

Verb Agreement in Standard Arabic: An Analysis in the Minimality Program

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Abstract

This paper, which studies verb agreement in Standard Arabic, presents two hypotheses that deal with sentences involving a preverbal noun: The Topicalization Hypothesis and the Subject Hypothesis. The former claims that the preverbal nominal in a noun-first sentence is a topic; the latter claims that it is a subject. The paper shows that the Subject Hypothesis is superior to the Topicalization hypothesis. Two other Hypotheses concerning the agreement between the verb and the subject in a VSO order have been proposed: the Singular Verb Analysis and the Zero Agreement Analysis. Using the Checking Theory as a frame of reference, I argue that the Zero Agreement Analysis is more adequate in accounting for the agreement anomaly in Standard Arabic. Other analyses (i.e. Hamou 1989, Mohammad 1990, Al-Seghayar 2002, Mahfoudhi 2002) are shown to be inadequate in handling the agreement asymmetry in Standard Arabic.

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