Morphosyntactic Effects of NPI-Licensing in Cairene Egyptian Arabic: The Puzzle of -š Disappearance Resolved

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1. A morphosyntactic puzzle from NPI contexts in Cairene Egyptian Arabic

Like several other Arabic dialects, Cairene Egyptian Arabic (CEA, henceforward) exhibits a two-pattern negation system: (i) *the circumfixal maa…š-pattern*, which is used, among other contexts, with perfective verb forms, where the predicate appears sandwiched between both negation elements, forming one morphological unit, as in (1a); and (ii) *the independent miš-pattern*, which is used, among other contexts, with imperfective verb forms, where the predicate follows the negation marker *miš*, without them forming a unit, as with the future verb form in (1b).[1]

(1) a. maa-saafir-t-i-š   b. miš   ħa-saafir
         NEG-travel.PERF-1SG-EV-NEG   NEG   FUT-travel.IPFV.1SG
         'I did not travel.'   'I will not travel.'

As (2) shows, the *-š* segment of the negation morpheme is obligatory in both patterns.

(2) a. *maa-saafir-t   b. *maa   ħa-saafir
          NEG-travel.PERF-1SG   NEG   FUT-travel.IPFV.1SG
         'I did not travel.'   'I will not travel.'

Interestingly, when the Negative Polarity Item (NPI) *ʕumr* (= 'ever;' literally = 'life/age') occurs in pre-negative position in the sentence, negation is expressed by *maa* only, as shown in (3a,c), and the *-š* segment is not allowed to surface (cf. the ungrammaticality of (3b,d)).[2]

(3) a. ʕumr-ii   maa-saafir-t   Masr
         ever-my   NEG-travel.PERF-1SG   Egypt
         'I have never traveled to Egypt.'
     b. *ʕumr-ii   maa-saafir-t-i-š   Masr
         ever-my   NEG-travel.PERF-1SG-EV-NEG   Egypt
     c. ʕumr-ii   maa   ħa-saafir   Masr
         ever-my   NEG   FUT-travel.IPFV.1SG   Egypt
         'I will never travel to Egypt.'

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[1] The following abbreviations are used in the glosses of data: 1, 2, 3 for first, second, and third person, respectively; SG = singular; PL = plural; M = masculine; F = feminine; NEG = negation; FUT = future; COMP = complementizer; PERF = perfective; IPFV = imperfective; PTCP = participial; Q = question-particle; ACC = accusative; IND = indicative; EV = epenthetic vowel.
[2] For convenience, I will translate *ʕumr* + negation as 'never' throughout, rather than the literal 'not ever.'

    d.   *ʕumr-ii   miš   ħa-saafir   Masr
        ever-my   NEG   FUT-travel.IPFV.1SG Egypt

As a marked option in the language, the NPI *ʕumr* may also occur in postverbal position, in which case the -*š* segment is obligatorily realized, as shown in (4).

(4) a.   maa-saafir-t-i-*(š)   Masr   ʕumr-ii
          NEG-travel.PERF-1SG-EV-*(NEG) Egypt   ever-my
          'I have never traveled to Egypt.'
    b.   miš/*maa   ħa-saafir   Masr   ʕumr-ii
          NEG/NEG   FUT-travel.IPFV.1SG Egypt   ever-my
          'I will never travel to Egypt.'

In addition, the NPI *ʕumr* itself may host negation, in which case the suffix -*š* is also required.

(5) a.   maa-ʕumr-ii-*(š)   saafir-t   Masr
          NEG-ever-my-NEG   travel.PERF-1SG   Egypt
          'I have never traveled to Egypt.'
    b.   maa-ʕumr-ii-*(š)   ħa-saafir   Masr
          NEG-ever-my-NEG   FUT-travel.IPFV.1SG Egypt
          'I will never travel to Egypt.'

Two main questions arise with regard to the facts described above: First, how can we provide a principled account for the puzzle of -*š* disappearance with *ʕumr*? Second, what are the implications of this morphosyntactic fact for the analysis of sentential negation in CEA in general? In this paper I provide answers to both questions in terms of a *Split-Neg* analysis of sentential negation in CEA, whereby the -*š* segment is treated as a separate head subject to an interface condition that regulates Spell-out of formal features in multiple licensing configurations at the syntax-morphology interface.

      The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 discusses two analyses of the status of the -*š* segment of the negation morpheme in Arabic dialects, concluding that neither approach is adequate enough to account for the morphosyntactic puzzle under study. In Section 3, I provide a solution for the puzzle of -*š* disappearance by appeal to the notion of "formal negativity" of a lexical item, as well as a dialect-internal asymmetry between different NPIs in their interaction with -*š*. Section 4 provides a minimalist implementation of the solution from Section 3 in terms of (i) a Split-Neg analysis of sentential negation in CEA, and (ii) an interface condition that regulates Spell-out of formal features in multiple licensing configurations. Section 5 is a brief discussion of the implications of the analysis at both the cross-linguistic and cross-dialectal levels. Section 6 sums up the conclusions of the paper.

2. Previous analyses of the grammatical status of -*š*

      Clearly, any solution to the puzzle of -*š* disappearance will be tied to how -*š* is treated in the grammar. There have been two main approaches regarding the syntactic status of -*š* in Arabic dialects: (i) -*š* as a Spec of NegP (along the lines suggested for French *ne…pas* in Pollock 1989, Ouhalla 1990, and Moritz and Valois 1994), and (ii) -*š* as part of a discontinuous Neg morpheme (as proposed in Benmamoun 1997, 2000, Bahloul 1996, Aoun *et al* 2010). The structure of NegP under both approaches is as in (6a,b), respectively.

(6) a.   NegP   b.   NegP

        Spec   Neg'   Spec   Neg'
        -*š*

              Neg   …   Neg   …
              maa   *maa…š*

The complementary distribution between -*š* and *ʕumr* noted above may seem to favor an analysis of sentential negation in CEA as in (6a), under the assumption that both elements are competing for the same position, i.e., SpecNegP. The main problem with this analysis, however, is that it does not extend to account for the interaction between -*š* and other NPIs in CEA. In particular, the NPI *lissah* (= 'yet') has the same distribution of *ʕumr* in that it may occur in both pre- and post-negative position, but, unlike with *ʕumr*, the realization of -*š* is always obligatory with *lissah*, as shown in (7).

(7) a. Mona lissah maa-saafir-it-*(š)
   Mona yet NEG-travel.PERF-3SGF-NEG
   'Mona has not traveled yet.'
  b. Mona maa-saafir-it-*(š)   lissah
   Mona NEG-travel.PERF-3SGF-NEG yet
   'Mona has not traveled yet.'

Recall also from the examples in (4) that -*š* has to surface when *ʕumr* is in postverbal position. The same holds of other postverbal NPIs in the language such as *ʔayy* (= 'any') and the adverbial *xaaliṣ* (= 'at all'), both of which require the -*š* to surface.

(8) a. ʔanaa maa-šuf-t-i-*(š)   ʔayy ħaagah
   I   NEG-see.PERF-1SG-EV-NEG any thing
   'I didn't see anything.'
  b. ʔanaa maa-šuf-t-i-*(š)   ħaagah xaaliṣ
   I   NEG-see.PERF-1SG-EV-NEG thing at all
   'I didn't see anything at all.'

I conclude then that the lack of complementary distribution between -*š* and most NPIs in CEA provides evidence against the analysis of -*š* as a Spec of NegP; hence, the structure in (6a) cannot help us resolve the puzzle under consideration.[3]

The same is also true of the discontinuous Neg head analysis in (6b). Aside from the fact that "this analysis may not be elegant," as Aoun *et al* (2010:106) themselves point out, it is not at all clear how to tie the presence of an NPI to -*š* disappearance under this analysis, let alone why this would occur with some NPIs, but not with others. In addition, the discontinuous Neg head analysis forces us to assume a rule at the sub-morphemic level. Neither Benmamoun (1997, 2000), Bahloul (1996), nor Aoun *et al* (2010), provide a possible rule. But even if we were able to formulate such a rule, it is not clear why it is always the -*š* segment, and not the preverbal *maa* marker, that disappears in such contexts. In other words, it remains mysterious why sentences like (9) below are not possible in CEA.

(9) *ʕumr-ii saafir-t-i-š   Masr
   ever-my travel.PERF-1SG-EV-NEG Egypt
   Intended reading: 'I have never traveled to Egypt.'

I, therefore, conclude that the discontinuous head analysis of sentential negation in Arabic dialects is not adequate to account for the puzzle under discussion.

To summarize this section, I have discussed two previous analyses of the structure of NegP in Arabic dialects, concluding that neither one of them is able to account for the puzzle of -*š* disappearance in CEA. As an alternative, in Section 4, I propose that a Split-Neg analysis of NegP structure in CEA, whereby -*š* is treated as a separate "formally negative" head, distinct from *maa*, the head of semantic negation, should help us resolve the puzzle under study. Before I discuss the details of such an analysis, however, I spend the next section providing a descriptive solution for the puzzle.

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[3] Another argument against the SpecNegP-analysis of -*š*, albeit a theory-internal one, has to do with whether or not multiple specifiers of a single head are allowed. In a framework that allows multiple specifiers (e.g., Chomsky 1995), an explanation for the complementary distribution between two elements in terms of their "competing" for a single Spec position does not hold any more.

3. Figuring out a solution to the puzzle: Why is *ʕumr* different?

In this section, I propose that the key to the solution of the puzzle of -*š* disappearance in CEA has to do with the "formal negativity" (or lack thereof) associated with different NPIs. In particular, I propose that some NPIs are formally marked as negative, and that the overt realization of -*š* is only compatible with those "negative NPIs."[4] Formal negativity can be determined by an item's synchronic behavior in the language, and also by considering its diachrony. Below, I discuss this with regard to the two NPIs *ʕumr* and *lissah*, as well as the -*š* segment of the negation morpheme.

One test to determine the formal negativity of a lexical item is whether or not it is compatible with nonnegative environments such as interrogatives or the protasis of a conditional. As it turns out, the NPI *ʕumr* may indeed occur in such contexts, as (10) shows, which suggests that it is nonnegative.

(10) a.　ʔinta　ʕumr-ak　　saafir-it　　　　　Masr?
　　　　　you　　ever-you　travel.PERF.2SGM　Egypt
　　　　　'Have you ever traveled to Egypt?'
　　　b.　law　　ʕumr-ak　　saafir-it　　　　　Masr　laazim　　tə-zuur　　　　ʔaswaan
　　　　　if　　ever-you　travel.PERF.2SGM　Egypt　must.PTCP　IPFV.visit.2SGM　Aswan
　　　　　'If you ever travel to Egypt, you must visit Aswan.'

The NPI *lissah*, by contrast, cannot appear in questions, except in the presence of the overt negative morpheme *walla* (11a), nor in conditionals (11b), which suggests that it is negative.

(11) a.　Aḥmad　　gih　　　　　　　*(wallaa)　lissah?
　　　　　Aḥmad　come.PERF.3SGM　or.not　　　yet
　　　　　'Has Aḥmad come or not yet?'
　　　b.　*law　Aḥmad　　gih　　　　　　　lissah　　…
　　　　　if　　Aḥmad　come.PERF.3SGM　yet
　　　　　'*If Aḥmad arrived yet, …'

A second diagnostic for the formal negativity of an NPI is whether it may occur as a fragment answer. As it turns out, while *ʕumr* may not occur in that function (12b), *lissah* can (13b).[5]

(12) a.　*Question*:　ʔinta　saafir-t　　　　　Masr　ʔabl　kidah?　b. *Answer*:　*ʕumr-ii
　　　　　　　　　　you　　travel.PERF-1SGM　Egypt　before　this　　　　　　　　ever-my
　　　　　　　　　　'Have you traveled to Egypt before?'　　　　　　　　　　　　'Never.'
(13) a.　*Question*:　huwwa　Mona　wasal-it?　　　　　　　　b. *Answer*:　lissah
　　　　　　　　　　Q　　　　Mona　arrive.PERF.3SGF　　　　　　　　　　　　　yet
　　　　　　　　　　'Has Mona arrived?'　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　'Not yet.'

Now, consider the -*š* segment. Like *lissah*, but unlike *ʕumr*, the -*š* segment is ungrammatical in questions and conditionals, as the ungrammaticality of the examples in (14) shows,[6] thereby suggesting that it is also an element marked for formal negativity.[7]

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[4] The proposal is familiar from work on *negative concord items*, which have been argued to be "negative," as opposed to NPIs of the *any*-type, which are assumed to be nonnegative. See the discussion of fragment answers in the text as well as in fn. 5 below for implications of the proposal to the study of polarity-sensitive items in general.

[5] The contrast between *ʕumr* and *lissah* in (12-13) with regard to their ability to occur as fragment answers bears on the debated issue of the status of fragment answers (see, for example, Giannakidou 1998, 2009, and Watanabe 2004). In particular, what this contrast shows is that presence of negation in the elided material is not enough a condition to license an NPI remnant as a fragment answer; rather, the negation has to be also recoverable from the lexical (i.e., formally negative) properties of that remnant.

[6] For some (usually older) speakers, use of -*š* alone in questions such as (14a) may be marginally acceptable, but for the author and his informants such cases are ungrammatical, hence the star.

[7] As we should expect, the fragment answer diagnostic cannot be applied to the -*š* segment given its affixality.

(14) a. *šuft-i-š   Aḥmad   ʔil-nahaar-dah?
        see.PERF.2SGM-EV-NEG   Ahmad   the-day-this
        Intended reading: 'Did you see Ahmad today?'
    b. *law šuft-i-š   Aḥmad   ʔil-nahaar-dah   …
        if   see.PERF.2SGM-EV-NEG   Ahmad   the-day-this
        Intended reading: 'If you saw Ahmad today, …'

On the other hand, when we consider the diachrony of the three items, we also arrive at the same conclusions regarding the negativity status of each. *ʕumr* is historically derived from the noun *ʕumr* (= 'life/age'), which is still productive in the language, and is, thus, nonnegative in origin. The origin of *lissah*, by contrast, while not as clear, seems to be negative: It may have been derived either from *laysa*, a negation marker from Classical Arabic, or from the phrase *laa li-s-saʕah* (literally, 'not to the hour'), which includes the negative marker *laa*. As for -*š*, it is generally assumed to be a phonological reduction of the Classical Arabic noun *šayʔ* (literally = 'a thing') in its accusative adverbial NPI function, as in the Quranic verse in (15) below (cited in Lucas 2010), hence its origin is also negative.

(15) ʔinna   ʔallah-a   laa   ya-ẓlim-u   ʔal-naas-a   šayʔ-an
      COMP   Allah-ACC   NEG   IPFV-be.unjust-IND   the-people-ACC   thing-ACC
      wa-lakinna   ʔal-naas-a   ʔanfus-a-hum   ya-ẓlim-uun
      and-but   the-people-ACC   selves-ACC-their   IPFV-be.unjust-IND   (*Qur'an* 10:44)
      'Allah is not unjust to people one bit; it is they who are unjust to themselves.'

To sum up, I have presented both synchronic and diachronic evidence indicating that while the NPI *ʕumr* is formally nonnegative, the NPI *lissah* and the -*š* segment of the negation morpheme are both formally negative. Adding the negation marker *maa*, which is the locus of semantic negation, to the list, we can summarize the grammatical properties of the four items as in table (16).

(16)	-*š*	*lissah*	*ʕumr*	*maa*
Diachronic origin	Noun used as an NPI: *šayʔ-an*	Probably from a negative marker	Noun meaning 'age/life': *ʕumr*	Negative morpheme: *maa*
Compatibility with nonnegative contexts	No	No	Yes	
Occurrence as a fragment answer	N/A	Yes	No	
Negativity status	Formal	Formal	Nonnegative	Semantic

Given Table (16), we are now in a better position to resolve the puzzle of -*š* disappearance in CEA. Descriptively speaking, the core fact may be restated as follows: The -*š* segment, a formally negative element, disappears in the presence of a nonnegative NPI such as *ʕumr*, but is retained in the presence of a negative NPI such as *lissah*. The phenomenon, however, is sensitive to locality: -*š* only disappears when *ʕumr* is "close by" (i.e., in pre-negative position) but not when it is relatively distant (i.e., in postverbal position), as shown earlier by the contrast between (3) and (4). We may thus restate the puzzle of -*š* disappearance in the form of the descriptive generalization in (17).

(17) Within a local domain, -*š* is not spelled-out in the presence of an NPI that is formally nonnegative; otherwise it is phonologically realized.

The question now becomes: How do we derive (17) in a principled manner at the syntax-morphology interface? I provide an implementation in the next section.

4. Implementing the solution: A Split-Neg analysis of sentential negation in CEA

To derive the generalization in (17) in a principled manner, I follow Soltan (2011) in adopting a *Split Neg* analysis of sentential negation in CEA, whereby *maa* is a (Pol)arity head, the locus of interpretable negation (marked as an [iNeg] feature), and *-š* is a Neg head specified for an uninterpretable negative feature (marked as [uNeg]).[8] Licensing of [uNeg] takes place under *Agree* between Pol and Neg, in a (modified) sense of Chomsky (2000, 2001),[9] as illustrated in (18), ignoring irrelevant details.[10]

(18)

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                PolP
              /      \
          Spec        Pol'
                    /      \
              Pol_maa        NegP
              [iNeg]       /      \
                       Spec        Neg'
              Agree             /      \
                          Neg_-š        TP
                          [uNeg]      /    \
                                    T       …
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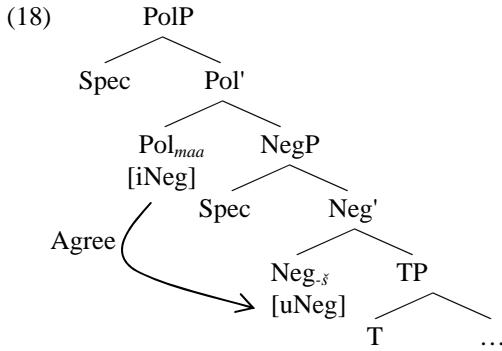
In addition to being semantically licensed by Pol (either under *downward entailment* in the sense of Ladusaw 1979, or *nonveridicality* in the sense of Giannkidou 1998), I also assume that some NPIs require "formal" licensing. In particular, based on Table (16), I assume that formally negative NPIs (e.g., *lissah*) are endowed with a [uNeg] feature, while nonnegative NPIs (e.g., *ʕumr*) are not. Those that have a [uNeg] feature are licensed by Pol, either via Agree, or in a Spec-head configuration.[11]

I will further assume that "local domain" in the descriptive generalization in (17) corresponds to the minimalist notion *phase* (i.e., CP and *v*P, following Chomsky 2001). Finally, I restate the generalization in (17) as an interface condition on the Spell-out of formal features licensed in the syntax, as in (19).

(19) *Minimize Formal Feature Mismatch* (MFFM): At Spell-out, minimize formal feature mismatch on licensees of the same licenser within a local domain.[12]

Given these background assumptions, we can now see why *-š* disappears with pre-negative *ʕumr*, but not with pre-negative *lissah*, given the representations in (20) and (21).

(20) [$_{CP}$ [$_{PolP}$ *ʕumr* Pol$_{[iNEG]}$ [$_{NegP}$ Neg$_{[\text{uNEG}]}$ [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ …]]]]]
    Spec-head ⌒   ⌒ Agree ⟋

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[8] The Split-Neg analysis adopted here is an adaptation of the approach to negation and negative concord proposed in Zeijlstra (2004, 2008).

[9] This is a modified version of Agree because the so-called *Probe* is actually an interpretable feature looking for a *Goal* with a matching uninterpretable feature in its c-command domain. This has been suggested in a number of places in the minimalist literature on syntactic agreement; see Zeijlstra (2004, 2008) and references cited there.

[10] I assume here, following Diesing and Jelinek (1995) and Soltan (2007, 2011), and contra Benmamoun (1997, 2000), Ouhalla (2002), Shlonsky (1997), and Aoun *et al* (2010), that NegP is higher than TP in the clausal hierarchy in Arabic dialects. In Soltan (2011), I provide empirical evidence for attested negation patterns from Sharqeyyah Egyptian Arabic as well as from Egyptian Arabic child language that cannot be accounted for if NegP were lower than TP. For considerations of space here, I refer the reader to this article for data and discussion.

[11] Benmamoun (1997) provides convincing arguments for the need to have both modes of licensing (c-command and Spec-head agreement) to account for the syntactic behavior of NPIs in Moroccan Arabic. The same considerations carry over to CEA, hence I follow his assumptions here.

[12] It should be noted here that for the purposes of MFFM, both semantic and syntactic licensing counts.

(21) [CP [PolP *lissah*[uNEG] Pol[iNEG] [NegP Neg[uNEG] [TP T [vP …]]]]]
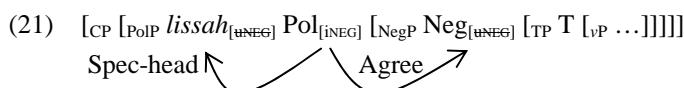
       Spec-head   Agree

While semantic licensing under Spec-head agreement with Pol in both structures is unproblematic, syntactic licensing of the [uNeg] feature on Neg via Agree leads to mismatch in (20), but not in (21), hence forcing -*š* to delete in the former, but not in the latter, as required by (19).[13]

    Similarly, the fact that postverbal *ʕumr* does not induce -*š* deletion in representations such as (22) follows from MFFM being sensitive to locality, defined in phasal terms.

(22) [CP [PolP Pol[iNEG] [NegP Neg[uNEG] [TP T [vP … *ʕumr*]]]]]

            Agree   NPI-License
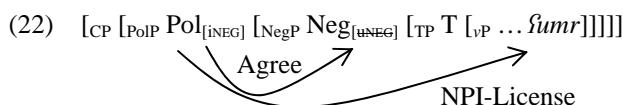
Since postverbal NPIs are within the *v*P phase, whereas -*š* is always in the CP phase, feature mismatch is rendered irrelevant at Spell-out and -*š* is always retained in such contexts (presumably due to an input-output faithfulness constraint militating against deletion of lexical material).

    A question arises, however, with the fact noted earlier that -*š* has to surface when *ʕumr* itself hosts circumfixal negation (cf. example 5), contrary to what we expect under the present analysis, since both elements are arguably in the same phase in that case. Two questions arise here: First, why is *ʕumr* able to host negation in the first place? Second, why does -*š* surface in that case? I discuss each in turn.

    For the first question, I suggest that, given its monosyllabicity, *ʕumr* has been reanalyzed as a preposition in the language. PPs in CEA can host negation, provided that their complement is a pronominal (23b); cf. Eid (1993). A *ʕumr*-phrase, being a PP, is, therefore, able to host negation.

(23) a. ʕand-ii   ʕarabiyyah   b. maa-ʕand-ii-š   ʕarabiyyah
       at-me   car   NEG-at-me-NEG   car
       'I have a car.'   'I don't have a car.'

    As to why -*š* does not disappear when *ʕumr* hosts negation, there are multiple possibilities to pursue. One is that the MFFM interface principle in (19) does not apply at the single prosodic word level; rather, it applies only when the mismatched features occur on different prosodic words. A second possibility is to assume that in such contexts it is actually Neg, after being licensed by Pol, that licenses the NPI *ʕumr*, now Merged in SpecTP, as shown in the representation in (24).

(24) [CP [PolP Pol[iNEG] [NegP Neg[uNEG] [TP *ʕumr* T [vP …]]]]]

            Agree   NPI-License
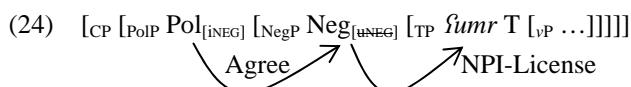
Under that scenario, Neg and *ʕumr* in (24) are not multiple licensees of the same licenser, and MFFM is rendered inoperative. A third possibility is to assume that TP is a phase in CEA, or to re-define locality in non-phasal terms.[14] Whatever the correct analysis turns out to be, the fact that -*š* is phonologically realized when *ʕumr* hosts negation is still reconcilable with the analysis presented here.

    To sum up the discussion in this section, a solution to the puzzle of -*š* disappearance in CEA is indeed possible if we adopt a Split-Neg analysis of sentential negation in the language, coupled with standard minimalist assumptions regarding formal feature licensing, and an interface condition regulating Spell-out of these formal features in multiple licensing configurations. If correct, the analysis provides evidence that NPI-licensing is not only a semantic dependency, but that, in certain instances, it does also involve formal feature licensing in a minimalist sense, with consequences at the syntax-morphology interface.

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[13] I'm using "delete" here rather descriptively. In an alternative framework where lexical material is late-inserted (such as Halle and Marantz' (1993) *Distributed Morphology*), the process would simply be "*Don't Spell-out*."

[14] In Soltan (2007), I argue that TP is part of the A'-domain in Standard Arabic and presumably in all other Arabic dialects as well. If this analysis is correct, then treating TP as a phase in CEA is not as stipulative as it may seem.

5. Brief remarks on cross-linguistic and cross-dialectal implications

In Section 4, I have proposed MFFM as an interface condition regulating Spell-out in multiple licensing configurations. A question immediately arises as to the implications of such a condition at both the cross-linguistic and cross-dialectal levels. Since a full discussion of such implications is obviously beyond the scope of this paper, I provide brief remarks in this section on the issue, hoping for future research to shed more light on the feasibility of MFFM as a universal interface condition.

Cross-linguistically, there seems to be evidence for the feasibility of MFFM, since multiple licensing configurations discussed in the minimalist literature are typically characterized by feature match, e.g., multiple nominative structures in Japanese derived via Multiple Agree (Hiraiwa 2001), multiple accusative constructions in Standard Arabic (Soltan 2002), and multiple negative concord structures in West Flemish derived via Binary Agree (Haegeman and Lohndal 2010). Such facts thus suggest that MFFM is on the right track as a general condition on multiple licensing configurations.

On the cross-dialectal level, it should be noted that not all Arabic dialects behave like CEA. Moroccan Arabic (MA), for example, dispenses with -*š* in all NPI contexts, whether the NPI is in pre- or post-negative position, and regardless of the NPI's negativity status (data from Benmamoun 2006).

(25) a. ma-qrit(*-š)   ħətta   kitab
          NEG-came.3SGM   even   book
          'I didn't read any book.'
      b. ma-ža(*-š)   ħətta   waħəd
          NEG-came.3SGM   even   one
          'No one came.'
      c. ħətta   waħəd   ma-ža(*-š)
          even   one   NEG-came.3SGM
          'No one came.'
      d. Nadya   ʕommɔr-ha   ma-žat(*-š)
          Nadya   ever-her   NEG-came.3SGF
          'Nadya never came.'
      e. Omar   baqi   ma-ža(*-š)
          Omar   yet   NEG-came.3SGM
          'Omar hasn't come yet.'

Dialects like MA thus do not seem to be sensitive to MFFM in NPI contexts. This could be due to two reasons. One possibility is that MA is in a *pre-Split-Neg* stage, with the -*š* segment still occupying SpecNegP, hence the complementary distribution with all NPIs (cf. Ouhalla 2002; see also Gelderen 2008 for a discussion of negative cycles cross-linguistically). Alternatively, one can still assume a Split-Neg structure for MA, but where MFFM is being overridden by another Spell-out constraint along the lines of "*In multiple licensing configurations, Spell-out less, when possible*." If correct, this latter approach would indicate that the mapping from the syntax to the morphophonology is subject to constraint interaction of the kind suggested in *Optimality Theory* (cf. Prince and Smolensky 1993), an interesting topic I leave for future research (but see Pesetsky 1998 for a similar conclusion).

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that a Split-Neg analysis of sentential negation in CEA allows us to formulate a principle to target the -*š* segment for deletion at Spell-out in certain NPI contexts. This principle is crucially tied to the grammatical status of -*š*, the negativity (or lack thereof) of the different NPIs in the language, as well as how local the -*š* and the NPI are with respect to one another. I have also briefly explored some potential implications of the present analysis at the cross-linguistic and cross-dialectal levels. If correct, the analysis not only explains away a morphosyntactic puzzle from NPI contexts in CEA, but it also provides evidence that NPI phenomena, in addition to being a semantic dependency, may also involve formal feature licensing in a minimalist sense, with effects at the syntax-morphology interface.

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