



## The Syntax Of The Wh-Subject In Ha'il Arabic

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### Abstract

This article aims to investigate the syntax of the Wh-subject in Hail Arabic (HA), a dialect spoken in the north Najd region in Saudi Arabia. It employs Chomsky's (2000, 2001) feature-checking theory and Rizzi's (1997) Split CP hypothesis. This paper demonstrates that the wh-subject can appear in three positions: the specifier position of Tense Phrase [spec, TP], the specifier position of Finiteness Phrase [spec, FinP], and the specifier position of Focus Phrase [spec, FocP]. The study addresses the following question: how is interrogation licensed while the subject is in [Spec, TP] or [Spec, FinP]? To answer this question, I assume, following Gad (2011), that interrogation is licensed via LF movement of an operator [Op] that bears a strong [wh] feature. This operator moves covertly to [spec CP] to license interrogation. I assume that the complementizer *illi* 'that' heads the FinP. It bears an EPP feature that attracts the Wh-subject adjoining its Spec position. I also claim that pronouns such as *hu* 'he' head the FocP. The study, adopting Chomsky (2000, 2001) feature-checking theory, claims that the focus head establishes an Agree relation with the goal that carries a matching unvalued [Foc] feature, valued [Wh] feature and valued phi-features. The study also demonstrates that the Wh-subject may occur in a final clause position preceded by *illi*-clause. I account for this phenomenon by assuming that the whole FinP headed by *illi* moves to the specifier of the upper Topic Phrase while the wh-subject remains in [spec, FocP].

**Keywords:** Hail Arabic; Focus Phrase; Topic Phrase; phi features; wh-subject

### 1. Introduction

The syntactic analysis of wh-questions has drawn the attention of many linguists. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the syntax of wh-questions within Chomsky's (1981-1991) Government and Binding (GB) theory and the Minimalist Program (MP) (1995-2001). For example, Cole and Herman (1998) investigate the Malay typology of wh-movement. Within an earlier version of the minimalist framework (Chomsky 1995), they investigate the principles governing overt wh-movement, partial wh-movement as well as wh in-situ.

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The formation of Subject wh-questions is an intriguing phenomenon that raises challenging questions to the core of the Move approach within the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995). These questions include 1) “Do wh subjects move overtly or at LF? And 2) “How does syntax derive wh-subject movement since there is no overt displacement or auxiliary inversion?” (Alshammari, 2018, p.1). In this regard, Chomsky (1986a) hypothesized that Wh-movement occurs in questions except subject questions which remain in-situ (i.e. don’ move).

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews earlier works on wh-questions in English and Arabic. Section 3 introduces the theoretical frameworks utilized in this study. In this section, there are two parts. First, it offers a brief background on Chomsky’s (1995) Minimalist Program (MP). Second, it discusses Rizzi’s (1997) split CP hypothesis. Section 4 gives a brief introduction of Hail Arabic. Section 5 contains the discussion and analysis. It is divided into three subsections. The first part shows the possible positions in which the subject might occur. The second and third part demonstrate how the wh-subject is formed and how it is derived. Syntactic analyses of wh-questions in HA are based on Chomsky’s (2001) feature checking theory and Rizzi’s (1997) split CP hypothesis. Section 6 summarizes and concludes the paper.

## 2. Literature review

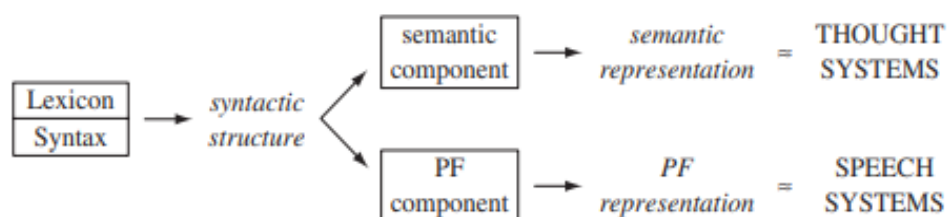
Chomsky’s (1977b) seminal work about Wh-movement sparked a number of cross-linguistic studies on the syntax of wh-questions. For example, Grewendorf (2001) explores the multiple wh-movement in Bulgarian. He claims that the overt multiple wh-words moves as a wh-cluster to [spec, CP]. Also, Khomitsevich (2009) investigates long-distance wh-movement in Russian. She argues that in Russian, unlike English, T but not C is a phase head. Many researchers have investigated the syntax of wh-questions in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and other Arabic varieties spoken throughout the Arab world. For instance, Alotaibi (2013), Al-Shorafat (2013), Al-Sager (2017), and Fasih (2007a, 2007b, 2012) explore the syntax of wh-questions in Standard Arabic (SA). Al-Shorafat (2013) and Al-Sager (2017) base their analysis of wh-questions in SA on Chomsky’s (2001) Phase theory. On the other hand, Alotaibi (2013) investigates the derivation of wh-questions in MSA within the minimalist framework (Chomsky 1998, 2000, 2008). He assumes that non-subject wh-items raise to [spec,FocP], whereas the wh-subject word is base generated in [spec,TopP]. Fasih (2012) claims that the wh-phrase in SA does not remain in-situ but it moves overtly to [Spec, CP]. There have been many works that address the phenomenon of wh-movement in different Arabic varieties. Among these studies are the following: Sulaiman (2016), Syrian Arabic; Taha et al., (2016), Sudanese Arabic; Almomani and Alsaidat (2010), Jordanian Arabic; Gad (2011), Egyptian. Furthermore, several accounts have been made to investigate wh-questions in Saudi dialects. In Najdi Arabic, for example, Alshammari (2019) addresses the issue of conjoined wh-questions. On the other hand, Alshammari (2018) investigates the syntax of wh-subjects in the shammari dialect of Arabic (SA). He provides empirical evidence that the wh-subject undergoes an overt movement to [spec,CP]. Fasih (2014) and Mushait (2019) explore the syntax of wh-questions in Najrani Arabic. Following Gad (2011), Fasih (2014) assumes that the focus phrase is headed by *illi* ‘that’ that forces the wh-subject adjoining [spec, FocP]. To the best of my knowledge, the syntax of wh-questions in Hail Arabic has never been investigated. The goal of this paper is to bridge that gap by providing a syntactic explanation of the wh-subject question in HA.

## 3. Theoretical background

### 3.1. Minimalist Program (MP)

This study is based on the Minimalist Program (MP) (Chomsky 1995). The syntactic theories have gone through several changes during the last five decades. The Minimalist Program is one of the syntactic frameworks that were developed by Chomsky (1995, 2001, 2004, 2008, 2013, 2015). Chomsky started the MP by defining the faculty of language (FL). He stated that the Faculty of Language has two interfaces: (a) the Conceptual-Intentional system (C-I or LF) and (b) the Sensorimotor system (SM or PF), with the syntax governing the relation between the two interfaces. A basic representation of the PF and LF interfaces of the model of grammar is schematically shown in (1) below:

1.



(Radford, 2009, p. 14)

MP has three basic syntactic operations: **Merge, Move, and Agree**.

**Merge:** It has two types: (i) External Merge and (ii) Internal Merge. An external merge involves combining two lexical items from the lexicon. An internal merge, also known as a **Move**, involves re-emerging an already merged category (i.e. in its base-position in a syntactic structure) and positions it higher in the hierarchy.

MP is based on the bottom-up derivational structure. According to Chomsky (1995, p. 225), the derivational structure starts by Select the lexical items objects from the (Numeration (N)). Then, the syntactic objects are combined by the syntactic operation Merge.

**Move:** It is defined as an instance internal that involves the re-merge of an already merged items with another two items.

**Agree:** In the early 2000s, the focus shifted from feature-checking as a requirement for movement to feature-checking as a requirement for agreement. The terms imposed on the operation Agree are outlined below (Chomsky, 2000, p. 122):

i.  $\alpha$  carries at least one uninterpretable/unvalued feature

$\beta$  has a matching interpretable/valued feature.

ii.  $\alpha$  c-commands  $\beta$ .

e. There is no potential goal  $\gamma$  intervening between  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . (Chomsky, 2000, p.122).

In MP, there are two types of features: (a) the interpretable features and (b) the uninterpretable features. The interpretable features [iF] have a semantic content while the uninterpretable features [uF] do not have a semantic content. The uninterpretable features are probes that search for interpretable features/Goals to value/check their [uF] before they are deleted. This operation (i.e., Probe-Goal configuration) is called Agree/feature checking theory in MP (Chomsky, 1995).

### 3.2. Split CP-system (Rizzi 1997)

Numerous works have addressed the inner structure of the CP-domain in natural languages since Rizzi's seminal work (1997) on the fine structure of the left periphery. The CP layer, according to Rizzi (1997), is divided into various projections. These projections are said to be fixed because they are based on a number of universal prerequisites, but various studies have found variations and suggested changes (e.g., Rizzi 2004; Haegeman 2003, among others). The five layers that make up the CP are as follows: Force Phrase, which is the highest projection that indicates the sentence's illocutionary force. There is a Topic Phrase below this that hosts dislocated topics. TopP is followed by Focus Phrase, which contains focused elements such as interrogatives. Below the focus phrase, there is another TopP, which is followed by the Finiteness Phrase, which encodes the sentence's finiteness or non-finiteness. FinP is, in turn, the lowest projection in this hierarchy. Consider the following tree diagram:

2.



(Rizzi,1997, p.297).

## 4. Overview of Hail Arabic

Aramaic, Ethiopian, South Arabian, Syriac, and Hebrew are all Semitic languages that belong to the Afro-Asiatic (Hamito-Semitic) family. The Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, and Africa are home to many of these languages. Within a few decades after the Islamic conquests of the Arabian Peninsula, Arabic spread across North Africa and the Middle East. Arabic is now spoken by more than 200 million speakers excluding bilingual speakers (Aoun et al, 2010; Watson, 2007). In Saudi Arabia, there are four dialects: Najdi (in the center of Saudi Arabia), Hijazi (in the west), Assiri (in the south), and Sharqawi (in the east). (Al Amro, 2019).

The Hail Arabic dialect is a subpart of the Najdi Arabic dialect. The Hail region (highlighted in red on the map below) is located northwestern Saudi Arabia. Hail city has more than 600.000 speakers according to the latest census (2018).

**Table 1.** Hail region, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

## 5. Discussion and analysis

### 5.1. Possible positions of the subject in HA

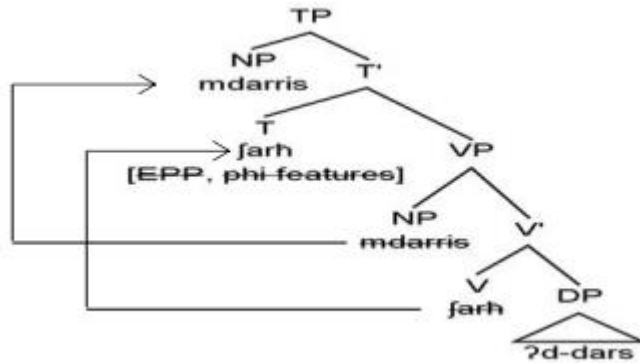
HA exhibits SVO word order (unmarked) and VSO (marked). In SVO order, the preverbal subject could be a definite DP subject, a specific indefinite DP subject and a pure indefinite DP subject as (3a), (3b), and (3c) show respectively.

3. a. al-mdarris                  ʃarḥ                                  ʔd-dars  
           the-teacher            explain.3SGM.PAST            the-lesson  
           ‘The teacher explained the lesson.’
- b. mdarris            al-ʃilu:m            ʃarḥ                                  ʔd-dars  
           teacher            the-sciences            explain.3SGM.PAST            the-lesson  
           ‘A teacher of science explained the lesson.’
- c. mdarris            ʃarḥ                                  ʔd-dars  
           teacher            explain.3SGM.PAST            the-lesson  
           ‘A teacher explained the lesson.’

To account for these elements in terms of their functions and position I argue, following Lewis (2013), that these elements are interpreted as a neutral subject occupying [spec, TP].<sup>2</sup> Consider the following tree diagram:

4.

<sup>2</sup> The assumption that a preverbal DP is a true subject occupying [spec, TP] is confirmed in other Arabic varieties. See Mohammed (2000), for Palestinian Arabic; Omari (2011), for Jordanian Arabic, among others.



The derivation will proceed as follows. The verb *farh* ‘explain’ merges with its object complement *?d-dars* ‘the lesson’ to form the VP. Then, the subject merges to the spec of V.<sup>3</sup> The verb *farh* ‘explain’ raises to T to check the [tense] feature on T°, while the subject moves to the specifier of the T head to check the EPP feature and the phi features.

The subject in HA can also appear in the left periphery. It can appear to the left of the complementizer *illi* as (5) shows:

5. al-mdarris              illi              farh    ?d-dars  
 The-teacher              that              explain.3SGM.PAST                                      the-lesson

‘The teacher that explained the lesson.’

The question that arises here is what position the subject occupies when *illi* is inserted. To answer this question, there are two possibilities. First, one might assume that *illi* heads the lower topic phrase and it attracts the subject to its spec position. However, this assumption does not account for the facts in HA. It is known that topicalized elements must be definite DPs, HA, however, allows indefinite NP to precede the complementiser *illi* as (6) illustrates:

6. mdarris    illi              farh    ?d-dars  
 teacher    that              explain.3SGM.PAST                                      the-lesson

‘A teacher that explained the lesson.’

From (6), we can conclude that the movement of the indefinite subject *mdarris* ‘teacher’ to the left of *illi* is not driven by topicalisation. The second possibility is to adopt the widely held assumption that suggests that *illi* heads the FocP. It also assumes that *illi* has a strong focus feature [+F] that forces the subject to move to the [spec, FocP].<sup>4</sup> This proposal does not also account for the data in HA for two reasons. First, constituents preceding *illi* are never given a tonal stress as the contrast in (7a) and (7b) shows (the focalized phrase appears in bold):

7. a. \***mdarris**              illi              farh    ?d-dars  
           teacher              that              explain.3SGM.PAST                                      the-lesson

‘It was a teacher that explained the lesson.’

- b. mdarris              illi              farh    ?d-dars

<sup>3</sup> Following VP-Internal Subject Hypothesis (Koopman & Sportiche 1991), I argue that the subject wh-phrase *min* ‘who’ originates within the VP, then it raises to the [spec, TP].

<sup>4</sup> Fasih (2014), following Gad (2011), claims that *illi* heads the FocP that forces the wh-subject word to move to its spec position.

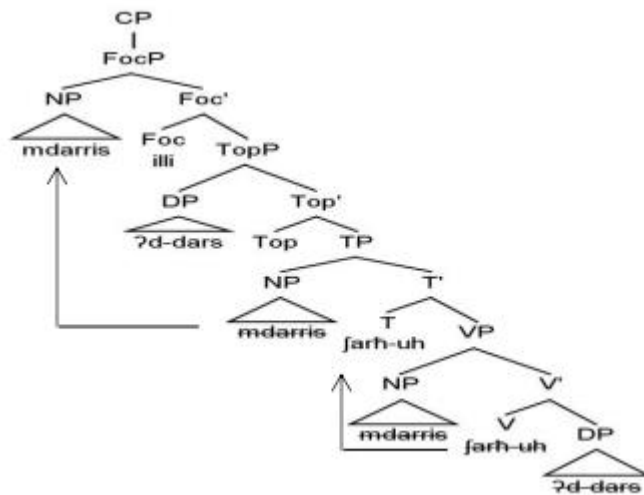
teacher that explain.3SGM.PAST the-lesson  
 ‘It was a teacher that explained the lesson.’

Second, the assumption that *illi* heads the FocP does not account for the ungrammaticality that results in topicalizing the DP object as in (8) below (the topicalized object and its co-referential clitic are italicised):

8.\*mdarris illi ?d-dars farh-uh  
 teacher that the-lesson explain.3SGM.PAST-it  
 ‘It was a teacher that explained the lesson.’

If *illi* heads the FocP, nothing bans the DP object *?d-dars* ‘the lesson’ to move to the specifier position of the lower TopP as sketched in (9):

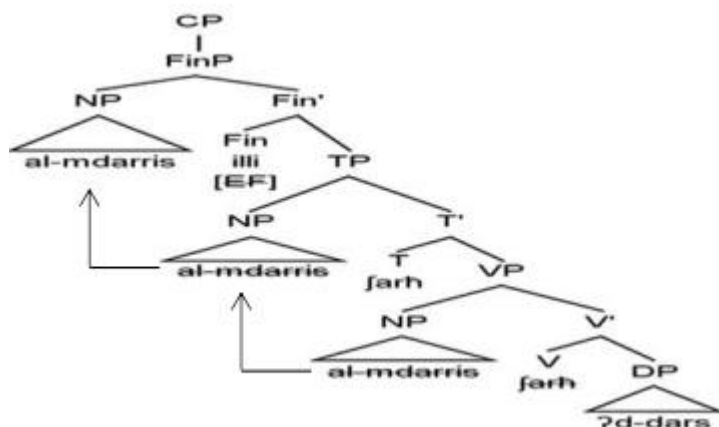
9.



In order to accommodate problems that encounter us in the two proposals mentioned above, I propose, following Rizzi (1997), that *illi* heads the FinP. Furthermore, I assume that *illi* has an edge feature [EF] that attracts the subject to the [spec, FinP]. Consider (5) which is, repeated here as (10), and its representation in (11):

10. al-mdarris illi farh ?d-dars  
 The-teacher that explain.3SGM.PAST the-lesson  
 ‘The teacher that explained the lesson.’

11.



The current proposal addresses two issues. First, the impossibility of focalizing elements preceding *illi* as the contrast in (12a) and (12b), demonstrates:

12. a. \***mdarris**      illi      farh      ?d-dars  
          teacher      that      explain.3SGM.PAST      the-lesson  
 ‘It was a teacher that explained the lesson.’
- b. mdarris      illi      farh      ?d-dars  
          teacher      that      explain.3SGM.PAST      the-lesson  
 ‘It was a teacher that explained the lesson.’

My proposal suggests that the main motivation for the movement of the subject to the left of *illi* is to satisfy the edge feature [EF] on the head  $Fin^{\circ}$ . In other words, the movement of the subject is not driven by focalization nor topicalisation, thus, sentence (12a) is ruled out.

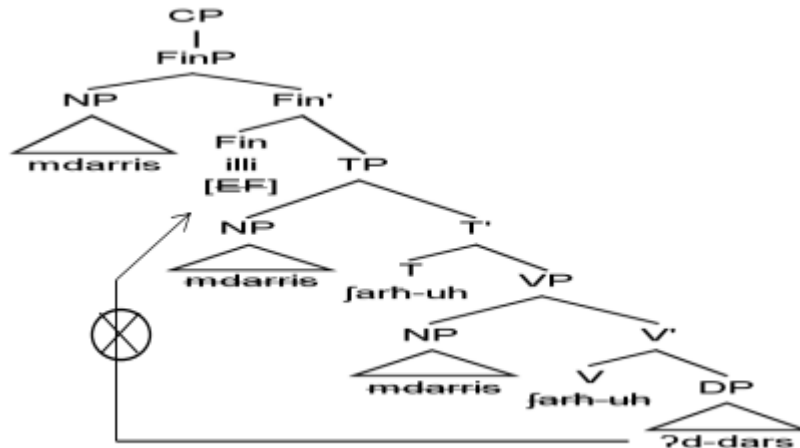
Second, the current proposal accounts for the impossibility of fronting the DP object to the left periphery (i.e. between *illi* and the TP) as (13), shows:

13. \*mdarris      illi      ?d-dars      farh-uh  
          teacher      that      the-lesson      explain.3SGM.PAST-it  
 ‘It was a teacher that explained the lesson.’

Recall that the current proposal locates *illi* in the lowest head of CP, namely the  $Fin^{\circ}$  head. With this being so, the fronted object is disallowed to appear between TP and FinP as there is no available projection that can host it as the representation in (14) illustrates:

14.





It is worth pointing out that the complementizer *illi* doesn't allow adjuncts (prepositional phrases/adverbials/) to appear to its left as respectively shown in (15a) and (15b):

15. a. \*bi-l-fas<sup>ɕ</sup>l illi al-mdarris farh ?d-dars  
 In-the-class that the-teacher explain.3SGM.PAST the-lesson  
 'It was in the class that the teacher explained the lesson.'
- b. \*bsrɕah illi al-mdarris farh ?d-dars  
 quickly that the-teacher explain.3SGM.PAST the-lesson  
 'It was quickly that the teacher explained the lesson.'

To account for the ungrammaticality in (15a) and (15b) above, one might postulate that the complementizer *illi* 'that' is endowed with a [+nominal] feature that only attracts nominal elements adjoining [spec, FinP]. Given this, the appearance of adjuncts to the left of *illi* yields illicit sentences.

So far, I have discussed two positions that the subject in HA occupies, namely [spec, TP] and [spec, FinP]. There is, however, a third position that the subject lands in. It can appear in the left periphery, more specifically, to the left of a pronoun. Interestingly, in the third position, the subject must be stressed, otherwise the sentence becomes an ill-formed as the contrast in (16a) and (16b) shows (the focalized phrase appears in bold):

16. a. **al-mdarris** hu illi farh ?d-dars  
 The-teacher he that explain.3SGM.PAST the-lesson  
 'It was the teacher who explained the lesson.'
- b. \*al-mdarris hu illi farh ?d-dars  
 The-teacher he that explain.3SGM.PAST the-lesson  
 'It was the teacher who explained the lesson.'

To determine the position of the subject, I will first discuss the function and position of the pronoun. I assume that the pronoun heads the focus phrase. In addition, I assume that the pronoun carries a cluster of features: [unvalued-phi features] and a strong contrastive focus feature [+F] and EPP feature. These features force the subject to move the specifier position of the FocP. I base my assumption on two observations. First, constituents preceding the pronoun must be contrastively stressed, otherwise the sentence becomes ungrammatical as the contrast in (17a-b) shows:

17. a. **al-mdarris** hu illi farh ?d-dars muhu  
 the-teacher he that explain.3SGM.PAST the-lesson not

ʔt̪<sup>ʕ</sup>- t̪<sup>ʕ</sup>a:lib

the-student

‘It was the teacher (not the student) who explained the lesson.’

b.*al-mdarris	hu	illi	ʃarħ	ʔd-dars	muħu
the-teacher	he	that	explain.3SGM.PAST	the-lesson	not

ʔt̪<sup>ʕ</sup>- t̪<sup>ʕ</sup>a:lib

the-student

‘It was the teacher (not the student) who explained the lesson.’

The second observation is that when the pronoun (the focus head) is present, the subject must move to the left periphery (to the spec, FocP) as (18a) shows. If the subject remains in-situ (i.e. in spec, TP), this yields an illicit sentence as shown in (18b):

18. a. <b>al-mdarris</b>	hu	illi	ʃarħ	ʔd-dars	muħu
the-teacher	he	that	explain.3SGM.PAST	the-lesson	not

ʔt̪<sup>ʕ</sup>- t̪<sup>ʕ</sup>a:lib

the-student

‘It was the teacher (not the student) who explained the lesson.’

b.*hu	illi	<b>al-mdarris</b>	ʃarħ	ʔd-dars	muħu
he	that	the-teacher	explain.3SGM.PAST	the-lesson	not

ʔt̪<sup>ʕ</sup>- t̪<sup>ʕ</sup>a:lib

the-student

‘It was the teacher (not the student) who explained the lesson.’

It is worth pointing out that the phi features spelled out on the focus head (the pronoun) should match the phi features cliticized to the verb inside the TP as (19) shows (the pronoun and the phi features on the verb are boldfaced):

19. al-mdarsi:n	<b>ħΛm</b>	illi	ʃarħ- <b>u</b>	ʔd-dars
The-teachers	they	that	explain-3PLM	the-lesson

‘It was the teachers who explained the lesson.’

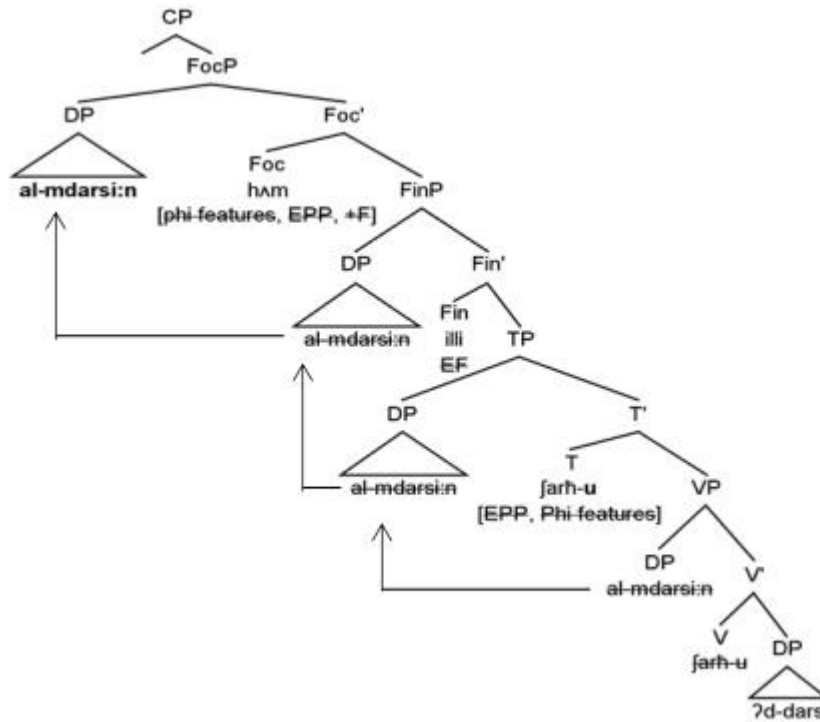
On the other hand, phi features mismatch yields an ungrammatical sentence as in (20):

20.*al-mdarsi:n	<b>ħΛm</b>	illi	ʃarħ- <b>an</b>	ʔd-dars
The-teachers	they	that	explain-3PLF	the-lesson

‘It was the teachers who explained the lesson.’

The contrast in (19) and (20) suggests that the focus head bears unvalued phi features that are valued by the subject. It also shows that the subject *al-mdarsi:n* ‘the teachers’ moves three times. First, it moves from [spec, VP] to [spec, TP] to check the phi features on T°. Second, it moves to [spec, FinP] to satisfy the edge feature on Fin° head. Then, it moves to [spec, FocP] to value the phi features and the contrastive focus feature on the head Foc°. The phi features that are valued by the subject *al-mdarsi:n* ‘the teachers’ are spelled out as a strong pronoun in the focus head and as a suffix (clitic) attached to the verb as in (19) which is sketched in (21):

21.



Based on the above discussion, we conclude that the subject in HA occurs in three positions: [spec, TP], [spec, FinP], and [spec, FocP]. I show the complementizer *illi* ‘that’ heads the FinP that bears an edge feature [EF] which triggers movement of the subject to the spec position of FinP. Finally, the subject shows up before a pronoun which is assumed to head the focus phrase. The subject moves to [spec, FocP] to value the unvalued phi features and the contrastive focus feature on the focus head. The three positions are summarized in (22a), (22b), and (22c) respectively:

22. a. al-mdarris                      farh                                      ?d-dars  
       The-teacher                      explain.3SGM                                      the-lesson  
       ‘The teacher explained the lesson.’
- b. al-mdarris      illi                      farh                                      ?d-dars  
       The-teacher      that                      explain.3SGM                                      the-lesson  
       ‘The teacher that explained the lesson.’
- c. **al-mdarris**      hu      illi                      farh                                      ?d-dars  
       The-teacher      he      that                      explain.3SGM                                      the-lesson  
       ‘It was teacher who explained the lesson.’

## 5.2. Formation of the Wh-subject in HA

In this section, I will go over the formation of wh-subjects in HA. I will also demonstrate how the wh-subject is derived. To begin, the wh-subject question is constructed by replacing the subject with the wh-word *min* ‘who’. Consider the following declarative sentences (22a-c), which are repeated below as (23a-c), and their interrogative counterparts (24a-c):

- 23.a. al-mdarris                      farh                                      ?d-dars  
       The-teacher                      explain.3SGM                                      the-lesson  
       ‘The teacher explained the lesson.’

- b. al-mdarris illi farh ?d-dars  
 The-teacher that explain.3SGM the-lesson  
 ‘The teacher that explained the lesson.’
- c. **al-mdarris** hu illi farh ?d-dars  
 The-teacher he that explain.3SGM the-lesson  
 ‘It was a teacher who explained the lesson.’
- 24.a. min farh ?d-dars  
 Who explain.3SGM the-lesson  
 ‘Who explained the lesson?’
- b. min illi farh ?d-dars  
 who that explain.3SGM the-lesson  
 ‘Who explained the lesson?’
- c. **min** hu illi farh ?d-dars  
 who he that explain.3SGM the-lesson  
 ‘Who explained the lesson?’

It is worth pointing out that the subject wh-phrase *min* ‘who’ may also occur clause finally as (25) shows:

25. illi farh ?d-dars min hu  
 that explain.3SGM the-lesson who he  
 ‘Who explained the lesson?’

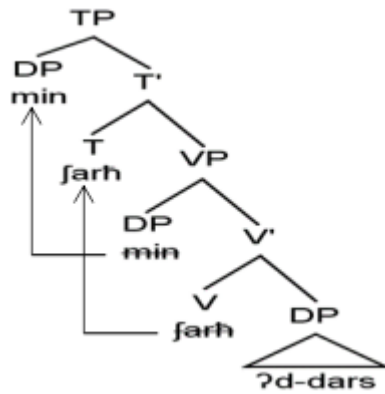
So far, I have shown that the Wh-word *min* ‘who’ appears clause initially, as shown in (24a-c). Also, the subject wh-phrase *min* ‘who’ appears in a clause-final position as in (25). In the following section, I will explain how interrogative sentences (24a-c) and (25) are derived and how interrogation is licensed.

### 5.3. Derivation of the Wh-subject in HA

This section will reveal how the wh-subject is derived. I will also illustrate how interrogation is licensed. I will explain the derivation using three examples in which the wh-subject word *min* ‘who’ occurs in three different positions. Let’s take the derivation of sentence (24a), which is repeated below as (26), and its representation as shown in (27):<sup>5</sup>

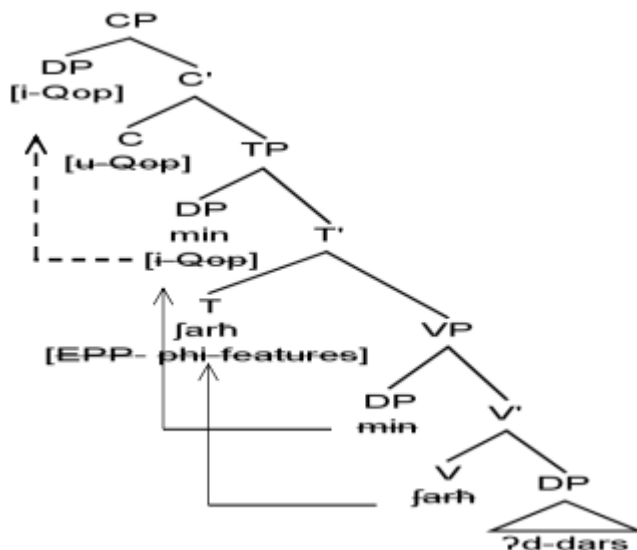
26. min farh ?d-dars  
 Who explain.3SGM the-lesson  
 ‘Who explained the lesson?’
- 27.

<sup>5</sup> The tree diagram in (27) is preliminary. Its modified version is shown in (28).



The derivation will proceed as follows. The verb *farh* ‘explain’ is merged with the DP object *?d-dars* ‘the lesson’ to form the VP *farh ?d-dars* ‘explained the lesson’. The wh-subject *min* ‘who’ merges to the spec of the head V. This then merges with a past tense constituent. Thus, the verb *farh* ‘explain’ raises to T to check the [tense] feature, while the wh-subject moves to the tense to check the EPP feature, and the phi features on the T head. Here, the question that arises at this point is: what clause-types sentence (25) as interrogative while the wh-subject remains in situ [spec, TP]? Following Gad (2011), I propose that clause in (26) is licensed via LF movement of an operator [Op] which carries a strong [wh] feature. The Op moves at LF to the Spec CP position to value the unvalued [u-wh] feature on C. The tree diagram in (27) is modified as in (28):<sup>6</sup>

28.



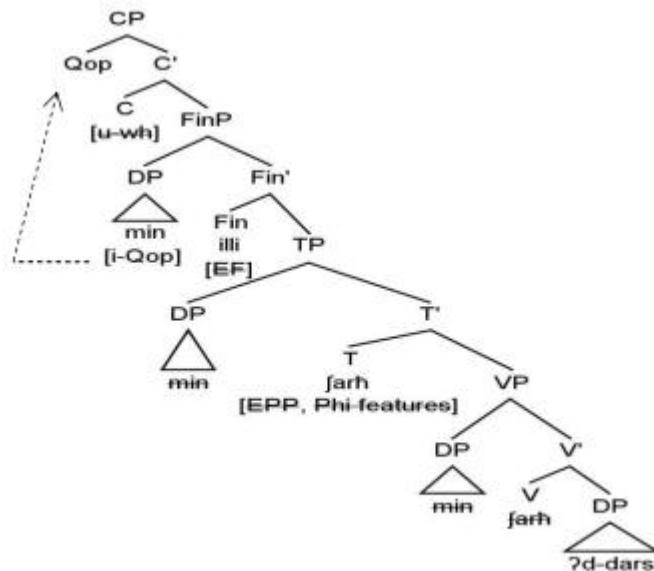
Having discussed the derivation of sentence (26), I shall now show the derivation of (24b), repeated below as (29):

- |                             |      |              |            |
|-----------------------------|------|--------------|------------|
| 29. min                     | illi | farh         | ?d-dars    |
| who                         | that | explain.3SGM | the-lesson |
| ‘Who explained the lesson?’ |      |              |            |

<sup>6</sup> The dotted line indicates the covert movement of the operator that licenses interrogation in sentence (26).

The derivation discussed under (26) is extended to (29) up to the point where the subject wh-phrase in (29) moves from [spec, TP] to [spec, FinP] headed by *illi* to satisfy an edge feature [EF] on  $Fin^{\circ}$ . Again, the same question asked under (26) is repeated here: how sentence (29) is licensed interrogative while the wh-question phrase is in [spec, FinP]. I also claim that it is licensed via LF movement of an operator [Op], which carries a strong [wh] feature. In spec-head relation, the operator values the unvalued [u-wh] on C head. The derivation of (29) is sketched in (30):

30.

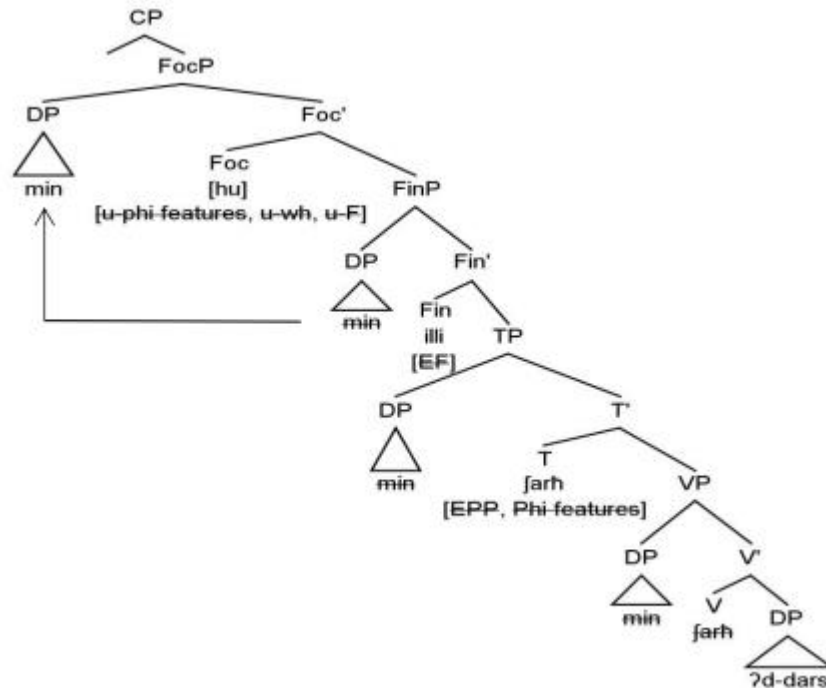


The derivation of the third position is demonstrated under (31):

31. min            hu      illi            jarh                            ʔd-dars  
 who            he      that            explain.3SGM            the-lesson  
 ‘Who explained the lesson?’

There are two important steps in the derivation of sentence (31). First, the subject wh-phrase *min* ‘who’ raises to the spec position of FinP to satisfy the edge feature on  $Fin^{\circ}$ . Next, it moves to [spec, FocP] to value a set of unvalued features on Foc head: unvalued phi features, a strong contrastive feature [+F], and the unvalued [u-Wh] feature. Unlike the first two cases in which interrogation licensed covertly, in (31), the wh-phrase *min* ‘who’ moves overtly in order to license sentence (31) as interrogative. The following tree diagram illustrates the derivation of (31):

32.

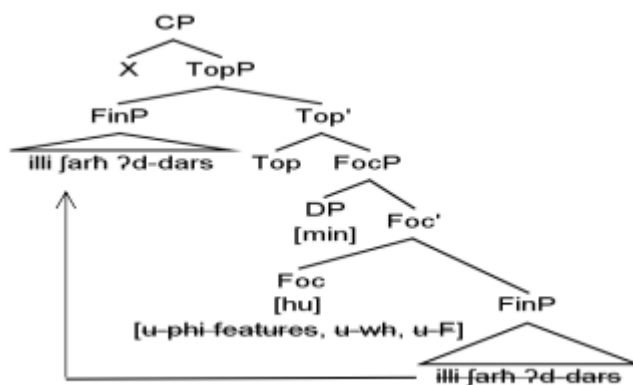


The discussion above revolves around cases where the wh-subject appears clause initially. However, there are cases in which the wh-phrase can appear in a clause final position as in (25), repeated below as (33), for ease of exposition:

33. illi                      farh                      ?d-dars              min              hu  
 that                      explain.3SGM              the-lesson              who              he  
 ‘Who explained the lesson?’

To account for this phenomenon, I propose, following (Gad 2011), that *illi*-clause raises to the specifier position of the upper topic phrase [spec, TopP], while the wh-phrase remains in [spec, FocP], thus satisfying freezing constraint.<sup>7</sup> The derivation of a wh-phrase preceded by *illi* clause is illustrated in the representation in (34):

34.



<sup>7</sup> Freezing Constraint states that ‘a phrase meeting a criterion is frozen in place’ (Rizzi 2006, p.112).

## 6. Conclusions

In this paper, I have explored the wh-subject syntax in Hail Arabic. I have shown that the wh-subject item *min* ‘who’ can occur in three positions, namely [spec,TP], [spec, FinP], and [Spec, FocP]. Following Rizzi (1997), I assumed that the complementiser *illi* ‘that’ heads the FinP. I also claimed that *illi* has an EPP feature that forces the wh-subject to adjoin the specifier position of the FinP. In the first two positions [spec,TP], and [Spec, FinP], there was a question that arose: How is interrogation licensed while the wh-subject in [spec, TP], or FinP? I tackled this issue, following Gad (2011), by proposing that wh-phrases are licensed via LF movement of an operator [Op] which carries a strong [wh] feature. The operator moves covertly to [spec, CP] to value the [Wh] feature on C<sup>o</sup>, thus licensing the sentence as interrogative. Furthermore, I assumed that pronouns such as *hu* ‘he’ in HA head the FocP. I suggested that the wh-subject raises to [spec, FocP] to satisfy a set of features (phi features, wh feature, focus feature) on the head Foc<sup>o</sup>. I also accounted for cases in which the wh-subject appears in the final clause position preceded by *illi*-clause. I proposed that the *illi*-clause raises to the specifier position of the upper topic phrase [spec, TopP], while the wh-clause remains in [spec, FocP].

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