Indicative and Subjunctive Clauses in Arabic

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Abstract:

The first part of this study investigates finiteness and modality in Arabic in an attempt to set up finite clause structure in the language. The second part limits itself to the indicative (hence ind.) structures introduced by the ind. complementizer (hence C) ‘anna 'that', and the subjunctive (hence subj.) structures introduced by the subj. C-'an 'to'. Since verb in Arabic must show aspect and agreement inflections, then it is assumed that Arabic has no nonfinite (infinitival) clause structure. The parallelism between the two types of structure is expressed by the following analogous behavior: (i) ind. C-'anna assigns the subject of its nominal Inflectional Phrase (hence IP) complement an accusative (hence acc) case and assigns its verb ind. Mood. Subj. C-'an assigns the verb of its verbal IP complement subj. mood and the agentive subject is always assigned nominative (hence nom.) case by the IP verb in VS(O) word order, (ii) adopting C+IP analysis for Arabic CP constituents, it is established below that overt ind. and subj. C-elements are sensitive to V-gapping. Mood and case are licensed by a lexically overt C-element, whereas V-gapping is triggered by a lexically covert C-element, viz. Subject NP-nom. case, and V ind./subj. mood are assigned under C-overt-ness whereas V-gapping is sanctioned under C-covert-ness.

1. Finiteness:

It is commonly assumed in the linguistic literature that finite/non-finite clause distinction is, to a large extent, based on morpho-syntactic criteria; that is a finite clause necessarily has a subject, contains a verb which allows contrasts in tense and mood, and displays agreement with its subject, while a non-finite (infinitival) clause contains a tense-less and agreement-less verb form, which lacks mood contrasts.

Arabic, as far as one can tell, shows only the former type of clauses, in which verb always shows aspect inflection, and agreement with its subject in terms of, gender and number in Subject Verb (O)bject SV(O) word order, and for gender in VS(O) word order. Since Arabic has no nonfinite (infinitival) verb form, then (non)perfect verb forms always show subject-verb agreement and mood inflection is restricted to non-perfect verb form.

The binary contrast between aspectual perfect and non-perfect forms of verb is encoded morphologically as a suffix appended to the perfect verb form to express subject-verb agreement, and as an affix to mark non-perfectiveness and mood. It is presumed in Arabic traditions that the prefixes /'l/, /nl/, /lj-/, and /t-/ indicate non-perfectiveness and the suffixes /-u/, /-a/ and /-null/ indicate mood (see table I below). Whether the prefixes /'l/, /nl/, /lj-/, and /t-/ indicate non-perfectiveness or subject-verb agreement is a controversial issue. It is assumed, here, that these prefixes are subject-verb agreement markers. The fact that verb in Arabic must express aspect as well as agreement with its subject entails that Arabic has no finite/nonfinite (infinitival) verb
contrast, but rather a verb has a lexical structure based on consonantal roots. Such roots must be supported by vocalic and consonantal affixes in order to receive its lexical or syntactic interpretation. For example, the root ...k...t...b... must acquire affixes to express the following interpretations: /kitaab/ ‘a book’, /ja-ktub-u/ ‘he writes’, /katab-a/ ‘he wrote’, /kaatib/ ‘author’ /maktab/ ‘office’ /mktaba/ ‘bookshop/library’, etc.

2 Modality:

The traditional ind./subj. mood distinction is determined by the syntax (subcategorization rules) and semantics (selection rules) of the main verb, e.g. /'a-lam-u/ ‘I know’, for instance, introduces ind. clause and /aqtarih-u/ ‘I suggest’ introduces subj. clauses. Verb in Arabic shows four moods viz. ind., subj., jussive, and imperative. Ind. mood has two distinct forms, which encode the aspect of the verb, i.e. (non)perfect verb forms. Perfect verb form does not show mood inflection. Non-perfect verb form stands as a basis for subj., jussive and imperative moods. Hence, two basic forms stand: perfect form, which is always interpreted as ind. perfective, /katab-a/ (he wrote), and non-perfect form, which may be interpreted as:

(i) ind. mood morphologically marked by the suffix -u, e.g. /j-aktub-u/ (he writes/is writing),
(ii) subj. mood marked by the suffix -a, /ja-ktub-a/ (he writes/is writing), and
(iii) jussive mood /ja-ktub/ (he writes/is writing) and imperative mood /uktub/ (you, write), which are phonetically null (see Fabri 1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>ind.</th>
<th>subj.</th>
<th>jussive</th>
<th>imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>perfect verb form</td>
<td>non-perfect verb form</td>
<td>non-perfect verb form</td>
<td>non-perfect verb form</td>
<td>non-perfect verb form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No mood inflection</td>
<td>-u</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>-null</td>
<td>-null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>katab-a</td>
<td>/n/j/t/-aktub-u</td>
<td>/n/j/t/-aktub-a</td>
<td>/n/j/t/-aktub</td>
<td>/u-ktub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike English, where modality is signaled by using auxiliaries, Arabic expresses modality by contrastive perfect and non-perfect verb forms as shown in the above tabular information. The traditional ind./subj. mood distinction in Arabic is determined by the semantics of the main verb.

(1) ’a-lamu/*alim-tu ’anna l-walad-a ju-ghaadir-u*ghaadar-a l-yawma 1sg-know/knew-1st that def-boy-acc. 3mg-leave-ind./left-3msg de-day ‘I know/knew that the boy leaves/left for today’ (ind.)

(2) ’a-qtarih-u/*i-qtarah-tu ’an ju-ghardir-a/*ghadar-a l-walad-u 1sg-suggest/suggested-1sg to 3msg-leave-subj/left-3msg def-boy nom l-yawma (subj.) def-day ‘I suggest/suggested that the boy leaves/*left today’

In (1), the embedded clause is introduced by the subordinate ind. C-’anna, which selects a nominal IP complement, where the verb may assume perfect or non-perfect form, and is inflected for agreement with its subject (3mg). The subject NP, i.e. l-walad-a must be lexically expressed and is assigned acc. case by C. Ind. mood is
indicated by -u suffixed to a necessarily non-perfect verb form. The aspect (non)perfectiveness of the embedded verb is not determined by the main verb.

In (2), the IP complement clause is introduced by the subj. subordinating particle C-'an, which subcategorizes for a verbal IP complement. Irrespective of (non)perfectiveness of the main verb, the verb in the subordinate subj. clause assumes the non-perfect form. The subj. mood is indicated by the extension -a, suffixed to the necessarily non-perfect verb form.

The conclusion that could be abstracted, thus far, is that the ind. C-'anna selects nominal IP complement, whose explicit subject it assigns acc. case. The subj. C-'an introduces a verbal IP complement, with non-perfect verb form and overt subject. The subordinating particle-'anna is an ind. C and the subordinating particle-'an is subj. C. Ind. clauses must, explicitly, display subject assigned acc case by the C-element and a non-perfect verb form marked for ind. mood. The subject in the subj. clause is categorized as an agentive NP in VS(O) word order, and hence always assigned nom case by the IP verb. Thus, 'anna is sensitive to VS(O), and 'an is sensitive to SV(O) as can be seen from the ungrammaticality of the following examples, in which the ind. C-'anna selects a verbal IP complement (3), and the subj. C-'an selects a nominal IP complement (4).

(3) *'a-'lamu/'alim-tu 'anna ju-ghaadiru/ghaadar-a l-waladu
   1sg-know/knew-1sg that 3msg-leave/left-3msg def-boy
   'I know/knew that the boy leaves/left'

(4) *'a-qtarahu/'i-qtarah-tu 'an l-fataata tu-ghaadiru/ghaadara-t
   1sg-suggest/suggested that def-girl 3fsg-leave/left-3fsg
   'I suggest/suggested that the girl leave/*left'

The fact that ind. C-element must select nominal IP complement and subj. C-element must select verbal IP complement indicates that these C-elements are in complementary distribution.

3. Clause Internal Structure:

It is generally accepted that subordinate (complement) clauses are introduced by overt or covert element in C position. Edmond (1976) and Soames and Perlmutter (1979); (see Radford 1988) suggest that the C node is generated within S` as a sister of the subject NP of the clause:

(i) S' ——> C NP VP

An alternative analysis, which is currently far more prominent in syntax, was formulated by Bersnan as early as (1970) (see Radford ibid.) to the effect that C and S form a maximal projection, which she categorizes as S-bar with C as structural head. The maximal projection S` is nowadays widely known as CP for C Phrase, and S is known as IP constituent. Thus S` = CP and S = IP (For discussion and motivations, see Haegeman (1991), Radford (1988) and Cowper 1992)

(ii) S' ——> C S = CP ——> C IP
Empirical evidence for IP/CP distinction in the language can be established by appealing to co-ordination and V-gapping. Ind. a-examples and subj. b-examples below show parallel coordinating and V-gapping behavior.

(i) Coordinated CPs:

(5a) 'alimtu 'anna l-walad-a ju-safar-u l-yawma wa 'anna l-bint-a knew-1st that def-boy-acc 3mg-left-ind. def-day and that def-girl-acc tu-safir-u ghadan
3fg-leave-ind. tomorrow 'I knew that the boy leaves today and that the girl leaves tomorrow'

(b) 'a-qtarihu 'an ju-safir-a l-walad-u l-yawma wa 'an 1st-suggest to 3msg-leave-subj def-boy-nom def-day and that tu-safir-a l-bint-u ghadan 3fsf-leave-subj. def-girl-nom tomorrow 'I suggest that the boy leaves today and that the girl leaves tomorrow'

Examples (5a/b) are straightforward coordinated CPs. The C-elements are lexically expressed, hence case and mood in (5a) and mood in (5b) are suffixed; that is the ind. C-elements in (5a) assign acc. case to the subjects l-walad-a/l-bint-a, and assign ind. mood to the verbs /j(t)usafir-u/. The subj. C-elements in (5b) assign subj. mood to verbs /j(t)usafir-a/ and the agentive NPs l-walad-u/l-bint-u/ are assigned nom. case by the verbs /j(t)usafir-a/ respectively.

(ii) Coordinated CP and IP:

(6a) 'alimtu 'anna l-walad-a ju-safir-u l-yawma wa -- l-bint-a knew-1st that def-boy-acc 3mg-left-ind. def-day and -- def-girl-acc tu-safir-u ghadan 3fg-leave-ind. tomorrow 'I knew that the boy leaves today and the girl leaves tomorrow’

(b) 'a-qtarihu 'an ju-safir-a l-walad-u l-yawma wa -- tu-safir-a 1st-suggest to 3msg-leave-subj def-boy-nom def-day and -- 3fsf-leave-subj. l-bint-u ghadan def-girl-nom tomorrow 'I suggest that the boy leaves today and the girl leaves tomorrow’

The data in (6a/b) show empty C position in the second unit. The subject NP l-bint-a in (6a) is marked for acc. case in virtue of being coordinated with l-walad-a, which is assigned acc. case by the first clause C-'anna. A similar relation holds between the verbs in (6b), where the verb tu-safir-a in the second clause is marked for subj. mood in virtue of being coordinated with the verb ju-safir-a, which is assigned subj. mood by the first clause C-'an. It could, thus, be posited that second clause subject acc. case and verb ind. mood in (6a), and second clause verb subj. mood in (6b) are sanctioned by empty C-position.
(iii) Coordinated IP and CP:

(7a)  ʿalimtu -- l-walad-a ju-safar-u l-yawma waʿanna l-bint-a
tu-safir-u ghadan
3fg-leave-ind. tomorrow
'I knew the boy leaves today and that the girl leaves tomorrow'

(b) ʿa-qtarihu -- ju-safir-u l-walad-u l-yawma waʿan
1st-suggest -- 3msg-leave-subj def-boy-nom def-day and that
tu-safir-a l-bint-u ghadan
3fsg-leave-subj. def-girl-nom tomorrow
'I suggest the boy leaves today and that the girl leaves tomorrow'

The data in (7a/b) above show that the first unit is an IP, where the C position is left empty, the verb in (7a) assumes ind. mood and the subject NP is marked for acc. case in virtue of being a complement of the main verb ʿalimtu. The subject NP in (7b) is marked for nom. case in its VS(O) word order. The second clause in each construction is a CP with an overt C. In (7a), C assigns acc. case to the subject l-bint-a and ind. mood to the verb tu-safir-u. In (7b), C assigns subj. mood to the verb tu-safir-a, which, in turn, assigns nom. case to the agentive NP l-bint-u. The fact that the verb of the first clause in (7b), i.e. ju-safir-u shows ind. mood and that the verb of the second clause, i.e. tu-safir-a shows subj. mood confirms that subj. mood is assigned under C-explicitness (cf. 8b below).

(iv) Coordinated IPs:

(8a) ʿalimtu -- l-walad-a ju-safar-u l-yawma wa -- l-bint-a tu-safir-u
ghadan
3fg-leave-ind. tomorrow
'I knew the boy leaves today and the girl leaves tomorrow'

(b) ʿa-qtarihu -- ju-safir-u l-walad-u l-yawma wa -- tu-safir-u
1st-suggest -- 3msg-leave-subj def-boy-nom def-day and -- 3fsg-leave-subj.
l-bint-u ghadan
def-girl-nom tomorrow
'I suggest the boy leaves today and the girl leaves tomorrow'

(8a/b) are coordinated IPs with empty C positions. The subject NP l-walad-a in (8a) shows acc. case assigned by the main verb ʿalimtu, and the verb shows ind. mood. The subject of the second unit, i.e. l-bint-a shows acc. case in coordination with the subject of the first clause, which, recall, is assigned acc. case by the main verb. The verbs in (8b) j/tu-safir-u show ind. mood due to C-covertness. The agentive NPs are marked for nom. case in their VS(O) order. The data in (9) and (10) below indicate that IPs, but not CPs, allow V-gapping in second clause, as confirmed by the grammaticality of (9)-(10)-examples vis-à-vis the ungrammaticality of their corresponding (11)-(12)-examples.

(v) Coordinated IPs/V-gapping:
(9a) alimtu -- l-walad-a ju-safar-u l-yawma wa -- l-bint-a -- ghadan knew-1st -- def-boy-acc 3mg-left-ind. def-day and -- def-girl-acc -- tomorrow 'I knew the boy leaves today and the girl tomorrow'

(b) 'a-qtarihu -- ju-safir-u l-walad-u l-yawma wa -- -- l-bint-u 1st-suggest -- 3msg-leave-subj def-boy-nom def-day and -- -- def-girl-nom ghdan tomorrow 'I suggest the boy leaves today and the girl tomorrow'

(vi) Coordinated CP and IP/V-gapping:

(10a) alimtu 'anna l-walad-a ju-safar-u l-yawma wa -- l-bint-a knew-1st that def-boy-acc 3mg-left-ind. def-day and -- def-girl-acc -- ghadan -- tomorrow 'I knew that the boy leaves today and the girl tomorrow'

(b) 'a-qtarihu 'an ju-safir-a l-walad-u l-yawma wa -- -- l-bint-u 1st-suggest to 3msg-leave-subj def-boy-nom def-day and -- -- def-girl-nom ghdan tomorrow 'I suggest that the boy leaves today and the girl tomorrow'

(vii) Coordinated CPs/*V-gapping:

(11a) 'alim-tu 'anna l-walad-a ju-safar-u l-yawma wa 'anna l-bint-a knew-1st that def-boy-acc 3mg-left-ind. def-day and that def-girl-acc -- ghadan -- tomorrow 'I knew that the boy leaves today and that the girl tomorrow'

(b) 'a-qtarihu 'an ju-safir-a l-walad-u l-yawma wa 'an 1st-suggest to 3msg-leave-subj def-boy-nom def-day and that -- l-bint-u ghdan -- def-girl-nom tomorrow 'I suggest that the boy leaves today and that the girl tomorrow'

(viii) Coordinated IP and CP/*V-gapping:

(12a) 'alim-tu -- l-walad-a ju-safar-u l-yawma wa 'anna l-bint-a knew-1st -- def-boy-acc. 3mg-left-ind. def-day and that def-girl-acc -- ghadan -- tomorrow 'I knew the boy leaves today and that the girl tomorrow'

(b) 'a-qtarihu -- ju-safir-u l-walad-u l-yawma wa 'an 1st-suggest -- 3msg-leave-nom def-boy-nom def-day and that -- l-bint-u ghdan -- def-girl-nom tomorrow 'I suggest the boy leaves today and that the girl leaves tomorrow'
Examples (9a/b) show coordinated CPs with empty C positions, hence coordinated IPs and V-gapping is possible. Examples (10a/b) show conjoined CPs, where the first C is lexically filled and the second C is left empty, hence V-gapping is possible. In examples (11a/b) the second C is spelled out, hence V-gapping is not possible and the structures are ungrammatical. The same argument applies to (12a/b), where the second C is overtly expressed. This argument presupposes that IP and CP are independent categories and embedded Complement clauses are CP constituents generated under Bersnan’s [C, IP] analysis. The generalization is that only IP constituents allow V-gapping in both ind. and subj. coordinated constructions.

Conclusion:

Verb finiteness and modality are considered and it is established that verb in Arabic has no non-finite (infinitival) form, hence no infinitival clauses. It is assumed that verbs in Arabic show contrast of aspect, viz. (non)perfectiveness to express mood, which is restricted to non-perfect verb form, and determined by the semantics of the main verb. The clause structures considered in this study are ind. structure introduced by C-‘anna and subj. structure introduced by C-‘an. Ind. C-‘anna assigns acc. case to the subject of its IP complement, and assigns ind. mood to the IP verb in SV(O) word order. The subj. C-‘an assigns subj. mood to its IP verb, which, in turn, assigns nom. case to the agentive subject in VS(O) word order.

In ind. structures, aspect of the main verb does not govern into the aspect of the embedded verb, which may be perfect or non-perfect. In subj. structures, the embedded verb assumes non-perfect verb form. Thus, subj. mood is sensitive to perfect verb form, whereas ind. mood is not. Case, mood assignment and V-gapping facts show that Arabic displays IP and CP clause structures.

It is posited that explicit ind. and subj. C-elements are sensitive to V-gapping, hence, only IP, but not CP constituents, allow V-gapping. It is also concluded that if ind. or subj. C-element is lexically expressed, mood and case are morphologically marked, but V-gapping is not possible. If ind. or subj. C-element is lexically covert, mood and case are not morphologically marked, but V-gapping is possible. The following tabular information show parallel behavior and complementary distribution between ind. C-‘anna and subj. C-‘an, with regard to mood, case assignment and V-gapping in a simple structure:

Table II: Case, mood and V-gapping:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ind. C-‘anna: N-a (acc.), V-u (ind.)</th>
<th>subj. C-‘an: V-a (subj.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>overt</td>
<td>covert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) case</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) mood</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) V-gapping</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overt ind. C-‘anna sanctions case and mood assignment but blocks V-gapping. Covert ind. C-‘anna does not assign case and mood, but allows V-gapping.

Overt subj. C-‘an assigns mood but blocks V-gapping. Covert subj. C-‘an does not assign mood but allows V-gapping.
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