

On complex adjectival phrases in Standard Arabic

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In this paper, we present three puzzling observations concerning a class of adjectival constructions in Standard Arabic: (i) pleonastic definiteness, where an instance of definite morphology is semantically transparent, (ii) required resumption, where the absence of a resumptive pronoun leads to deviance, and (iii) case and agreement misalignment, where the domain for structural case assignment does not coincide with that for agreement marking. We then propose a resolution for these puzzles. Our proposal takes seriously the idea that semantics is purely interpretive, i.e. that the truth condition of the sentence is to be computed compositionally from its syntactic structure. The proposal includes two generalizations about case and agreement which turn out to concur to a large degree with widely accepted views on syntactic relations concerning these phenomena. The generalizations are (i) that arguments of 2-place predicates receive Accusative case and arguments of one-place predicates receive Nominative case, and (ii) that sentential nodes are barriers for agreement. Another conclusion of our proposal is that indices on pronouns can undergo movement which results in predicate abstraction and which exhibit properties of \bar{A} -movement.

Keywords: adjectives, case, resumption, agreement, definiteness

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