

### Further Remarks on First Conjunct Agreement

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Aoun, Benmamoun, and Sportiche (ABS, 1994) propose an analysis of first conjunct agreement in VS sentences in Lebanese Arabic and Moroccan Arabic. On the basis of the distribution of number-sensitive items, they argue that this type of agreement is due to clausal coordination. Munn (1999) argues against ABS's account and proposes that first conjunct agreement in the Arabic dialects arises because coordination of NP subjects is semantically plural but syntactically singular. In this reply we show that Munn's alternative analysis is empirically inadequate.

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#### 1 The Problem: First Conjunct Agreement in Lebanese and Moroccan Arabic

Consider the following two sentences:

- (1) a. Is John sick and Mary absent?  
b. John is and Mary was, sick.

(1a) is a case of across-the-board (ATB) extraction or a case of IP conjunction below a verb in C; (1b) is a case of right node raising. Assume that we combine the two. First, we form a right-node-raising structure.

- (2) John is and Mary is, sick.

Second, we perform ATB extraction of *is*.

- (3) a. Is [John *is sick*] and [Mary *is sick*] sick.  
b. Is John and Mary sick.

Assuming for the sake of presentation that the right-node-raised constituent is external to the conjunction, we get (3a) (where silent material is italicized); (3a) is pronounced as (3b). This in essence is the analysis of first conjunct agreement in Moroccan Arabic (MA) and Lebanese Arabic (LA) that we presented in Aoun, Benmamoun, and Sportiche (ABS) 1994. Representative examples are given in (4) and (5).

- (4) a. *ža* <sup>7</sup>omar w karim (MA)  
came.3MS Omar and Karim  
'Omar and Karim came.'

We wish to thank Lina Choueiri for her help with the analysis and the facts.

- b. <sup>7</sup>omar w karim žaw  
Omar and Karim came.3P  
'Omar and Karim came.'
- (5) a. <sup>-</sup>əža kariim w marwaan (LA)  
came.3MS Karim and Marwan  
'Karim and Marwan came.'
- b. kariim w marwaan <sup>-</sup>əžo  
Karim and Marwan came.3P  
'Karim and Marwan came.'

Indeed, under the analysis in ABS 1994, (4) and (5) contain a conjunction of clauses with singular subjects. Just as in (3), there is no agreement between the verb and what superficially appears to be a conjunction of DPs.

This analysis adopts a standard and rather uncontroversial view of agreement and conjunction, namely:

- (6) a. If number agreement holds between an element X and a phrase YP, then X agrees with the number of YP (e.g., if a subject is plural, subject-verb agreement will result in plural morphology on the verb).
- b. The number of conjoined DPs can always be the "sum" of the numbers of its parts (e.g., a conjunction of DPs is plural).

In ABS 1994 we show that adding to (4) and (5) elements that are sensitive to the singular/plural distinction of the subject supports this analysis. Let us refer to such elements as *number-sensitive items* (NSIs). For example:

- (7) a. \*tlaqa <sup>7</sup>omar w karim (MA)  
met.3MS Omar and Karim
- b. \*lta<sup>-</sup>a kariim w marwaan (LA)  
met.3MS Karim and Marwan
- (8) a. \*gləs <sup>7</sup>omar w karim ħda bə<sup>7</sup>ḏhum (MA)  
sat.3MS Omar and Karim near each.other
- b. \*<sup>-</sup>a<sup>7</sup>ad kariim w marwaan ħad ba<sup>7</sup>ḏun (LA)  
sat.3MS Karim and Marwan near each.other
- (9) a. \*ža <sup>7</sup>omar w karim bžužhum (MA)  
came.3MS Omar and Karim together
- b. \*<sup>-</sup>əža kariim w marwaan ma<sup>7</sup> ba<sup>7</sup>ḏun (LA)  
came.3MS Karim and Marwan with each.other

In ABS 1994 we reason that these sentences are ill formed because in each case neither of the conjoined clauses has a possible subject or antecedent for the element 'meet', 'together', or 'each other', which requires one. However, when the verb carries plural agreement, NSIs are licensed.

- (10) a. tlaqaw <sup>7</sup>omar w karim (MA)  
 met.3P Omar and Karim  
 ‘Omar and Karim met.’  
 b. Ita<sup>o</sup> kariim w marwaan (LA)  
 met.3P Karim and Marwan  
 ‘Karim and Marwan met.’
- (11) a. gəlsu <sup>7</sup>omar w karim ħda bə<sup>7</sup>dhum (MA)  
 sat.3P Omar and Karim near each.other  
 ‘Omar and Karim sat near each other.’  
 b. biħibbo kariim w marwaan ħaalun (LA)  
 love.3P Karim and Marwan themselves  
 ‘Karim and Marwan love themselves.’
- (12) a. žaw marwan w karim bžužhum (MA)  
 came.3P Marwan and Karim together  
 ‘Marwan and Karim came together.’  
 b. <sup>o</sup>əžo kariim w marwaan ma<sup>7</sup> ba<sup>7</sup>ḍun (LA)  
 came.3P Karim and Marwan with each.other  
 ‘Karim and Marwan came together.’

Under the analysis in ABS 1994 the difference between (7)–(9) and (10)–(12) is that the former involve clausal coordination and the latter involve phrasal DP coordination.

Given the above facts, two questions arise. Is the clausal coordination analysis correct for first conjunct agreement in LA and MA? If so, are all superficially similar configurations of data in other languages to be analyzed in the same way?

Empirically justifying an answer to the second question is beyond the scope of this reply and was beyond the scope of ABS 1994. We merely note there that any enrichment of the stock of available analytical devices requires, on methodological grounds, incontrovertible motivations, which we still believe are lacking. In the absence of such motivations, alternative analyses combining existing devices (such as right node raising, ATB extraction, and agreement as defined in (6a)) are to be preferred. In ABS 1994 we argue that this is the case for the varieties of Arabic we discuss. Beyond these general remarks, the particular facts of different languages have to be considered before this issue can be decided.

Munn (1999) challenges the analysis given in (3) on two grounds. First, he argues that an alternative mechanism can handle the facts on which the analysis in ABS 1994 is based. Second, he argues that our analysis makes predictions falsified by the LA and MA data. We believe that when closely examined, these objections are unconvincing. Munn also claims that a particular view of the structure of conjunction combined with a modified theory of agreement (which is actually not presented) is necessary to handle LA and MA as well as other languages. Although such a claim may be warranted, it does not seem to be supported for LA and MA by the data Munn examines, as we discuss shortly.

## 2 The Theoretical Argument

Munn suggests a single-clause analysis with a conjoined subject for sentences like those in (4) and (5). He argues in favor of distinguishing syntactic and semantic plurality, whereby a singular DP can “refer” to a plurality of objects (e.g., *the group*) and a plural DP can refer to a single object (*pluralia tantum*; e.g., *the scissors*).

Munn reasons that this distinction is what is at stake in (7)–(9). Suppose that we are really dealing with a conjunction of DPs. Assume further that mere semantic plurality is insufficient to license the NSIs in (7)–(9); they require syntactic plurality. Under this assumption, if (7)–(9) contain a semantic plural that is not a syntactic plural, then we can explain why these sentences are ill formed. Following Munn’s reasoning the putative coordinated subject is indeed syntactically singular and therefore fails to license NSIs in (7)–(9).

Let us assume Munn is correct, and let us assume we are dealing with a conjunction of DPs that is semantically plural. Obviously the verb is marked singular in (4)–(5). What is the syntactic number of this conjunction of DPs? Is it syntactically singular or syntactically plural?

Suppose it is allowed to be syntactically plural. Then the ungrammaticality of (7)–(9) becomes mysterious: the NSIs do have a syntactically plural antecedent (namely, the conjunction of DPs) and the sentences should be fine. Note that it cannot be the case that these NSIs take a plural verb as “antecedent.” If such a conjunction of DPs is, for example, in object position, it can license NSIs without plural agreement being expressed on a verb or anything else.

- (13) a. gəlləst marwan w karim ħda bə<sup>7</sup>ḏhum (MA)  
 seated.1s Marwan and Karim near each.other  
 ‘I seated Marwan and Karim next to each other.’  
 b. <sup>7</sup>a<sup>77</sup>adt kariim w marwaan ħad ba<sup>7</sup>ḏun (LA)  
 seated.1s Karim and Marwan near each.other  
 ‘I seated Karim and Marwan near each other.’
- (14) a. šəft marwan w karim bžuzħum (MA)  
 saw.1s Marwan and Karim together  
 ‘I saw Marwan and Karim together.’  
 b. šəft karim w marwaan ma<sup>7</sup> ba<sup>7</sup>ḏun (LA)  
 saw.1s Karim and Marwan with each.other  
 ‘I saw Karim and Marwan together.’

Suppose then that this conjunction of proper name DPs cannot be syntactically plural; it must be syntactically singular. If a conjunction of proper names can be singular, it should be able to trigger singular agreement like a singular DP, even in the SV order. As far as we know, this is impossible in all Arabic dialects (but see footnote 4).

- (15) a. <sup>7</sup>omar w karim žaw (MA)  
 Omar and Karim came.3P  
 ‘Omar and Karim came.’

- b. kariim w marwaan ʿəʒo (LA)  
 Karim and Marwan came.3P  
 ‘Karim and Marwan came.’

There is however one imaginable way out: if it were claimed that a conjunction of DPs (specifically, two singular proper names) must be syntactically plural unless it agrees with a preceding verb in the singular, one could derive the facts. One problem is of course that this would be a restatement of the facts to account for. Another problem is that it seems too strong within Munn’s own analysis. He takes (though we wouldn’t) the lack of agreement in (16a) to be an instance of first conjunct agreement.

- (16) a. There is a cat and a dog in the bedroom.  
 b. There is a cat and a dog looking at each other.

The well-formedness of (16b) with a reciprocal—which in English (or varieties of English in which (16a) is well formed) requires a syntactically plural antecedent—shows that the conjunction of DPs is plural for the purposes of what follows it.

Another problem with Munn’s analysis is that he makes no explicit proposal about how first conjunct agreement works under the assumption that we are dealing with a conjunction of DPs. Although he argues that first conjunct agreement differs from specifier-head agreement, he proposes no theory of agreement that could be compared with or could replace the (standard) one adopted in ABS 1994.<sup>1</sup> We conclude that Munn’s position is wrong (for LA and MA) on both theoretical and empirical grounds.<sup>2</sup>

### 3 The Empirical Arguments

Having discussed the theoretical arguments for maintaining the account advanced in ABS 1994 for first conjunct agreement, we discuss next the empirical arguments based on Arabic data that Munn gives to reject it.

Munn offers the following empirical considerations favoring a conjoined-DP analysis over a conjoined-clause analysis. First, consider the following situation in LA or MA:

<sup>1</sup> An additional problem that Munn does not address is why there is no agreement with both conjuncts in the VS order given that the subject and the verb were in a specifier-head relation prior to the movement of the verb past the subject. For instance, there is strong evidence in MA based on the distribution of sentential negation and expletive subjects that in VS sentences the subject is in [Spec, IP] (or [Spec, TP]) and the verb is in a higher projection (Aoun and Benmamoun 1999, Benmamoun, forthcoming). Recall that Munn agrees that when the verb and the putative coordinated subject are in a specifier-head relation, the verb agrees with both conjuncts. The fact that in the VS order the subject is in [Spec, IP] ([Spec, TP]) can be taken to indicate that agreement under government is theoretically inadequate.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, this says nothing about languages in which the sentences corresponding to (7)–(9) are well formed. For example, the following sentences in English show that V DP agreement in *there*-insertion contexts does not behave like VS partial agreement in LA and MA (see also section 4):

- (i) a. There is a cat and a dog in the room.  
 b. ??There are a cat and a dog in the room.  
 c. There is a cat and a dog looking at each other.

## (17) V [DP-2P] and [DP-1s] . . . NSI

The verb may appear in the 1st person plural or in the 2nd person plural. The first is a case of full agreement, where the verb agrees with the conjoined DP *DP-2P and DP-1s*, which counts as 1st person plural (just as in English: e.g., *You and I like ourselves/\*yourselves/\*themselves*). The second is a case of partial agreement, where the verb agrees with the first conjunct only, which in ABS 1994 we analyze as clausal conjunction and which Munn analyzes as DP conjunction. Under the clausal conjunction analysis an NSI should not be licensed in the partial agreement case, but under a DP conjunction analysis it should be.

Munn claims that such sentences are grammatical. Unfortunately, we disagree; Munn reports the MA example he gives in (17b) (see our (18)) as well formed, but we find it deviant.

- (18) \*mšitu ntuma w ana məžmu<sup>7</sup>in (MA)  
 left.2P you.P and I together

Second, Munn remarks that if some elements require semantic plurality but do not require syntactic plurality, the two analyses make opposite predictions again. In ABS 1994 we claim that a partial agreement configuration consists of two clauses with singular subjects, whereas Munn claims that in such a configuration the conjunction is semantically plural but syntactically singular. The examples that require semantic plurality should be impossible under our analysis and acceptable under Munn's. The Arabic predicate 'form a circle around a tree' requires a semantically plural subject, and according to Munn the following examples (his (23a–d)) are well formed even though there is no clausal source for them:<sup>3</sup>

- (19) a. darət <sup>7</sup>alya w marwan dwira <sup>7</sup>la š-šəžra (MA)  
 formed.3FS Alia and Marwan (small) circle around the-tree  
 'Alia and Marwan formed a small circle around the tree.'  
 b. darət ž-žma<sup>7</sup>a dwira <sup>7</sup>la š-šəžra  
 formed.3FS the-group (small) circle around the-tree  
 'The group formed a small circle around the tree.'

<sup>3</sup> In ABS 1994 we indicate that first conjunct agreement cannot appear with intransitive 'meet' in LA or MA. Munn uses the data in (15a–b), given here as (ia–b), to show that *lta<sup>-</sup>a* 'meet' can only have plural agreement even though, according to him, *el-jama<sup>7</sup>a* 'the group' can have singular agreement with other verbs.

- (i) a. el-jama<sup>7</sup>a lta<sup>-</sup>o (LA)  
 the-group met.3P  
 b. \*el-jama<sup>7</sup>a lta<sup>-</sup>a  
 the-group met.3MS

However, in LA the word for 'group' is *al-mažmuu<sup>7</sup>a* and not *el-jama<sup>7</sup>a* as in Munn's (15a–b). When *jama<sup>7</sup>a* is replaced by *mažmuu<sup>7</sup>a*, the two sentences become unacceptable; in accord with our statement in ABS 1994, first conjunct agreement cannot appear with intransitive 'meet'.

- (ii) a. \*1-mažmuu<sup>7</sup>a lta<sup>-</sup>o (LA)  
 the-group met.3P  
 b. \*1-mažmuu<sup>7</sup>a lta<sup>-</sup>it  
 the-group met.3FS

- c. ʔəmlit ʔalya w marwaan ħal̄-a ħawl š-šazra (LA)  
 formed.3FS Alia and Marwan circle around the-tree  
 ‘Alia and Marwan formed a circle around the tree.’
- d. ʔəmlit l-mažmuuʔa ħal̄-a ħawl š-šazra  
 formed.3FS the group circle around the-tree  
 ‘The group formed a circle around the tree.’

These examples are indeed acceptable with the interpretation that Alia and Marwan or the group drew a circle around the tree (or formed a circle around it by using stones for instance). Moreover, this predicate ‘form a circle’ does not require a semantically plural subject as evidenced by the fact that syntactically and semantically singular NPs such as *Alia* can be substituted for the conjoined NP subjects in the sentences in (19).

Similarly, Munn points out that first conjunct agreement is possible in his (22a) even though *nəfs lə-ktab* ‘the same book’ requires a semantically plural subject as shown by the acceptability of his (22b) (Munn’s (22a–b) are given in (20a–b)).

- (20) a. qrat ʔalya w ʔomar nəfs lə-ktab (MA)  
 read.3FS Alia and Omar same the-book  
 ‘Alia and Omar read the same book.’
- b. qrat ž-žmaʔa nəfs lə-ktab  
 read.3FS the-group same the-book  
 ‘The group read the same book.’

It is not the case, however, that *nəfs lə-ktab* ‘the same book’ requires a semantically plural subject. The following sentence with a subject that is not semantically plural is perfectly acceptable:

- (21) qrat nadia nəfs lə-ktab (MA)  
 read.3FS Nadia same the-book  
 ‘Nadia read the same book.’

(21) has only one interpretation: namely, that Nadia read the same book as some other book prominent in the discourse. One might think that (20a–b) could be ambiguous between a reading similar to that of (21) and a reading where Alia and Omar (20a) or the group members (20b) read the same book as each other. However, the second reading does not obtain. In this respect, (20a) minimally contrasts with the ambiguous sentence (22), where the verb fully agrees with the conjoined postverbal subjects.

- (22) qraw ʔalya w ʔomar nəfs lə-ktab (MA)  
 read.3P Alia and Omar same the-book  
 ‘Alia and Omar read the same book.’

This being the case, (20a–b) cannot be used to support Munn’s analysis.

Finally, Munn discusses constructions in which the first conjunct ‘each woman’ binds a pronoun—‘her’—in the second conjunct, as in (23). These examples correspond to Munn’s (25a–d).

- (23) a. mšat kull mra w xu-ha (MA)  
 left.3FS each woman and brother-her  
 ‘Each woman and her brother left.’  
 b. qrat kull mra w wəld-ha qišša  
 read.3FS each woman and child-her story  
 ‘Each woman and her child read a story.’  
 c. raahit kəll mara w ʿəbna (LA)  
 left.3FS each woman and child.her  
 ‘Each woman and her child left.’  
 d. ʿəryit kəll mara w ʿəbna ʿəšša  
 read.3FS each woman and child.her story  
 ‘Each woman and her child read a story.’

These sentences are well formed in LA and MA and a priori seem to raise a problem for the conjoined-clause analysis. Indeed, in conjoined clauses the type of binding exemplified in (23) is not possible.

- (24) \*Each woman read a story and her child read a story.

This is an interesting point; to do it justice would require an elaborate discussion. We limit ourselves to a few remarks. Although binding of the sort illustrated in (23a) is allowed in a conjunction of DPs, it is not semantically neutral. Thus, both MA and LA display the following pattern:

- (25) a. karim w marwan dəhku (MA)  
 Karim and Marwan laughed.3P  
 ‘Karim and Marwan laughed.’  
 b. dəhku karim w marwan  
 laughed.3P Karim and Marwan  
 ‘Karim and Marwan laughed.’  
 c. dḥək karim w marwan  
 laughed.3MS Karim and Marwan  
 ‘Karim and Marwan laughed.’  
 d. karim dḥək w marwan dḥək  
 Karim laughed.3MS and Marwan laughed.3MS  
 ‘Karim laughed and Marwan laughed.’
- (26) a. kariim w marwaan ddaḥḥako (LA)  
 Karim and Marwan laughed.3P  
 ‘Karim and Marwan laughed.’  
 b. ddaḥḥako kariim w marwaan  
 laughed.3P Karim and Marwan  
 ‘Karim and Marwan laughed.’

- c. *ddaħħak kariim w marwaan*  
 laughed.3MS Karim and Marwan  
 ‘Karim and Marwan laughed.’
- d. *kariim ddaħħak w marwaan ddaħħak*  
 Karim laughed.3MS and Marwan laughed.3MS  
 ‘Karim laughed and Marwan laughed.’
- (27) a. *kull ražəl w wəld-u dəhku* (MA)  
 each man and child-his laughed.3P  
 ‘Each man and his child laughed.’
- b. *dəhku kull ražəl w wəld-u*  
 laughed.3P each man and child-his  
 ‘Each man and his child laughed.’
- c. *dəhkat kull ražəl w wəld-u*  
 laughed.3MS each man and child-his  
 ‘Each man and his child laughed.’
- (28) a. *kəll rəžžeel w ʔəbn-o ddaħħako* (LA)  
 each man and child-his laughed.3P  
 ‘Each man and his child laughed.’
- b. *ddaħħako kəll rəžžeel w ʔəbn-o*  
 laughed.3P each man and child-his  
 ‘Each man and his child laughed.’
- c. *ddaħħak kəll rəžžeel w ʔəbn-o*  
 laughed.3MS each man and child-his  
 ‘Each man and his child laughed.’

(25a–c) and (26a–c) are all ambiguous. They may mean that Karim and Marwan laughed independently; that is, they may have the same meaning as the clausal conjunction in (25d) and (26d). Alternatively, they may mean that Karim and Marwan laughed together—in other words, that there is a single laughing event in which both Karim and Marwan participated (what we may call the nondistributive or perhaps more appropriately the comitative reading). What is remarkable is that if there is binding from the first conjunct into the second, only the comitative reading is available. Thus, (27a–c) and (28a–c) are unambiguous. In each case there is a single laughing event in which both members of the pair (man, his child) participate.

This interpretive difference is unexpected under an analysis such as Munn’s that treats first conjunct agreement structures as identical to full agreement structures (differing only in how agreement is calculated on these structures). This interpretive difference between comitative and noncomitative readings correlates well with an analysis of noncomitative readings in the VS order as cases of clausal conjunction. What remains to be explained is why binding from the first conjunct into the second requires this comitative reading in MA and LA. We will not attempt this explanation here. Let us note however that it is conceivable—although certainly not neces-

sary—that, for these comitative constructions, an analysis such as Munn’s, where the second conjunct is adjoined to the first, is correct.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4 Agreement in Standard Arabic

Munn criticizes our 1994 analysis of the well-known agreement asymmetry in Standard Arabic (SA). This asymmetry involves number agreement. In the VS order the verb does not carry a plural morpheme, but in the SV order it does.

- (29) a. waqafa l-ʿawlaadu (VS: gender and person) (SA)  
 stood.3MS the-children  
 ‘The children stood up.’  
 b. ʿal-ʿawlaadu waqafu (SV: number, gender, and person)  
 the-children stood.3MP  
 ‘The children stood up.’

Munn rightly points out that in ABS 1994 we do not explain ‘how and why agreement is lost’ in SA. However, it is not clear how Munn’s proposal itself deals with this asymmetry. Moreover, the conclusion that he seems to draw—namely, that a parallel exists between the agreement pattern in VS order in SA and first conjunct agreement in VS order in LA and MA—is not warranted, in our view.

In ABS 1994 we argue that this asymmetry in SA is different from the asymmetry that obtains in the context of coordination in MA and LA. First, in sentences with postverbal simple plural subjects, number agreement is obligatory in MA and LA, as shown in (30)–(31).

- (30) a. wəqfu lə-wlad (MA)  
 stood.3P the-children  
 ‘The children stood up.’

<sup>4</sup> In this case we expect first conjunct agreement to be possible in both the VS order and the SV order. First conjunct agreement (with a comitative reading) in the SV order is possible under certain circumstances. Thus, (i) requires plural agreement on ‘left’; singular agreement becomes possible in (ii) especially with an intonation break between ‘every boy’ and the phrase containing the bound pronoun ‘his’.

- (i) a. karim w marwan mšaw/\*mša (MA)  
 Karim and Marwan left.3P/\*left.3MS  
 ‘Karim and Marwan left.’  
 b. kariim w marwaan daharo/\*dahar (LA)  
 Karim and Marwan left.3P/\*left.3MS  
 ‘Karim and Marwan left.’  
 (ii) a. kull wəld w bba-h, mša (MA)  
 every boy and father-his left.3MS  
 ‘Every boy and his father left.’  
 b. kəll walad w bayy-o, dahar (LA)  
 every boy and father-his left.3MS  
 ‘Every boy and his father left.’

We have no explanation for why first conjunct agreement is not systematically possible in the SV order.

- b. \*wəqf lə-wlad  
stood.3MS the-children
- (31) a. neemo l-wleed (LA)  
slept.3P the-children  
'The children slept.'
- b. \*neem l-wleed  
slept.3MS the-children

Second, in SA number agreement is not possible with postverbal conjoined subjects (32a–b). In MA and LA, however, number agreement is possible (32c–d).

- (32) a. žaa<sup>-</sup>a t-tullaab-u wa l-<sup>-</sup>asaatiðat-u (SA)  
came.3MS the-students-NOM and the-teachers-NOM  
'The students and the teachers came.'
- b. \*žaa<sup>-</sup>uu t-tullaab-u wa l-<sup>-</sup>asaatiðat-u (SA)  
came.3MP the-students-NOM and the-teachers-NOM  
'The students and the teachers came.'
- c. žaw <sup>7</sup>omar w karim (MA)  
came.3P Omar and Karim  
'Omar and Karim came.'
- d. raaħo kariim w marwaan (LA)  
left.3P Karim and Marwan  
'Karim and Marwan left.'

Finally, unlike in MA and LA ((8a–b) are repeated for convenience), the postverbal conjoined subject in SA can bind morphologically plural anaphors.<sup>5</sup>

- (33) žalasa kariim-un wa marwaan-u qurba ba<sup>7</sup>ðihimaa (SA)  
sat.3MS Karim-NOM and Marwan-NOM near each.other.DUAL  
'Karim and Marwan sat near each other.'
- (8) a. \*gləs <sup>7</sup>omar w karim ħda bə<sup>7</sup>ðhum (MA)  
sat.3MS Omar and Karim near each.other
- b. \*<sup>-</sup>a<sup>7</sup>ad kariim w marwaan ħad ba<sup>7</sup>ðun (LA)  
sat.3MS Karim and Marwan near each.other

The only conclusion that can emerge from these facts is that the pattern of agreement asymmetries that arises in the context of simple plural subjects in SA is different from the pattern of

<sup>5</sup> Note that in SA simple postverbal plural subjects can also bind morphologically plural anaphors.

- (i) žalasa t-tullaab-u qurba ba<sup>7</sup>ðihim (SA)  
sat.3MS the-students-NOM near each.other.P  
'The students sat near each other.'

agreement asymmetries that arises in the context of coordination in LA and MA. It is hard to see how this difference can be predicted by a unified account such as Munn's.

If this is correct, then we are left with the problem of how to account for the agreement asymmetry in the context of plural subjects in SA. This problem has been taken up by Aoun and Benmamoun (1999). They maintain the fundamental assumption made in ABS 1994 that number agreement always obtains in SA regardless of word order, though it may not be spelled out morphologically. Further, they argue that the reason why number agreement is not overtly realized on the verb is that the verb and the postverbal subject merge morphologically after Spell-Out. Since number is an inherent feature of DPs, it is realized on the subject, thus obviating the need for spelling out the number morpheme on the verb. In other words, the merger between the verb and the subject turns the subject into an exponent of the number morpheme, which is possible because that number is an inherent feature of the noun. Without going into the details of the analysis, we will give some of the evidence that Aoun and Benmamoun provide for the morphological merger account of the agreement asymmetry in SA.

When the subject is a null pronominal, number agreement must be spelled out by an affix, as shown by the fact that both the auxiliary verb and the main verb must carry number agreement in (34a–b).

- (34) a. *kun-na ya-kul-na* (SA)  
 was-3FP 3-eat-FP  
 'They were eating.'  
 b. \**kaan-at ya-kul-na*  
 was-3FS 3-eat-FP

Furthermore, when the subject is a *wh*-trace, number agreement must be spelled out by an affix.

- (35) a. *ayyu awlaad-in naḏaḥuu* (SA)  
 which.NOM children-GEN succeeded.3MP  
 'Which children succeeded?'  
 b. \**ayyu awlaad-in naḏaḥa*  
 which.NOM children-GEN succeeded.3MP  
 'Which children succeeded?'

For an element to merge and be an exponent of a feature, this element must itself be phonologically overt; pro and *wh*-traces do not qualify by definition. The only way to spell out number in (34) and (35) is via an affix on the verb.<sup>6</sup>

Although the merits of this analysis remain to be seen (see Benmamoun, forthcoming, for further discussion and an extension to other contexts of agreement in Arabic), the main point is that in SA the absence of the number affix on the verb in VS sentences has no impact syntactically

<sup>6</sup> It is easy to see how the same analysis accounts for why the verb shows number agreement in the SV order. Assuming subject raising, the verb is followed by a trace, a phonologically null copy of the subject, which cannot spell out the number feature on the verb.

as far as NSIs are concerned. In LA and MA, by contrast, first conjunct agreement affects the distribution of NSIs. This conclusion remains correct and is consistent with the analysis given in ABS 1994.

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