

Subject Wh-Movement in Najrani Arabic and Minimalism

Abdul-Hafeed Ali Fakih (Corresponding author)

Department of English, Ibb University, Yemen

Department of English, Najran University, Saudi Arabia

Tel: 966-550-186-509 E-mail: a.hafeed1@gmail.com

Received: August 3, 2014 Accepted: August 12, 2014 Published: October 23, 2014

doi:10.5296/ijl.v6i5.6059 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v6i5.6059>

Abstract

In this study I aim to explore the syntactic behavior of subject wh-movement in Najrani Arabic and it attempts to provide a unified account of the following questions:

1. Does Najrani Arabic allow the subject wh-phrase to undergo syntactic movement from [Spec, VP] to [Spec, IP] and then to [Spec, CP] at PF?
2. Is *illi* 'that' a complementizer or a relative pronoun?
3. Can the subject wh-phrase be accounted for via Focus movement? Does Najrani Arabic allow the subject-wh to move overtly to [Spec, FocusP] for feature checking?

I attempt to explore whether it is possible for the subject-wh to move overtly from [Spec, VP] to [Spec, IP] and then to [Spec, CP] at PF. This analysis postulates that *illi* ('that') is viewed as a complementizer which heads the head C position of CP. However, this line of argument is observed to be unsystematic because the complementizer *illi* 'that' constitutes an island constraint to subject wh-movement when compared to Focus movement analysis presented as an alternative. Furthermore, following Focus movement analysis in Rizzi (1997, 2001) and Gad (2011), it is proposed in the alternative analysis that *illi* is treated as a relative pronoun and heads the Focus projection. The subject-wh moves overtly to [Spec, Focus] for feature checking considerations. The movement is triggered by the strong Focus feature on the head *illi* which occupies the FocusP projection; this movement takes place before Spell-Out. Hence, it is the alternative analysis that offers a neatly unified account of *illi*-questions in Najrani Arabic.

Keywords: Subject-wh, *illi*-questions, Focus movement, strong Focus feature, FocusP.

1. Introduction

Since Najrani Arabic descended from classical Arabic, it still has a rich agreement inflection and shares many common features with Standard Arabic; *wh*-phrase movement is no exception. Najrani Arabic is spoken in the Najran Region which is located in the south western part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In this study I have focused on Najrani Arabic whose syntax of subject *wh*-movement has fascinated me sufficiently to investigate and examine it with a view to providing a unified treatment based on Focus movement analysis advocated in Rizzi (1997, 2001) and Gad (2011). The topic of the syntax of subject *wh*-movement in Najrani Arabic is selected for study for the following reasons: (i) the morpho-syntax of subject *wh*-movement has recently become a focus of considerable discussion in linguistics. (ii) It has not been examined in detail how subject *wh*-phrases are derived and represented syntactically in relation to the clause structure of Najrani Arabic, how subject *wh*-phrase movement is accounted for and what motivates the overt movement in the syntax. (iii) There is a need to provide a satisfactorily unified account of the treatment of subject *wh*-questions in Najrani Arabic in a modern framework, given the recent challenges in linguistic theory posed by Minimalism and Focus movement analysis.

This study has been organized into five sections: Section 1 is an introduction; Section 2 surveys the views of English syntacticians on the treatment of *wh*-movement in English and other languages and outlines the different analyses presented by Arab linguists on Arabic *wh*-movement; Section 3 introduces *wh*-movement in minimalism; Section 4 provides a detailed analysis of subject *wh*-phrase extraction from intransitive and transitive constructions in Najrani Arabic and explores the possibility of moving the subject-*wh* from the VP-internal position to [Spec, IP] and then to [Spec, CP] at PF. However, this analysis has shown to be unsystematic because it fails to presents a unified analysis on the subject under discussion. I argue that in Najrani Arabic *wh*-extraction from subject position is blocked from a derived subject DP in Spec-TP for the reason that TP is a phase. The analysis points out that the assumption that *illi* 'that' as a complementizer does not work properly in subject *wh*-questions in Najrani Arabic because it constitutes an island constraint to subject *wh*-movement. Therefore, an alternative approach is offered based on Focus movement analysis advocated in Rizzi (1997, 2001) and Gad (2011); it presents a satisfactorily unified account of subject *wh*-movement in Najrani Arabic in a systematic manner. Finally, Section 5 summarizes the findings of the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Wh-Movement in English and Other Languages*

In his *Syntactic Structures* (1957) Chomsky posits two transformational rules (i.e. optional and obligatory rules) to derive interrogatives in English. Moreover, he accounts for *wh*-questions by setting up a new optional transformation *T_w*; within *T_w* he further sets up two steps. He points out that there should be an ordering of rules for these transformations to apply correctly, such as *T_w* must apply first to strings to which *T_q* has already been applied. Moreover, Bach (1971) assumes a universal rule of Question-word movement. He observes that *wh*-phrase movement is always to the left (never to the right) and should be unbounded;

as the leftward movement rules are also seen to be unbounded. Given this, Culicover (1976) used a transformation which moved such *wh*-words to the beginning of the sentence position and called it Fronting.

As far as the rule of *wh*-movement is concerned, Chomsky (1977) points out that when a *wh*-phrase moves, it leaves a trace behind. Chomsky asserts that "*wh*-movement leaves a non-terminal trace. That is, the position from which the *wh*-phrase moved remains in the derived constituent structure with its index, identical to the index of the *wh*-phrase, now in COMP" (p.82). Given the Extended Standard Theory, Chomsky (1980:3) points out that these rules are "restrictive to the single rule: Move α , where α is a category". Furthermore, in his (1981) Government and Binding (GB) theory, Chomsky further discusses *wh*-movement and presents a formal analysis of *wh*-movement. He explores how the *wh*-phrase moves what it leaves behind after movement takes place, for example *wh*-trace as well as Case-assignment of *wh*-phrase. Moreover, Chomsky (1981) stresses that the trace (variable), left behind after movement, is co-indexed with the operator '*wh*-word' which binds it.

On the other hand, what makes Chomsky's *Barriers* (1986a) different from other approaches is that Chomsky incorporates the non-lexical elements C[omplementizer] and I[nflection] into the X-bar system of maximal projections. It is also assumed in the *Barriers* framework that the SPEC[ifier] of the C[omplementizer] P[hrase] is equivalent to S' in other systems: the SPEC of CP is taken to be a position to which a *wh*-element can move; and the SPEC of the inflection phrase, IP, (here, IP is equivalent to S) is the position for a subject NP. Let us look at the following example to illustrate the point:

1. Who can John see?

The *Barriers* framework allows two types of movement in (1): substitution and adjunction. In case of substitution, a phrasal category is allowed to move to the Spec of CP and a head (being X^0) to move to another head position. In case of adjunction, movement is possible only to a maximal projection which should not be an argument. Given this, the simple sentence in (1) demonstrates two types of movement: the first one involves movement of the inflectional element *can* to the head C position, and the second one moves the question phrase *who* to Spec position of CP, since the question phrase is a maximal projection, thus yielding the following derivations in (2).

2a. $CP_{[SPEC]} C IP_{[John]} can VP_{[see who]]]$

b. $CP_{[Who_j]} can IP_{[John]} VP_{[e_i]} VP_{[see e_j]]]$

Hence, Chomsky's (1986a) incorporation of these functional elements has been considered a step forward in the syntactic analysis of question constructions.

Moreover, Radford (1981) indicates that the existing grammar faces a number of problems with *wh*-questions, as it fails to attain observational adequacy in resolving certain issues of the syntax of *wh*-questions, as illustrated in (3), taken from Radford (1981:149).

3. Which car will your father put in the garage?

Here, Radford points out that the problem in (3) is whether the *wh*-word should occur before or after the verb. To account for this, he postulates that the *wh*-phrase originates after the verb and is moved to the sentence-initial position by a rule which he calls "*WH*-MOVEMENT". Moreover, he describes two types of adjunction: (i) sister-adjunction, and (ii) Chomsky-adjunction. Radford prefers the latter due to its syntactic advantages with regard to *WH*-MOVEMENT. In refining his (1981) work, Radford (1988) introduces an empty complementizer (C) in the COMP position and derives S-structure by the operation of two movement rules: the first rule is I-MOVEMENT, while the second rule involves the familiar *WH*-MOVEMENT.

2.2 *Wh*-movement in Arabic

Recent analysis of *wh*-questions in Modern Standard Arabic, based on the minimalist framework of Chomsky (1995, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2006), has been seen in Fakih (2007a, 2007b, and 2011), Alotaibi (2013), and Al-Shorafat (2013).

Moreover, the phenomenon of *wh*-movement and the nature of *wh*-phrases in Arabic dialects has recently received an extensive coverage in linguistic literature. Various accounts have been presented and different approaches have also been suggested with the aim of providing a satisfactory analysis on the subject. I may classify the major studies conducted on the subject under study into three views. (i) It has been observed that there are Arabic dialects which permit optional *wh*-movement; either they allow the *wh*-phrase to move to [Spec, CP] at S-structure (e.g., Iraqi Arabic, Wahba (1991); Palestinian Arabic, Abu-Jarad (2003); Makkan Arabic, Bardeas (2005); Jordanian Arabic, Al-Momani and Al-Saiat, (2010); Emirati Arabic, Leung and Al-Eisaei (2011); Cairene Arabic, Al-Touny (2011)), or remain in-situ (e.g., Iraqi Arabic, Wahba, (1991); Palestinian Arabic, Abu-Jarad (2003); Makkan Arabic, Bardeas (2005); Jordanian Arabic, Al-Momani and Al-Saiat (2010); Cairene Arabic, Al-Touny (2011)). This view has been adopted by many linguists including Aoun and Li (1993), Cheng (1991), Denham (2000) and Peseteskyy (1987). These linguists view languages such as French, Egyptian Arabic, Iraqi Arabic, the Babine language, Bahasa Indonesia, and Palauan as optional languages. (ii) There are, however, Arabic dialects which are *wh*-in-situ languages; they permit the *wh*-phrases to stay in-situ only (e.g., Egyptian Arabic, Cheng (1991, 2000), Lassadi (2003), Sultan (2010) and Yassin (2013); Makkan Arabic, Abu-Sulaiman (2007)). (iii) On the other hand, there are also other Arabic dialects in which the *wh*-phrase moves obligatorily to [Spec, CP] in overt syntax (e.g., Moroccan Arabic, Nouhi (1996); Jordanian Arabic, Yassin (2013)). Given this, Nouhi (1996: 86) shows that *wh*-in-situ is not allowed in Moroccan Arabic (MA) *wh*-constructions, be they matrix or embedded. He concludes that the fronting in *wh*-constructions in MA is actual fronting of the *wh*-phrase to [Spec of CP] at S-structure.

Moreover, unlike the majority of other Arabic dialects (e.g., Aoun and Choueiri (1998) for Lebanese Arabic and Shlonsky (2002) for Palestinian Arabic), Sultan (2010:18-19) argues that "fronting of *wh*-argument in Egyptian Arabic is not strictly prohibited". It may be pointed out that the difference in *wh*-movement strategies is often attributed to the fact that cross-linguistically *wh*-constituents are not identical in nature. Aoun and Li (1993), Cheng

(1991), and Ouhallah (1996), among others, argue that the wh-questions in natural languages differ with regard to their morphological and syntactic properties. On the other hand, Abdel Razaq (2011) explores the typological variation in wh-constructions in some modern Arabic dialects, particularly, Iraqi, Lebanese and Jordanian and observes that although these Arabic dialects share many common features, there are certain differences in the technique manipulated in the formation of wh-questions. Furthermore, many spoken modern Arabic dialects like Iraqi Arabic (Ouhallah (1996), Simpson (2000) and Wahba (1991)), Lebanese Arabic (Aoun, Benmamoun and Choueiri (2010), Aoun and Choueiri (1999), and Aoun and Li (2003)), Egyptian Arabic (Cheng (1991), Sultan (2009) and Wahba (1984)) and Jordanian Arabic (Al-Moman (2010) use more than one strategy in the formation of wh-questions.

It can be observed that Arab and Western linguists have presented different strategies with the aim of providing a unified account of wh-movement in Arabic dialects. For instance, Wahba (1984) indicates that wh-scope licensing in Egyptian Arabic takes place via movement: covert movement in the case of in-situ wh-questions, and overt movement in the case of ex-in-situ wh-questions. On the other hand, Sultan (2010) argues that wh-scope takes place not via movement, but rather via the mechanism of unselective binding. Abu-Jarad (2008) explores the typology of wh-questions in Palestinian Arabic (PA) and shows that the wh-operators in PA function in two different ways on the basis of the type of wh-operator, whether it is a wh-argument or a wh-adjunct. On the other hand, Leung and Al-Eisaei (2011) examine two major types of wh-constructions in Emirati Arabic, for example wh-fronting and wh-cleft and argue that these constructions are construed by independent strategies.

3. Wh-Movement in Minimalism

A careful examination of Chomsky's (1995) Minimalist analysis of wh-movement reveals the way Chomsky departs from the earlier treatment versions in the Principles and Parameters Theory (1991); Chomsky's Minimalist analysis relies crucially on feature checking considerations. In what follows, however, I introduce his (1995) treatment of the underlying question affix Q and its impact on wh-movement analysis. Chomsky's Minimalist assumptions are based on 'economy principles' which aim to minimize derivations and reduce the burden of grammatical constraints and conditions imposed on the grammars of language; the goal is to make language learning easier and more economical.

Following Watanabe's (1991) analysis of wh-movement, Chomsky (1995) takes a different position; he points out that there is no parametric variation with regard to wh-in-situ phenomenon. He observes that differences between languages (such as that between English and Japanese, for instance) "reduce to morphology", more specifically, "the internal morphology of the wh-phrases" (p. 199). In showing why the raising of the wh-operator is ever overt, contrary to the "Principle of Procrastination", Chomsky argues that the basic assumption of "economy of derivation" is that operators are driven by morphological necessity, since they are "last resort". This entails that certain features must be discharged in what Chomsky calls the checking domain of a head, otherwise the derivation will crash. Hence, movement of an operator to [Spec, CP] must be motivated by such a requirement. In this connection, Chomsky (1995) proposes that the interrogative C, the head of CP, contains

an abstract question affix Q, assumed to be present in the underlying structure (i.e. at LF) of an interrogative clause. It can be noted that the affix Q is a device that distinguishes the D-structure of an interrogative clause from that of its declarative counterpart. Moreover, Chomsky suggests that the Q-feature is strong in English. Given this, Chomsky proposes that raising of a *wh*-operator to [Spec, CP] is driven by the need for a morphological Q-feature to be licensed. Chomsky goes on further to assume that in a simple interrogative clause C (COMP) contains an underlying abstract affixal question Q. In a language like English, C has a strong Q feature, as does the operator that raises to it. Moreover, if C has a strong Q feature, the raising will be overt. Thus, it is apparent that the operator moves to check its own feature; and by doing so, it satisfies the feature of the head it moves to.¹

Such Q-feature is taken to be a morphological property of such operators as *wh*. Further, Chomsky shows how the Q-feature in C position is checked under the assumptions of the checking theory. That is, for licensing the features of an appropriate C, "the operators raise for feature checking to the checking domain of C: [Spec, CP], or adjunction to Spec (absorption), thereby satisfying their scopal properties" (p. 199). Given the assumption that the Q-feature of C is strong, the movement must be overt. Chomsky makes his conclusion, on the basis of Watanabe (1991), that the Q-feature is strong in all languages, "the *wh*-operator feature is universally strong" (p. 199). Let us look at the following examples in (3) to illustrate the point (examples are cited from Chomsky (1995: 293)).

3a. Q_[IP who will fix the car]

b. Q_[IP John will fix what]

c. Q_[IP John will fix the car how (why)]

According to Chomsky, if an interrogative structure contains an overt *wh*-phrase (whether it occurs in the subject or object or adjunct position) the *wh*-feature adjoins covertly to Q. Chomsky points out that (3a) is interpreted as a *wh*-question, though it has overt syntactic properties of IP. (3b) gives the interpretation 'what will John fix'. (3c) is interpreted as 'how (why) will John fix the car'. According to Chomsky's Minimalist assumptions, the *wh*-phrase in (3) raises to [Spec, CP] where it has to be licensed "by Q-feature of the complementizer C, not of the latter being licensed by the raised *wh*-phrase" (p. 259). Chomsky makes this assumption on the analogy that the V or T head checks the Case of the DP in Spec, not that the DP that licenses the head.

On the other hand, Chomsky (1995: 263) assumes that the question words such as *who* and *what*, have three components: "the *wh*-feature, an abstract element underlying indefinite pronouns and the feature [\pm human]". Given the assumption that the interrogative C (= Q) is strong, Chomsky points out that the *wh*-feature cannot overtly raise alone to license the feature Q for the reason that the derivation will crash at PF. In this case, Chomsky argues that "the whole *who*, *what* will be pied-piped in overt raising" (p. 263).

¹ Haegeman and Guéron (1999: 547), on the other hand, propose that *wh*-movement checks the [+ *wh*] feature and "creates a specifier-head relation between [+WH] feature on a head (C in embedded clauses; T in Foc in root clauses) and the *wh*-phrases in its specifiers".

4. Subject Wh-movement in Najrani Arabic

The syntactic analysis of wh-questions has received extensive coverage over the last four decades in linguistic literature of the world languages where universal rules and parametric variations were pointed out cross-linguistically. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that wh-questions are divided into two types: argument wh-questions (subject and object) and adjunct wh-questions. In Najrani Arabic, the argument subject wh-phrases occur in their canonical positions as the subjects of the IPs which they precede.

In what follows I explore the syntactic behavior of argument subject wh-phrases in Najrani Arabic and examine wh-phrase extraction from intransitive and transitive positions with the aim of illustrating how a wh-question can be derived in these positions, why wh-movement takes place, and what motivates this movement in the syntax.

- 1a. [IP Ahmed raah]
 Ahmed.nom left.past.3sg.m
 'Ahmed left.'
- b. *man raah ?
 who left.past.3sg.m
 'Who left?'
- c. man illi raah ?
 who that left.past.3sg.m
 'Who left?'
- 2a. Fatima naamat
 Fatima.nom slept.past.3sg.f.
 'Fatima slept.'
- b. *man naamat ?
 who slept.past.3sg.f.
- c. man illi naamat?
 who that slept.past.3sg.f.
 'Who slept?'
- 3a. Arwa ktebet gissah
 Arwa.nom wrote.past. 3sg.f story.ibdef. acc.
 'Arwa wrote a story.'
- b. *man ktebet gissah
 who wrote.past. 3sg.f story.ibdef. acc.
- c. man illi ktebet gissah
 who that wrote.past. 3sg.f story.ibdef. acc.
 'Who wrote a story?'
- 4a. Mohammed gatal ?asad
 Mohd.nom killed.past.3.sg.m lion.indef.a cc.
 'Mohammed killed a lion.'
- b. *man gatal ?asad
 who killed.past.3.sg.m lion.indef.a cc.

c. man illi gatal ?asad
 who that killed.past.3.sg.m lion.indef.a cc.
 'Who killed a lion?'

A closer look at the Najrani Arabic sentences in (1a), (2a), (3a), and (4a) of intransitive and transitive constructions, respectively, reveals that the subject DPs move from the VP-internal position to the [Spec, IP] position, given Koopman and Sportiche's (1991) VP-Internal Subject Hypothesis. Moreover, the normal practice of deriving a subject *wh*-question is to front the subject *wh*-phrase to the clause-initial position or to the left periphery of the sentence. In so doing, however, ungrammatical interrogative structures have been derived in (1b), (2b), (3b), and (4b), which is unexpected in Najrani Arabic. The only way to save the grammaticality of these constructions is that Najrani Arabic grammar resorts to the insertion of *illi* 'that' immediately after the subject *wh*-phrase as exemplified in (1c), (2c), (3c), and (4c). This type of interrogatives construction is called *illi*-questions in many Arabic varieties.²

Questions arise here: How can I account for *illi*-questions in Najrani Arabic? Does the subject *wh*-phrase undergo syntactic movement from [Spec, VP] to [Spec, IP] and then to [Spec, CP] at PF? Can *illi* be accounted for in a systematic manner in Najrani Arabic? Is *illi* a complementizer or a relative pronoun? Can *illi*-questions be accounted for via Focus movement analysis? Can I argue that the structure [*wh*-phrase+*illi*+VP] occurs in a Focus projection headed by *illi*? If so, what motivates the subject *wh*-phrase to move to the FocusP projection in the syntax?

In the MP, Chomsky (1995) argues that subjects carry unlicensed features that need to be checked. Given this, subjects raise to the nearest position which has to be an appropriate domain for feature licensing. In this connection, overt and covert movements are distinguished. With overt movement, the subject raises to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle (EPP)³ feature of the head I(nflection) as in SVO languages. On the other hand, covert movement involves the movement of the features whereas the subject remains in its position as in VSO languages.

Now let us see how Chomsky (1995) views the syntactic movement of the subject *wh*-phrase in English from the VP-internal position to Spec, IP in (5) - (these examples are cited from Chomsky (1995: 293)).

5. Q[IP who will fix the car]

According to Chomsky, if an interrogative structure contains an overt *wh*-phrase (whether it occurs in the subject, object or adjunct position) the *wh*-feature adjoins covertly to Q. Chomsky points out that (5) is interpreted as a *wh*-question, though it has overt syntactic

² It can be observed that much work in this respect has been done on Arabic dialects (Agbayani (2000), Al-Momani (2010), Bardeas (2011), Benmamoun (2000), Cheng (1997), Gad (2011), Osman (1990), Shlonsky (2002), Sultan (2010), and Wahba (1984, 1990), among others); they have provided various syntactic analyses within different morpho-syntactic approaches.

³ The Extended Projection Principle (EPP) is the modified version of Chomsky's (1981) Projection Principle; it states that a sentence must have a subject.

properties of IP. According to Chomsky's Minimalist assumptions, the *wh*-phrase in (5) raises to [Spec, CP] where it has to be licensed "by Q-feature of the complementizer C, not of the latter being licensed by the raised *wh*-phrase" (1995:259). Chomsky makes this assumption on the analogy that the V or T head checks the Case of the DP in Spec, not that the DP that licenses the head.

Furthermore, Agbayani (2000) examines two analyses for the position of subject *wh*-phrases. The first analysis is the Vacuous Movement Hypothesis (VMH) which takes the *wh*-subject to be inside the Spec IP position where no Aux inversion can take place, as in the following example:

- 6a. Who has fixed the car?
 b. [CP C [IP who has fixed the car]]
 (Agbayani, 2000: 703)

The other analysis of the *wh*-subject position addressed by Agbayani (2000) illustrates that the subject *wh*-phrase raises to the [Spec CP] position where Aux inversion takes place as shown in (7).

7. [CP who₂ has₁], [IP t₂ t₁ fixed the car]

4.1 Subject *Wh*-Movement to [Spec, CP] in Najrani Arabic: *illi* as a complementizer

Before discussing the proposed alternative based on Focus movement analysis outlined in Rizzi (1997, 2001) and Gad (2011), I may assign this subsection to investigate whether there is any possibility of moving the subject *wh*-phrase from the VP-internal position to [Spec, IP] and then to [Spec, CP] at PF. However, this analysis will not be convincing because it will fail to offer a satisfactory account on the subject under discussion because of subject *wh*-islandhood which blocks *wh*-movement to [Spec, CP]. This will be discussed below in detail.

It can be observed that Koopman and Sportiche's (1991) VP-Internal Subject Hypothesis provides a further account for the position of subjects. It takes subjects to be base-generated in VP. According to the VP-Internal Subject Hypothesis, in Najrani Arabic the subject *wh*-phrase *man* 'who' originates within the VP as in (1a), (2a), (3a), and (4a) above, then it raises overtly to the [Spec IP] position to satisfy the EPP and also to obtain its scope. It can be observed that in Najrani Arabic subject *wh*-phrase extraction is similar to that of English subject *wh*-phrase fronting, as demonstrated in (5a) above. Following Chomsky's (1995) minimalist analysis, I assume tentatively that in Najran Arabic the syntactic movement of the subject *wh*-phrase undergoes overt movement in the syntax from the VP-internal position to [Spec, IP] to satisfy the EPP and to obtain its scope. To illustrate the point, the sentences in (2) and (3) above are reproduced in (8) and (9) below for further demonstration.

- 8a. [IP Fatima_i [I [I [VP t_i [V' naamat]]]]]
 Fatima.nom slept.past.3sg.f.
 'Fatima slept.'

- b. [_{CP} man_i [_C illi [_{IP} t_i [_I [_{VP} t_i [_V [_V naamat?]]]
 who that slept.past.3sg.f.
 'Who slept?'
- 9a. [_{IP} Arwa_i [_I [_{VP} t_i [_V ktebet gissah]]]]]
 Arwa.nom wrote.past. 3sg.f story.ibdef. acc.
 'Arwa wrote a story.'
- b. [_{CP} man_i [_C illi [_{IP} t_i [_I [_{VP} t_i [_V [_V ktebet gissah?]
 man that wrote.past. 3sg.f story.ibdef. acc.
 'Who wrote a story?'

The sentences in (8) and (9) illustrate that in the [Spec, IP] position the wh-phrase cannot undergo any overt movement to [Spec, CP] across the complementizer *illi* 'that' which serves as a wh-island effect that blocks the subject wh-phrase movement to the [Spec, CP] position. Furthermore, the structures in (8b) and (9b) which exhibit *illi*-questions pose a challenge for the current syntactic analysis. The question is: What is the syntactic status of *illi*? It can be observed that the occurrence of *illi* with the subject wh-phrase is obligatory because in the absence of it the derived subject wh-question is ungrammatical, as shown in (2b) and (3b) above, reproduced as (10) and (11) below.

10. *man naamat ?
 who slept.past.3sg.f.
11. *man ktebet gissah
 who wrote.past. 3sg.f story.ibdef. acc.

The ungrammaticality of (10) and (11) can be attributed to the absence of *illi* which must be inserted immediately after the subject wh-phrase, as exemplified in the grammatical (12) and (13) below. This type of wh-question derivation in (10) and (11) is not only unacceptable but is also ruled out in Najrani Arabic grammar.

12. man illi naamat ?
 who that slept.past.3sg.f.
 'Who slept?'
13. man illi ktebet gissah
 who that wrote.past. 3sg.f story.ibdef. acc.
 'Who wrote a story?'

Given this, I propose the following structure for relativised subject wh-questions (or *illi*-questions) for Najrani Arabic illustrated in (14a). Notice that (14b) is ruled out.

- 14a. [subject wh-phrase + *illi* + VP ...]
 b. *[subject wh-phrase + ϕ + VP ...]

It can be observed that Najrani Arabic grammar allows the obligatory structure ([subject wh-phrase + *illi* + VP ...]) in (14a) above, but not the one demonstrated in (15) below.

15. *[subject wh-phrase + *illi* + *NP ...]

The reason why (15) is not acceptable can be attributed to the fact that *illi* is [+definite] and [+human] and has to co-occur with the subject wh-phrase which must precede it in the syntax; their co-occurrence is a must in order for the derived wh-questions to converge. Besides, Najrani Arabic grammar accepts only a VP to follow the wh-phrase + *illi*, not an NP. Hence, the following structure in (16) can be proposed.

16. *man* 'who' + *illi* ([+human] and [+definite]) + VP

It is observed that when the nominal head is [+human and +definite], the structure wh-phrase + *illi* + VP is well-formed. However, when the nominal head is [-human], the structure is ruled out.

Following analyses in Chlonsky (1992) for Palestinian Arabic, Wahba (1984) for Egyptian Arabic, Osman (1990) for Egyptian Arabic, Cheng (1997), Pesetsky and Torrego (2000) and Radford (2000) for English, Benmamoun, (2000) for Moroccan Arabic, Gad (2011) for Egyptian Arabic, Chomsky (1995, 1998, 1999, 2000), among others, if I assume that *illi*, which appears obligatorily immediately after the subject wh-phrase in Najrani Arabic, is a complementiser and that it occurs as the head C of CP,⁴ then this assumption will support the argument that *illi* is an island effect which blocks wh-phrase movement to [Spec, CP]. In other words, the subject wh-phrase in *illi*-questions in Najrani Arabic cannot cross the complementizer *illi* 'that' because the latter constitutes a subject island constraint for wh-movement. Now let me explain why the subject wh-phrase movement across the complementizer *illi* 'that' is barred in Najrani Arabic examples above. The reason why the subject wh-phrase movement is not allowed in the derived questions in (8), (9), (12), and (13) above can be attributed to the fact that the subject question word *man* 'who' has been moved out of the CP *illi* + subject wh-phrase. I can thus state the Subject Condition as follows:

17. Subject Condition:

Nothing may be moved out of a phrase in subject position ([Spec, CP])

It can be stressed that although movement is unbounded, there are still a number of constraints on movement; these constraints have traditionally been called constraints. The wh-island is the most basic of the island constraints suggested in generative grammar; it is also the basis for idea that movement must take place from CP to CP. It can be pointed out that the long-standing line of research within generative syntax, particularly in Standard Theory and Extended Standard Theory, has been shown in Ross's (1967) and Chomsky's (1973) first efforts which attempted to characterize the different conditions responsible for delimiting the power of transformations. These constraints have been comprised under the notion of islands. In the last four decades, the extensive research in generative grammar has shown that subjects have been held to be islands for extractability possibilities. For instance, Gallego and Uriagereka (2006) and Fernandez (2009) stress that sub-extraction is banned

⁴ Hageman (1994: 382-3) argues that some languages allow their wh-phrases to be followed by an overt complementizer; for example Dutch, Flemish, Bavarian, and German.

from subjects once they occupy the specifier position of TP for the reason that TP is taken to be a phase in Romance.

Furthermore, given Najrani data on subject wh-questions above, I can state the subject wh-island constraint in Najrani Arabic in the following way:

18. Subject wh-island Constraint:

A wh phrase cannot be moved out of a + Wh CP.

A +Wh CP is a CP with a + Wh head or specifier.

Given this, I argue that in Najrani Arabic wh-extraction from subject position is blocked from a derived subject DP in Spec-TP for the reason that TP is a phase. Based on the preceding line of analysis, it can be pointed out that the assumption that *illi* 'that' as a complementizer does not work properly in subject wh-questions in Najrani Arabic because it constitutes an island constraint to subject wh-movement.

The argument in the preceding analysis, however, seems weak as it is not systematic. This analysis is not convincing because it fails to provide a satisfactory analysis on the subject under investigation. In what follows I propose an alternative approach based on Focus movement analysis.

4.2 An alternative analysis: A Proposed Focus-Based Analysis of Subject Wh-Movement in Najrani Arabic: [Subject-Wh Movement to [Spec, FocusP]: illi as a Relative Pronoun

The preceding analysis of subject wh-movement extraction in Najrani Arabic seems weak because the argument presented sounds unsystematic. In what follows, however, I attempt to present an alternative analysis that seeks to offer a unified account of the subject movement of wh-questions in Najrani Arabic within Focus movement analysis advocated in Rizzi (1997, 2001) and Gad (2011).

In the literature, wh-phrases are argued to bear Focus features. This idea is discussed by Culicover & Rochemont (1983), Horvath (1986), Haegeman (1994), Rizzi (1997), Rochemont (1986), and Zubizarreta (1998), and Lassadi (2003), among others. On the other hand, some other arguments have analyzed initial wh-phrases as the result of Focus movement, rather than wh-movement: for example, Cinque (1993), Pesetsky and Torrego (2000) and Radford (2000) for English; Brody (1990a), Horvath (1986), Kiss (1987), and Puskas (1992) for Hungarian; Sabel (2000) for Kikuyu and Bahasa Indonesia; Tsimpli (1990) for Greek; and Hoh & Chiang (1990) for Chinese.

Furthermore, there are two types of information which the articulation of any sentence expresses: presupposition and Focus. While presupposition refers to the old information which has already been introduced into the discourse, Focus is the new information or comment (Cinque, 1993).

Focus movement analysis within wh-phrases has recently received considerable attention in linguistic literature, in general, and Arabic literature, in particular. The major work on Focus analysis of wh-movement in Arabic has been seen in Moutaoukil (1989), Ouhallah (1999), Lassadi (2003), Al-Momani (2010), and Gad (2011), among others.

Furthermore, in his analysis of Focus movement, Rizzi (1997) argues that a clause consists of three basic structural layers: (i) a lexical layer which hosts a verb, (ii) an inflectional layer which hosts a functional head, and (iii) a complementiser layer which hosts an interrogative phrase, a topic, a relative pronoun or a focalised element. These three layers are VP, IP and CP, respectively (Gad, 2011).

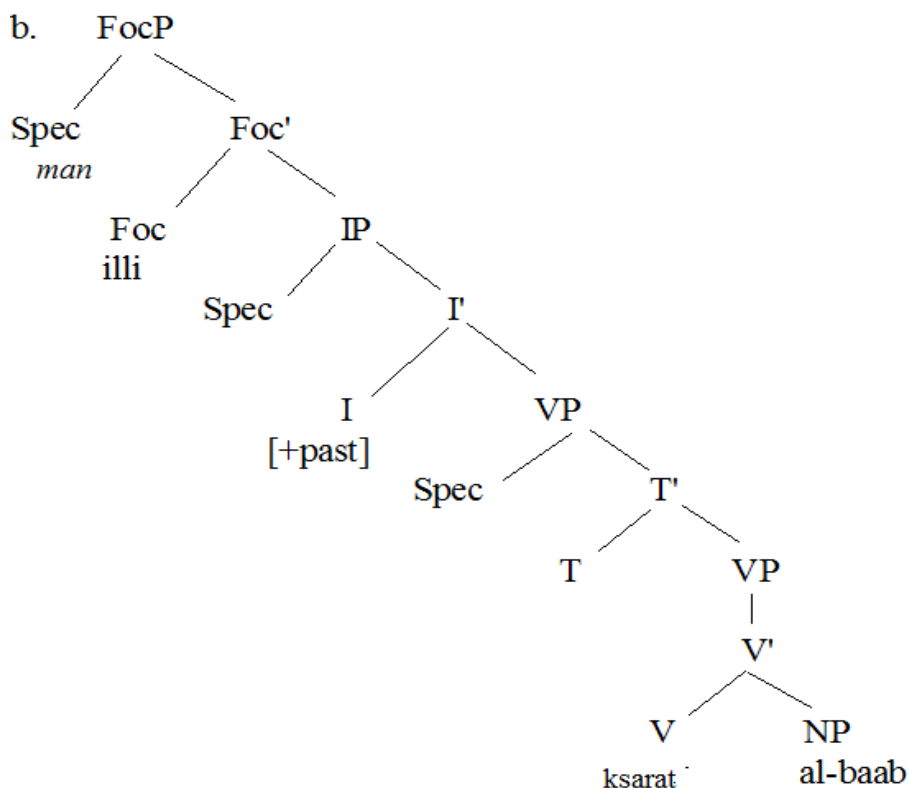
Following minimalist assumptions in Chomsky (1995), Rizzi (1997), Lassadi (2003), Al-Momani (2010), and Gad (2011) that the category with the strong feature can project, I argue that *illi* 'that' can be assumed to have a strong Focus feature, and hence it licenses the Focus Projection (FocusP) and heads it in subject wh-phrases of Najrani Arabic. Accordingly, on the basis of Najrani data, I posit a Focus Projection headed by *illi* which attracts the subject wh-phrase to its specifier. The Focus analysis (based on Rizzi (1997) and Gad (2011)) attempts to highlight the role of *illi* in the formation of this type of *illi*-questions in Najrani Arabic.

An illustration of how the alternative analysis of Focus movement works in wh-fronting in Najrani Arabic and what motivates it in the syntax can be seen in (19) below.

- 19a. Hind ksarat al-baab
 Hind.nom. broke.past.3sg.f door.def.acc
 'Hind broke the door.'
- b. man illi ksarat al-baab
 who that broke.past.3sg.f door.def.acc
 'Who broke the door?'

Following analysis on Focus movement in Rizzi (1997, 2001), Lassadi (2003), Al-Momani (2010), and Gad (2011), I argue here that the structure [wh-phrase+illi+VP] occurs in a Focus projection headed by *illi*. I assume that subject wh-movement in Najrani Arabic is triggered by a feature other than the wh-feature; hence, wh-phrases do not occur in the CP projection, but rather in [Spec, Focus] and the head C will be occupied by the invariant relative pronoun *illi*. Given *illi*-questions of subject-wh in Najrani Arabic, I propose that it is the strong Focus feature that triggers movement to take place before Spell-Out. In this view, the subject wh-phrase *man* moves to [Spec, Focus] for feature checking necessity. If this movement does not take place, the derivation will not converge; hence, it will crash because the strong [+wh] feature on the wh-phrase is not checked in the syntax. It can be noted that *illi* and the subject wh-phrase carry [+nominal] features. When *illi* occupies the head C position it creates the FocusP projection which is the proper licensing domain for the wh-phrase in [Spec, Focus]. The subject-wh data in Najrani Arabic show that *illi* heads the FocusP complement, (similar to English Comp 'that' in CP analysis). In the FocusP, headed by *illi*, the subject wh-phrase occupies the Spec position because it bears the [+Focus] and [+nominal] features. For instance, the subject-wh in (19b) above is no longer in its canonical position in [Spec, IP]; it is fronted to [Spec, Focus]. For the sake of illustration, (19b) will be reproduced in (20a) and (20b) below.

- 20a. man illi ksarat al-baab
 who that broke.past.3sg.f door.def.acc
 'Who broke the door?'



It can be observed in Najrani Arabic argument wh-questions that the second type of chain formation pointed out by Rizzi (2001) is available. The second type of chain is formed in *illi*-questions; it is an operator chain which Rizzi (1997) argues to exist in Focus movement constructions. In *illi*-questions, an argument chain is formed with the movement of the argument subject wh-phrase to the [Spec FocusP] position. With the insertion of *illi* which carries a strong Focus feature, the subject-wh moves to the left periphery of the sentence to occupy the [Spec, FocusP] position, as illustrated in (20b) above. Based on that, the subject wh-phrase in [Spec, FocusP] is checked via feature sharing with the head of the projection (Rizzi, 2001). The argument subject wh-phrase and *illi* carry [+nominal] and [+Focus] features, so *illi* cannot act as a scope-bearing element, but rather, it seems to carry a certain discourse feature which triggers the movement of the wh-phrase *man* to its specifier position in (20) above. This movement analysis in the MP framework depends on the Minimal Link Condition proposed by Chomsky (1995):

The Minimal Link Condition: *K attracts A only if there is no B, B closer to K than A, such that K attracts B.* (Chomsky 1995: 311)

In the subject wh-questions in Najrani Arabic above, *illi* which heads the FocusP carries a Focus feature (FF) which needs to be satisfied. The closest feature to the (FF) is the one which the wh-phrase carries, or F' in Collins's (2001) sense. The feature F' enters into a checking relation with the FF on *illi*. Chomsky (1995) argues that strong features that are

visible at PF are illegitimate objects that need to be licensed in the syntax; if such strong features are not checked the derivation will crash. Focus-movement takes place for the Focus-feature of the wh-phrase *man* to be checked against the strong Focus feature of *illi* which heads the FocusP projection, so the wh-phrase is moved to [Spec, FocusP]. The Focus movement analysis suggested here for *illi*-questions in Najrani Arabic bears some aspects of similarity with the wh-movement of the English type. For instance, both types of movement are motivated by two distinct features: the [+Focus] feature and the [+wh] feature, respectively. In both types of movement, wh-phrases act as operators leaving behind variables that define the scope of the moved wh-phrases.

It can be pointed out that the proposed alternative of Focus-based analysis of subject wh-movement in Najrani Arabic looks superior to that of [Spec, CP] analysis as it accounts for the subject-wh movement in a systematic manner and presents a satisfactory analysis on the subject.

5. Conclusion

This study has first attempted to explore the possibility of moving the subject-wh from the VP-internal position to [Spec, IP] and then to [Spec, CP] at PF. However, this analysis was shown to be unsystematic because it failed to present a satisfactory account on subject wh-movement in Najrani Arabic. In this connection, I have argued that in Najrani Arabic wh-extraction from subject position is blocked from a derived subject DP in [Spec, TP] for the reason that TP is a phase. I have also pointed out that the assumption that *illi* 'that' as a complementizer does not work properly in subject wh-questions in Najrani Arabic because it constitutes an island constraint to subject wh-movement.

Furthermore, an alternative framework was proposed based on Focus movement analysis outlined in Rizzi (1997, 2001) and Gad (2011). I have argued that the structure [wh-phrase+*illi*+VP] occurs in a Focus projection headed by *illi*. It has been suggested that subject wh-movement in Najrani Arabic is triggered by a feature other than the wh-feature; hence, wh-phrases do not occur in the CP projection, but rather in [Spec, Focus]; the head C is occupied by the invariant relative pronoun *illi*. When *illi* occupies the head C position it creates the FocusP projection which is the proper licensing domain for the wh-phrase in [Spec, Focus]. Accordingly, I have proposed that it is the strong Focus feature that motivates movement to take place before Spell-Out. In this view, the subject wh-phrase moves overtly to [Spec, Focus] for feature checking considerations. Besides, Focus-movement takes place for the Focus-feature of the wh-phrase to be licensed against the strong Focus feature of *illi* which heads the FocusP projection, so the wh-phrase is moved to [Spec, FocusP]. Thus, Focus movement analysis has shown to be superior to that of the [Spec, CP] analysis because it provides a unified treatment of subject wh-movement in Najrani Arabic in a systematic manner.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions on the earlier draft of this study. The study has also benefited from the IJEL

editor's comments. Besides, I would like to thank my colleague Daniel Forgrave for his comments and suggestions on the earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to thank all my informants who provided all the necessary data about Najrani Arabic. This includes my colleagues, my B.A students and my friends. Many special thanks must go to my M.A students, Mrs. Hadeel Al-Shareef and Ms. Wofga Ankees, for providing the required data on Najrani Arabic, in general, and wh-questions, in particular. Their help is highly appreciated.

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