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Verbal Agreement in Mehri Word Order: A Feature-based-Inheritance Model

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses agreement in syntactic order of Mehri. It investigates how VSO and SVO are derived and proposes an alternative analysis based on Chomsky's (2008) feature-based-inheritance approach which seeks to provide a unified account on the subject. It shows that regardless of whether the DP is located in [Spec-v*P] in VSO order or in [Spec, TP] and [Spec-TopP] (Topic Phrase) in SVO order, the Agreement can be applied and unvalued uninterpretable features are valued and deleted by matching them with their valued interpretable counterparts. We argue that since the edge feature of the head C of the CP phase is inherited by the Top head or T head, the (in)definite DPs in Mehri are raised from [Spec, v*P] to [Spec-TopP] and [Spec, TP] in SVO order, which can be dominated by CP projection, as assumed in Chomsky (2008). Besides, we contend that T in VSO order lacks an edge feature inherited from C. Therefore, the genuine DP must stay in-situ in [Spec, v*P], while the lexical verb moves higher to T in TP layer, not to Foc in FocP (Focus Phrase) as argued by Musabhien (2009), and show full agreement with the post-verbal DP. We also assume that in SVO order the definite DP is a Topic, whereas the indefinite DP is a Pre-verbal subject. In VSO order, the post-verbal DP is a subject. Given these, Top and T heads inherit probe features from C and immediately agree with DP via either short-distance agreement in SVO order or long-distance agreement in VSO order.

Keywords: CP phase**,** edge feature, feature inheritance, full agreement, Mehri

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INTRODUCTION

The interaction between word order and agreement in Mehri[1] language is a

[1] Mehri is one of six Modern South Arabian languages spoken in the southern-central region of the Arabian Peninsula. Mehri is spoken in eastern Yemen, southern Oman (Dhofar), parts of central-southern and eastern Saudi Arabia,

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phenomenon that has not attracted much attention. This may be due to many reasons. For instance, as Mehri is a minority language spoken among a huge community of Arabic language in Yemen, it does not contain formal scripts (i.e., written system), and it is banned from use in government agendas. Despite the lack of attention, a number of analyses within different theoretical frameworks of the syntactic theory have been conducted on the phenomenon. Among these analyses, Ouhalla (1997), and Doron and Heycock (1999) had been concerned with the relative positions of subject with regard to the verb, while others had explored extensively the interpretation of the post-verbal and the pre-verbal subjects assuming the preverbal were best analyzed as left dislocated items (Aoun, Benmamoun, & Choueiri, 2010; Plunkett, 1993). Between these two streams, many scholars have tackled the correlation between the subject position and its agreement with a predicate (Benmamoun, 1999; Fehri, 1993, 2005; Mohammad, 2000; Soltan, 2006, 2007, 2011). This correlation between verbs and pre-verbal or post-verbal subject in Mehri is the main concern of this paper.

Due to the morphological features that overtly mark an agreement between the post-verbal or the pre-verbal subjects and the predicates, Mehri allows diverse word orders. In particular, the two prevalent word orders of Mehri that have constituted an intriguing topic of discussion in this study are VSO and SVO. As the following structures show, the masculine and feminine markers can appear elsewhere on verbs in the pre-nominal position as in (1a) and (1c) or in the post-nominal position as in (1b) and (1d).

(1) a. *raḥāl a-ġayg ḥa-mōh man ḥabrōt*

collected.3ms the-man.3ms-Nom the-water.Acc from ḥabrōt

'the man collected the water from ḥabrōt'

b. *a-ġayg raḥāl ḥa-mōh man ḥabrōt*

the-man.3ms-Nom collected.3ms the-water.Acc from ḥabrōt

'the man collected the water from ḥabrōt'

c. *raḥl-ōt a-ġīgēt ḥamōh man ḥabrōt*

collected.3fs the-girl.3fs-Nom the-water.Acc from ḥabrōt

'the girl collected the water from ḥabrōt'

d. *a-ġīgēt raḥl-ōt ḥamōh man ḥabrōt*

the-girl.3fs-Nom collected.3fs the-water.Acc from ḥabrōt

'the girl collected the water from ḥa brōt'

and in diasporic communities in parts of the Gulf. The language does not have a formal script, and is threatened by the majority language, Arabic. It is banned from use in government agendas. The number of Mehri tribe members is estimated by the Mehri Language Center in al-Ghaydhah as c. 100,000. However, through modernisation, education in Arabic, migration patterns and increased communications, code switching into Arabic has become the norm, threatening the language from within. Mehri community members have traditionally been involved in agriculture, fishing and livestock husbandry. The speakers of Mehri have a rich tradition of oral folklore. This linguistic heritage is increasingly under threat from the dominant national language, Arabic, and from increased urbanisation and contact with Arabic speakers.

The behaviour of the examples above is straightforward because the verb exhibited appears with the same agreement features regardless of whether it precedes or follows the nominal subject. Similarly, the morphological agreement is also shown on verbs associated with plural subject, as exemplified in (2a) and (2b) below.

(2) a. ***raḥāl-am*** *hā-būn ḥa-mōh man ḥabrōt*

collected.3mp the-people.3ps-Nom the-water.Acc from ḥabrōt

'the people collected the water from ḥabrōt'

b. *hā-būn* ***raḥāl-am*** *ḥa-mōh man ḥabrōt*

the-people.3ps-Nom collected.3mp the-water.Acc from ḥabrōt

'the people collected the water from ḥabrōt'

The structures in (2a) and (2b) show that the post-nominal or pre-nominal verb √***rḥl*** 'to collect' is marked by a suffix ***-am***. This marker expresses the plural masculine feature agreeing with a given subject ***hā-būn*** 'the people' in two positions. Nonetheless, agreement on a verb is conversely recognized when the nominal subject takes plural feminine features:

(3) a. ***raḥāl*** *ha-ynaṯ ḥa-mōh man ḥabrōt*

collected.3fp the-women.3fp-Nom the-water.Acc from ḥabrōt

'the women collected the water from ḥabrōt'

b. *ha-ynaṯ* ***raḥāl*** *ḥa-mōh man ḥabrōt*

t h e - w o m e n . 3 f p - N o m collected.3fp the-water.Acc from ḥabrōt

'the women collected the water from ḥabrōt'

In (3a) and (3b), the verb ***raḥāl*** 'collected' is a pattern. It embeds plural feminine features. The existence of these features is only interpreted when the verb correlates with a plural, feminine subject, such as ***ha-ynaṯ*** 'the women'. According to Rubin (2010), both 3mp and 1ms are characterized by an internal vowel change ***/ū/*** as in ***šənḏūr*** 'made a vow', or ***ksūh*** 'found' (Watson, 2012). In a similar way, the internal vowel ***/ā/*** in ***raḥāl*** 'collected' works simultaneously as the 3mp and 1ms marker with respect to the subject in a given structure.

The affixes[2] ***-ā-***, ***-ōt*** and ***-ām*** appear

[2] According to Rubin (2010) and Watson (2012), verbs in Mehri inflect for person, number and gender. The current paper only focuses on perfective form. Watson (2012, pp. 85-87) demonstrated the main difference between both forms. She explored that the perfective form usually appear with suffixes, while imperfective form appears with both prefixes and suffixes. Consider the templet below:

Perfective Form			
	Singular	Dual	Plural
1	*-ak*	*-akī*	*-an*
2m	*-ak*		*-akam*
2f	*-aš*		*-akan*
3m	***-0***	***-ōh***	***-am***
3f	***-ūt***	***-tōh***	***-0***

Imperfective Form			
	Singular	Dual	Plural
1	*a-*	*na-...-ōh*	*na-*
2m	*ta-*	*ta-....-ōh*	*ta-...-am*
2f	*ta-....-i*		*ta-...-an*
3m	*ya-*	*ya-....-ōh*	*ya-...-am*
3f	*ta-*	*ta-....-ōh*	*ta-...-an*

in both word orders: SVO and VSO. This appearance becomes a significant issue in the study of agreement in two orders. In the spirit of the literature on the word order of Arabic, there are two strands of analysis that have been discussed this issue. These are topic and subject analyses. In terms of the former, the preverbal category is excluded from the sentence as the subject (Alotaibi, 2013; Musabhien, 2009; Ouhalla, 1999). Rather, it is determined as a topic that is followed by a complete verbal sentence that functions as a comment. Consequently, it is considered that the pronominal clitics on verbs are subject markers which highlight the null subjects in a comment, while the original subject is topicalized and then moved to the left periphery of the structure, and functions as a topic. The second strand of analysis is undertaken by Mohammad (2000), Fehri (1993, 2005) and Aoun et al. (2010). It is assumed that the preverbal nouns in structures such as those in (1b), (1d), (2b) and (3b) are merely subjects, while the affixes attached to the verbs are agreement markers.

In this study, we argue that both SVO and VSO are merged in the inner v*P phase. From this, the occurrence or the non-occurrence of the edge feature on C, inherited to T or Top, plays a significant role to reconstruct the word orders regardless of whether it is SVO or VSO. Moreover, we contend that C in Mehri is the sole provider of agreement, tense and case features to T. Hence, T head becomes an active probe that contains unvalued features such as φ-features. These features will become valued when T probes down searching for the matching goal, in its Spell-Out domain. In this paper, we adopt the latest advances within the minimalist framework of the linguistic theory introduced in Chomsky (2008) to account for how agreement is established under a Feature Inheritance, and to explain how the pre-verbal and the post-verbal noun phrases achieve their surface positions in Mehri language.

This paper is organized as follows. Following Section 1, introductory section, Section 2 provides a methodological background for the study. It also reviews some related studies of verbal agreement in Standard Arabic. Section 3 results in a morphological agreement between verbs and post-verbal or preverbal subjects in Mehri. Section 4 discusses the analysis of the derivation of SVO and VSO word orders in Mehri on the bases of Chomsky's (2008) minimalist framework. Section 5 summarizes and concludes the study.

METHODS

Insights of Minimalist Program

One of the most important contributions of the Minimalist Program is that it is the only linguistically indispensable levels are the interface levels (Chomsky, 2000). A linguistic expression in the Minimalist enterprise is defined as the optimal realizations of the interface (PF, LF) conditions, where the optimality is recognized through the principles of derivational economy. These principles allow the computational system to select the optimal derivations from a set of computing derivations (Kitahara, 1995).

According to Chomsky (2000), Universal Grammar gives a set of linguistic properties (features) and operations that derive the set of features to generate expressions.

According to Chomsky (1995) and Jubilado (2010), the computational system maps some lexical arrays to linguistic expressions. These arrays are called numeration (i.e., a pair of lexical items which are selected from the lexicon). The computational system selects a lexical item for one time, which is then introduced into the derivation by the operation Select, which incorporates it to the set of syntactic objects formed. In other words, the derivation makes a one-time selection of a lexical array from the lexicon and then maps the lexical array to the expressions, dispensing with further access to the lexicon (Almansour, 2012). Lexical items, though, are drawn freely from the lexicon throughout the building of a sentence, and thus a level of Deep Structure is no longer available. Chomsky (1995) postulated that within a numeration, both case and φ-features were specified, by lexical entry (intrinsic features) or by derivational operations such as Agree and Move.

In addition to the operation *Select*, the computational system includes three operations which are Merge, Agree and Move. The operation *Merge* takes two syntactic objects (α, β) and form K(α, β). The operation *Merge* is asymmetric, projecting either α or β, the head of the object that projects becoming the prominent label that determines the syntactic and semantic information of the syntactic product (Boeckx, 2006; Haegeman, 2006). For example, the pre-nominal modifiers in Arabic such as Numerals are the head of the Numeral Phrase, while the post-nominal numerals are the specifier of head noun. The operation *Agree* establishes a relationship between a lexical α and a feature F in some restricted search space (its domain) (Chomsky, 2000). For a syntactic outcome K with a label LB(K), LB(K) is the sole category of K that is immediately accessible to a language L. Therefore, it must be the category that activates Agree. By the virtue of uninterpretable feature (Chomsky, 2000), the functional elements are active probes that start searching for the matching goal within the domain of LB(K) (Taha & Sultan, 2016). According to Chomsky (2001), this relation is termed Probe-Goal Matching that induces Agree between categories and eliminates the existing uninterpretable features in the syntactic object. The operation *Move* establishes agreement between α and F, and merges P(F) to αP, where P(F) is a typical phrase that is dominated by F, and αP is a projection headed by α. P(F) then becomes a Spec-α (Chomsky, 2000), for example, by moving DP from the [Spec, VP/v*P] to the [Spec, TP] in order to satisfy further morphological requirements such as EPP on T (Wahab, Razak, & Sultan, 2016).

Feature-based Inheritance Approach

Contra Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001), Chomsky (2008) claims that T lacks φ-features and tense in the lexicon. Therefore, TP is incapable to form a single phase (Taha, Sultan, & Yasin, 2017).

Nevertheless, he contends that TP is a derivative phase in the sense that it inherits features from C. Put conversely, if selected by C, T projects these features. Otherwise "it is a raising […] infinitival, lacking φ-features and basic tense" (Chomsky, 2008). When T probes down searching for the matching goal, it actually acts to value the features of C. In other words, both C and T form a complex probe which agrees with the matching goal. This matching goal should be the closest DP in a search space. It is the [Spec, v*P] because it has intrinsic φ-features. The matching goal can remain in its situ with its unvalued features deleted via Agree, forming a VSO word order, "it can raise as far as Spec-T, at which point it is inactivated, with all features valued, and cannot raise further to Spec-C" (Chomsky, 2008), producing a SVO word order.

In a parallel to a relation between C and T, Chomsky (2008) argued that the head v transmitted features to lexical V. Therefore, the v*P phase could be formed. He claimed that both v and C comprise two types of features: agree features (φ-features), and edge feature. In addition to these, both T and V inherit case feature from C and v. This feature acts to value the unvalued case feature on both external and internal DPs that will result in nominative subject and accusative object. On the other hand, the edge feature is used to trigger movement of the [Spec, v*P] to the left periphery of the clause forming a SVO word order.

Verbal Agreement in Recent Minimalist Analysis

In his phase-based analysis of agreement in Standard Arabic, Al-Shorafat (2012) assumed that SVO word order did not create a problem with Chomsky's (2008) Phase Theory. According to his assumption, the SVO word order in SA is straightforward, where the subject is attracted from its canonical position in the specifier of v*P to the specifier of TP in order to satisfy an edge feature on T. Besides, he argues that VSO word order is problematic and poses a challenge for Chomsky's theory. He builds an argument that the edge feature always exists on T. This feature must trigger movement of the subject to the left periphery. Therefore, it has to make a violation to the VSO word order. But differently, Alenazy and Saidat (2015) refered the difference in derivation between SVO and VSO word orders to the loss of edge feature in VSO structure. They argued that the non-existence of edge feature on T allowed the subject to remain in situ, thus, the VSO was formed. Fakih (2016) clarified this issue and assumed that the SVO order was marked, while the VSO order was unmarked. In line with Chomsky's (2008) minimalist framework, he proposes that C transmits both φ-features and edge feature to T. These features obtain agreement relation between the post-verbal or preverbal subject and the lexical verb. As for the VSO order, Musabhien (2009) and Fakih (2016) postulated that C lacked an edge feature. However, T category became unable to attract the subject, hence it remained *in*

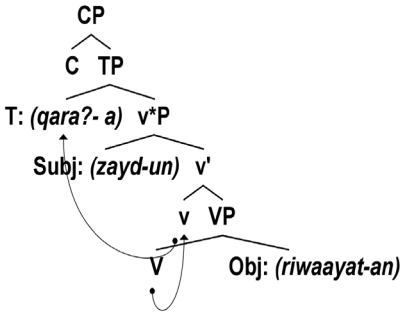
situ within v*P phase, while in SVO order it moves to the left periphery of the clause because the edge feature is inherited to Top or T. Consider the derivations adopted from Fakih (2016), in (4) and (5) below.

(4) a. **qara?- a** Zayd-un riwaayat-an

read 3ms. Zayd 3ms. Nom novel.Acc

'Zayd read a novel'

b.

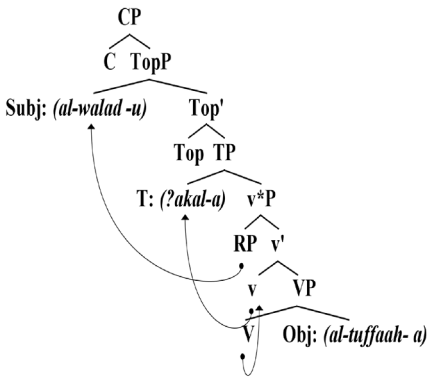


(5) a. al-walad -u **?akal-a** al-tuffaah- a

the-boy.3ms.Nom ate.2ms. the-apple.Acc

'the boy ate the apple'

b.



In clause (4a) whose derivation is shown in (4b), it is observed that the unmarked VSO order is derived by movement of the lexical V ***qara?- a*** 'read' to the higher functional heads v and T, respectively, as demonstrated by movement arrows. In this structure, there is a restriction that C only inherits φ-features to T, which in turn probes down and agrees with the specifier of v*P, i.e., ***Zayd-un***. Since C does not contain edge feature, T becomes incapable to attract this subject. As a result, it remains in situ, and the VSO order is structured. On the contrary, the subject DP ***al-waladu***[3] 'the boy' moves from [Spec-v*P] to [Spec-TopP] in (5b). As Fakih (2016) explained, "since the edge feature of the head C of the CP phase is inherited by the Top head, the topicalized elements in Standard Arabic are raised from lower positions to the specifier position of TopP". However, there remain two questions. First, why does verb lose number feature in VSO order, as shown in (6b) below? Second, why do pre-verbal and post-verbal subjects show nominative case, as illustrated in (6a & b)?

(6) a. al-awlaad-u[1] **?akal-uu** al-tuffaah- a

the-boys 3mp. Nom ate.3mp the-apple.Acc

'the boys ate the apple'

[3] Musabhien (2009) and Fakih (2015) explore that the structural (nominative and accusative) Case assignment in SA is present. Case marking system is overtly morphologically realized. The overt nominative marker is the suffix

b. **?akal-a** al-awlaad-u al-tuffaah- a

ate.3mp the-boys 3mp. Nom the-apple.Acc

'the boys ate the apple'

In order to answer these questions and to place the analysis on a concrete footing, Alenazy and Saidat (2015) pose an empirical analysis that shows the distinction between VSO and SVO orders in SA. This is given in (7).

(7) a. Unlike SVO, in VSO there is a restriction imposed to the post-verbal subject.

b. In SVO, subject movement takes place after all unvalued φ-features of T have valued and deleted.

c. In VSO, the head T also agrees with pronominal element attaching to the verb.

d. In both orders, C is the sole element that inherits case feature to T in order to assign a nominative case to the preverbal or post-verbal subject.

To see how the pattern in (7) works, Alenazy and Saidat (2015) stated that "definite and indefinite noun phrases alike are allowed to function as post-verbal subjects. In SVO on the other hand, the preverbal noun phrase, which is conceived of as a topic or focus, is generally required to be definite". In a similar way, Musabhien (2009) maintained that the definite DP undergoes movement to the [Spec, TopP], while the indefinite DP moves to the [Spec, TP]. The former is considered as a topic because it is topicalized and specified, whereas the latter is merely a preverbal subject. In two contexts, the pronominal marker attaches to the verb, as illustrated by ***-uu***[4] in (6a) above. As for (7b), the Agree operation occurs, first. T is an active probe that agrees with a local goal, i.e., [Spec, v*P]. Via edge feature, this goal will be moved to the left periphery, either in [Spec, TopP] or [Spec, TP]. In terms of (7c), it is assumed that T agrees with a pronominal element which attaches to the verb. Given this, we assert that the edge feature does not exist on T. Therefore, the [Spec, v*P] remains in situ. Through a long-distance agreement, T agrees with a verbal complex,?***akal-uu*** 'ate 3mp.', that bears nominal sublabels. This verb, furthermore, undergoes a movement to T and losses its pronominal marker ***-uu,*** as shown in (6b), given the fact that the pronominal clitic is just a morphological marker that refers to the pre-verbal subject.

With regard to the case value, in parallel to light v that assigns accusative case to the internal DPs, in (7d), C determines a nominative case to either post-verbal or pre-verbal DPs. According to Fakih (2015), the structural case relation such as in (6a) and (6b), goes as follows. In SVO word

[4] ***–u*** while the overt accusative Case marker is the suffix ***–a***; both markers are suffixed to nominals. Kremers (2003, p. 35) argued that **"**Arabic has three cases: nominative, genitive and accusative**"**, where genitive case is indicated by the suffix –i added to nominals. Against this, though Mehri has three cases: nominative, genitive and accusative, the case marking system is covertly marked in Mehri.

order, the topic ***al-awlaad-u*** receives its nominative case in the left periphery of the clause, i.e., [Spec, TopP], while the subject ***al-awlaad-u***, in VSO order, receives it in the base position of [Spec, v*P] for the reason that T does not inherit edge feature from C, which is responsible for triggering syntactic movement of the subject from [Spec, v*P] to [Spec, TopP]. In both contexts, C inherits case feature to T. This feature, then, serves to value the unvalued case on pre-verbal or post-verbal subjects. A very strong evidence that supports this assumption is Fakih's (2015) example that is shown in structure (8b):

(8) a. al-kuttaab-**u** **katab-uu** al-riwaayat-a
the.writers.Nom wrote.3mp the-story.Acc
'the writers wrote the story'

b. ʔinna al-kuttaab-**a** **katab-uu** al-riwaayat-a
Comp the-writers.Acc wrote.3mp. Nom the-story.Acc
'the writers wrote the story'

A closer look at SVO example introduced by the complementizer ***ʔinna*** in (8b) above reveals that ***ʔinna*** is an overt Case assigner. It assigns accusative to the pre-verbal DP ***al-kuttaab-a*** 'the writers' which follows it immediately. Historically, this issue is originally expounded by Arab grammarians such as Sibawayh (768 [Reprinted 1973]), IbnHisham (1211) and Hassan (1961). In more detail, C in (8a) inherits case feature to T, and assigns a nominative case to the preverbal DP ***al-kuttaab-a*** 'the writers'. But differently, a similar DP appears with an accusative case in (8b). This DP is directly influenced by an overt C, i.e., ***ʔinna***, which inherits case feature to the head Top, and assigns an accusative case to the topicalized subject ***al-kuttaab-a*** 'the writers'. This supports Chomsky's (2008) assumption that states C has full responsibility to inherit features to the lower functional heads such as T and Top. The assumption henceforth, known as *Feature-based-Inheritance*, is used as the analytical framework for Mehri constructions. These constructions are elicited from authentic materials which have collected in May 2015 by a fieldwork conducted in al-Mahrah, Yemen.

RESULTS

Agreement in Mehri Language

As presented in the introductory section that Mehri allows two prevalent word orders: SVO and VSO, this section shows the correlation between the pre-verbal or post-verbal subjects and the verbs, in terms of φ-features. It also aims to present a satisfactory account for the case assignment given to both the external and internal arguments, namely subject and object. For the sake of clarity and ease of discussion, the analysis is presented as follows.

Verbal Agreement in Mehri VSO Structure

In this subsection, we assume the VSO order as the unmarked structure. The sentence begins with a verb and is immediately followed by a post-verbal subject. It can be

observed in Mehri syntax that the subject shows full agreement to the verb in terms of φ-features (i.e. person, gender and number), while the case assignment is covertly marked (i.e., case marker does not exist). The points are illustrated in the following patterns.

(9) a. ***[saḥāṭ*** *aġayg ḥōz],* *wa* ***dahāk*** *agādas*

slaughtered.3ms the-man.3ms.Nom the-goat.mf.Acc, and stripped.3ms. skin-its.Acc

" **سحَاط** أغَيق حُوز و **دحَاك** اقَادس"

'the man slaughtered the goat, and stripped its skin'

b. *maġōran,* ***[malh-ōt*** *atē* *ṯ* *ḏakamah gād],* *wa* ***ṭarḥ-ōt*** *yarēm*[2]

Then, salted.3mf. the-woman.3mp.Nom that skin Acc, and put.3mf. yarēm.Acc

barkah, *wa* ***waṭbat****-ah,* *at-tė̄* *wīḳā* *ḥanīd*

inside-it Gen. and tanned.3mf-it-Acc., until became.3ms water-skin.Acc.

«مغُورن، **ملحُوت** أتيث ذَكمه قَاد، و**طرحُوت** إريم بِركه و **وطبَته** اتى ويڤَا حنَيد»

'Then, the woman salted that skin, she put yarēm inside it and tanned it, until it became the water-skin'

c. ****malh*** *atēṯ* *ḏakamah gād*

[salted-X] the-woman.3mp.Nom that skin Acc

The entire sentences in (9) above, which are illustrated in (9a) and (9b), show an agreement between verbs and post-verbal subjects, respectively. In particular, the verbal roots such as √***sḥṭ*** 'to slaughter' and √***dḥk*** 'to strip' in (9a) are strong triliteral verbal roots. These verbs enter a computation with φ-feature marker, i.e., infix vowel ***-ā-***. This marker actually shows agreement in person, singular, and masculine with the post-verbal subject ***aġayg*** 'the man'. In the bracketed VSO structure, the verb ***saḥāṭ*** 'slaughtered' comes before the nominal subject ***aġayg*** 'the man'. Hence, it is assumed that this verb undergoes movement from its canonical position as the head of v*P, to a higher functional head, it is T (see section 5 below). On the other hand, the strong triliteral verbal roots such as √***mlḥ*** 'to salt' and √***ṭrḥ*** 'to put', and the weak[5] triliteral verbal root √***wṭb*** 'to tan' in (9b) appears with a suffix marker ***-ōt*** in ***malh-ōt*** **'**salted' and ***ṭarḥ-ōt*** 'put', and ***-at*** in ***waṭbat*** 'tanned'. Nevertheless, the ***-t*** marker is a proto-Semitic feature that shows

[5] Verbs in Mehri are lexically subcategorized into triliteral verbs and non-triliteral verbs. The former contains two types: simple three radical roots, and derived types (*ha-type, ša-type* and *ta-type*). In terms of the simple type, it can be divided into strong roots and weak roots. In contrast to simple strong roots whose sounds cannot be changed in any grammatical functions, such as aspect and mood functions, Rubin (2010, p. 149) defined weak verbs **"**as verb whose conjugation differs from that of the basic paradigm [….] because of the presence of one or more particular root consonants which cause or have caused phonetic changes**".** As for the non-triliteral verbs, this type of verbs contains four or five radical roots.

feminine either in verbs or nouns (Lipiński, 2001). In the context of (9b), both markers show a relationship between the derived verbs and post-verbal subject ***atēt̲*** 'the woman' in terms of φ-features (i.e., person, singular and feminine). In (9c), the structure is ungrammatical because the ill-formed verb ***malh*** does not show agreement with its post-verbal subject ***atēt̲*** 'the woman'.

(10) a. [***hagm-ōh*** *aḳayṣar wa akawb l-habūn],

attacked.mdu. [the-tiger and the-wolf.mdu.Nom] on-the people.Gen

wa ***ḳaṣr-ōh*** *hāybīt ṭayt, wa* ***afawt-ōh***

and killed.mdu. the-camel one Acc, and ran way.mdu

"هقمُوه اقَيصْر واگوب لهَابون، **وقصْرُوه** هَايبيت طيت، و**افُوتُوه"**

'Both tiger and wolf attacked the people, they killed one camel and ran away'

b. [***ġawḳ-tōh*** *ḳāḳatī t̲rayt man ḥamōh], wa* ***aṡġar-tōh*** *ṡtrayr ṭāṭ.*

looked.fdu [frog two fdu.Nom] for the-water.Gen, and saw.fdu. channel one.Acc

wa ***farḥ-tōh*** *bēh*

one.Gen, and liked.fdu. it.Acc

"**غُوفْتُوه** فَافَاتي ثرَيت من حمُوه، و**اشْغَرتُوه** اشْترَير طَاط، و**فرحتُوه** بِه"

'two frogs looked for the water, they saw one channel, and liked it

c. ****hagm*** *aḳayṣar wa akawb l-habūn*

[**attacked.X]** the-tiger and the-wolf.mdu.Nom to-the people.Gen

In a similar way, the strong triliteral verbal roots such as √***hgm*** 'to attack', √***ḳṣr*** 'to kill' and √***flt*** 'to run away' in (10a) are drawn with a suffix marker ***-ōh***. The suffix morphologically show agreement between three derived verbs: ***hagm-ōh*** 'attacked', ***ḳaṣr-ōh*** 'killed' and ***afawt-ōh*** 'ran away' (the l sound replaced by w in the Mehri dialect under study), and the genuine subject ***aḳayṣar wa akawb*** 'both tiger and wolf', in terms of φ-features (i.e., person, dual and masculine). On the contrary, the verbal roots √***ġlḳ*** 'to look', √***ṡġr*** 'to see' and √***frḥ*** 'to like' in (10b) associate with a suffix ***-tōh***. This process results in the verbs such as follows: ***ġawḳ-tōh*** 'looked', ***aṡġar-tōh*** 'saw' and ***farḥ-tōh*** **'**liked'. In other words, the suffix ***-tōh*** makes a correlation between the main first verb ***ġawḳ-tōh*** 'looked' and the post-verbal subject ***ḳāḳatī t̲rayt*** 'two frogs' in φ-features (person, dual and feminine). A similar suffix in ***aṡġar-tōh*** 'saw' and ***farḥ-tōh*** **'**liked' also refers to the genuine subject in the bracketed VSO order. Moreover, there is a mismatch between the ungrammatical verb ***hagm*** and ***aḳayṣar wa akawb*** 'both tiger and wolf'. Thus, the structure (10c) becomes ill-formed because the verb does not show agreement with its post-verbal subject.

(11) a.*[**saḥāṭ-am** aġyūg hārawn], wa **dḥāk-am** tēsan,*

slaughtered.3mp. the-men.3mp. Nom the-goats.Acc. and stripped.3mp them.Acc.

"**سحَاطَم** اغيوُق هَارون، و**دحَاكَم** تِيسن"

'The men slaughtered the goats. They stripped them'

b. *maġōran, [**mōlah** yanēṯ laykamah gīlēd], wa **ṯōraḥ** yarēm*

Then, salted.3fp. women.3fp. Nom those skins Acc, and put.3fp. yarēm.Acc

*barkē-ham, wa **waṭb**-ēham, at-tė waḳā-m ḥanōd*

inside-them, and tanned-them, until became.3mp. water-skins.Acc

"مغُورن، **مُولح** إنيث ليَكمه قِيلِيد، و**طُورح** إريم بركِيهَم، و**وطبِيهَم** اتى وقَام حنَود"

'Then, the women salted those skins, they put yarēm inside them, and tanned them, until they became water-skin'

c. ***saḥāṭ** aġyūg hārawn*

[slaughtered.X] the-men.3mp. Nom the-goats.Acc.

In (11a), the bracketed VSO order is formed. Within this, the verbal root √***sḥṭ*** 'to slaughter' associates with a suffix ***-am*** in order to agree with its post-verbal subject ***aġyūg*** 'the men'. Specifically, the suffix ***-am*** considers as φ-marker (person, plural and masculine) that shows agreement with the genuine subject. Otherwise, the structure becomes ill-formed as presented in (11c). In contrast, the plural feminine marker in (11b) is shown by vocalic melody. This means that the vocalic sound such as ***-ō***, which has been inserted to the verb ***mōlah*** 'salted' and ***ṯōraḥ*** 'put' maintains agreement with the subject ***aġyūg*** 'the men'. However, the agreement in person, plural and feminine features is interpreted between these constituents.

Verbal Agreement in Mehri SVO Structure

As discussed in subsection 4.1 above, the agreement is fully shown in VSO order, where the verb totally agrees with its post-verbal subject. In this subsection, we argue that the pre-verbal subject undergoes movement to the initial position of the clause from its base position in v*P (see section 5 below). As a result, the SVO order in Mehri is formed. It is a marked structure because the nominal subject replaces its base position. Within SVO order, we assume that there is a strong correlation between the verb and its pre-verbal subject in terms of φ-features. The correlation is explored in patterns (12), (13) and (14) below.

(12) a. *[Ahmēd **hagg** ḍēr haybīt], maġōran*

A h m ē d . 3 m s . N o m pilgrimaged.3ms. on the-camel. fs.Gen, then

***habṭā**, wa **wīṣal** m-ḍēr atawḳayf*

was late.3ms., and arrived.3ms. after the-day-of-Arafat

”احميد **حِق** ظِير هَايبيت، مغُورن **هبطًا،**
ووِيصِل مظِير اتوقَيف“
‘Ahmēd pilgrimaged on the camel.
He was late, and arrived
after the day of Arafat’

b. *wa āmōr,* [*ḏīkmah haybīt* ***aḥaḳṭ-ōt*** *ḥalakamah],* ***wa āmlōt***
And said.3ms., that the-camel.3fs. Nom gave-birth.3fs. there, and made.3fs.
mēkan ṡaxōf
much milk.Acc
”وامور ذِكمه هَايبيت **احقْطُوت** حلَكمه،
واملوُت مِيكن اِشخوف“
‘He said that the camel gave-birth there. and made much milk’

c. *ḏīkmah *haybīt* ***aḥaḳṭ*** *ḥalakamah*
that the-camel.3fs.Nom **[gave-birth.X]** there,

The sentences in (12) above, which are observed in (12a) and (12a), appear with full agreement between the pre-verbal subject and the rest of verbs in each structure. In (12a), the geminate verbal root √***ḥgg*** ‘to pilgrimage’ and its preverbal subject ***Ahmēd*** are in a SVO word order. This verbal root associates with a vocalic melody, i.e., ***/a/***, which allows it to agree with preverbal subject in person, singular and masculine φ-features. Following this, the ha-type verb ***ha-√bṭʕ*** ‘to be late’ and the strong triliteral verbal root √***wṣl*** ‘to arrive’ show similar agreement with the genuine pre-verbal subject. In particular, the sound ***/ʕ/*** is inflected into a long vowel ***/ā/*** in ***habṭā*** ‘was late’, while the long vowel ***/ī/*** is inserted in √***wṣl***, as shown in ***wīṣal*** ‘arrived’.

In (12b), the strong triliteral verbal root √***ḥḳṭ***[6] ‘to give birth’ is attached to a suffix ***-ōt***. This suffix has a significant function to represent agreement with preverbal subject ***ḏīkmah haybīt*** ‘that camel’in that the pre-verbal subject ***ḏīkmah haybīt*** correlates with the main verb ***aḥaḳṭ-ōt*** ‘gave birth’, and agrees with it in person, singular and feminine φ-features. Moreover, the suffix ***-ōt*** attaches with the weak triliteral root √***ʕml*** ‘to make’, and result in the second verb in a structure, that is ***āml-ōt*** ‘made’, which totally agrees with the pre-verbal subject. In (12c), the sentence is ungrammatical because the verb does not maintain φ-feature marker ***-ōt*** that serves to show agreement with the preverbal subject.

(13) a. *[Aššargī wa Ahmēd* ***ḥagg-ōh*** *ḍēr haybīt-i ṯrayt],*

Aššargī wa Ahmēd.3mdu.Nom pilgrimaged.3mdu. on the-camel-du two.Gen

maġōran ***habṭ-ōh,*** *wa* ***waṣl-ōh*** *m-ḍēr atawḳayf*

[6] Interestingly, there are equivalent verbs that express the meaning of ‘giving new birth’ in Mehri lexicon. These verbs actually refer to the type of the subject that performs the action; it is either to be camel, goat/cow etc. or women. For example, consider the following:

a- ***haybīt aḥaḳṭ-ōt*** ‘the camel gave birth’
b- ***baḳrēt/ḥōz haġīg-ōt*** ‘the cow/goat gave birth’
c- ***atēt barw-ōt*** ‘the woman gave birth’

The verbal root √***ḥḳṭ*** ‘to give brith’ is only used for camels, while the two verbal roots: √***brw*** and √***hġg*** are used in different contexts. The former is used for woman and the latter is used for cow, goat, etc.

then, were.3mdu. and arrived.3mdu. after the-day-of-Arafat.Gen

" اشرقي واحميد **حقوُه** ظِير هَاييتي ثْرَيت، مغُورن **هبطوه**، و**وصِلوُه** مظِير اتوقَيف"

'Aššargī and Ahmēd pilgrimaged on two camels. They were late, and arrived after the day of Arafat'

b. *wa āmr-ōh, [ḏnaymah haybīt-i ṯrayt* ***aḥakṭ-tōh*** *ḥalakamah]*

and said.3mdu., these.fdu camel. fdu. two.fdu,Nom gave birth.3fdu. there

wa ***āmal-tōh*** *mēkan ṡaxōf*

and made.3fdu. much milk.Acc

"وامرُوه ذِكمه هَاييت **أحقْطوُت** حلَكمه، و**املوُت** مِيكن اِشْخوف"

'And they said 'these two camels gave birth there, and made much milk'

c. **Aššargī wa Ahmēd* ***ḥagg*** *ḍēr haybīt-i ṯrayt*

Aššargī wa Ahmēd.3mdu.Nom **[pilgrimaged.X]** on the-camel-du two.Gen

As for the duality, the pronominal suffix ***-ōh*** in (13a) attaches to the verbs as in ***ḥagg-ōh*** 'pilgrimaged', ***habṭ-ōh*** 'were late' and ***waṣl-ōh*** 'arrived' in order to show agreement with pre-verbal subject ***Aššargī wa Ahmēd*** 'two personal names in Mehri'. Particularly, the correlation between these constituents is defined as follows; the suffix marks agreement in φ-features (person, dual and masculine) between the pre-verbal subject and all verbs which immediately follow it. In a similar way, the pronominal suffix ***-tōh*** in (13b) attaches to verbs as in ***aḥakṭ-tōh*** 'gave birth' and ***āmal-tōh*** 'made'. This suffix shows agreement between these verbs and the pre-verbal subject ***ḏnaymah haybīt-i ṯrayt*** 'these two camels'. Specifically, the existence of pronominal suffix ***-tōh*** has a significant role to show agreement in person, dual and feminine between the preverbal subject and the following verbs, otherwise the sentence will be crashed, as presented by the ill-formed structure in (13c) above.

(14) a. [*Aššargī wa Ahmēd wa bar Madayh* ***ḥagg-am*** *ḍēr ṡahlīṯ habɛ̀r].*

Aššargī, Ahmēd and bar Madayh.3mp.Nom pilgrimaged.3mp. on three camels. Gen

maġōran ***habṭ-am****, wa* ***waṣl-am*** *m-ḍēr atawḳayf*

then, were.3mp. and arrived.3mp. after the-day-of-Arafat.Gen

"اشرقي واحميد وبرمديه **حقَم** ظِير ثْهلَيث هبِير، مغُورن **هبطَام**، و**وصِلَم** مظِير اتوقَيف"

Aššargī, Ahmēd and bar Madayh pilgrimaged on two camels. They were late, and arrived after the day of Arafat'

b. wa *āmōr-am*, [*layakama*h *śahlīṯ habėr* ***aḥḳōṭ*** *ḥalakamah],*

said.3mp. those three camels.3fp.Nom gave birth.3fp. there,

wa ***āymal*** *mēkan śaxōf*

and made.3fp. much milk.Acc

"واومورم ليكمه ڤشهلَيث هيِير **احقُوط** حلَكمه، **وايمل** مِيكن اڤشخوف"

'And they said 'those three camels gave birth there, and made much milk'

*c. *Aššargī wa Ahmēd wa bar Madayh* ***ḥagg*** *ḍēr śahlīṯ habėr*

Aššargī, Ahmēd and bar Madayh.3mp.Nom **[pilgrimaged.X]** on three camels. Gen

As for the plurality, the pronominal suffix ***-am*** in (14a) is added to the verbs as in ***ḥagg-am*** 'pilgrimaged', ***habṭ-am*** 'were late' and ***waṣl-am*** 'arrived'. It shows agreement in person, plural and masculine features between these verbs and the pre-verbal subject ***Aššargī wa Ahmēd wa bar Madayh*** 'three personal names'. In (14c), the ungrammatical verb ***ḥagg*** lacks a pronominal suffix. It does not agree with its pre-verbal subject that originally bears plural and masculine features. The sentence, therefore, is crashed. On the other hand, the verbs ***aḥḳōṭ*** 'gave birth' and ***āymal*** 'made' agree with the pre-verbal subject 'those three camels' in terms of person, plural and feminine φ-features. As discussed in (12a) and (12b), the vocalic melody ***/a/*** and the diphthong ***/ay/*** are interpreted as the plural feminine markers, which create an agreement between two verbs: ***aḥḳōṭ*** 'give birth' and ***āymal*** **'**made', and the plural pre-verbal subject: ***layakama*****h** ***śahlīṯ habėr*** 'those three camels'.

DISCUSSION

Derivation of SVO and VSO Structures in Mehri

In section 4, it should be argued that verbs in Mehri must show full agreement with subjects, regardless of whether they are pre-verbal or post-verbal subjects. Through specific affixes, verbs correlate with the genuine subject in a sentence; otherwise the structure must be crashed, as investigated by (9c), (10c), (11c), (12c), (13c) and (14c) above. In this section, we explore how VSO and SVO word orders are derived morph-syntactically in Mehri and in turn propose two clause structures of these word orders on the basis of Chomsky's (2008) feature-based-inheritance approach. We adopt the analysis of Kufa[7] school grammarians, who have assumed that both a post-subject

[7] According to Abdul-Raof (2001), traditional Arab grammarians belong to two grammar schools: *Baṣra* school grammarian and *Kūfa* school grammarian (primary schools of linguistics located in Iraq (Shah, 2003)). According to *Baṣra* school grammarian, the post-verbal DP in VSO in Arabic is ***fā'il*** 'agent' while the preverbal DP in SVO is ***mubtada'*** 'that with which a beginning is made'. As for the *Kūfa* school grammarian, post-verbal and pre-verbal DPs would be assigned the same function and denotation ***fā'il*** 'agent' and ***fā'il muqaddam*** 'fronted agent'.

or pre-subject would be assigned the same function and denotation, these are called ***fā'il*** 'agent' or ***fā'il muqaddam*** 'fronted agent', respectively (Abdul-Raof, 2001). According to Musabhien (2009), Alotaibi (2013) and Fakih (2016), the subject is topicalized by movement to the specifier of TopP in order to form a SVO word order in SA, as presented in (5b) above. In this paper, our argument for the derivation of SVO structure in Mehri is two-fold. First, we contend that definite subject undergoes movement from [Spec, v*P] to [Spec, TopP]. It is henceforth called a Topic. Second, we assume that indefinite subject moves from [Spec, v*P] to [Spec, TP]. It is, thus, called a fronted subject. Contra Musabhien (2009), We build our argument on that Mehri allows two types of DPs: definite DP or indefinite DP, which occupy the left periphery of the clause. Consider pattern (15) below.

(15) a. *aġayg saḥāṭ ḥōz*

the-man.3ms.Nom slaughtered.3ms. the-goat.Acc.

'the man slaughtered the goat'

b. *ġayg saḥāṭ ḥōz*

a-man.3ms.Nom slaughtered.3ms. the-goat.Acc.

'a man slaughtered the goat'

c. *saḥāṭ ḥōz*

slaughtered.3ms.Nom the-goat. Acc.

'he slaughtered the goat'

d. *saḥāṭ aġayg/ ġayg ḥōz*

slaughtered.3ms. the/a-man.3ms. Nom the-goat.Acc.

'the man slaughtered the goat'

e. *saḥāṭ aġayg/ ġayg ḥōz*

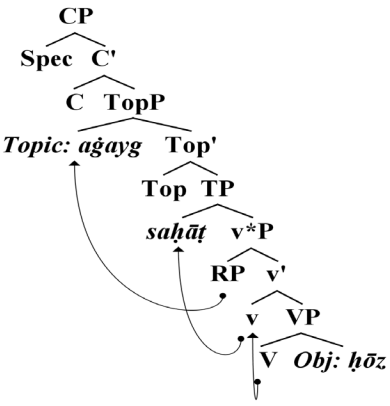
Did-slaughtere.3ms. the/a-man.3ms.Nom the-goat.Acc.

'Did the man slaughtered the goat?'

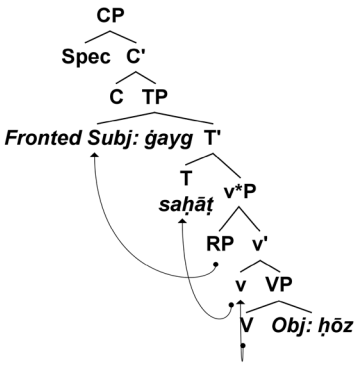
(15a) and (15b) show that in SVO the pre-verbal subject must necessarily be a full DP that totally agrees in φ-features with its verb. It can appear in the form of a pronominal clitic infixed to the verb, as illustrated in (15c). In other words, verbs in Mehri are drawn with pronominal references, which are wired with an overt subject such as (15a) and (15b) or a covert/*pro* subject as shown in (15c). The diversity of (in)-definiteness feature in both clauses does not affect the syntactic structures. Rather, it gives a specific interpretation to each clause. For example, clause (15a) is topicalized and specified because its peripheral subject ***aġayg*** 'the man' is definite DP. In this case, we assume that the presence of the feature on the head Top of TopP motivates the topicalized subject in SVO order in Mehri to undergo movement from [Spec-v*P] to [Spec-TopP]. On the other hand, clause (15b) is a generic structure that begins with an indefinite subject ***ġayg*** 'a man'. However, the generic subject moves from [Spec-v*P] to [Spec, TP].

Now let us examine how the Mehri data interact with Chomsky's (2008) feature-based-inheritance analysis. The objective is to explore whether the feature inheritance framework can be applicable in Mehri Syntax. Let us take the example in (15a) and (15b) to be derived in (16a) and (16b) in order to illustrate the issue clearly.

(16) a.



b.



From the geometric tree in (16a), it is obvious that the lexical verb ***saḥāṭ*** 'slaughtered' moves higher from its base position V to the functional light position v which in turn agrees with object ***ḥōz*** 'the goat'. According to Chomsky (2008), light v bears unvalued φ-features and case feature. Based on this view, we argue that light v is an active probe that must search for a matching goal in order to value its -interpretable features (i.e., -mp.). It, then, probes down to agree with the object ***ḥōz*** 'the goat' that contains intrinsic φ-features (i.e., +mf.). On the other hand, this object contains unvalued case that requires valuation. Upwards, the object agrees with a case assigner, light v, in which the object ***ḥōz*** 'the goat' is covertly assigned by an accusative case (Mahajan, 2012).

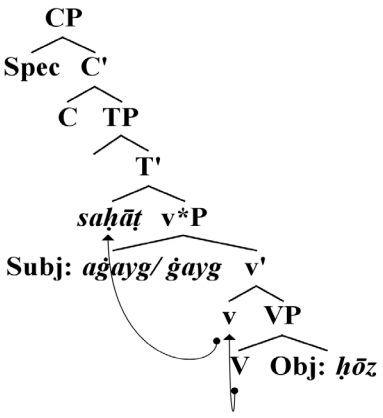
Furthermore, unvalued ϕ-features on T initiate an Agree relation with the subject in [Spec-v*P], i.e., ***aġayg*** 'the man'. This subject moves from [Spec-v*P] to [Spec-TopP]. In this connection, we postulate that since the edge feature of the head C of the CP phase is inherited by the Top head, the definite subject in Mehri is raised from base position to the left periphery of TopP, and becomes a topic. Following Fakih's (2016) view, we argue that the topic in (16a) leaves behind a resumptive pronoun (RP) in the specifier position of v*P. Besides, the Mehri clause structure in (16a) above shows that the edge feature (EF) of the head Top of TopP is inherited from C and φ-features of T are also inherited from C in the same manner. Building on Chomsky's (2008) Feature-based-Inheritance, we assume that both heads: Top and T inherit their features from the head C of the CP phase. Specifically, this assumption goes as follows; T inherits φ-features (-3ms.), and agrees with [Spec, v*P] that contains corresponding valued φ-features (+3mp.),

while Top inherits edge feature and case features from C which motivate DP ***aġayg*** 'the man' to move from [Spec, v*P], and assigns with a covert nominative case (Fakih, 2015). Hence all -interpretable features are valued and deleted in the syntax, thus deriving a topicalized SVO structure in Mehri.

In (16b), it is clear that TopP projection does not exist. We refer this point to the fact that the subject is indefinite that only moves higher from [Spec, v*P] to [Spec, TP]. Building on Musabhien's (2009) assumption that says, in Arabic dialects such as Jordanian dialect, the subject only moves to the specifier of TP, we assume that T in Mehri inherits a set of features from C. These features are unvalued φ-features (-3ms.), edge feature, and case feature. So, T is an active probe that agrees with indefinite subject ***ġayg*** 'a man', i.e., [Spec, v*P], which in turn is active that is assigned by a nominative case feature on T. Hence all -interpretable features are valued and deleted in the syntax, and the edge feature on T serves to trigger movement of [Spec, v*P] to the specifier of TP, thus deriving a non-topicalized SVO structure in Mehri. In (16b), we assume that the specifier is not a topic, as seen in (16a). Rather, it is a fronted subject that lacks definite feature.

Moving to VSO word order in Mehri, it can be commonly stated that the VSO order is treated as unmarked order. We argue that the genuine subject in this language has to stay in situ, that is, it has to remain in [Spec-v*P]. It does not move higher to either [Spec, TP] or [Spec, TopP], regardless of its in-definiteness feature. Furthermore, given Chomsky's (2008) minimalist analysis, we explore how VSO in Mehri is obtained in minimalist syntax. It is only derived by movement of the lexical verb from V to the functional head v (i.e. the light verb) and then to the functional head T (Fakih, 2016), not the head Foc, as assumed by Musabhien (2009). The Agree relation occurs between the functional head v (the probe) and the object (the goal), from one hand, and the functional head T (the probe) and the subject (the goal), on the other. However, it should be pointed out that in Chomsky's (2008) Feature-based-Inheritance, the Agree operation operates downward for the sake of feature valuation purposes. As a consequence, the -interpretable features of the functional heads (v and T) and the nominals (object and subject) are valued and hence deleted under the Agree relation. Let us demonstrate the VSO structure in (15d) by the derivational process shown in (17) below.

(17)



The syntactic derivation in (17) shows that the unmarked VSO order in Mehri is derived by movement of the lexical V to the higher functional heads v and T,

respectively. In the spirit of Chomsky's (2008) analysis, we assume that in VSO order in Mehri the post-verbal subject DP ***aġayg*** 'the man' or ***ġayg*** 'a man' does not raise from its base position of [Spec-v*P] because it has its features valued and deleted under the Agree relation with the c-commanding T. The justification as to why [Spec-v*P] remains in situ in Mehri can be attributed to the assumption that the head C in VSO order does not have an edge feature (vs. SVO order) (Fakih, 2016; Musabhien, 2009). This means that no movement of the subject is required in this context. In particular, we argue that T in Mehri enters into computation with a set of features inherited from C. These are unvalued φ-features and case feature (i.e., -3ms. and nominative assignment). Therefore, it is an active probe that c-commends with the subject DP ***aġayg*** 'the man' or ***ġayg*** 'a man' which in turn has unvalued case feature. Hence, the Agree relation is established between these two elements. Since T lacks an edge feature, the subject has to stay in its original position in [Spec, v*P], and is assigned by a covert nominative case.

Furthermore, the lexical V ***saḥāṭ*** 'slaughtered' moves higher to light v in order to support non-lexical features. This movement results in a complex verb with both causative and accusative features. As the Agree relation operates downward, the complex verb agrees with object and assigns it with an accusative case. On the other hand, the lexical verb ***saḥāṭ*** 'slaughtered' has a pronominal reference (i.e., infix; ***-ā-*** that shows +3ms.). Thus it moves higher to adjoin with T, forming a full agreement between the T and the valued subject that remains in situ in [Spec-v*P] under long-distance agree (Chomsky, 2008). A piece of strong evidence that supports this assumption is the example shown in (15c) above. In (15c), the subject is a phonologically null element, while its labels are drawn with the lexical verb ***saḥāṭ*** 'slaughtered'. However, we assume that the lexical verb, in this context, is the only local goal that c-commends with T, and values in unvalued φ-features (-3ms.). Besides, T inherits case feature from C, and assigns a nominative case to the pronominal affix on V, assuming it as the marker for the null nominative subject. Moreover, the lexical verb ***saḥāṭ*** 'slaughtered' in (15e) is focalized. It is originally located in V and then moves through three functional heads: v, T and Foc in order to satisfy some morphological requirements. Once it reaches head Foc, the Focus Projection (FocP) is formed between CP and TP layers. Hence the structure will be interpreted as an interrogative clause, not a declarative clause since the lexical verb is focalized and inherently shows do-inversion question.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown agreement in Mehri and pointed out how the syntactic word orders: SVO and VSO are derived on the basis of Chomsky's (2008) feature-based-inheritance approach. This study aims at presenting a satisfactory account on pre-verbal and post-verbal subjects. It argues that Mehri shows full agreement between lexical verb and its subject, wherever it is

located in a sentence. In other words, the lexical verb in Mehri exhibits a complete φ-agreement with its pre-verbal subject in SVO order or post-verbal subject in VSO order. This agreement is obviously marked by specific suffixes attached to the lexical verb when the subject is dual and masculine plural. But if the subject is singular and feminine plural, the lexical verb must contain specific infixes, namely vocalic melodies.

The study has also presented an alternative analysis for the syntactic word order in Mehri on the basis of Chomsky's (2008) feature-based-inheritance approach. In SVO word order, it proposes that because the edge feature of the head C of the CP phase is inherited by the Top head, the definite subject is topicalized in Mehri. It is then raised from a lower position in [Spec, v*P] to a higher position [Spec, TopP]. On the other hand, the edge feature is inherited by T head from C to move the indefinite subject from the specifier of v*P to the specifier of TP. Besides, building on the analysis of Arab grammarians expounded by Abdul-Raof (2001), we proposed that the definite subject in Mehri is a topic, while the indefinite subject is a fronted subject in which the lexical verb must bear pronominal markers which are morphologically linked to the pre-verbal subject. On the contrary, this study argued that the subject in VSO order in Mehri has to stay in situ in [Spec, v*P], while the lexical verb moves higher to T, not to Foc, and totally agrees with its post-verbal subject. This is because T lacks an edge feature inherited from C of the CP phase.

Moreover, we demonstrated that regardless of whether the subject, i.e. the goal with which C agrees, is located in [Spec, v*P] in VSO or in [Spec, TopP] and [Spec, TP] in SVO, the Agree operation is applied. Hence all -interpretable features on T (-φ-features) and unvalued cases on subject or object are valued and deleted by matching them with their valued counterparts. In this connection, we assumed that the functional light v c-commends the object in [v*P, Comp], and the functional T c-commend the subject in [Spec, v*P]. In a covert syntax, the former is assigned by an accusative case, while the latter is assigned by a nominative case. With regard to the CP phase, we proposed that C is the only element that takes the responsibility to inherit agreement and nominative case to T and Top. In addition, we showed that VSO and SVO in Mehri differ from each other in that the subject in VSO remains in situ while it undergoes movement from [Spec-v*P] to [Spec-TopP] or [Spec, TP] in SVO.

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