The role of modification in supporting specific readings of indefinite DPs is often remarked on. In Arabic, modifiers also effect the syntactic distribution of subjects. This talk investigates this relationship and its consequences for a theory of specificity.

Two subject positions in Arabic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Position</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Article Form</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>subject₁</td>
<td>l-waladu</td>
<td>ːāʔ-ːa</td>
<td>The child came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject₁</td>
<td>l-waladu</td>
<td>ːāʔ-ːa</td>
<td>The child came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject₂</td>
<td>l-ʔawlādu</td>
<td>ːāʔ-ʔū</td>
<td>The children came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject₁</td>
<td>l-bintu</td>
<td>ːāʔ-ʔat</td>
<td>The girl came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject₁</td>
<td>l-bintu</td>
<td>ːāʔ-ʔat</td>
<td>The girl came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject₁</td>
<td>l-banātu</td>
<td>ːīʔ-na</td>
<td>The girls came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject₂</td>
<td>l-banātu</td>
<td>ːīʔ-na</td>
<td>The girls came.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An indefinite subject may also occur in either the pre- or post-verbal position, but in the pre-verbal position it must bear a modifier (Cantarino, 1974; Bakir, 1980; Wright, 1981; Brustad, 2000; Mohammad, 2000; Holes, 2004).

(2) a. walad-un *(ṭawīl-un) ːāʔ-a.
   boy-NOM *(tall-NOM) came-3MS
   ‘A tall boy came.’

   b. ːāʔ-a  walad-un *(ṭawīl-un).
      came-3MS boy-NOM (tall-NOM)
      ‘A (tall) boy came.’

   (1)
English stage- and individual-level predicates show a similar distinction in the position of the subject (Kratzer, 1989; Diesing, 1992).

(3) a. A fireman is available.
   b. A fireman is intelligent.

(4) a. There is a fireman available.
   b. *There is a fireman intelligent.

(5) Diesing (1992)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
\text{DP}_i \\
\text{a fireman} \\
\text{T} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{t_i} \\
\text{V'} \\
\text{V} \\
\text{V'} \\
\text{V} \\
\end{array}
\]

a. available

b. intelligent

In contrast to subjects of stage-level predicates, indefinite subjects of individual-level predicates are ungrammatical without a modifier (Érteschik-Shir 1997; Hallman 2004).

(6) a. Are any firemen available?
   b. Yes, a fireman is available.

(7) a. Are any firemen in the watchtower?
   b. Yes, a fireman is in the watchtower.

(8) a. Are any firemen intelligent?
   b. *Yes, a fireman is intelligent.

(9) a. Are any firemen Polish?
   b. *Yes, a fireman is Polish.

(10) a. Are any firemen intelligent?
    b. Yes, a fireman in the third brigade is intelligent.
(11)  a. Are any firemen Polish?
    b. Yes, a fireman in the third brigade is Polish.

The fact that indefinite preverbal subjects in Arabic must always bear a modifier suggests they cannot escape the requirement by reconstruction. Independent support in Soltan (2007)

(12)  a. sabaq-a l-sayf-u l-Yaâl-a.
      preceded-3MS the-sword-NOM the-censure-ACC
      ‘It’s too late to do anything.’
      the-sword-NOM preceded-3MS the-censure-ACC

(13)  a. fâd-a l-kayl-u
      overflowed-3MS the-capacity-NOM
      ‘I am fed up.’
    b. * l-kayl-u fâd-a
      the-capacity-NOM overflowed-3MS

• Summary: In both English and Arabic, an indefinite DP in [spec,TP] must be modified. English allows reconstruction under some circumstances; Arabic doesn’t.

French subjects of certain predicates behave similarly (Galmiche, 1986, and references therein).

(14)  a. * Un vélo est jaune.
      ‘A bicycle is yellow.’
      ‘Men are embarrassed.’

(15)  a. * Un homme est grand/gentil.
      ‘A man is tall/nice.’
    b. * Une fille est eskimo.
      ‘A girl is an Eskimo.’

(16)  a. * Un homme a faim.
      ‘A man is hungry.’
    b. * Une femme est chauve.
      ‘A woman is bald.’
    c. * Des gens sont témoins de Jehovah.
      ‘People are Jehovah’s Witnesses.’

(17)  a. Une femme, que je rencontre chaque matin dans l’autobus et dont j’ai toujours admiré la coiffure, est, en fait, chauve.
      A woman, who I meet on the bus every morning and whose hair I had always admired, is, in fact, bald.
    b. Une femme que je connais est chauve.
      A woman who I know is bald.
Erteschik-Shir (1997):

(18) a. ??A student likes linguistics.
    b. A student who I know likes linguistics.

(19) \[\langle \text{A student}\rangle_{\text{FOC-SUB}} [\text{who I know [e]}]\langle \text{likes linguistics}\rangle_{\text{FOC}}

(20) a. ??Hans adores a dog.
    b. ??The queen of England has a fear of a mouse.
    c. ??This is a dissertation on a unicorn.

(21) a. Hans adores a dog I own.
    b. The queen of England has a fear of a mouse which keeps appearing in her kitchen.
    c. This is a dissertation on a unicorn which appears in a certain fairytale.

Fodor and Sag (1982): A modifier disambiguates a referential/quantificational ambiguity in favor of the referential reading.

(22) a. Sandy didn’t see a squirrel.
    b. Sandy didn’t see a squirrel that was chasing its tail around the oak tree.

(23) \((\alpha_\alpha : \Phi)\) denotes the unique individual \(i\) such that \(i = c_{IR}\) and \(\vDash cf_{\tau cTcW} \Phi\) if there is such; otherwise \(\dagger\).

It is not clear that the DP without the modifier is ambiguous:

(24) Sandy saw several squirrels...
    a. *but she didn’t see a squirrel.
    b. but she didn’t see a squirrel that was chasing its tail around the oak tree.

One possible take on these facts is that objects show a similar positional effect contingent on modification.
Do modified indefinites show any other hallmarks of specificity other than what is associated with their syntactic position?

**English—Definite Partitivity (as per Enç 1991)**

(26) a. *Sandy heard several squirrels rustling in her flower garden. She chased some away, but she didn’t see a squirrel.*
   b. Sandy heard several squirrels rustling in her flower garden. She chased some away, but she didn’t see a squirrel that was digging up her prized petunia.

(27) a. Some firemen were honored at the awards ceremony. A fireman from the third precinct was very emotional.
   b. Most firemen are tall, though a fireman from the 3rd precinct is rather short.

(28) a. The firemen in the 3rd precinct are quite negligent. Nonetheless, there’s a fireman in the watchtower at all times.
   b. The firemen in the 3rd precinct are quite negligent. Nonetheless, there’s a fireman in the watchtower at all times. It’s staffed entirely by firemen from the neighboring 7th precinct.

**English—Referentiality (in the sense of co-indexation with a syntactic antecedent)**

(29) Sandy heard a squirrel rustling in her flower garden, but she didn’t see a squirrel that was digging up her prized petunia.

(30) A fireman was honored at the awards ceremony. A fireman from the 3rd precinct was very emotional.

(31) There is a fireman singing and there is a fireman cooking.

**Familiarity condition (Heim, 1983)**

(32) Let $F$ be a file, $p$ an atomic proposition. Then $p$ is appropriate with respect to $F$ only if, for every noun phrase $NP_i$ with index $i$ that $p$ contains:
   a. if $NP_i$ is definite, then $i \in \text{Dom}(F)$
   b. and if $NP_i$ is indefinite, then $i \notin \text{Dom}(F)$

**Arabic—Definite Partitivity**

(33) taṣamma'ā ‐a ḥuṣārā?):u fi l-maqhā.
gathered‐3MS poets‐NOM in the‐cafe
‘Some poets gathered in the cafe.’
      poet‐NOM recited‐3MS poem‐ACC‐his the‐new‐ACC
      ‘A poet recited his new poem.’
   b. fāṣīr‐un ẓamīl‐u l‐ṣawt‐i ?alqā qaṣīdat‐a‐hu l‐ṣadīdat‐a.
      poet‐NOM beautiful the‐voice‐GEN recited‐3MS poem‐ACC‐his the‐new‐ACC
      ‘A poet with a nice voice recited his new poem.’

(34) katab‐a karīm‐un qaṣā?īd‐a.
wrote‐3MS kariim‐NOM poems‐ACC
‘Kariim wrote some poems.’

5
a. * qasīdat-un nufır-at  Yalā 所有情节-
    poem-NOM publishedPASS-3FS on  net-GEN  the-internet
    'A poem was published on the internet.'

b. qasīdat-un  qamīlat-un  nufır-at  Yalā 所有情节-
    poem-NOM  beautiful-NOM publishedPASS-3FS on  net-GEN  the-internet
    'A beautiful poem was published on the internet.'

(35)  a.  fāyīr-un  qamīl-u  l-ṣawt-i  ʔaℓqā  qasīdat-a-hu  l-ṣadīdat-a  fi  l-muntadā.
    poet-NOM  beautiful  the-voice-GEN  recited-3MS  poem-ACC-his  the-new-ACC  in  the-forumGEN
    'A poet with a nice voice recited his new poem at the forum.'

b. qasīdat-un  qamīlat-un  nufır-at  Yalā 所有情节-
    'A beautiful poem was published on the internet yesterday.'

(36)  qāʔ-a  ʔawlād-un  li-l-maʕab-i.
    came-3MS  children-NOM  to-the-playground-GEN
    'Some children went to the playground.'

a. walad-un  tawil-un  rama-a  ʔubbāk-an  bi-ḥaṣarat-in.
    child-NOM  tall-NOM  throw-3MS  window-ACC  with-rock-GEN
    'A tall child threw a rock at a window.'

b. walad-un  tawil-un  rama-a-hum  bi-ḥaṣarat-in.
    child-NOM  tall-NOM  throw-3MS-them  with-rock-GEN
    'A tall child threw a rock at them.'

Arabic—Referentiality

(37)  qāʔ-a  fāyīr-un  ʔilā  l-muntadā.
    came-3MS  poet-NOM  to  the-forumGEN
    'A poet came to the forum.'

a. fāyīr-un  qamīl-u  l-ṣawt-i  ʔaℓqā  qasīdat-a-hu  l-ṣadīdat-a.
    poet-NOM  beautiful  the-voice-GEN  recited-3MS  poem-ACC-his  the-new-ACC
    'A poet with a nice voice recited his new poem.'

b. ʔaℓqā  fāyīr-un  (qamīl-u  l-ṣawt-i)  qasīdat-a-hu  l-ṣadīdat-a.
    recited-3MS  poet-NOM  beautiful  the-voice-GEN  poem-ACC-his  the-new-ACC
    'A poet (with a nice voice) recited his new poem.'

c. wa  ttaʔal-ha  ʔanna-hu  l-fāyīr-u  ṭāt-u-hu.
    and  turned-out-3MS  that-him  the-poet-NOM  same-NOM-his
    'and it turned out it was the same poet.'

(38)  katab-a  kariim-un  qasīdat-an.
    wrote-3MS  kariim-NOM  poem-ACC
    'Kariim wrote a poem.'

a. qasīdat-un  qamīlat-un  nufır-at  Yalā 所有情节-
    poem-NOM  beautiful-NOM  publishedPASS-3FS  on  net-GEN  the-internet
    'A beautiful poem was published on the internet.'

b. nufır-at  qasīdat-un  (qamīlat-un)  Yalā 所有情节-
    publishedPASS-3FS  poem-NOM  beautiful-NOM  on  net-GEN  the-internet
    'A (beautiful) poem was published on the internet.'

c. wa  ttaʔal-ha  ʔanna-hu  l-qasīdat-u  ṭāt-u-ha.
    and  turned-out-3MS  that-it  the-poem-NOM  same-NOM-its
    'and it turned out it was the same poem.'
• Hypothesis 1: A modifier licenses an indefinite DP in a higher position than the DP would have been able to occur in without the modifier. The modified DP in the higher position does not show any signs of discourse anaphoricity of either the partitive or referential type (beyond what an existential quantifier shows). A modifier doesn’t make an indefinite specific, it just gives it higher scope.

(39) kaṭūr-un min l-suwwāh-i daxal-ū l-masjid-a.
many-NOM of the-tourists-GEN entered-3MP the-mosque-ACC
‘Many of the tourists entered the mosque.’

   but notPAST 3M-enter-s-it tourist-NOM
   ‘But no tourist entered it, *(40)’

   but notPAST 3M-enter-s-it tourist-NOM egyptian-NOM
   ‘But no egyptian tourist entered it, *(40)’
   ‘But an egyptian tourist didn’t enter it, ✓(40)’

(40) bal zūr-a l-sūq-a bi-ẓānib-i l-masjid-i.
rather visited-3MS the-market-ACC at-beside-GEN the-mosque-GEN
‘Rather, he visited the market next to the mosque.’

if 3M-die-S three-NOM of relatives-my, 1S-inherit house-ACC
‘If three relatives of mine die, I’ll inherit a house.’ (same range of meanings as English)

• Hypothesis 2: Modifiers have two independent effects: 1) they license a certain semantic attribute of the DP they occur in (e.g. “+specific”), and 2) they license the occurrence of the DP in a higher syntactic position than the DP would otherwise have been able to occur in. [+specific] is interpreted either as variable over choice functions, e.g. ε in von Heusinger (2002), or as a singleton-set deriving domain restriction (Schwarzschild, 2002).

(42) a condition: ε_i x [condition(x)]
   a. [[ε_i x[condition]]] = Φ_1([[condition]])
   b. Φ_1([[condition]]) ∈ ([[condition]])

• If hypothesis 2 is the correct approach, we can draw some conclusions about what the attribute [+specific] is associated with.

– If [+specific] is a choice function, It is not an optional interpretation of the indefinite article a or its unpronounced counterpart in Arabic.

– If [+specific] is a covert domain restriction, it is not the ubiquitous pragmatic restriction proposed by Stanley and Gendler Szabó (2000); Stanley (2002).

(43) a. Everyone answered every question.
   b. In most of his classes, John fails exactly three Frenchmen.
   c. In every room in John’s house, he keeps every bottle in the corner.
   d. The customer is always right.
   e. Usually, the sailor stops, but the marine goes on.

(44) Everyone answered every <question, f(i)>.
The variable $i$ is bound by the higher quantifier, context-given $f$ maps that person to the set of questions on that person’s exam.

(45) a. At the park, Sandy saw a $<\text{squirrel, } f(i)>$.
b. At the park, Sandy didn’t see a $<\text{squirrel, } f(i)>$.
c. At the park, Sandy didn’t see $\epsilon_{\text{park}} x \text{squirrel}(x)$.
d. At the park, Sandy didn’t see $\epsilon_{\text{speaker}} x \text{squirrel}(x)$.

(46) a. At the park, Sandy didn’t see a $[\text{squirrel and } <\text{that was chasing its tail around the tree, } f(i)>]$.
b. At the park, Sandy didn’t see a $[\text{squirrel and } \{\epsilon_{\text{park}} x \text{ (} x \text{ was chasing its tail around the tree)}\}]$.
c. At the park, Sandy didn’t see a $[\text{squirrel and } \{\epsilon_{\text{speaker}} x \text{ (} x \text{ was chasing its tail around the tree)}\}]$.

(47) a. *The police chief didn’t read a report.
b. *?The police chief didn’t read a report that someone bribed an officer.
c. The police chief didn’t read a report that someone published on the internet.

(48) a. *A report is well written.
b. *?A report that it’s going to rain this morning is well written.
c. A report that Mary submitted this morning is well written.

(49) a. *A rumor is baseless.
b. *?A rumor that someone is planning a terrorist attack is baseless.
c. A rumor that someone posted on the internet is baseless.

(50) a. *The police chief didn’t act on a rumor.
b. The police chief didn’t act on a rumor that someone was planning a terrorist attack.
c. The police chief didn’t act on a rumor that someone was circulating on the internet.

(51) a. *bayaan-un kaʃafa daʃf-an fii jihaaz-i l-ʔamin-i.
report-NOM exposed weakness-ACC in apparatus-GEN the-security-GEN
‘A report exposed a weakness in the security apparatus.’
b. *bayaan-un ʔanna fajx-ʃ-an jaaʔa bi-qunbulat-in ʔilaʔa l-minṭaqaṭ-i l-xaḍraʔaʔ-i
report-NOM that someone-ACC came with-bomb-GEN to the-zone-GEN the-green-GEN
kaʃafa daʃf-an fii jihaaz-i l-ʔamin-i.
exposed weakness-ACC in apparatus-GEN the-security-GEN
‘A report that someone entered the Green Zone with a bomb exposed a weakness in the security apparatus.’
c. bayaan-un naʃara-hu fjax-ʃ-un ʔalā fjabakat-i l-internet kaʃafa daʃf-an fii
report-NOM published-it someone-NOM on net-GEN the-internet exposed weakness-ACC in
jihaaz-i l-ʔamin-i.
apparatus-GEN the-security-GEN
‘A report that someone published on the internet exposed a weakness in the security apparatus.’
References


