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The ‘believe’-construction in Standard Arabic¹

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This paper presents an analysis for the ‘believe’-construction in Standard Arabic (SA). The analysis proposed here assumes the VISIBILITY CONDITION, whereby structural Case is necessary to render arguments visible at LF for θ -role assignment (Aoun 1979, Chomsky 1981). The earlier approaches are untenable because they do not make proper provision for the Case-visibility requirements of the complement clause of ‘believe’. Thus, they are not extendable to SA since they ignore the Case-visibility requirements of the CP complement of *ǧanna* ‘believe’, assuming that CPs require Case for visibility (Uriagereka 2006, 2008). These requirements can be satisfied if we assume the distinction between structural Case and lexical case established in Al-Balushi (2011: 126–157) based on SA data, where structural Case is licensed on arguments and lexical case is assigned to non-arguments, nominals merged in A-bar positions. I thus propose that the Acc-marked DP (embedded subject/matrix object) does not receive structural Acc Case from the matrix v^*0 , but rather lexical Acc case from the matrix predicate *ǧanna*, as a lexical element, reserving the structural Acc Case for the CP argument. I also argue that this DP is an A-bar element, co-indexed with an empty category argument *pro* in the embedded clause.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relevant literature has two main approaches to accounting for the morphosyntax of the English construction in (1).

(1) John believes Mary/her to be smart.

These approaches are based on one of two main ideas, either Case assignment across the boundary of the complement clause, termed EXCEPTIONAL CASE MARKING (ECM), or movement to the matrix clause for Case assignment, termed RAISING-TO-OBJECT (R-to-O). A standard assumption for both approaches is that the Acc-marked DP in (1) is an argument of the embedded predicate and bears no thematic relationship with the matrix predicate.

[1] For my mother (1954–2015).

I would like to thank the editor as well as the three anonymous *Journal of Linguistics* reviewers for suggesting important revisions that improved this paper.

I use the following abbreviations: 1, 2, 3 = first, second, third person; ACC = accusative; AUX = auxiliary; CL = object pronominal clitic; COMP = complementizer; D = dual; DOM = differential object marker; ec = empty category; ENER = energetic; F = feminine; FUT = future; GEN = genitive; IMPF = imperfective; IMPR = imperative; IND = indicative; INTERRO = interrogative; JUSS = jussive; M = masculine; NEG = negative; NOM = nominative; P = plural; PASS = passive; PRS = present; PST = past; S = singular; SUB = subjunctive.