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The Negative Polarity Item *ʕumur* in Najdi Arabic

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Abstract
This research investigates the negative polarity item (NPI) *ʕumur* in Najdi Arabic, one spoken variety of Arabic. It indicates that this NPI is a head instantiating its own maximal projection, named as AspP (a shorthand for Aspectual Phrase). Some pieces of empirical evidence have been furnished to support this contention, namely distributional properties and pronominal clitics. It turns out that this NPI is not an adverb since it does not share the same distributional properties with other adverbs. Unlike adverbs, this NPI is immobile and licensed only in a position to the right of the negative particle *ma* whose existence is crucial for *ʕumur*. Additionally, the study shows that the pronominal clitic appearing on *ʕumur* is a consequence of valuing its uninterpretable φ-features, in most cases, by the interpretable features of the subject. The study demonstrates that AspP is atop TP. Hence, the subject based generated in the Spec of little *vP* moves first to the Spec of TP, satisfying the EPP on T, then, if topicalized, to the Spec of AspP headed by *ʕumur*. Furthermore, the study finds out that the Negation Phrase (NegP) is positioned atop AspP. Thus, the strict adjacency maintained between *ʕumur* and *ma* follows.

Key words: Negative polarity item; *ʕumur*; Najdi Arabic; AspP; Adverbial

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INTRODUCTION
Many research papers and even projects have persistently addressed negation and its accompanying properties. This interest is mainly ascribed to the syntactic significance negation has maintained since the first days of the generative theory (Zanuttini, 1991, 1997; Haegeman, 1995; Laka, 2013). For instance, one significance of negation comes directly from the fact that negation behaves differently with various categories, the issue which has been repeatedly taken as one evidence (or, more directly, a diagnostic) for classifying categories based on their interaction with negation (Radford, 1997). Negation being diagnostic is motivated by the assumption that the categories belonging to the same class exhibit a similar fashion with respect to negation (i.e., position, movement, etc.). Additionally, due to the fact that negative items and heads can be located in different positions in one sentence, this sentential variance has been also exploited to pin down the actual hierarchal structure of projections and their base generation (cf. Baltin & Collins, 2008). In a related vein, negation has several typological benefits for the syntactic theory and typology alike. Negation is by and large one decisive factor in classifying world languages and decide how languages are similar and different. It comes no surprise that the languages belonging to the same family should have, to a large extent, something common in terms of negation either in scope-related aspects or in base generation of negative particles and items (Dahl, 1979; Miestamo, 2005, 2007; Lindblom, 2014).

As a result of this intensive investigation of negation and its related aspects in cross-linguistic syntax, in-depth appreciation of negation in general and negative items in particular have been made available. One major consequence is that negation has robust interaction and relation with certain items and elements. Some words which had tentatively been affiliated with certain syntactic categories without concrete evidence have been found to be negative items whose behavior is better captured if

paired up with negation (De Swart, 1998; Drenhaus et al., 2005; Sells, 2006; Hoeksema, 2012). Important for the purposes of the current study are certain negative items called 'Negative Polarity Items' (henceforth, NPIs) (to be distinguished from Negative Concord Items (NCIs) (see, Lee, 1996; Benmamoun, 1996; Van Rooy, 2003).

NPIs are defined as elements that can only occur in negative contexts but cannot be used to provide negative fragment answers on their own (see, Giannakidou, 1998, 2000; Zeijlstra, 2004, 2008, 2010; Alsarayreh, 2012 for precise natures of such items and their unique behaviour and distribution).[1] Against this background, the current research aims at investigating one NPI used in Najdi Arabic (henceforth, NA), namely *ʕumur* in terms of its syntactic position with respect to the negation phrase.[2] It analyses specifically how this NPI is licensed in the grammar of NA, and hence contribution to the current research on negative items and how they are licensed within the general boundaries of sentences.

The next discussion of organised as follows. Section 2 provides the basic facts of this NPI in NA. It indicates that (ma + *ʕumur*) forms a contiguous string where nothing can intervene in between. Additionally, it shows that the movement of the main verb to the left of the contiguous string (ma + *ʕumur*) is prohibited. Section 3 investigates this NPI and the related observations raised in Section 2. It argues that unlike other varieties in Arabic, the only licensing way available in NA for *ʕumur* is via a Spec-head configuration. Most importantly, this section finds out that *ʕumur* in NA is a zero-level element heading its own projection positioned above the little *vP* projection and below TP. Section 4 includes the conclusions of the research.

1. DISTRIBUTIONAL FACTS OF *ʕUMUR* AND CORRELATION WITH NEGATION

On the basis of the surveyed NA data, it is quite clear that *ʕumur*, like other NPIs which are cross-linguistically attested, cannot appear in the absence of the negation particle, *ma*. Put differently, to have *ʕumur* in a sentence, the negative particle *ma* must be there, as well.[3] Consider the following sentences:

1) a. Fahd ma ʕmur-uh yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
"Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai."

b. *Fahd ʕmur-uh yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
Intended meaning: 'Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai.'

The presence of the negation particle *ma* is crucial for the existence of *ʕumur* (as in 1a), otherwise the sentence is rendered ungrammatical (as in 1b). Following this, we can state that *ʕumur* is parasitic on the negative particle *ma* which is, in turn, of paramount importance for licensing *ʕumur*. Additionally, it should be stressed that nothing can intervene between *ʕumur* and the negation particle *ma*. Consider the following sentences in (2):

2) a.*ma Fahd ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
NEG Fahd NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
Intended meaning: 'Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai.'

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

c. * Fahd ma l-Dubai ʕmur-uh yru:ḥ.
Fahd NEG to-Dubai NPI-3SM go.PRES
Intended meaning: "Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai."

In (2a), the sentence is ungrammatical because the subject *Fahd* intervenes between the negation particle *ma* and the NPI *ʕumur*. Both (2b) and (2c) are ungrammatical because the verb *yru:ḥ* "go" and the adjunct *lDubai* "to Dubai", respectively, disrupts the adjacency requirement maintained between the negation particle and *ʕumur*. Hence, a generalization to make is that *ma* and *ʕumur* must be adjacent, providing that the latter follows the former. If *ma* follows *ʕumur*, the resulting sentence is ungrammatical, regardless of the number of intervening constituents.

3) a. *Fahd ʕmur-uh ma yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NPI- 3SM NEG go.PRES to-Dubai
Intended meaning: 'Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai.'

b.*Fahd ʕmur-uh yru:ḥ ma l-Dubai.
Fahd NPI- 3SM go.PRES NEG to-Dubai
Intended meaning: "Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai."

c. *Fahd ʕmur-uh yru:ḥ l-Dubai ma.
Fahd NPI- 3SM go.PRES to-Dubai NEG
Intended meaning: "Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai."

d. *ʕmur-uh Fahd yru:ḥ l-Dubai ma.
Fahd NPI- 3SM NEG go.PRES to-Dubai
Intended meaning: "Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

On the other hand, some elements can precede the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*) without incurring any

[1] NCIs are defined as elements that can only occur in negative contexts and, unlike NCIs can be to provide negative fragment answers on their own (Giannakidou, 1998, 2000)

[2] *ʕumur* is a negative item equal the English adverb *never*. It *is used b*y the speaker to stress that the subject has never done the given action. It is thus construed as an effort-saving element (in the sense of the Relevance Theory) implying that the speaker is certain of his/her claim about the subject and thus there is no need on the part of the hearer to argue (cf. Taha et al., 2014; Al-Jarrah et al., 2015).

[3] It should be made clear that the current research draws all conclusions about *ʕumur* at the level of declarative sentences. Thus, the generalizations made herein do not necessarily hold true of the case about *ʕumur* at the level of questions.

violations that render the whole sentence ungrammatical. Consider the following examples in (4).

4) a. Fahd ma ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
"Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai."

b. l-Dubai ma ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ Fahd.
to-Dubai NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES Fahd
"To Dubai, Fahd has never gone."

As can be seen clearly from examples in (4), the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*) can be preceded by the subject *Fahd* (as in 4b) or by an adjunct *lDubai* 'to Dubai' (as in 4b). It can even be preceded by both of them, providing that the subject comes second:

5) a. l-Dubai Fahd ma ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ
to-Dubai Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES
"To Dubai Fahd, he has never gone."

b. *Fahd l-Dubai ma ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ
Fahd to-Dubai NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES
"To Dubai Fahd, he has never gone."

By the same token, the direct object can precede the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*), as in sentence (6).

6) ʔal-bint Fahd ma ʕumur-uh yiʃoof-ha
DEF-girl Fahd NEG NPI-3MS see.PRES-3FS
"The girl, Fahd has never seen her."

As clear from examples (4-6), the fronted elements are read as topics, a point we will return to later. A further characteristic of *ʕumur* is that it should appear with a pronominal suffix of the subject. Without this pronominal clitic on *ʕumur*, the whole sentence is yielded ungrammatical, as in (7) below.

7) Fahd ma ʕumur-*(uh) yru:ḥ l-Dubai
Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
"Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

It should be highlighted that this clitic must show the same person, number, and gender features (φ –features) of those of the subject. Otherwise, the sentence is ungrammatical.

8) *Fahd ma ʕumur-ha yiʃoof ʔal-bint
Fahd NEG NPI-3FM see.PRES DEF-girl
Intended meaning: "Fahd has never seen the girl."

Sentence (8) is ungrammatical because the pronominal clitic suffixed to *ʕumur* has the same person, number, and gender features of those of the object *ʔalbinit* 'the girl' rather than the subject *Fahd,* hence the sentence ungrammaticality. Thus, a correlation between the subject and *ʕumur* must obtain.

The last issue to raise is that the main verb must be located in a position to the right of *ʕumur*:

9) a. *Fahd yru:ḥ ma ʕumur-uh l-Dubai
Fahd go.PRES NEG NPI-3SM to-Dubai
"Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

b. *yru:ḥ Fahd ma ʕumur-uh l-Dubai
go.PRES Fahd NEG NPI-3SM to-Dubai
"Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

c. *yru:ḥ ma ʕumur-uh Fahd l-Dubai
go.PRES NEG NPI-3SM Fahd to-Dubai
"Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

In (9a), the main verb *yru:ḥ* 'go' precedes the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*) along with the subject *Fahd* which in turn precedes the verb *yru:ḥ* 'go', hence the sentence ungrammaticality. The same scenario holds true for (9b) except for the fact that the subject *Fahd* follows the verb *yru:ḥ* 'go' which both precede the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*); whence the sentence ungrammaticality, as well. In (9c) the verb *yru:ḥ* 'go' alone precedes the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*); the resulting sentence is ungrammatical, nonetheless.

On the basis of these observations, it can be adduced that the movement of the main verb to the left of the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*) is prohibited. In the next section, we are going to shed light on this prohibition alongside the other observations explained (such as the strict adjacency between *ma* and *ʕumur*) within the current syntactic theory (Chomsky, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2005).[4]

2. SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF *ʕUMUR*

Several studies have investigated this NPI in Arabic dialects. Most recently is the study of Alqassas (2015) which argued, following Benmamoun (1997) that this NPI can be licensed in the sentence via two mechanisms: the Specifier-Head and the c-command. Consider the following examples taken from Jordanian Arabic (Alqassas, 2015, p.112)

10) a. ma-zaar-Iš ʕʊmr-o el-batra.
NEG-visit.PERF.3ms-NEG NPI-ever-him DEF-Petra
"He never visited Petra."

b. ʕʊmr-o maa zaar el-batra.
NPI-ever-him NEG visit.PERF.3ms DEF-Petra
"He has never visited Petra."

In (10a) *ʕumur* is licensed in the sentence by the c-command mechanism since *ʕumur* is situated within the c-commanding domain of the negation that is headed by the negative particle *ma*. In (10b) *ʕumur* is assumed

[4] *ʕumur* is supposedly used by the speaker in order to consolidate his/her assertion about the subject. Thus, this NPI can be assumed to have evidentiality-related function in the sentence where it shows up. Once used in one sentence, the speaker asserts that he/she is certain of his/her statement about the subject. Following this, we can suggest that this item entails a higher level of evidentiality (see, e.g., Dendale and Tasmowski 2001 Alhaisoni *et al* 2012, Aikhenvald 2014, and Alshamari 2015 for further information about evidentiality).

to be located in the specifier position of the negation phrase that is headed by the negative particle *ma*. Hence, the licensing mechanism is carried out via the local Spec-head configuration. What can basically be understood from sentence (10) is the observation that when *ʕumur* shows up in a position to the left of the negative particle *ma* heading the negation phrase, *ʕumur* is said to be licensed via the local Spec-head configuration. On the other hand, when *ʕumur* appears to right of the negative particle *ma* heading the negation phrase, *ʕumur* is said to be licensed via the c-command mechanism. However, this line of reasoning cannot be extended to NA data. Firstly, under no means can *ʕumur* appear to the left of the negative particle *ma* in NA (at least at the level of declarative sentences).

11) *Fahd ʕumur-uh ma yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NPI-3SM NEG go.PRES to-Dubai
Intended meaning: "Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

Sentence (11) remains ungrammatical even if the putative string (*ʕumur*+ ma) initiates it.

12) *ʕumur-uh ma Fahd yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
NPI-3SM NEG Fahd go.PRES to-Dubai
Intended meaning: "Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

Ungrammaticality of both sentences in (11) and (12) entails that *ʕumur* cannot be licensed via a spec-head configuration either in the lower NegP or the upper NegP, if we grant that negation can be housed in two distinct projection in the Arabic sentence (cf. Lucas, 2010; Benmamoun et al., 2013; Soltan, 2014; Alqassas, 2015). Additionally, the strict adjacency maintained between the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*) implies strongly that the co-commanding mechanism is what NA opts for, given that *ʕumur* must follow the negative particle *ma*. Although it is not a concrete indication for c-commanding, this strict linear relation between the elements of the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*) emphasises the c-commanding relation (cf. Kayne, 1994; Rohrbacher, 1994; Johnson, 1997).

However, one question must be raised, namely why the c-commanding relation between the elements of the contiguous string (*ma* + *ʕumur*) must be strict. As clearly evident from (10a), it is not obligatory in Jordanian Arabic to have this type of c-commanding relation, i.e., the string (*ma* + *ʕumur*) must not be in strict adjacency since some element can intervene between them (such as the verb *zaar* "visited").

Before asking this question, we must handle the categorial status of *ʕumur*. Following related literature this item is counted as an adverbial NPI which is base-generated in some specifier position. The following quotation is taken from Alqassas (2015, p.111)

> I specifically show how these negatives interact with **the adverbial NPI ʕʊmr "ever"** and the adverbial NCI baʕd "yet" resulting in the contrasts reported in previous sections. I, then, extend this analysis to capture the contrasts resulting from the co-occurrence of the two negatives, the NPI ʕʊmr, the NCI baʕd and the NCI wala-ħada. (Emphasis is mine).

However, this treatment should not be passed unchallenged as far as NA is concerned. First and foremost, *ʕumur* exhibits distinct features which are not shared by other adverbials. Important for the purposes of the current research are two interrelated notions: distribution and pronominal suffix.

2.1 Distribution

Depending on NA data, *ʕumur* does not share the same distributional properties with other adverbials. For instance, the adverbial *ʔams* "yesterday".

13) a. ʔams lageet ʔal-ridʒaal ʕind ʔal-maxzan.
Yesterday found.1S DEF-man next to DEF-store
"Yesterday, I found the man next to the store."

b. lageet ʔams ʔal-ridʒaal ʕind ʔal-maxzan.
found.1S Yesterday DEF-man next to DEF-store
"Yesterday, I found the man next to the store."

c. lageet ʔal-ridʒaal ʔams ʕind ʔal-maxzan.
found.1S DEF-man yesterday next to DEF-store
"I found the man next to the store yesterday."

d. lageet ʔal-ridʒaal ʕind ʔal-maxzan ʔams.
found.1S DEF-man next to DEF-store yesterday
"Yesterday, I found the man next to the store."

As clear from examples in (13), the adverb *ʔams* 'yesterday' enjoys a free distribution in the sentence where it shows up. In (13a) it initiates the sentence, functioning as a topic of the sentence. In (13b), it is preceded by the main verb *lageet* 'found'. In (13c), it appears in a position to the right of the object, while it ends the sentence in (13d). Such a free distribution of this adverbial can be schematically represented as follows:

14) a. *ʔams* V Subject PP.
b. V *ʔams* Subject PP.
c. V Subject *ʔams* PP.
d. V Subject PP *ʔams*.

Additionally, such free distribution can be exhibited with reference to the locative adverbial such as *ʕind ʔal-maxzan* "next to the store". Consider the following examples in (14):

15) a. ʕind ʔal-maxzan lageet ʔal-ridʒaal ʔams.
next to DEF-store found.1S DEF-man yesterday
"Next to the store, I found the man yesterday."

b. lageet ʕind ʔal-maxzan ʔal-ridʒaal ʔams.
found.1S next to DEF-store DEF-man yesterday
"Yesterday, I found the man next to the store."

c. lageet ʔal-ridʒaal ʕind ʔal-maxzan ʔams.
found.1S DEF-man next to DEF-store yesterday
'I found the man next to the store yesterday.'

d. lageet ʔal-ridʒaal ʕind ʕind ʔal-maxzan.
found.1S DEF-man next to DEF-store yesterday
'Yesterday, I found the man next to the store.'

The locative adverbial *ʕind ʔal-maxzan* 'next to the store' enjoys free distribution in the sentence where it appears. In (15a) it initiates the sentence as a topic of the sentence. In (15b), it is preceded by the main verb *lageet* 'found'. In (15c), it occurs in a position to the right of the object, while it ends the sentence in (15d). Such a free distribution of this adverbial can be schematically represented as follows:

16) a. ʕind ʔal-maxzan V Subject PP.
b. V *ʕind ʔal-maxzan* Subject PP.
c. V Subject *ʕind ʔal-maxzan* PP.
d. V Subject PP *ʕind ʔal-maxzan*.

This property (free distribution) is a general hallmark of the adverbs in NA (and presumably all Arabic dialects). However, the NPI *ʕumur* does not share the adverbs in NA of being in a free distribution. As indicted above, the NPI *ʕumur* must follow the Neg particle *ma*.

17) a. yru:ḥ ma ʕumur-uh Fahd l-Dubai.
go.PRES NEG NPI-3SM Fahd to-Dubai
"Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

b. *yru:ḥ ma Fahd ʕumur-uh l-Dubai.
go.PRES NEG Fahd NPI-3SM to-Dubai
Intended meaning: "Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

c. *yru:ḥ ma Fahd l-Dubai ʕumur-uh.
go.PRES NEG Fahd to-Dubai NPI-3SM
Intended meaning: "Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

d. * **ʕumur-uh** yru:ḥ ma Fahd l-Dubai.
NPI-3SM go.PRES NEG Fahd to-Dubai
Intended meaning: "Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

Unlike other adverbs, *ʕumur* does not enjoy a free distribution in the sentence where it appears. In addition, the contiguous string (ma + *ʕumur*) cannot appear in any place. It should be positioned to the left of main verb (and the non-topicalized subject).

18) a. Fahd **ma** ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
"Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

b. ***ma** ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ Fahd l-Dubai.
NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES Fahd to-Dubai
'Fahd has never gone to Dubai.'

c. *yru:ḥ Fahd **ma** ʕumur-uh l-Dubai.
go.PRES Fahd NEG NPI-3SM to-Dubai
"Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

d. *yru:ḥ Fahd l-Dubai **ma** ʕumur-uh.
go.PRES Fahd to-Dubai NEG NPI-3SM
"Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

What this basically implies is that *ʕumur* is generated in a specific position within the main spine of the sentence. It should be preceded by negation but followed by the main verb.

2.2 Pronominal Suffixes

The second property by which *ʕumur* differs from other adverbials is the presence of pronominal suffix. Unlike other adverbials, *ʕumur* must have a pronominal suffix of the subject. It should be stressed that what is significant is not the idea that *ʕumur* must have a pronominal suffix of the subject but rather being obligatorily attached to such a suffix in the first place. Consider the following examples in (19):

19) a. *ʔams-uh laga Fahd ʔal-ridʒaal ʕind ʔal-maxzan.
Yesterday-3SM found.3SM Fahd DEF-man next to DEF-store
"Yesterday, Fahd found the man next to the store."

b. *laga ʔams-uh Fahd ʔal-ridʒaal ʕind ʔal-maxzan.
found.3SM Yesterday-3SM Fahd DEF-man next to DEF-store
"Yesterday, Fahd found the man next to the store."

c. *laga Fahd ʔams-uh ʔal-ridʒaal ʕind ʒal-maxzan.
found.3SM Fahd Yesterday-3SM DEF-man next to DEF-store
"Yesterday, Fahd found the man next to the store."

d. *laga Fahd ʔal-ridʒaal ʕind ʔal-maxzan ʔ ams-uh.
found.3SM Fahd DEF-man next to DEF-store yesterday-3SM
"Yesterday, Fahd found the man next to the store."

All examples in (19) are ungrammatical because the adverbial *ʔams*, unlike *ʕumur,* has a pronominal suffix of the subject, regardless of the syntactic position it occupies in composition with the subject. The same observation is extended to other adverbials.

2.3 Discussion

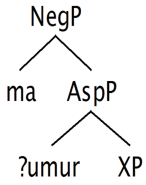
According to the discussion in the last subsections (that *ʕumur* does not share other adverbials with the same distribution and the fact that it must have a pronominal suffix of the subject, with the subject either follows or precede it), we are in position to assume that this NPI is base-generated in one specific position in the tree. This position must be to the right of the Negation Phrase housing the negative particle *ma*. Additionally, due to the facts of pronominal suffixation, we argue that this NPI is a head instantiating its own projection. Many research papers have assumed that pronominal suffixation is a property of heads other than the non-head elements (cf. Aoun et al., 2001; McCloskey, 2002; Boeckx, 2003; Alexopoulou & Keller, 2007). Following this line of thought, *ʕumur* is a head particle housed in a dedicated projection which is located below the NegP headed by the particle *ma*. Let name this head as an Aspectual projection (AspP) since it is headed by an NPI donating the perfect aspect. As clear from examples above, this NPI renders the sentence where

it shows up aspectual. Consider sentence (1) which is repeated below for convenience in (20):

20) Fahd ma ʕmur-uh yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
"Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai."

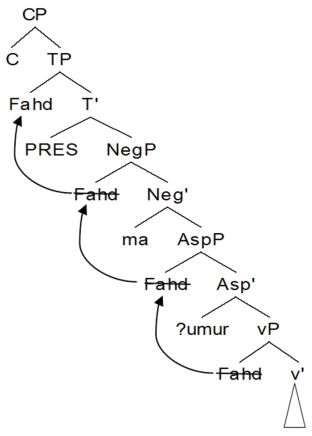
In order to license AspP headed by *ʕumur*, it should be c-commanded by NegP. This amounts to saying that the only way possible to contain *ʕumur* in the sentence is to precede it by a NegP whose presence makes the presence of AspP licit. Consider the following schematic representation in (21).

21)



Crucial for the purposes of our assumption is that *ʕumur*, as a head, has a set of uninterpretable φ-features (gender, number, and person) which must be valued and deleted before the sentence convergence at LF (cf. Chomsky, 1995). One way of doing so is via the upwards movement of the subject to the Spec of AspP. What this might mean is that the subject lands in the Spec of AspP en route to the Spec of TP. Following this proposal, once the subject resides in the Spec of AspP, it values the uninterpretable φ-features of *ʕumur*. As a result of this valuation, a pronominal clitic of the subject appears on *ʕumur*. Afterwards, the subject leaves its position in the Spec of AspP, leaving behind a copy of its own, to the Spec of NegP headed by *ma*. Afterwards, the subject moves to the Spec of TP satisfying the EPP on T. In light of this proposal, the schematically presentation of the sentence (20) is shown in (22).[5]

22)



As clear from (22), once the subject *Fahd* moves upwards to the Spec of AspP headed by *ʕumur*, it values the uninterpretable φ-features of *ʕumur* as 3rdSM, resulting in the subject clitic *–uh* on it. However, what rules out this proposal is that the main verb is inflected form tense, a state of affairs that indicates that the main verb is adjoined to T. For instance, the main y*ru:ḥ* 'go' in sentence (20) is in present tense, while in sentence (23) is in past:

23) Fahd ma ʕmur-uh ra:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PAST to-Dubai
"Fahd, he had never gone to Dubai."

Thus, the verb should be in T. This assumption is paired with the fact that the verb in NA and in other Arabic dialects has rich inflection. Following this proposal, the verb movement to T must be blocked by the existence of other maximal projections between the main verb and Tº, namely NegP and AspP. So, the verb must move first to AspP to adjoin the head of this phrase, then moves to head to the NegP, and finally to the head of TP. However, verb movement cannot be pursued this way due to the fact that the head of AspP is filled by *ʕumur*. As a result, the verb y*ru:ḥ* must remain adjoined to the head of little vP, contrary to fact. The verb is inflected for tense, entailing its position in T. Thus, the immediate question to ask is how the fact related to *ʕumur* can be accommodated. In relation to this, the main key to this question is the observation that in cases where the subject initiates the sentence where the contiguous string (ma + *ʕumur*) shows up must be read as a topicalized item. Consider the following examples in (4) repeated below:

24) a. Fahd ma ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
"Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai."

w

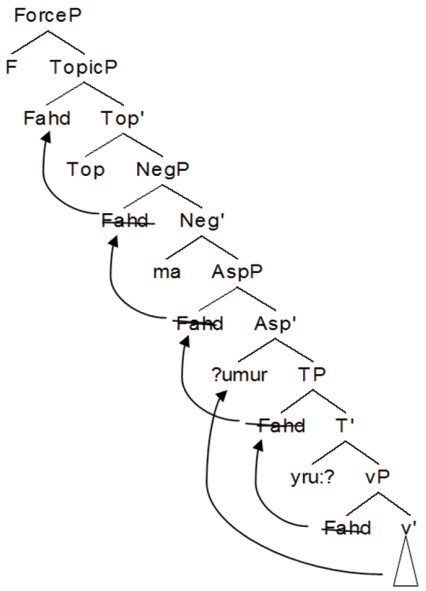
b. l-Dubai ma ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ Fahd.
to-Dubai NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES Fahd
"To Dubai, Fahd has never gone."

As (24a) shows, *Fahd* functions as a topic about which the sentence is about. In (24b), the PP *lDubai* 'to Dubai' functions as a topic. Following Rizzi (1997)'s hypothesis on Split CP, we assume that both NegP headed by *ma* and AspP headed by *ʕumur* are positioned atop TP but below the Topic Phrase. Thus, the subject being topicalized must first dwell in Spec of AspP headed by *ʕumur*, then to Spec of NegP headed by ma, then to Spec of Topic Phrase. Thus, sentence (20) repeated below has the schematic representation in (26) instead that of (22):

25) Fahd ma ʕumur-uh yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
Fahd NEG NPI-3SM go.PRES to-Dubai
"Fahd, he has never gone to Dubai."

26)

[5] The only relevant details are represented in the tree.



NegP and AspP are located above T°; otherwise the movement of the main verb to T must be prevented. This assumption that NegP (as well as AspP) is positioned above TP is strongly supported by cases where the subject remains *in situ* such as (27). In this sentence, the subject *Fahd* remains in Spec of TP while the main verb *yru:ḥ* shows up to its right, i.e., adjoined to T.

27) ma ʕumur-uh Fahd yru:ḥ l-Dubai.
NEG NPI-3SM Fahd go.PRES to-Dubai
"Fahd has never gone to Dubai."

The negation particle *ma* in turn initiates the sentence, appearing to the left of the moved verb *yru:h*.[6]

CONCLUSION

This current research investigates the NPI *ʕumur* in NA. It concludes that this NPI is a head instantiating its own projection labelled as AspP, which is positioned atop TP but below NegP which is a must to get this projection licensed properly. One empirical evidence for this licensing condition is that *ʕumur* must be preceded by the negative particle *ma* in declarative clauses. Facts drawn by *ʕumur*'s distributional characteristics and pronominal suffixation are taken as evidence for its headedness status. *ʕumur* is not an adverb since it does not maintain the same distributional properties of other adverbs. For instance, unlike adverbs, *ʕumur* is assumed to be immovable. Additionally, the study shows that the pronominal clitic appearing on *ʕumur* is a consequence of valuing its uninterpretable φ-features by the interpretable features of the subject.

[6] However, the reason why ʕumur is still attached a pronominal suffix of the subject, while the subject is in Spec TP needs further investigation.

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