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The Null-Subject Parameter in Modern Arabic Dialects

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One of the major goals in the Government and Binding approach to the study of syntax has been to establish the ways in which languages can (and cannot) differ with respect to core grammar. The study of dialects or closely related languages fits naturally into this line of inquiry under the reasonable assumption that dialect differences will reflect a relatively small number of parameter changes in the core system. Stated somewhat differently, the study of dialect differences can reveal changes in core grammar in action, so to speak. Of course, the actual nature of the grammatical difference may be quite abstract, manifesting itself in a number of more superficial differences that seem unrelated or even contradictory from a pretheoretical point of view. As an analogy, think, for example, of how a decrease in the pitch of the voice, an increase in facial hair, and a loss of hair on the head tend to be associated and are explicable in terms of a specific chemical change in the endocrine system.

One of the most intensively studied cluster of properties that seem to manifest the same underlying parameter of core grammar has been that associated with the so-called null-subject or pro-drop parameter. The work of Jaeggli (1982), Rizzi (1982), and others has shown that the features in (1) tend to cluster together.

- (1) a. phonologically null subject pronouns
- b. free subject inversion
- c. that-trace violations

For example, the grammar of Italian is set positively for this parameter and thus permits zero subject pronouns (2a), permits the subject to be placed after the verb freely (2b) and permits the subject of a that clause to be extracted under wh-movement (2c). Conversely, the grammar of English is set negatively for this parameter and so subject pronouns must have phonological content (2a), the subject may appear after the verb only in specific contexts such as interrogatives (2b), and finally the subject of a that clause may not be extracted by wh-movement.

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (2) | <u>Italian</u> | <u>English</u> |
| | a. Fuma. | *Smokes. |
| | b. Fuma Mario. | *Smokes John. |
| | c. Chi hai detto che fuma? | *Who did you say that smokes? |

In this paper we will briefly compare two modern colloquial Arabic dialects with respect to the null-subject parameter. We will argue that when attention is restricted to a particular syntactic context, the two dialects pattern as Italian and English do with respect to the properties in (1). We shall then look further into the grammar of the dialect specified positively for the null-subject parameter, discussing additional features that bear on the precise implementation of this aspect of core grammar. The two dialects we shall be comparing are those of Levantine Arabic on the one hand (viz. Palestinian, Lebanese, and Jordanian, which, though different in many ways, exhibit the same behavior with respect to the null-subject parameter) and the dialect of the Bani-Hassan, a Bedouin clan of the Jordanian desert, on the other.¹ The particular syntactic context we shall be looking at is subordinate clauses headed by the complementizer innu 'that'.

1. Wh-movement and the null subject parameter

As in English, Levantine Arabic exhibits the that-trace effect. While the object may be extracted from a that clause in the formation of a wh-question (3a), a subject NP may not be (3b) unless the complementizer innu is omitted (3c). Unlike in English, Levantine Arabic (LA) can make relatively free use of resumptive pronouns in wh-questions. It is thus possible to question the subject position of a that clause if this position is marked by a resumptive pronoun, realized as a clitic on the complementizer innu (3d).

- (3) a. ?ayy fusta₁n. Fariid kaal innu l-bint ištara₁t e_{-i}?
 which dress did F. say that the girl bought?
 b. *?ayy bint₁. Fariid kaal innu e₁ ištara₁t l-fusta₁n?
 which girl did F. say that bought the dress?
 c. ?ayy bint₁. Fariid kaal e₁ ištara₁t l-fusta₁n?
 which girl did F. say bought the dress?
 d. ?ayy bint₁. Fariid kaal inn-ha₁ ištara₁t l-fusta₁n?
 which girl did F. say that-she bought the dress?

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While subject pronouns are freely droppable in main clauses in LA (4a), they cannot be omitted in a that-clause (4b); instead they must be phonologically realized as a clitic pronoun on the complementizer (4c).

- (4) a. (hiy) ištara^vt l-fuṣṭān.
 (she) bought the dress.
 b.*Fariid kaal innu ištara^vt l-fuṣṭān.
 F. said that bought the dress.
 c. Fariid kaal inn-ha ištara^vt l-fuṣṭān.
 F. said that-she bought the dress.

Finally, while the subject may be placed after the verb to varying degrees in main clauses in LA, such inversion is absolutely impossible in innu clauses, as shown in (5).

- (5) a. Fariid kaal innu l-bint ištara^vt l-fuṣṭān.
 F. said that the girl bought the dress.
 b.*Fariid kaal innu ištara^vt l-bint l-fuṣṭān.

To summarize, in innu ('that') clauses Levantine Arabic displays all of the characteristics of a negative (English-like) setting for the null-subject parameter. When we turn to the situation in the Bani-Hassan dialect (BHA), we find exactly the opposite state of affairs. In BHA there is no difference between subject and object position with respect to accessibility to wh-movement in innu clauses. Both are freely extractable: cf. (6a) and (6b). The options of dropping the complementizer (6c) and employing a resumptive pronoun (6d) are also available, just as in Levantine Arabic.

- (6) a. wayy libaas_i Fariid gaal innu al-binit ištara^vt e_i?
 which dress_i did F. say that the girl bought?
 b. wayy binit_i Fariid gaal innu e_i ištara^vt al-libaas?
 which girl_i did F. say that bought the dress?
 c. wayy binit_i Fariid gaal e_i ištara^vt al-libaas?
 which girl_i did F. say bought the dress?
 d. wayy binit_i Fariid gaal inn-ha_i ištara^vt al-libaas?
 which girl_i did F. say that-she_i bought the dress?

Unlike in LA, BHA permits the use of null-subject pronouns in innu clauses.

- (7) a. al-binit gaalat innu ištara^vt al-libaas.
 the girl said that bought the dress.
 b. al-binit gaalat inn-ha ištara^vt al-libaas.
 the girl said that-she bought the dress.

In fact, (7a) with the null subject pronoun is the unmarked way of expressing "the girl said that she bought the dress" (with or without an equi interpretation). (7b), where the subject pronoun is phonologically realized, is only employed for emphasis on the subject. This difference between (7a) and (7b) can be understood as following from the "avoid pronoun" principle, a discourse rule that

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enjoins one to use phonologically null pronouns whenever the grammar permits. Since the option of null subject pronouns is unavailable for innu clauses in LA, the "avoid pronoun" principle is not applicable in that dialect.

Finally, again unlike in LA, subjects of innu clauses may be freely inverted with the verb in BHA.

- (8) a. Fariid gaal innu al-binit ištara al-libaas.
 F. said that the girl bought the dress.
 b. Fariid gaal innu ištara al-binit al-libaas.

2. LF rules and subject position

Given that BHA exhibits no contrasts between subjects and objects with respect to accessibility to wh-movement, the next question we want to ask is whether the same lack of contrast also obtains for rules of the LF component of the grammar, rules which help to specify the scope of certain quantifier-like expressions. As work by Kayne (1979) and many others since has shown, these display subject/non-subject distinctions that parallel the distribution of variables formed by wh-movement in the syntax. We might therefore expect that such LF rules will also fail to show a subject/nonsubject contrast in BHA. But in fact this expectation is not supported by the data. The grammar of BHA displays subject/nonsubject contrasts similar to those that can be found in English.

The first of the two LF rules we shall discuss is that which helps to characterize the logical-form scope of wh-in-situ expressions which, given that BHA has obligatory wh-movement in the syntax, will only arise in multiple questions. Following the original proposal of Chomsky (1973), we assume the existence of an LF rule of wh-raising that raises a wh-expression to the controlling interrogative Comp, where it may undergo absorption with another wh-operator to give a complex operator. The rule of wh-raising will thus transform the S-structure (9b) of a sentence such as (9a) into the LF representation (9c).

- (9) a. min ištara wušš?
 who bought what?
 b. $\min_i [\underline{e}_i \text{ ištara wušš}]$
 c. $\text{wušš}_j \ \& \ \min_i [\underline{e}_i \text{ ištara } \underline{e}_j]$

Chomsky (1981) has proposed that the distribution of variables formed by wh-raising (and hence derivatively the distribution of the wh-in-situ expressions themselves) follows from the Empty Category Principle (ECP), a condition on LF representations which requires empty categories to be properly governed. Very informally, an empty category is properly governed by the lexical head of its phrase. In (9c) \underline{e}_j is properly governed by the verb ištara. Certain analogical extensions of the basic government configuration are permitted to handle subject position variables. Very roughly, if an immediately preceding antecedent c-commands an empty category, that empty cate-

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gory will be said to be properly governed. Thus, in (9c) e_i is properly governed by min, its antecedent. Consider now the paradigm of (10).

- (10) a. *min i9tigad innu min kisar al-šubbaak?
 who thinks that who broke the window?
 b. min i9tigad min kisar al-šubbaak?
 who thinks who broke the window?
 c. min i9tigad innu kisar miin al-šubbaak?
 who thinks that broke who the window?

The BHA contrast between (10a) and (10b) mirrors the contrast in the corresponding English sentences. In order to have a *wh-in-situ* in the subject position of a complement clause, the complementizer innu must be omitted in order to satisfy the ECP by antecedent government. Note that BHA can also satisfy the ECP by taking advantage of the free inversion option not present in English, as in (10c) where the subject has been postposed with the verb and hence will satisfy the ECP by virtue of being properly governed by the verb.

The other LF rule that bears on the status of the ECP in BHA is one that helps to characterize the scope of expressions quantified by the negative existential walla. When an NP quantified by walla appears in postverbal position the verb must be preceded by the particle ma (11b), which in other contexts marks sentential negation (11a). But when the negatively quantified NP appears in preverbal subject position (11d), the particle ma must be absent (11e).³

- (11) a. al-ṭaalib ma gara al-ktaab.
 the student didn't read the book.
 b. al-ṭaalib ma gara walla ktaab.
 the student neg. read no book.
 c. *al-ṭaalib gara walla ktaab.
 the student read no book.
 d. walla ṭaalib gara al-ktaab.
 no student read the book.
 e. *walla ṭaalib ma gara al-ktaab.
 no student neg. read the book.

Following Rizzi's (1982) interpretation of similar data in Italian, we shall assume that ma acts as a scope marker indicating that the NP quantified by walla has scope over the verb. We shall also assume the existence of an LF rule of quantifier raising (QR) that adjoins an NP quantified by walla to the clause in which walla appears. This rule will thus assign the sentences in (11b) and (11d) the LF representations of (12a) and (12b), respectively.

- (12) a. walla ktaab_i [al-ṭaalib ma gara e_i]
 b. walla ṭaalib_i [e_i gara al-ktaab]

Since the QR rule adjoins the quantified NP to S, the subject variable will meet the ECP by antecedent government. Hence, in general, negatively quantified expressions may appear in the subject position of an innu clause.

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The negative existential quantifier in BHA becomes relevant to the ECP by virtue of the fact that with matrix clause verbs of desire and request a lower clause NP quantified by walla may be interpreted as having scope over the matrix clause provided that the latter is marked with the particle ma. An example appears in (13a). This sentence, which we assume to have the LF representation (13b), describes a situation in which the speaker asserts that there is no book that the teacher has asked the boy to read. (13a) can thus be true in a situation in which the teacher may never have spoken with the boy. It thus contrasts with (13c), which asserts that the teacher has asked the boy to read no book and hence must have spoken with the boy.

- (13) a. al-m9allim ma ṭalab min al-walad innu yigra walla ktaab.
the teacher ask from the boy that he read no book.
b. walla ktaab_i [al-m9allim ma ṭalab min al-walad innu yigra e_i]
c. al-m9allim ṭalab min al-walad innu ma yigra walla ktaab.
the teacher asked from the boy that he read no book.
d. al-m9. ṭalab min al-wal._j [innu [walla ktaab_i [e_j ma yigra e_i]]]

Now if we accept that the rule of QR can move an NP past the complementizer innu in (13a) we can ask whether the same wide scope will be possible when the quantified NP appears in subject position. The answer turns out to be no. The sentence (14a) may not be associated with the LF representation of (14b); rather it has the interpretation of a denial that the teacher asked that no student read that book; i.e. the interpretation of a double negation, as indicated in (14c).

- (14) a. al-m9allim ma ṭalab innu walla ṭaalib yigra al-ktaab haḏaak.
the teacher neg. ask that no student read that book.
b. *walla ṭaalib_i [al-m9allim ma ṭalab innu e_i yigra al-kt. haḏ.]
c. al-m9allim ma ṭalab innu [walla ṭaalib_i [e_i yigra al-kt. haḏ.]

A logical form representation in which the subject of the innu clause has wide scope is possible in BHA, but it must arise from an S-structure such as (15a), where the quantified NP is in postverbal position.

- (15) a. al-m9allim ma ṭalab innu yigra walla taalib al-ktaab haḏaak.
b. walla ṭaalib_i [al-m9allim ma ṭalab innu yigra e_i al-kt. haḏ.]

Like the facts regarding the distribution of wh-in-situ, the contrast between (14b) versus (13b) and (15b) indicate that the variable arising from QR is not properly governed in the preverbal subject position of an innu clause and hence that it violates the ECP. This behavior contrasts with postverbal subjects and objects, which will be properly governed by the verb and hence satisfy the ECP.

To summarize, the LF rules involved in the interpretation of wh-in-situ and quantifiers exhibit a subject/nonsubject asymmetry in BHA just as in English. Given that this is true, it then becomes mysterious why that-trace violations are possible for the syntactic rule of wh-movement in BHA. Why should the subject position of an innu clause

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be accessible to wh-movement in the syntax but remain inaccessible to extraction rules of the LF component? An explanation, originally proposed by Rizzi for a similar state of affairs in Italian, that has a strong prima facie plausibility is to assume that the syntactic rule of wh-movement does not in fact extract the subject of an innu clause from preverbal position but rather from postverbal position, an option generally available in the pro-drop languages. According to this proposal, the S-structure associated with (16a) is not (16b), where the empty category variable appears in preverbal position, but rather (16c) where the empty category variable appears in post-verbal position, where it is properly governed by the verb.

- (16) a. wayy binit Fariid gaal innu ištara~~t~~ al-libaas?
 which girl did F. say that bought the dress?
 b. wayy binit_i Fariid gaal innu e_i ištara~~t~~ al-libaas.
 c. wayy binit_i Fariid gaal innu ištara~~t~~e_i al-libaas.

If we accept this proposal we can then maintain that the preverbal subject position of an innu clause in BHA is inaccessible to long extraction in both the syntactic and the LF components of the grammar, just as in LA and English.

3. min and miin

There is a certain amount of independent evidence for the post-verbal source of a wh-questioned subject of an innu clause in BHA. Like some other dialects of the Arabian Peninsula, BHA has two different forms for the word 'who'. In BHA they take the form of min and miin. miin occurs to the exclusion of min when object of a verb or preposition, while min occurs to the exclusion of miin in preverbal subject position of a verb such as ḍarab 'hit' or kisar 'break' (or, more accurately, when the variable associated with min appears in preverbal subject position).

- (17) a. min/*miin ḍarab miin/*min.
 Who hit who?
 b. ma9a miin/*min raah Fariid al-suug?
 With who did F. go to the market?

Now, crucially, in multiple questions there is a contrast in the distribution of min and miin between pre and postverbal position. This is shown by the paradigm in (18). (18a) is excluded, regardless of whether we have min or miin in preverbal subject position since with the complementizer innu present we have an ECP violation. When the complementizer is omitted, however, min occurs to the exclusion of miin (18b). But when the inversion option is chosen for the subject, then it must appear as miin. Min is strongly rejected.

- (18) a. *min i9tigad innu min/miin kisar al-šubbaak?
 who thought that who broke the window?
 b. min i9tigad min/*miin kisar al-šubbaak?
 who thought who broke the window?

- c. *min* i9tigad innu kisar miin/*min al-šubbaak?
 who thought that broke who the window?

A similar contrast between pre and postverbal subject position for variables is illustrated by the pair of sentences in (19). In (19b), the S-structure associated with (19a), the variable bound by who is in preverbal position and hence we have min. In (19d), on the other hand, the object wušš has undergone wh-movement while the subject 'who' is in postverbal position, whence it must surface as miin.

- (19) a. *min*/*miin ištara wušš?
 who bought what?
 b. min_i [e_i ištara wušš]
 c. wušš ištara miin/*min?
 what did who buy? (i.e. Who bought what?)
 d. wušš_j [e_i ištara miin $_i$ e_j]

Space limitations do not permit us to go into a detailed discussion concerning the distribution of min and miin. We shall have to be content with the generalization that miin occurs when the variable associated with 'who' is lexically governed (i.e. when complement to a preposition or verb or in inverted subject position), while min appears when 'who' is not lexically governed (i.e. in preverbal subject position).⁴

The immediate importance of the min/miin distinction is that it provides a way of distinguishing the preverbal from postverbal source of the word. Capitalizing on this distinction, we ask what form the wh-operator will take when the subject of an innu clause is questioned. If we are correct in supposing that in BHA extraction is really from the postverbal position, then we predict that the extracted operator should appear as miin and not min. In fact, this prediction is true, as the contrast in (20) shows.

- (20) a. *miin*/*min Fariid gaal innu kisar al-beeḏa?
 who did F. say that broke the egg?
 b. *min*/*miin Fariid gaal kisar al-beeḏa?
 who did F. say broke the egg?

Interestingly, when the complementizer innu is omitted, the distribution of min and miin reverses. Only min is possible to the exclusion of miin (20b). The contrast between (20a) and (20b) thus indicates that when the wh-word can be extracted from preverbal subject position this option is strongly favored to the exclusion of extraction from postverbal position. Perhaps this can be explained by appeal to the notion that when two alternative derivations are available for the same D-structure, the shorter one (in this case the one without subject inversion) is selected.

To summarize the results of this section, it has been argued that the apparent that-trace violations possible in BHA in contrast

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to LA are to be explained by the hypothesis that extraction proceeds from postverbal subject position, an option that is available in BHA but not in LA due to the pro-drop parameter. In addition to explaining the dialect difference, this hypothesis also explains why the syntactic rule of wh-movement appears to behave differently from LF rules with respect to the accessibility of subject position of innu clauses. Finally, it was contended that the distribution of the question words min and miin independently support the postverbal source of subject extraction in innu clauses. We are thus able to conclude that preverbal subject position of that clauses is as inaccessible to long wh-extraction in Bani-Hassan Arabic as it is in Levantine Arabic or in English.

Further evidence in support of this position comes from situations in which, for whatever reason, subject inversion is blocked in an innu clause. We predict that in such cases wh-subject extraction should be impossible and recourse to a returning pronoun required. Cases of this sort are discussed in the next section.

4. Inflection and the null subject parameter

We have so far not made any specific proposal as to the exact nature of the null-subject parameter, i.e. with respect to the question of what exactly is the difference between the grammars of the BHA dialect on the one hand and the LA dialect on the other that yields the quite systematic differences we have observed? We shall not attempt an answer to this difficult question here. We can, however, discuss some additional evidence that indicates that the difference between the two grammars, whatever it may be, is situated in the verbal inflection exhibited by the clause.

The features of verbal inflection that play a central role with respect to core grammar appear to be two: whether the verb is tensed (and hence finite) or not (and hence infinitival) and whether or not the verb shows agreement with the subject for person.

- | | | | |
|------|----|-----------------|-------------|
| (21) | a. | +tense, +person | finite |
| | b. | -tense, +person | subjunctive |
| | c. | +tense, -person | participle |
| | d. | -tense, -person | infinitive |

Only the first three of the four possible forms in (21) are attested in modern colloquial Arabic dialects. Finite verbs exhibit independent selection for the categories of tense/aspect. They may thus appear in main clauses as well as in innu 'that' clauses complement to verbs such as gaal 'say', i9tigad 'think', etc. Subjunctive denotes verbs that exhibit no independent selection for tense/aspect, but nevertheless show full obligatory agreement with the subject. Since Arabic lacks the combination of features in (21d), we find the subjunctive form of the verb in many constructions that correspond to the infinitive in English; e.g. the appearance of controlled PRO requires the verb to appear in the subjunctive. Verbs such as ṭalab 'ask', haawal 'try' subcategorize for complement clauses with sub-

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conjunctive verbal inflection. Like many other modern colloquial Arabic dialects, BHA has developed a verbal form used to express certain aspectual distinctions that is traditionally called participial, because of its nominal origin (cf. Aoun 1979 for discussion). In BHA one of its uses is to express the present perfect aspect. Although the participial verbal form is clearly a verb, as shown by a variety of syntactic, morphological, and phonological tests (see Haddad 1983 for discussion), it continues to display one relic of its nominal origin, namely failure to inflect for person. The participle in BHA only shows distinctions in gender (masculine versus feminine) and number (singular versus plural).

The relevance of the participle to this paper is that when the verb appears in this form in BHA, the clause has a negative setting for the null-subject parameter, as shown by the paradigm in (22). In contrast to the perfect (+tense, +person) form of the verb, participial inflection does not permit subject pronouns to be omitted (22a), does not permit inversion of the subject after the verb (22b), and, as the theory developed in the preceding section predicts, participial inflection does not permit extraction of the subject of an innu clause under wh-movement without the insertion of a resumptive pronoun (22c).

- (22) a. Fariid gaal inn-ha mištarya al-libaas.
 *innu
 F. said that(-she) has bought the dress.
 (cf. Fariid gaal innu ištara al-libaas.
 F. said that bought the dress.)
- b.*Fariid gaal innu mištarya al-binit al-libaas.
 (cf. Fariid gaal innu ištara al-binit al-libaas.)
- c. wayy binit_i Fariid gaal inn-ha_i mištarya al-libaas.
 *innu
 which girl did F. say that(-she) has bought the dress?
 (cf. wayy binit_i Fariid gaal innu ištara al-libaas?)

These data indicate that the potential for inflection for person is a necessary condition for a clause to exhibit the null-subject phenomenology and thus tend to support Rizzi's (1982) view of the null-subject parameter as involving the possibility of assigning the feature pronominal to the Inflectional constituent of a clause. Pronouns, of course, are the only nominal categories that show person distinctions; indeed, distinction in person is an intrinsic feature of pronouns. Hence, one might reason that if a category fails to inflect for person, then it cannot accept the feature pronominal.⁵

Another paradigm making the same point appears in (23). In Arabic the verb 'to be' is not expressed in the present tense (23a). If verbal inflection for person is a necessary condition for a positive setting of the null-subject parameter, we predict that innu clauses with a predicate nominative construction in the present

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tense should exhibit a negative setting. This prediction is confirmed. Subject pronouns cannot be omitted (23b), inversion is impossible (23c), and a resumptive pronoun is required if the subject position of an innu clause is questioned.

(23) <u>Present Tense</u>	<u>Past Tense</u>
a. Widaad m9allma. W. is a teacher.	Widaad kaanat m9allma. W. was a teacher.
b. Fariid gaal inn-ha m9allma. *innu F. said that she (is) a teacher.	Fariid gaal inn-ha kaanat m9allma. innu F. said that(-she) was a teacher.
c.*F. gaal innu m9allma Widaad. F. said that a teacher (is) Widaad.	F. gaal innu kaanat Widaad m9allma. F. said that was Widaad a teacher.
d. wayy binit _i F. gaal inn-ha _i *innu m9allma? Which girl did F. say that she (is) a teacher?	wayy binit _i F. gaal innu kaanat innha _i m9allma? Which girl did F. say that was a teacher?

To conclude, we have shown that systematic variation among the properties of (1) can be found outside of the more extensively studied (from the generative viewpoint) Western European languages. At the very least this encourages the belief that the null-subject parameter is a genuine category of core grammar that is worthy of further study. The Arabic data indicate that the setting for this parameter can be a function of clause type rather than being a gross feature of the grammar as a whole. The data from the Bani-Hassan dialect show that the setting of this parameter can be directly affected by the nature of the verbal inflection of the clause. Further research should attempt to identify additional factors that influence the setting for this parameter in order to arrive at a truly explanatory account of its properties.

FOOTNOTES

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²Finite verbs exhibit obligatory agreement for person, number, and gender with the subject. The text examples have been cited with 3 singular feminine subjects, marked by the suffix -at on a perfect verb. Michal Allon Livnat (personal communication) informs me that

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while Somali has a positive setting for the null-subject parameter in main clauses, it has a negative setting in that-clauses. See Livnat (forthcoming) for discussion.

³(11e) is not ungrammatical. It is just not associated with the LF representation "There is no student who read the book"; rather, it is associated with a double negative interpretation "there is no student who did not read the book". Interestingly, the appearance of ma relative to the linear position of the quantified expression in S-structure carries over to at least two other constructions. Postposed subjects quantified by walla require the scope particle (*(ma) gara walla ṭaalib al-ktaab 'no student read the book') while a focused object appearing before the verb requires the particle to be dropped (lest a double negative reading be imposed): walla ktaab al-ṭaalib (*ma) gara "there is noobook the student read".

⁴The min/miin distinction also appears to be tied up with ergativity. With verbs such as maat 'die' and ingital 'be killed' there is a strong preference to express the subject with miin instead of min: miin/?min maat 'who died?', miin/?min ingital 'who got killed?'. These data indicate an S-structure in which the variable appears in postverbal position. The ergative verbs require much further study that I have been able to devote to them at this writing. (Thanks to Dominique Sportiche for suggesting the possible relevance of ergativity to the distribution of min and miin.)

⁵There is an interesting contrast between a wh-variable and a pro subject of participial clauses when the complementizer innu is omitted. The variable is possible, but the pro is not.

- i) wayy binit Fariid gaal mištarya al-libaas?
which girl did F. say has bought the dress?
- ii)*Fariid gaal mištarya al-libaas.
F. said has bought f. the dress.

Perhaps this contrast is to be explained by appeal to the notion that participial inflection is not "rich" enough to identify the pro subject; a variable would not suffer the same fate since it has overt identification--its antecedent.

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