut) = lan

Both structures (25a) and (25b) lead to the same conclusion that the default negative form laa is changed into a tensed negative: laa becomes lam when merged with T bearing past tense but becomes lan when merged with T bearing future tense.

The second argument in support of the NBT approach is based on empirical fact that the verb, particularly in the past tense, must merge with negation in some modern dialects of Arabic as illustrated in (26a) from Moroccan Arabic (MA) and (26b) from Levantine Arabic (LA).

26)  

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>ma-żat-š</td>
<td>nadia</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neg-come.3SGF.PFV</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>ma-ʔižat(-š)</td>
<td>nadia</td>
<td>LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neg-come.3SGF.PFV</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

‘Nadia did not come.’

These examples show that negative particle ma is morphologically merged with the perfective verb form in both modern dialects of Arabic. The mere difference is the occurrence of negation enclitic morpheme -š is obligatory in MA, but optional in LA (Note 5). Under the NBT approach, the merger between the perfective verb form źa ‘come’ and ma...š is a byproduct of the movement of T to V, i.e., a movement motivated by the need of the verb to check its temporal features at T. To circumvent the minimality effects, the verb moves to Neg and then the complex V and Neg moves to T.

The T-Neg-V merger in example (26) from MA can be basically structured as in (27), ignoring for the time being the subject position and other irrelevant details.

27)  

**Merger:** maa...š + žat = ma-żat-š
The third argument in support of the NBT is that the subject precedes sentential negation in some modern dialects of Arabic, specifically Moroccan Arabic as illustrated in (28) and Egyptian Arabic as in (29). Put simply, it is not possible to place Neg higher than the subject because the subject shall be located at Spec; TP.

28) l-wald masi hna MA
   the-boy Neg here
   ‘The boy is not here.’

29) ḥil-waad miš hna LA
   the-boy Neg here
   ‘The boy is not here.’

Source: Benmamoun et al., 2013, p. 94.

The above examples indicate that the Neg projection cannot be positioned higher than T. If it were higher than T, then the word order of Subject-Neg cannot be predicted. Therefore, the structure of Subject-Neg order, under NBT approach, might look like (30).

30)

```
  DP
 /   |
  l-wald T  NegP
      /|
     Spec Neg' Neg
        |
         A\P
           |
            маси
             |
              hna
```

2.2 Neg-Above-T Analysis [NAT Analysis]

The NAT analysis, which is advanced in Diesing and Jelinek (1995), Soltan (2007), Zanuttini, (1997) and supported by Benmamoun et al. (2013), proposes that NegP projection must be placed higher than TP as diagrammatically shown in (31).

31)

```
  Spec
 /   |
  Neg Neg' Neg
     |
     TP
     Spec T' VP
      |
       V
```

The approach is basically based on the traditional assumption (Ouhalla, 2003; Zanuttini, 1997) that the position of negative projection is parametric across languages: languages with postverbal negation such as Germanic languages have Neg lower than T while languages with preverbal negation such as Spanish, Italian and Arabic have Neg higher than T.

The NAT approach advocates raise serious doubts on the effectiveness of imperfective-perfective asymmetry underpinned the NBT’s main argument that the perfective verb form (contrary to the imperfective verb) must raise to T for temporal feature requirements via Neg, hence, no perfective verb in standard/dialectal varieties of Arabic is predicted to appear above Neg. Soltan (2011) provides robust empirical evidence against the NBT analysis from Sharqeyyah Egyptian Arabic where negation occurs higher than the perfective verb, as illustrated in (32). Any raising for the perfective verb to T yields undesirable results. Therefore, this prediction is not borne out under NBT analysis.
32) ?anaa    miš    lašib-t
    I       Neg      played.1SG

‘I don’t play.’

Source: Soltan, 2011, p. 262.

Under the NBT analysis where the perfective-imperfective asymmetry plays a great role, the perfective verb has to move to T and picks Neg on its way to T, resulting in discontinuous negation pattern *ma-lašib-t-š* as in (33) instead of independent negation.

```
33)
```

**Merger: ma...š + lašib-t = lašib-t-š**

Independent negation pattern in (32) cannot be derived if V does not skip over Neg to T, followed by Neg movement over the T-V complex, to generate the right word order as represented in (34).

```
34)
```

However, both movements violate the HMC and RM constraints. Furthermore, Neg-movement over the T-V complex to some higher head, though improper, is not motivated. The theoretical issue arises from the difference between the ability of the same language to show two negation patterns: discontinuous negation *ma...š* and independent negation *miš*, the former needs to host the verb, but the latter does not. I argue that the two negation patterns are well predicted under the NAT based on whether a head, T in this context, is required to host negation or not. Moreover, the perfective verb can adjoin T without violating any head movement constrains, as shown in (35), because Neg in this proposed structure does not intervene between V and T.
Positing Neg above T can allow the two negation patterns to appear within the same language without resorting to use more theoretical apparatus into the structure.

Another relevant piece of evidence in favor of NAT and against NBT, I assume, comes from speech of the Egyptian children. Omar (1973) observed that the children at the early acquisition of negation overgeneralize the use of the independent negation pattern \textit{miš} as in (32), represented in (35), to all verb forms in Egyptian Arabic. If this observation is correct, then NBT analysis does not allow the shift from independent negation pattern to the discontinuous negation \textit{ma...š} pattern or vice versa as it would have violations of HMC and RM or any related constraints. By contrast, the NAT can smoothly explain the children acquisition shift from one pattern to the other if children start pattern acquisition by assuming that Neg is nonaffixal and does not merge with the adjacent T specified for past tense. Later on, they realize, based on the primary linguistic data, that the head Neg has to merge with the head T specifying past tense, and thus the circumfixal negation pattern \textit{ma...š} will replace the early utterances of the \textit{miš} pattern.

A third piece of evidence in support of the NAT approach is related to the capacity of the negative particle \textit{laa} in SA to assign Case to the subject.

36) \begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{laa} & mudaris-an \\
Neg & teacher-3SGM-acc \\
\textit{yažib-un} & absent-3SGM-nom \\
\end{tabular}

\textit{‘No teacher is absent.’}

That the capacity of the negative element \textit{laa} to assign an accusative case to the subject amounts to prove that the case assigner \textit{laa} must be in a position higher than the subject, so that it can assign case downwards to the subject; perhaps in a way akin to the accusative case assignment of the matrix verb to the subject of an embedded clause in English Exceptional Case Marking constructions.

3. NAT Analysis over NBT Analysis: Discussion

I propose that both NBT and NAT analyses have a great deal of empirical facts to capture. However, the latter gains more weight than the former whose theoretical and empirical issues left unresolved. My argument remains consistent in that the behavior of negation in both dialectal and standard versions of Arabic, despite the variation attested in the number of negative elements, can be explained in a straightforwardly unified way.

Theoretically, it is not possible to assume that the intervention effect of Neg with respect to V-to-T movement works in a contradicting way; Neg allows V-to-T raising in the perfective, but precludes the same in the imperfective. If the perfective verb can move to T through Neg avoiding HMC or any minimality condition, then there is no way to claim the opposite takes place in the imperfective (Note 6). I argue that the location of Neg between T and V does not play any role in precluding the imperfective verb from raising to T as both verb forms, if motivated, can move to T without incurring minimality effects or violations of whatsoever movement related constraints. If the HMC and minimality effects are circumvented in the perfective verb form, then there is no logic to assume it is not the case in the imperfective. Similarly, if the location of Neg between T and V provides the adjacency required for T+Neg merger, bearing in mind the tensed negatives of SA (\textit{lam} and \textit{lan}) derived from \textit{laa} by merging adjacent heads, then the location of Neg above T will serve the same; T is adjacent to Neg in the opposite direction. No evidence from SA is provided to assume the correct merger linearization either.
Under the NAT analysis, the derivation of the tensed negative *lam* and *laa*, if compared to the derivations (25a) and (25b) under the NBT analysis, can be proceeded up as in (37a) and (37b) respectively.

\[
\text{Merger: } Laa+T(\text{past}) = Lam^w/
\]

\[
\text{Merger: } Laa+T(\text{fut}) = Lam^w/
\]

In proposed structures (37a) and (37b), the Neg+T merger, regardless of its nature (syntactically or morphologically driven), is possible as the two heads Neg and T are adjacent to each other. It turns out to say that the adjacency requirement is fulfilled in the NAT in a way at least similar to that in the NBT. However, the nature of Neg+T merger (syntactic or morphological) might be a point of controversy. The NBT insisted that the Neg+T merger takes place in narrow syntax via head movement. However, the Neg-to-T movement does not have a motivation in such a way it targets the root of the tree for extension. There is a debate on legitimacy of head movement operation in the literature of generative syntax (Note 7). The NAT implicitly argues against the possibility of explaining the merger in the narrow syntax. It assumes that the morphological merger is a post-syntactic operation (PF component). Leaving the merger for postsyntactic component (i.e., Neg-T cliticization) seems more tempting and convincing, as it does not need to be syntactically motivated. It is imperative to point out that there is a dispute regarding the status of preverbal nominal in the literature of Arabic grammar/syntax. In traditional grammar, there had been two schools: the Basran and the Kufi schools of grammar (Note 8). The Basran grammarians consider preverbal nominals in Arabic to be topics (mubtada) that are co-indexed with a covert subject pronoun after the predicate (*xabar*), namely verb. The Kufi grammarians allow subjects in preverbal and postverbal positions. Such a disagreement on whether the preverbal nominals are genuine subjects or not is reflected in the works of generative syntax of Arabic. The modern followers of the Basran approach (Alazzawi, 1990; Soltan, 2007; Al-Horais, 2009; Al-Balushi, 2011; among others) argue that preverbal nominals are topics/left-dislocated nominals that are base-generated in a peripheral non-argument position. On the other hand, the modern followers of the Kufi approach (Mohammad, 1990; Fassi Fehri, 1993; Ouhalla, 1994; Benmamoun, 2008; Aoun et al., 2010; among others), consider nominals to be genuine subjects in Arabic, regardless of the position they appear: preverbally or postverbally (Note 9). The NAT analysis goes in tandem with the former view where preverbal nominals are based generated in Topic Phrase or left-dislocated to Topic Phrase from thematic positions. Therefore, all the preverbal nominals given in the paper are considered to be topics/topicalized subjects.

Empirically, there is a number of language facts brought from SNRDA in support to the NAT analysis. First, Negation in SNRDA can interact with categories other than tense in the clause. It can also interact with nominal, adjectival, and prepositional predicates.

\[
\text{Negation with nominal predicate}
\]

\[
\text{alwald} \quad \text{muu} \quad \text{saavir}
\]

\`
The boy is not a poet.'
``

\[
\text{Negation with adjectival predicate}
\]

\[
\text{as-sayyara} \quad \text{mee} \quad \text{zeena}
\]

\`
The car is not good.'
``
c) **Negation with prepositional predicate**

\[
\text{almudiir } \text{muu} \quad \text{bi-almaktab} \\
\text{the-manager Neg in-the-office}
\]

‘The manager is not in the office.’

d) **The preposition hosting pronoun**

\[
\text{maa } \text{šandi kitaab} \\
\text{Neg at-me book}
\]

‘I do not have a book.’

The above examples show that the negative element precedes nonverbal predicates such as the nominal predicate šaṣṭir ‘poet’ in (38a), adjectival predicate zeena ‘good.Fem’, prepositional predicate bi-almaktab ‘in-the-office’ or preposition hosting a pronoun šandi ‘at-me’. It suggests that determining the location of Neg on the basis of the interaction between the Verb and the Tense, namely the perfective-imperfective asymmetry, is not a viable mechanism as the negative element can interact with categories other than the verb and tense.

Second, a negative particle precedes some elements supposedly to occupy positions above the head T, i.e., TP or CP projections.

- **Future tense expressing element raḥ ‘will’**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{39) } & \quad \text{maa raḥ yahdūr Al-Ṣaṇīmah} \\
& \text{Neg Aux.fut attend.3SGM.IPFV the-party}
\end{align*}
\]

‘He will not/is not going to attend the party.’

In example (39), the negative element maa precedes the auxiliary element raḥ ‘will-going to’ that SNRDA utilizes for expressing future tense. The position of Neg in relation to the head T expressing future of example (39) is shown in (40).

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{NegP} \\
\text{Spec} \\
\text{Neg'} \\
\text{Neg} \\
\text{TP} \\
\text{maa Spec} \\
\text{'T'} \\
\text{T} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{raḥ} \\
\text{V} \\
\text{ya-hdūr al-‘azīmah} \\
\end{array}
\]

In (40), Neg head must be higher than the head T. Since the Arabic dialect, unlike SA, does not display tense on negatives, no morphological merger between Neg and T is required. It expresses past/present tense on verbs, but future tense by separate elements like raḥ ‘will-going to’.

- **Existential expletive subject fī ‘there’**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{41) } & \quad \text{maa fī banziin bi-l-mahatah} \\
& \text{Neg Expl petrol in the station}
\end{align*}
\]

‘There is no petrol in the station.’

In (41), the negative element maa precedes the expletive subject fī ‘there’ and thus the negative maa needs to occupy a position no lower than TP as structured in (42).
I argue that if the position of negative element *maa* in the proposed structure (42) were lower than TP, then there will be no simple way for deriving the correct word order where the negative precedes the subject.  

- Indefinite pronominal subject *ahad* ‘one’

43) Maa ahad wis'I al-baarih  
   Neg one arrived the-yesterday  
   ‘No one arrived yesterday.’

The indefinite pronominal subject *ahad* in (43) must be base-generated at TP projection, namely at the specifier position of T as shown in (44).

44)

The above examples suggest that there must be a position higher than the subject to host the negative; otherwise there would be no motivation if we assume the Neg is base-generated below TP and move upwards. Moreover, the negative in SNRDA precedes not only the subject but also merge with it in some cases as illustrated in (45).

45) a) maani musamihak  
   Neg-I forgive.PART.1SGM.for.you  
   ‘I don’t/am not going to forgive you.’

b) maahi musafirah  
   Neg-she travel.PART.SGF  
   ‘She isn’t travelling/going to travel.’
These above examples show that the negative element *maa* precedes and merges with the pronominal subject as ani ‘I’ in (45a). This empirical fact supports my argument that Neg must be located above TP, where the subject is occupying the specifier position of TP (Note 10). Due to their adjacency, the negative can host the pronominal subject as enclitic and this is in general a property of heads.

- It precedes adverbials like ʕumr hosting pronoun subject clitics as in (46).

46)  
a) *maa* ʕumruh ʕaṭani xabar  
Neg ever-he gave.me news.SG  
‘He has not ever given me a piece of information.’

b) *maa* ʕumri sawyt zay kiðaa  
Neg ever-me did like this  
‘I have not ever done this.’

The negative element *maa* in (46) should be higher than these adverbial elements which shall occupy nAnthematic positions, i.e., outside of TP.

To sum, a negative element must occupy a position higher than TP/CP positioned-elements such as future expressing auxiliary element raah as in (39), existential expletive subject fii ‘there’ as in (41), indefinite pronominal subject ahad ‘one’ as in (43), and adverbials hosting pronoun subject clitic as in (46).

Finally, a related piece of evidence in favor of the NAT is that Neg projection can provide a slot for the topicalized subject, specifically specifier position of NegP as illustrated in (47).

47)  
a) al-banaät maa hin musafiraat  
the girls Neg they.fem travel.PART.3PLF  
‘The girls, they are not travelling/going to travel.’

b) al-ʕaṣayyal maa hum ʕaylini ham  
the-boys Neg they.M take.PART.3PLM care  
‘The boys, they are not caring.’

Under the NAT analysis, the topicalized/left-dislocated subject will fill the specifier position of the Neg and this option is not possible under the NBT analysis.

### 4. Conclusion

The paper presented comparisons and contrasts between SA and SNRDA in terms of the properties of sentential negation; SA uses five negative elements (*laa*, *ma*, *lam*, *lan* and *laysa*), but SNRDA uses three negatives (*maa*, muu/mee and *laa*). Despite the apparent differences, the negation pattern in both dialectal and standard versions of Arabic finds a unified morphosyntactic account under the NAT approach. In this paper, I investigated the theoretical and empirical motivations of the two existing approaches to the location of DP in the clausal structure and demonstrated that the NAT gains more empirical support than the NBT from both versions of Arabic. SNRDA allows negation to precede (and merging in some cases with) non-verbal predicates (nominals, adjectivals, prepositionals, adverbials) and some CP/TP positioned elements (expletive subject fii ‘there’, indefinite pronominal subject ahad ‘one’, future expressing element raah ‘will’). The study has concluded that the position of Neg above T is the most viable option to capture various facts of sentential negation in both standard and dialectal versions of Arabic. The proposed NAT-based analysis, I assume, can capture similar facts of negation in other Arabic dialects spoken in Gulf countries like Hijazi Arabic, Kuwaiti Arabic, and Bahraini Arabic, as they all share the same negation pattern with SNRDA. However, this tendency needs to be extensively investigated in the future.

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References


Notes

Note 1. I have borrowed the coined abbreviation (SNRDA) from Alshammiry (2016); a study conducted on adverbs in the same dialect, i.e., a dialect that is spoken in the northern region of Saudi Arabia. However, Standard Arabic (SA) refers to the most widely used version of Arabic, especially in media, radio broadcasts, literary texts, speeches, debates etc.

The abbreviations used in the glosses of data are: 1, 2, and 3 = first, second and third person, respectively; N= number; G = gender; DU = dual; SG = singular; PL = plural; M = masculine; F = feminine; FUT = future; ASP = aspect; PFV = perfective verb; IPFV = imperfective verb; IND = indicative; JUS = jussive; SUB = subjunctive; PART = participle; NOM = nominative; ACC = accusative; GEN = genitive. T = tense; Neg = negation; EXPL = expletive.

Note 2. Alsalem (2012 and Brustad (2000) claim that muu in Kuwaiti Arabic does not agree in any feature with the predicate. By contrast, Alzahrani (2015) argues that there are two variants of muu in Hijazi Arabic muu and mee where the latter is used with the singular feminine predicate. SNRDA behaves like the latter in this regard.

Note 3. For more details on the claim that imperfective in SA is a nontensed default verb form, see (Benmamoun, 1999).

Note 4. Rizzi’s (1990) Relativized Minimality (RM) stipulates that “in a configuration [...] α [...] γ [...] β [...]”, where α c-commands γ and γ c-commands β, γ blocks a relationship between α and β iff γ is of the same type as α, where ‘of the same type’ is understood as: (a) if α is a head, γ is a head; (b) if α is a phrase in an A-position, γ is a phrase in an A-position; and (c) if α is a phrase in an A’-position, γ is a phrase in an A’-position.” Similarly, Travis (1984) Head Movement Constraint states that the Head movement may not skip intermediate heads.

Note 5. Soltan (2014, 2017) demonstrates that Cairene Egyptian Arabic, among others like Moroccan Arabic and Levantine Arabic, uses two patterns of sentential negation: (i) the discontinuous ma….š negation pattern where the predicate appears sandwiched between the two negative elements, forming one morphological unit as in (1a); and (ii) the independent miš pattern which is used in other contexts, mainly in nonverbal predicates without forming a unit with the predicate as in (1a) and (1b) from Cairene Egyptian Arabic.

1) a) ma-ruh-t-i-š
   Neg-go.PFV-1SG-E(penthic Vowel)-Neg
   ‘I didn’t go.’

No space in the paper is given for discussion of the discontinuous negation ma…š pattern as both standard and dialectal varieties of Arabic, namely SA as well as SNRDA, do not utilize this pattern.

Note 6. There are certain properties on the imperfective Verb or the Tense, away from the intervention effect of the Neg, which might be responsible for such preclusion. However, this is not the concern of my current paper.

Note 7. Chomsky (2001) claims that head movement, apart from Baker’s (1988) cases of incorporation, is phonological or morphological operation, i.e., it does not take place in the narrow syntax. Contra Chomsky’s PF-based approach to head movement, see Donati (2006).

Note 8. For discussion on the status of preverbal nominals in Arabic grammars/syntax, see the works Eid (1975), Hassan (1975), Al-Kawari (2008), among others.

Note 9. For consistency purpose, the data provided from the dialectal and standard versions of Arabic throughout the paper are restricted to the SVO order where the nominal is preverbal.

Note 10. Similar pieces of evidence come from Sana’ani Arabic, which allows the pronominal subject to precede or follow the sentential negation. For the details on the argument, see Benmamoun and Al Asbahi (2014).

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