Revisiting Negative Concord as syntactic agreement in Arabic

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The study shows that previous accounts of Negative Concord (NC) as syntactic agreement in Arabic have conceptual and empirical problems. I propose that the syntactic agreement approach of NC in Arabic can still be maintained under some crucial modifications. In particular, I propose that the negative marker carries semantic negation in both Strict and Non-strict NC languages. I further assume that syntactic agreement can take place under Spec-head relation as well as c-command. For this assumption to work, I propose an Accord relation which allows feature checking to take place under Spec-head relation or c-command. The modified syntactic agreement approach can account for the distributional differences between preverbal n-words in Strict NC languages like Moroccan Arabic and preverbal n-words in Non-strict NC languages like Jordanian Arabic. Preverbal n-words in Strict NC languages are interpreted in the specifier domain of the negative marker where they can properly be licensed. In contrast, preverbal n-words in Non-strict NC languages are neither in Spec-head relation with the negative marker nor are they in its c-command domain.

KEYWORDS: Negative Concord, Agree, Spec-head agreement, Accord, Arabic.

1. Negative Concord

Negative Concord (NC) is a phenomenon whereby two negative constituents fail to contribute double negation to the interpretation. Consider the following example from Italian.[1]

(1) Italian (Penka 2011: 14)
  Maria   non   ha   visto   nessuno.
  Maria   NEG   has.3SG.F   seen   NBODY
  'Maria hasn't seen anybody.'

Example (1) includes two negative constituents, the sentential negative marker *non* and the n-word *nessuno* 'nobody'. However, *nessuno* seems to have lost its negative force and the interpretation includes only one instance of negation. Expressions like *nessuno* in Italian are dubbed n-words after Laka (1990) as most of those expressions begin with the prefix *n-* in European languages.

The status of *nessuno* in Italian as an n-word rather than a Negative Polarity Item (NPI) is supported by the fact that *nessuno* can provide fragment answers where it seems to contribute distinct negation to the interpretation in contrast to genuine NPIs such as *alcuno* 'anybody' as exemplified in (2) below. The negative fragment test has widely been accepted as a diagnosis of n-words (see Laka 1990; Zanuttini 1991; Haegeman 1995; Haegeman & Zanuttini 1991, 1996; Bernini & Ramat 1996; Haspelmath 1997; Herburger 2001; Giannakidou 1998, 2000, 2006; Zeijlstra 2004; Hoyt 2010; Penka 2011; among many others).[2]

(2) Italian (Zanuttini 1991: 116)
    A: *Chi   hai   visto?*
        who   have.2SG   seen
        'Who have you seen?'
    B: *Nessuno.*
        NBODY
        'Nobody.'
    B': **Alcuno.*
        anybody
        'Anybody.'

NC languages like Italian contrast with double negation languages such as Standard English where two negative constituents yield a double negation reading rather than a concordant reading as shown in (3).[3]

(3) Standard English
    I did not see nobody. (= I saw somebody)

The goal of this paper is to account for the distribution of n-words in Arabic. The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, I present the descriptive facts about NC in Arabic, showing that Arabic exhibits both Strict and Non-strict varieties of NC. In section 3, I discuss a hybrid analysis of NC in Arabic which claims that a combination of the ideas of a syntactic agreement approach and a lexical ambiguity approach to NC can account for the distribution of n-words in Arabic, showing that this hybrid analysis is both conceptually and empirically flawed. In section 4, I present the ideas of a pure syntactic agreement approach to NC in Arabic, again showing that this approach is both conceptually and empirically inadequate. In section 5, I provide a modified version of the syntactic agreement approach to NC in Arabic that allows feature checking to take place under either Spec-head relation or c-command. Section 6 concludes the study.

2. NC in Arabic

Arabic exhibits the two varieties of NC that are discussed in the literature. On the one hand, there are Arabic varieties in which n-words must always co-occur with a negative marker such as *ħətta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic as shown in (4). Those languages are referred to as Strict NC languages after Giannakidou (1998, 2000).

(4) Moroccan Arabic
    a. **(ma)-ʒa*   *ħətta*   *waħəd.*
        NEG-came.3SG.M   NDET   one
        'No one came.'
    b. *ħətta*   *waħəd*   **(ma)-ʒa.*
        NDET   one   NEG-came.3SG.M
        'No one came.'

On the other hand, there are varieties of Arabic in which post-verbal n-words must co-occur with a negative marker, whereas preverbal n-words must not co-occur with a negative marker such as *walaa*-phrases in Egyptian Arabic as shown (5). Those languages are referred to as Non-strict NC languages after Giannakidou (1998, 2000).

(5) Egyptian Arabic
    a. **(maa)-gaa-š*   *walaa*   *waaħid.*
        NEG-came.3SG.M-NEG NDET   one
        'No one came.'
    b. *walaa*   *waaħid*   *(*maa)-gih.*
        NDET   one   NEG-came.3SG.M
        'No one came.'

The co-occurrence of a preverbal *walaa*-phrase and a negative marker is not totally excluded in Egyptian Arabic. In fact, a preverbal *walaa*-phrase and a negative marker co-occurring in the same clause in Egyptian Arabic can be grammatical with a double negation reading, but never a concordant reading as illustrated in (6).

(6) Egyptian Arabic
    wala   *waaħid*   *ma-gih.*
    NDET   one   NEG-came.3SG.M
    'No one did not come.' (= 'Everyone came.')

Both *ħətta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic and *walaa*-phrases in Egyptian Arabic can be used as fragment answers where they can express negation distinctly (i.e. on their own and without the presence

of a negative marker), whereas genuine NPIs such as *ʔayy*-phrases cannot do so as shown in (7) and (8), respectively, below.

(7) Moroccan Arabic
    A: *škun   šuft?*
       who   saw.3SG.M
       'Who did you see?'
    B: *ħətta   waħəd.*
       NDET   one
       'No one.'
    B': **ʔayy   waħəd.*
       any   one
       'Anyone.'

(8) Egyptian Arabic
    A: *šuft   miin?*
       saw.3SG.M   who
       'Who did you see?'
    B: *walaa   waaħid.*
       NDET   one
       'No one.'
    B': **ʔayy   waaħid.*
       any   one
       'Anyone.'

Finally, both *ħətta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic and *walaa*-phrases in Egyptian Arabic are subject to a syntactic locality condition; they cannot be licensed by superordinate negation (i.e. negation in a higher clause), as shown in (9a) and (9b), respectively.

(9) a. Moroccan Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 163)
       **ma-gaal-š   ʔali bəlli Mona fəhmat   ħətta   ħaʒa.*
       NEG-said.3SG.M-NEG Ali COMP Mona understood.3SG.F NDET   thing
       'Ali didn't say that Mona understood anything.'

      b. Egyptian Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 163)
       **Aħmad maa-ʔaal-š   ʔin   Mona fihmit   walaa   ħaagah.*
       Ahmad NEG-said.3SG.M-NEG COMP Mona understood.3SG.F NDET   thing
       'Ahmad didn't say that Mona understood anything.'

NC raises two serious questions for linguistic analysis. The first question concerns compositionality. NC constructions create a challenge for compositionality as they involve a negative constituent that does not contribute semantic negation to the interpretation of the sentence in which it occurs. The second question concerns the parametric variation between Strict and Non-strict NC languages. In particular, it is not clear why some languages require an n-word to be accompanied by a negative

marker in both preverbal as well as postverbal position such as the case in Moroccan Arabic, whereas other languages require an n-word to be accompanied by a negative marker only in postverbal position such as the case in Egyptian Arabic.

Different approaches have been proposed to account for the interpretation and distribution of n-words. While some approaches take n-words to be NPIs of a special kind (e.g. Laka 1990; van der Wouden 1997; Zwarts 1996, 1998; Progovac 1988, 1993, 1994; Giannakidou 1998, 2000, 2006), others take n-words to be negative quantifiers (e.g. Zanuttini 1991; Haegeman & Zanuttini 1991, 1996; Haegeman 1995; de Swart & Sag 2002; Watanabe 2004). Other approaches take n-words to be ambiguous between a non-negative NPI reading and a negative quantifier reading (e.g. Herburger 2001). A more recent approach to NC takes n-words to be neither non-negative NPIs nor negative quantifiers. Rather, it takes n-words to be non-negative indefinites that are endowed with an uninterpretable negative feature that needs to Agree with a matching interpretable negative feature in order for the derivation not to crash (e.g. Zeijlstra 2004, 2008).

The current study will not attempt an exhaustive survey of those approaches. The interested reader is referred to Zeijlstra (2004) and Penka (2010) for an overview of those approaches and possible challenges.[4] Instead, the current study focuses on two approaches to NC in Arabic that are articulated within the most recent framework of NC as syntactic agreement (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008); namely Ouali & Soltan's (2014) hybrid approach and Alqassas' (2021) syntactic agreement approach. The study will show that both the hybrid approach and the syntactic agreement approach face several conceptual and empirical problems. An alternative syntactic agreement account of NC in Arabic will be suggested. In particular, it will be shown that the syntactic agreement analysis can still work for NC in Arabic if I assume that syntactic agreement can operate under Spec-head relation as well as c-command. I propose that n-words in Arabic are subject to an Accord relation which allows feature checking to take place under either Spec-head relation or c-command.

3. The hybrid approach

3.1 Ouali & Soltan (2014)

Ouali & Soltan (2014) provide a hybrid account of NC in Arabic. Their account is a combination of the syntactic agreement approach (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008) and the lexical ambiguity approach (Herburger
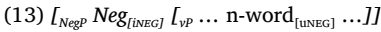
2001). Following the syntactic agreement approach (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008), they assume that NC is a manifestation of syntactic agreement between an n-word and a semantic negation in the clause, where Agree is defined in terms of feature checking following recent assumptions within Minimalism (Chomsky 1995, 1998, 2000, 2001) as shown in (10) below.

(10) Agree (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 170, adapted from Baker 2008)
    A functional head F agrees with XP, XP a maximal projection, only if
    i. F c-commands XP (the c-command condition).
    ii. There is no YP such that F c-commands YP, YP c-commands XP and YP has phi-features (the locality condition).
    iii. F and XP are contained in all the same phases (e.g. full CP) (the phase condition).
    iv. XP is made active for agreement by having an unchecked formal feature (the activity condition)

N-words are assumed to bear an uninterpretable negative feature [uNEG] that needs to be checked and eliminated against a matching interpretable negative feature [iNEG] under Agree as shown in the abbreviated syntactic representation in (11).[5]

(11) *[Neg$_{[iNEG]}$ ... [... n-word$_{[uNEG]}$ ...]]*
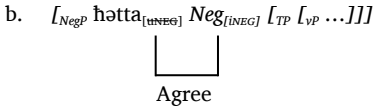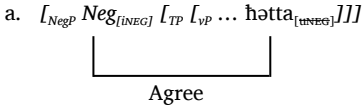

             Agree
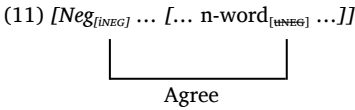
Zeijlstra (2004, 2008) argues that the variation between Strict and Non-strict NC languages lies in the negative force of the negative marker in the two types of languages. In particular, he contends that semantic negation is expressed by a null operator in Strict NC languages as represented in (12) where the [iNEG] feature on $Op^{\neg}$ can check the [uNEG] feature on both the negative marker and the n-word under multiple Agree (cf. Ura 1996; Haraiwa 2001). Semantic negation in Non-strict NC languages, on the other hand, is expressed by the negative marker itself as represented in (13).

(12) *[Op$^{\neg}$$_{[iNEG]}$ [$_{NegP}$ Neg$_{[uNEG]}$ [$_{vP}$ ... n-word$_{[uNEG]}$ ...]]]*

(13) *[$_{NegP}$ Neg$_{[iNEG]}$ [$_{vP}$ ... n-word$_{[uNEG]}$ ...]]*

Ouali and Soltan argue that Zeijlstra's system does not extend to Arabic. Alternatively, they suggest that the variation between Strict and Non-strict NC languages lies in the feature specification of n-words rather than in the negative feature of the negative marker in the two
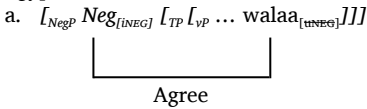
types of languages. Principally, they propose that the negative marker carries semantic negation in both Moroccan Arabic and Egyptian Arabic. They further argue that n-words in Strict NC languages like *ħatta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic are assumed to be always specified for [uNEG] that must be checked and deleted by the matching [iNEG] feature of the negative marker under Agree in both postverbal as well as preverbal position as shown in (14).

(14) Moroccan Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 174)

    a. $[_{NegP}$ *Neg*$_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ ... ħatta$_{[uNEG]}]]]$

                        Agree

    b. $[_{NegP}$ ħatta$_{[uNEG]}$ *Neg*$_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ ...$]]]$

                  Agree

N-words in Non-strict NC languages, on the other hand, like *walaa*-phrases in Egyptian Arabic are assumed to be lexically ambiguous between a [uNEG] feature and an [iNEG] feature in line with the lexical ambiguity approach (Herburger 2001). Consequently, they propose that there are two types of *walaa* in Egyptian Arabic: [uNEG]-*walaa* and [iNEG]-*walaa*. [uNEG]-*walaa* appears postverbally and is licensed under Agree by the [iNEG] feature of the negative marker as shown in the structure in (15a), whereas [iNEG]-*walaa* appears preverbally and expresses sentential negation by itself as shown in the structure in (15b).[6]

(15) Egyptian Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 174-175)

    a. $[_{NegP}$ *Neg*$_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ ... walaa$_{[uNEG]}]]]$

                       Agree

    b. $[_{FP}$ walaa$_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ ...$]]]$

For the question of what prevents the wrong kind of *walaa* in Egyptian Arabic to appear in the wrong position, Ouali and Soltan propose that [iNEG]-*walaa* cannot occur in postverbal position as shown in (16) because this violates the assumption that for negation to be semantically interpreted it needs to take scope over TP (Zanuttini 1991, Ladusaw 1996, Herburger 2001).

(16) Egyptian Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 174)
    *šuft   walaa   waaħid.
    saw.1SG   NDET   one
    Intended: 'I saw nobody.'

[uNEG]-*walaa*, on the other hand, cannot appear in preverbal position because it violates the economy condition of Minimize Feature Uninterpretability (MFU):

(17) MFU (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 176):
    Minimize feature uninterpretability in a derivation when possible.

The MFU is a principle of grammar that regulates the competition between interpretable and uninterpretable features in syntactic derivations. The MFU prefers interpretable features over uninterpretable features in syntactic derivations when no other grammatical principles are violated. Interpretable features are assumed to be less costly to computational systems as they do not require any licensing operations during the derivation. Therefore, the MFU renders sentences like (18) below ungrammatical under a concordant reading because an unwelcome [uNEG] feature enters the derivation when an [iNEG] feature is possible. Only [iNEG]-*walaa* can appear preverbally, in which case it expresses double negation when accompanied with a negative marker (but never a concordant reading, as indicted by the hashtag with the second translation in (18) below).

(18) Egyptian Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 175)
    walaa   waaħid   maa-gaa-š.
    NDET   one   NEG-came.3SG.M-NEG
    'Nobody didn't come.'
    #'Nobody came.'

Ouali and Soltan provide two arguments in support of the assumption that *ħətta* in Moroccan Arabic has a [uNEG] feature, whereas *walaa* in Egyptian Arabic exists with an [iNEG] feature as well as a [uNEG] feature. The first argument concerns the fact that *walaa* can express sentential negation in Egyptian Arabic as shown in (19a), whereas *ħətta* in Moroccan Arabic cannot do so as shown in (19b).

(19) a. Egyptian Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 173)
       huwaa walaa yiʕraf   ʔayy   ħaaga.
       he   NEG   know.3SG.M any   thing
       'He doesn't know anything.'
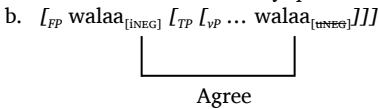   b. Moroccan Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 173)
       *huwaa ħətta yʕrəf   ʔayy   ħaʒa.
       he   NEG   know.3SG.M any   thing
       Intended: 'He doesn't know anything.'

The second argument comes from Negative Spread constructions where two n-words may co-exist in the absence of a negative marker. Negative Spread constructions are allowed in Egyptian Arabic as shown in (20a) as preverbal [iNEG]-*walaa* can license postverbal [uNEG]-*walaa* as shown in the syntactic derivation in (20b). Moroccan Arabic, on the other hand, does not allow Negative Spread constructions as shown in (21a) as such constructions lack an [iNEG] feature that can license n-words as represented in the structure in (21b).
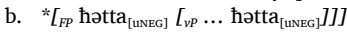
(20) Egyptian Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 164, 175)

    a. *walaa*   *Taalib*   *gaawib*   *ʕalaa*   *walaa*   *suʔaal.*
         NDET   student   answered.3SG.M   on   NDET   question
         'No student answered any question.'
    b. $[_{FP}$ walaa$_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ … walaa$_{[uNEG]}$$]]]$

                      Agree

(21) Moroccan Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 164, 174)
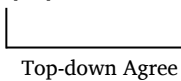
    a. **ħətta*   *Taalib*   *ʒawəb*   *ʕla*   *ħətta*   *suʔaal.*
         NDET   student   answered.3SG.M   on   NDET   question
         'No student answered any question.'
    b. $*[_{FP}$ ħətta$_{[uNEG]}$ $[_{vP}$ … ħətta$_{[uNEG]}$$]]]$

3.2 Challenging the hybrid approach

The hybrid account that Ouali and Soltan provide for NC in Arabic suffers a conceptual problem. Although Ouali and Soltan claim that they adopt Zeijlstra's implementation of Agree where Agree works in a top-down fashion with [iNEG] functioning as a PROBE that seeks a GOAL that it c-commands and that bears a matching [uNEG] feature as shown in the representation in (11) above, repeated as (22) below, the analysis they propose assumes that Agree works in both a top-down fashion as well as a bottom-up fashion as shown in (23) for Moroccan Arabic.[7]

(22) *[Neg$_{[iNEG]}$ … [… n-word$_{[uNEG]}$ …]]*

                Top-down Agree

(23) Moroccan Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 174)

    a. $[_{NegP}$ *Neg$_{[iNEG]}$* $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ … ħətta$_{[uNEG]}$$]]]$

                  Top-down Agree

b. $[_{NegP}$ ħətta$_{[uNEG]}$ Neg$_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ ...$]]]$

Bottom-up Agree

The hybrid account also suffers empirical problems. It makes wrong predictions about where [iNEG] can occur in Egyptian Arabic. As mentioned previously, Ouali and Soltan argue that [iNEG]-*walaa* is ungrammatical in postverbal position as illustrated in (16) above, repeated as (28) below, because its presence in postverbal position violates the assumption that for negation to be semantically interpreted it needs to take scope over TP.

(24) Egyptian Arabic
    *šuft   walaa waaħid.
    saw.1SG NDET one
    Intended: 'I saw nobody.'

This predicts that [iNEG]-*walaa* will be grammatical in postverbal position when negation is already marked above TP by, for example, a sentential negative marker or a preverbal [iNEG]-*walaa*. This prediction in not borne out as shown in the following examples.

(25) Egyptian Arabic
    *maa-šuft   walaa   waaħid.
    NEG-saw.1SG NDET   one
    Intended: 'I did not see nobody.'

(26) Egyptian Arabic
    *walaa Taalib gaawib   ʕalaa walaa suʔaal.
    NDET student answered.3SG.M on   NDET question
    Intended: 'No student answered no question.'

In (25), negation is marked above TP by the sentential negative marker *maa*, thus predicting [iNEG]-*walaa* to be acceptable in postverbal position and the sentence to have a double negation reading, contrary to fact. In (26), negation is marked above TP by preverbal [iNEG]-*walaa*, incorrectly predicting [iNEG]-*walaa* to be acceptable in postverbal position and the sentence to have a double negation reading. Furthermore, the economy condition of MFU even inaccurately prefers [iNEG]-*walaa* over [uNEG]-*walaa* in both (25) and (26) as the occurrence of [iNEG]-*walaa* does not violate any other syntactic or semantic constraints.

The hybrid account also makes wrong predictions about what would make a Strict or Non-strict NC language. As discussed above,

Ouali and Soltan argue that in Egyptian Arabic, a Non-strict NC language, the n-word *walaa* has an [iNEG] feature besides its [uNEG] feature, by virtue of it being used as a sentential negative marker in the language. Moroccan Arabic, on the other hand, is a Strict NC language, because the n-word *ħətta* in Moroccan Arabic cannot function as a sentential negative marker and therefore it only has a [uNEG] feature. This predicts languages in which n-words can function as sentential negative markers to be Strict NC languages, and languages in which n-words cannot function as sentential negative markers to be Non-strict NC languages. This prediction is not borne out. For example, the familiar n-word *wala* can function as a sentential negative marker in both Jordanian Arabic and Algerian Arabic as shown in (27a) and (27b), respectively.

(27) a. Jordanian Arabic
    huwaa wala biʕrif ʔayy ši.
    he   NEG know.3SG.M any   thing
    'He doesn't know anything.'
   b. Algerian Arabic
    huwaa wala yʕrəf ʔayy ħaʒa.
    he   NEG know.3SG.M any   thing
    'He doesn't know anything.'

However, only Jordanian Arabic behaves as a Non-strict NC language. While *wala*-phrases need to be accompanied with a negative marker only in postverbal position in Jordanian Arabic as illustrated in (28), *wala*-phrases need to be accompanied with a negative marker in both a preverbal as well as a postverbal position in Algerian Arabic as illustrated in (29).[8]

(28) Jordanian Arabic
   a.*(ma)-ʤa   *wala waaħad.*
     NEG-came.3SG.M NDET one
     'No one came.'
   b. *wala   waaħad (*ma)-ʤa.*
     NDET   one   NEG-came.3SG.M
     'No one came.'

(29) Algerian Arabic (Hoyt 2010: 253-254)
   a. *(ma)-ʒa   *wala ħadd.*
     NEG-came.3SG.M NDET one
     'No one came.'
   b. *wala ħadd *(ma)-ʒa.*
     NDET one   NEG-came.3SG.M
     'No one came.'

Moreover, while the hybrid account may extend to fragment answers in Non-strict NC languages like Egyptian Arabic, it is not clear under this account how n-words are licensed in fragment answers in Strict NC languages like Moroccan Arabic. N-words in both Moroccan Arabic and Egyptian Arabic can provide negative fragment answers as illustrated earlier in the data in (7) and (8). The hybrid account correctly predicts a fragment answer *walaa*-phrase in Egyptian Arabic to be grammatical because it carries an [iNEG] feature that does not need licensing as shown in the structure in (30a). However, it incorrectly predicts a structure with a fragment answer *ħətta*-phrase in Moroccan Arabic to be ungrammatical because it does not include a sentential negative marker that can license the *ħətta*-phrase as illustrated in (30b).[9]

(30) a. Egyptian Arabic
    [$_{FocusP}$ *wala*$_{[iNEG]}$ *waaħid* ...
   b. Moroccan Arabic
    [$_{FocusP}$ *ħətta*$_{[uNEG]}$ *waħəd* ...

Finally, the hybrid account of NC suffers a learnability problem. Ouali and Soltan argue that the economy condition of MFU is irrelevant to Strict NC languages like Moroccan Arabic because n-words in those languages are always specified for a [uNEG] feature; therefore, they always have to be licensed in the course of the derivation. As mentioned earlier, the MFU assumes that interpretable features are more economic and therefore less costly in syntactic derivations than uninterpretable features. This leads to the undesired result of making some languages more economic and therefore more learnable than other languages. For example, according to the MFU, Non-strict NC languages such as Egyptian Arabic are predicted to be more learnable than Strict NC languages such as Moroccan Arabic as the convergence of n-words in the former does not always require licensing while the convergence of n-words in the latter always requires licensing.

I conclude, then, that the hybrid approach falls short of accounting for the distribution of n-words in Arabic. An alternative account of NC as syntactic agreement in Arabic is provided by Alqassas (2019, 2021), which I discuss next.
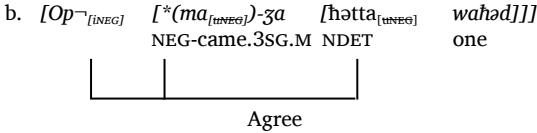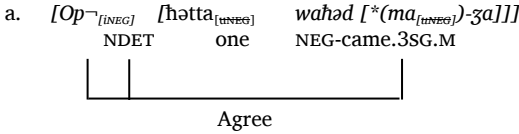
4. The syntactic agreement approach

4.1 Alqassas (2019, 2021)
Alqassas (2019, 2021) proposes that NC is a manifestation of syntactic agreement between an n-word and an element that carries seman-

tic negation in the sense of Zeijlstra (2004, 2008) discussed in the previous section. Unlike the hybrid approach, Alqassas adopts the assumption of the original syntactic agreement account that the parametric variation between Strict and Non-strict NC languages lies in the negative force of the negative marker rather than in the feature specification of n-words in the two types of languages. In particular, Alqassas postulates that n-words are specified for a [uNEG] feature in both Strict and Non-strict NC languages. He further argues that the negative marker carries a [uNEG] feature and is only formally negative in Strict NC languages, but it carries an [iNEG] feature and is semantically negative in Non-strict NC languages.
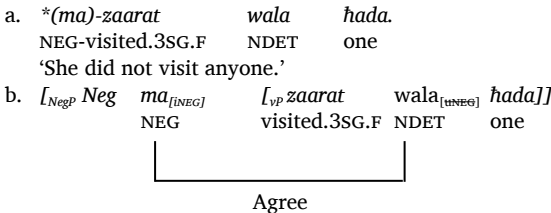
Both n-words and the negative marker in Strict NC languages are assumed to check their uninterpretable negative feature [uNEG] against the interpretable negative feature [iNEG] of an abstract negative operator *Op¬* under Agree. The derivations for preverbal and postverbal n-words in Moroccan Arabic would then be as shown in (31a) and (31b) respectively below under Alqassas' analysis.

(31) Moroccan Arabic (Alqassas 2021: 124)

 a. *[Op¬$_{[iNEG]}$ [ħətta$_{[uNEG]}$ waħəd [*(ma$_{[uNEG]}$)-ʒa]]]*
     NDET one NEG-came.3SG.M

         Agree

 b. *[Op¬$_{[iNEG]}$ [*(ma$_{[uNEG]}$)-ʒa [ħətta$_{[uNEG]}$ waħəd]]]*
     NEG-came.3SG.M NDET one

         Agree

N-words in Non-strict NC languages, on the other hand, check their uninterpretable negative feature [uNEG] against the interpretable negative feature [iNEG] of the negative marker when they appear in postverbal position as shown in (32) for Jordanian Arabic.

(32) Jordanian Arabic (Alqassas 2021: 120, 124)

 a. **(ma)-zaarat wala ħada.*
   NEG-visited.3SG.F NDET one
   'She did not visit anyone.'

 b. *[$_{NegP}$ Neg ma$_{[iNEG]}$ [$_{vP}$ zaarat wala$_{[uNEG]}$ ħada]]*
     NEG   visited.3SG.F NDET one

         Agree

Alqassas suggests that preverbal n-words in Non-strict NC languages cannot be licensed by the negative marker because they are neither c-commanded by nor are they in Spec-head relation with the negative marker.[10] Instead, they are licensed by an abstract negative operator as exemplified in (33) for Jordanian Arabic.

(33) Jordanian Arabic (Alqassas 2021: 127)
    a. *wala*   *ħada*   *katab*   *riwaaye.*
        NDET   one   wrote.3SG.M novel
        'No one has written a novel.'
    b. $[_{CP}$ $Op¬_{[iNEG]}$ $[$wala$_{[uNEG]}$ *ħada* $[_{TP}$ *katab riwaaye*

The abstract negative operator is invoked as a last resort strategy when the negative marker fails to license an n-word. The insertion of the abstract negative operator is averted when the preverbal n-word is preceded by a negative constituent such as the negative compounds *maʕumriš* 'never' and *maħadaaš* 'nobody'.[11] By virtue of them being inherently negative, Alqassas predicts the presence of preverbal negative compounds to render the abstract negative operator unnecessary.[12] This prediction is borne out as shown in the example in (34).[13]

(34) Jordanian Arabic (Alqassas 2021: 126)
    maʕumriš   *wala*   *ħada*   *zaar*   *el-batra.*
    never   NDET   one   visited.3SG.M DEF-Petra
    'Never has anyone visited Petra.'

4.2 Challenging the syntactic agreement approach

Like the Hybrid Account discussed in the previous section, the syntactic agreement account presented in this section is conceptually and empirically inadequate. From the original syntactic agreement approach (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008), it inherits the problem that it does not explain why the presence of the negative marker is obligatory in Strict NC languages. Under this account the negative marker carries an uninterpretable negative feature which cannot license n-words. This renders the negative marker unnecessary in Strict NC languages like Moroccan Arabic, which is not the case.

Zeijlstra (2004) explains the obligatory presence of the negative marker in NC constructions by assuming that the presence of the negative marker is necessary for the purpose of marking the scope of negation. Penka (2011) points out that this explanation is insufficient as it does not extend to constructions with preverbal n-words in strict NC languages. A preverbal n-word should be sufficient to mark the scope of negation which predicts the presence of the negative marker to be

unnecessary with preverbal n-words in strict NC languages. This predication is not borne out as the presence of the negative marker is obligatory with postverbal as well as preverbal n-words in strict NC languages.

Alqassas' syntactic agreement approach of NC does not account for the whole range of empirical data in Arabic. For example, Alqassas reports that Negative Spread constructions in his dialect of (Houran) Jordanian Arabic are acceptable only with a marginal double negation reading, but never a concordant reading as exemplified in (35). This is unexpected under the syntactic agreement account. The account predicts sentences like (35) to yield a concordant reading rather than a double negation reading because the sentence is assumed to include an abstract negative operator that can license the preverbal as well as the postverbal n-word under multiple Agree in the sense of Ura (1996) and Hiraiwa (2001) as shown in the derivation in (36).

(35) Jordanian Arabic (Alqassas 2021: 133)

wala	*mʕalme*	*rassabat*	*wala*	*Taalib.*
NDET	teacher.SG.F	failed.3SG.F	NDET	student

    *'No teacher failed any student.'
    ?'No teacher failed no student.' (= 'Every teacher failed a student')

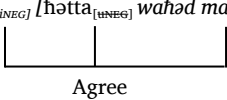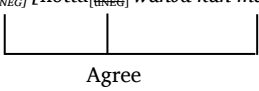(36) *[Op¬[iNEG] [wala[uNEG] mʕalme [TP rassabat wala[uNEG]] Taalib]]]*

Agree

The syntactic agreement account also fails to account for the tendency of preverbal n-words in Moroccan Arabic to be in the specifier domain of the negative marker. This tendency is observable in a number of constructions such as complex tense constructions which include a combination of an auxiliary verb and a lexical verb.[14] The negative marker can cliticize to either the auxiliary verb or the lexical verb in complex tense constructions in Moroccan Arabic as exemplified in (37).

(37) Moroccan Arabic (Benmamoun 2006: 146)

a. *ma-kan-š*   *taybɣi*   *Nadya.*
    NEG-was.3SG.M-NEG love.3SG.M Nadia
    'He did not love Nadia.'

b. *kan*   *ma-taybiɣ-š*   *Nadya.*
    was.3SG.M   NEG-love.3SG.M-NEG Nadia
    'He did not love Nadia.'

However, when a preverbal *ħətta*-phrase is present in Moroccan Arabic, a complex tense clause is grammatical only when the negative marker cliticizes to the auxiliary verb as illustrated in (38) below.[15]

(38) Moroccan Arabic (Benmamoun 2006: 146)
    a. *ħətta*   *waħəd*   **(ma)-kan*   *taybɣi-h.*
        NDET   one   NEG-was.3SG.M   love.3SG.M-him
        'No one loved him.'
    b. **ħətta*   *waħəd*   *kan*   *(ma)-taybɣi-h.*
        NDET   one   was.3SG.M   NEG-love.3SG.M-him
        'No one loved him.'

The contrast in (38) is unexpected under the syntactic agreement account. The account incorrectly predicts both examples in (38) to be grammatical. Both examples are assumed to include an abstract negative operator with an [iNEG] feature that can license the [uNEG] feature of the preverbal n-word and the negative marker as shown in the syntactic derivations in (39).

(39) Moroccan Arabic
    a. *[Op¬[iNEG] [ħətta[uNEG] waħəd ma[uNEG]-kan taybɣi-h]]*

            Agree

    b. *[Op¬[iNEG] [ħətta[uNEG] waħəd kan ma[uNEG]-taybɣi-h]]*

            Agree

To rule out structures such as (38b) in Moroccan Arabic, further stipulations need to be made. I conclude, then, that Alqassas' syntactic agreement analysis faces problems accounting for the whole range of NC empirical facts in Arabic. In the next section, I propose a modified version of the syntactic agreement approach. In particular, I propose that the variation between Strict and Non-strict NC languages lies in the position of preverbal n-words in the clausal hierarchy in the two types of languages.

5. An alternative syntactic agreement account

In this section, I propose that the analysis of NC as syntactic agreement in Arabic can be maintained under the following assumptions. First, the negative marker carries semantic negation (i.e. iNEG) in both

Strict and Non-strict NC languages. Second, Spec-head relation should be added to the licensing configurations of n-words. Third, preverbal *ħətta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic are interpreted in the specifier domain of the negative marker, whereas preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic are interpreted in a left-peripheral position outside the specifier and c-command domain of the negative marker. I discuss these assumptions in turn in the following sections.

5.1 The negative status of negative markers

Zeijlstra (2008) provides three arguments in support of the assumption that the negative marker bears an interpretable negative feature [iNEG] in Non-strict NC languages but an uninterpretable negative feature [uNEG] in Strict NC languages. These arguments come from the structure of negative imperatives, the optionality of the negative marker with preverbal n-words in Strict NC languages, and the interaction of quantifying DPs with the negative marker. I will demonstrate that while the argument from the structure of negative imperatives might extend to Arabic, the argument from the optionality of the negative marker with preverbal n-words in Strict NC languages does not. The argument from the interaction of quantifying DPs with the negative marker will not be discussed as it cannot be replicated for Arabic, but see Barouni (2017) for possible challenges.

Zeijlstra offers an argument from the typology of imperative clauses in Strict and Non-strict NC languages to support the claim that the negative marker carries semantic negation in Non-strict NC languages but only syntactic negation in Strict NC languages. In particular, he demonstrates that while Strict NC languages allow True Negative Imperatives (TNI), Non-strict NC languages allow Surrogate Negative Imperatives (SNI). TNIs are exemplified in (40) from Polish. The examples in (40) show that indicative and imperative sentences in Polish are negated in the same way. The negative marker *nie* in Polish always precedes the finite verb, be it indicative or imperative.

(40) Polish (Zeijlstra 2008: 24)

    a. *(Ty)*   *nie*   *pracujesz*
        you   NEG   work.2SG
        'You aren't working'

    b. *Pracuj!*
        work.2SG.IMP
        'Work!'

    c. *Nie*   *pracuj!* (TNI)
        NEG   work.2SG.IMP
        'Don't work!'

SNIs, on the other hand, are illustrated in (41) from Spanish. In (41), indicative and imperative sentences are not negated in the same way. The preverbal negative marker *no* is used to negate both types of sentences; however, it requires a verb in the subjunctive form rather than the imperative form in imperative sentences. Zeijlstra adopts Han's (2001) semantic analysis which shows that TNIs are banned because they include an imperative operator that might not be in the scope of negation.

(41) Spanish (Zeijlstra 2008: 24)
    a. *Tu   no   lees*
       you   NEG read.2SG
       'You don't read'
    b. *¡Lee!*
       read.2SG.IMP
       'Read!'
    c. *¡No   lee!* (*TNI)
       NEG   read.2SG.IMP
       'Don't read!'
    d. *¡No   leas!* (SNI)
       NEG   read.2SG.SUBJ
       'Don't read!'

Both Moroccan Arabic and Jordanian Arabic allow only SNIs as shown in (42) and (43), respectively.[16] This does not constitute a serious challenge for Zeijlstra's system. Zeijlstra makes it very clear that his analysis of the differences in the structure of negative imperative sentences between Strict and Non-strict NC languages is unidirectional in the sense that it guarantees all Non-strict NC languages to allow only SNI's, but it does not guarantee all Strict NC languages to allow only TNI's as TNI's might be banned on different grounds.

(42) Moroccan Arabic (Ouali & Soltan 2014: 172)
    a. *lʕəb!* (Positive imperative)
       play.2SG.M.IMP
       'Play!'
    b. *ma-lʕəb-š!* (*TNI)
       NEG-play.2SG.M.IMP-NEG
    c. *ma-tlʕəb-š!* (SNI)
       NEG-play.2SG.M.SUBJ-NEG
       'Don't play!'

(43) Jordanian Arabic
    a. *ʔilʕab!* (Positive imperative)
       play.2SG.M.IMP
       'Play!'

    b.   **ma-ʔilʕab!* (TNI)
        NEG-play.2SG.M.IMP
    c.   *ma-tilʕab!* (SNI)
        NEG-play.2SG.M.SUBJ
        'Don't play!'

    Probably, the strongest argument against Zeijlstra's suggestion that the negative marker is semantically negative in Non-strict NC languages, but only formally negative in Strict NC languages comes from the obligatory presence of the negative marker with preverbal n-words in Strict NC languages.

    Zeijlstra demonstrates that while the negative marker is always obligatory for the expression of negation in Non-strict NC languages, it is only obligatory with postverbal n-words in some Strict NC languages such as Greek as exemplified in (44). The negative marker *dhen* is obligatory in (44a) where the n-word *oute kan* 'even' appears in a postverbal position but optional in (44b) where *oute kan* appears in a preverbal position. Zeijlstra argues that this is expected on functional grounds. Though the negative marker carries a [uNEG] feature that does not contribute to the interpretation, its presence is obligatory with postverbal n-words to mark the scope of negation but only optional with preverbal n-words that function as scope markers themselves.

(44) Greek (Zeijlstra 2008: 23)
    a.   *O*   *Jannis*   **(dhen) dhiavase oute*   *kan*   *tis*   *Sindaktikes*   *Dhomes*
        the   Jannis NEG   reads even the Syntactic Structures
        'Jannis doesn't read even Syntactic Structures'
    b.   *Oute kan*   *ti*   *Maria (dhen)* *proskalese o*   *pritanis*
        even   the   Maria NEG   invite   the   dean
        'Not even Maria did the dean invite'

    Zeijlstra further suggests that the negative marker is obligatory in all negative sentences (including sentences with preverbal n-words) in strict NC languages in which the negative marker is part of the verbal morphology such as Czech as shown in (45).

(45) Czech (Zeijlstra 2004: 64)
    a.   *Nevolá*   *nikdo.*
        NEG.calls   NBODY
        'Nobody is calling'
    b.   *Nikdo*   *nevolá.*
        NBODY   NEG.calls
        'Nobody is calling'

Zeijlstra's analysis of the optionality of the negative marker in Strict NC languages does not extend to Arabic. I have previously seen that the negative marker is always obligatory with both postverbal as well as preverbal n-words in Moroccan Arabic. A structure with a pre-verbal *ħətta*-phrase that is not accompanied by the negative marker is totally excluded in Moroccan Arabic as shown in the ungrammaticality of (46) below. Note here that the negative marker in Moroccan Arabic is not part of the morphology of the verb but is merely a syntactic clitic. Consequently, I propose that the negative marker is semantically nega-tive in both Moroccan Arabic and Jordanian Arabic.
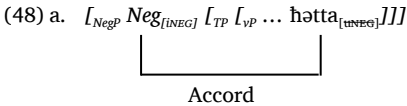
(46) *ħətta   waħəd   ʒa.
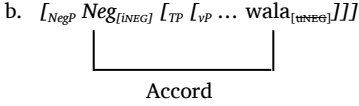   NDET   one   came.3SG.M

5.2 Licensing configurations

The modified syntactic agreement analysis I propose in this section also assumes that Spec-head relation exists side by side with c-command as a licensing configuration of n-words in Arabic.[17] Therefore, I suggest that n-words in Arabic are subject to an Accord relation which is a vari-ation of the Agree relation defined in (10) earlier. Accord is defined to allow feature checking to take place under either Spec-head relation in the sense of Chomsky (1986) or c-command in the sense of Reinhart (1976).[18]
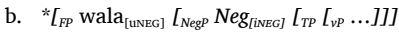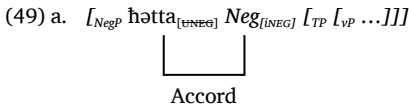
(47) Accord
    A functional head F accords with XP, XP a maximal projection, only if
    i. F c-commands XP or XP is in Spec-head relation with F (the c-command or Spec-head condition).
    ii. There is no YP such that F c-commands YP, YP c-commands XP and YP has phi-features (the locality condition).
    iii. F and XP are contained in all the same phases (e.g. full CP) (the phase condition).
    iv. XP is made active for agreement by having an unchecked formal feature (the activity condition).

To see how Accord works, I suggest that postverbal *ħətta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic and postverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic are both licensed through Accord under c-command as shown in the syntac-tic representations in (48a) and (48b), respectively.[19]

(48) a. $[_{NegP}\ Neg_{[iNEG]}\ [_{TP}\ [_{vP} \ldots\ ħətta_{[uNEG]}]]]$

               Accord

b. $[_{NegP}\ Neg_{[iNEG]}\ [_{TP}\ [_{vP}\ ...\ \text{wala}_{[uNEG]}]]]$

Accord

Preverbal n-words, on the other hand, are licensed by Accord under Spec-head relation. This accounts for the distributional differences between preverbal *ħǝtta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic and preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic. On the one hand, *ħǝtta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic are acceptable in preverbal position because they are in Spec-head relation with the negative marker where they can enter into an Accord relation with the negative marker as represented in (49a). On the other hand, *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic are not tolerated in preverbal position because they are located in the specifier position of a functional projection (FP), presumably FocusP, in the left-periphery as represented in (49b) and therefore they are neither in Spec-head relation with the negative marker nor are they in its c-command domain. This analysis is supported by the distributional differences between preverbal *ħǝtta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic and preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic in various constructions as I will discuss in the next section.

(49) a. $[_{NegP}\ \text{ħǝtta}_{[uNEG]}\ Neg_{[iNEG]}\ [_{TP}\ [_{vP}\ ...]]]$

Accord

b. $*[_{FP}\ \text{wala}_{[uNEG]}\ [_{NegP}\ Neg_{[iNEG]}\ [_{TP}\ [_{vP}\ ...]]]]$

A reviewer points out that the effect of Accord is comparable to having upward and downward Agree. I argue that this is not the case and that Accord is empirically more appealing than having upward and downward Agree. If upward Agree was available as a licensing configuration for n-words, it remains a mystery why it can license preverbal *ħǝtta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic as in (49a), but not preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic as in (49b). Furthermore, upward Agree does not explain why preverbal *ħǝtta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic have a tendency to be merged in the specifier domain of the negative marker as I am going to see in the following section. It is worth pointing out here that Spec-head agreement has not been completely abandoned as a licensing configuration. Koopman (2006), for example, argues that Spec-head not only co-exists with Agree as a licensing configuration, but might rather be the only available licensing configuration. Chomsky (2001) defends Agree as a licensing configuration but also notes that in

addition to Agree "there is presumably a similar but distinct agreement relation, concord, involving Merge alone." (Chomsky 2001, footnote 5). The current study defends a compromise position that allows syntactic agreement to operate under either c-command or Spec-head relation.

5.3 Licensing of preverbal n-words

There is consensus in the Arabic generative literature that preverbal DPs in Arabic are base-generated in their surface position and are co-indexed with a resumptive pronoun in the thematic domain; however, it is debatable whether preverbal DPs in Arabic are located in an A-position or an A'-position (see Fassi Fehri 1993; Benmamoun 2000; Aoun *et al.* 2010; Soltan 2007). In this paper, I adopt the assumption that preverbal DPs in both Moroccan Arabic and Jordanian Arabic are base-generated in their surface position, but I argue that they occupy different positions in the clausal hierarchy. In particular, I conjecture that preverbal DPs in Moroccan Arabic are interpreted clause-internally, whereas preverbal DPs in Jordanian Arabic are located in the left-periphery. Later in this section, I suggest that this follows from a typological difference of word order in Maghrebi Arabic and Levantine Arabic rather than from some lexical/feature specification of n-words themselves. Accordingly, I propose that the variation in the distribution of preverbal n-words in Moroccan Arabic and Jordanian Arabic lies in the position of these n-words in the clausal hierarchy. Both preverbal *ħətta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic and *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic are base-generated in their surface position. But, preverbal *ħətta*-phrases are merged in the specifier domain of the negative marker, whereas preverbal *wala*-phrases are merged in a functional projection in the left-periphery outside the specifier domain of the negative marker. As noted by an anonymous reviewer, another possibility to entertain here is to assume that *wala* in Jordanian Arabic is not only endowed with a [Neg] feature, but also with a [Foc] feature which allows for its appearance in a left peripheral position (cf. Haegeman 2000, Poletto 2010, Breitbarth *et al.* 2013). This analysis is supported by the distributional differences between preverbal *ħətta*-phrases and preverbal *wala*-phrases in various constructions such as complex tense constructions, clitic-left dislocated constructions, and negative nominal sentences.

To start with, sentential negation in both Moroccan Arabic and Jordanian Arabic can cliticize either to the auxiliary verb or to the main verb in complex tense constructions (i.e. constructions that involve a combination of an auxiliary verb and a lexical verb) as shown in (50) and (51), respectively.

(50) Moroccan Arabic (Benmamoun 2006: 146)
    a.   *ma-kan-š*   *taybɣi*   *Nadya.*
         NEG-was.3SG.M-NEG   love.3SG.M Nadia
         'He did not love Nadia.'
    b.   *kan*   *ma-taybiɣ-š*   *Nadya.*
         was.3SG.M   NEG-love.3SG.M-NEG Nadia
         'He did not love Nadia.'

(51) Jordanian Arabic
    a.   *ma-kaan*   *yiħib*   *Nadya.*
         NEG-was.3SG.M love.3SG.M Nadia
         'He did not love Nadia.'
    b.   *kaan*   *ma-yiħib*   *Nadya.*
         was.3SG.M   NEG-love.3SG.M Nadia
         'He did not love Nadia.'

However, when a preverbal *ħətta*-phrase is present in the subject position in Moroccan Arabic, a complex tense clause is grammatical only when the negative marker cliticizes to the auxiliary verb as illustrated in (52) below. The contrast in (52) argues against a covert analysis of the licensing of n-words in Moroccan Arabic. Assuming a VP-internal subject position (Mohammad 1989, Fassi Fehri 1993), the preverbal *ħətta*-phrase in both sentence (52a) and sentence (52b) is supposed to reconstruct to Spec,VP at LF where it is interpreted in the c-command domain of the negative marker in the head of NegP, incorrectly predicting both sentences to be grammatical. The contrast in (52), instead, suggests that preverbal *ħətta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic need to overtly be in the domain of the negative marker (i.e. in Spec-head relation with the negative marker at Syntax). The grammaticality of (52a) as opposed to the ungrammaticality of (52b) follows if I assume that the preverbal *ħətta*-phrase is in Spec-head relation with the negative marker at Syntax in the former but not in the latter.

(52) Moroccan Arabic (Benmamoun 2006: 146)
    a.   *ħətta*   *waħəd*   **(ma)-kan*   *taybɣi-h.*
         NDET   one   NEG-was.3SG.M   love.3SG.M-him
         'No one loved him.'
    b.   **ħətta*   *waħəd*   *kan*   *ma-taybɣi-h.*
         NDET   one   was.3SG.M   NEG-love.3SG.M-him
         'No one loved him.'

Conversely, a preverbal *wala*-phrase that surfaces in the subject position in a complex tense clause in Jordanian Arabic cannot be licensed by the negative marker regardless of whether the negative marker cliticizes to the auxiliary verb or the lexical verb as exemplified

in (53) below.[20] This suggests that preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic are located in the left-periphery outside the specifier and c-command domain of the negative marker.

(53) Jordanian Arabic
    a.   *wala   waaħad   ma-kaan   yiħib   Nadya.*
           NDET   one   NEG-was.3SG.M   love.3SG.M   Nadia
           'No one loved Nadia.'
    b.   *wala   waaħad   kaan   ma-yiħib   Nadya.*
           NDET   one   was.3SG.M   NEG-love.3SG.M   Nadia
           'No one loved Nadia.'

Preverbal *ħatta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic and preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic display the same distributional differences in clitic-left dislocated constructions. The subject can intervene between a clitic-left dislocated object and the verb in both Moroccan Arabic and Jordanian Arabic as shown in (54) and (55), respectively.

(54) Moroccan Arabic (Alqassas 2021: 281)
    a.   *lə-ktab   ma-qrat-u   Səlwa.*
           the-book   NEG-read.3SG.F-it   Salwa
           'Salwa didn't read the book.'
    b.   *lə-ktab   Səlwa   ma-qrat-u.*
           the-book   Salwa   NEG-read.3SG.F-it
           'Salwa didn't read the book.'

(55) Jordanian Arabic
    a.   *l-ktaab   ma-qarat-u   Salwa.*
           the-book   NEG-read.3SG.F-it   Salwa
           'Salwa didn't read the book.'
    b.   *l-ktaab   Salwa   ma-qarat-u.*
           the-book   Salwa   NEG-read.3SG.F-it
           'Salwa didn't read the book.'

Nevertheless, an object *ħatta*-phrase in Moroccan Arabic can be clitic-left dislocated as long as the subject does not intervene between the *ħatta*-phrase and the negative marker as shown in (56). Assuming that fronted elements related to a resumptive pronoun do not reconstruct (Aoun & Benmamoun 1996), Benmamoun (1997) attributes the contrast in (56) to the assumption that the preverbal clitic-left dislocated *ħatta*-phrase is in the specifier domain of the verbal complex that involves the negative marker at surface structure in (56a) but not in (56b). In (56a), the subject surfaces in a postverbal position and the preverbal clitic-left dislocated *ħatta*-phrase surfaces in a position that is in the domain of the verbal complex that involves the negative marker (i.e. in Spec-head

relation with it at surface structure). In (56b), the subject surfaces in a preverbal position where it intervenes between the preverbal clitic-left dislocated *ħatta*-phrase and the verbal complex that involves the negative marker.[21]

(56) Moroccan Arabic (Benmamoun 1997: 281)
    a. *ħatta*   *ktab*   **(ma)-qrat-u*   *Səlwa.*
        NDET   book   NEG-read.3SG.F-it   Salwa
        'Salwa did not read any book.'
    b. **ħatta*   *ktab*   *Səlwa*   *ma-qrat-u.*
        NDET   book   Salwa   NEG-read.3SG.F-it
        'Salwa did not read any book.'

Preverbal clitic-left dislocated *wala*-phrases in JA, on the other hand, cannot be licensed by the negative marker regardless of whether the subject intervenes between the *wala*-phrase and the negative marker or not as exemplified in (57). The unavailability of a concord reading in (57) follows immediately if I assume that the preverbal clitic-left dislocated *wala*-phrase is located in the left-periphery outside the specifier and c-command domain of the negative marker.

(57) Jordanian Arabic
    a. **wala*   *ktaab*   *ma-garat-uh*   *Salwa.*
        NDET   book   NEG-read.3SG.F-it   Salwa
        'Salwa did not read any book.'
    b. **wala*   *ktaab*   *Salwa*   *ma-garat-uh.*
        NDET   book   Salwa   NEG-read.3SG.F-it
        'Salwa did not read any book.'

The analysis presented here also makes correct predictions about the distribution of preverbal *ħatta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic and preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic in negative nominal sentences. When a pronominal copula is present in a negative nominal sentence, the negative marker can either follow or precede the pronoun in both Moroccan Arabic and Jordanian Arabic as illustrated in (58) and (59), respectively.

(58) Moroccan Arabic (Ouhalla 2002: 313)
    a. *Omar*   *ma-huwwa-ši*   *mrid/f-l-dar.*
        Omar   NEG-PRON-NEG   sick/in-the-house
        'Omar is not sick/in the house.
    b. *Omar*   *huwwa*   *ma-ši*   *mrid/f-l-dar.*
        Omar   PRON   NEG-NEG sick/in-the-house
        'Omar is not sick/in the house.'

(59) Jordanian Arabic
   a. *Omar   ma-huu   mariið/f-d-daar.*
       Omar   NEG-PRON   sick/in-the-house
       'Omar is not sick/in the house.'
   b. *Omar   huu   muu   mariið/f-d-daar.*
       Omar   PRON   NEG   sick/in-the-house
       'Omar is not sick/in the house.'

But, when a preverbal *ħətta*-phrase is present in the subject position in a negative nominal sentence in Moroccan Arabic, the sentence is grammatical only when the negative marker precedes the pronoun as shown in (60). Ouhalla (2002) interprets the contrast in (60) to suggest that a preverbal *ħətta*-phrase in a negative nominal sentence needs to be in Spec-head agreement with the negative marker.[22] The contrast in (60) follows if I assume that the *ħətta*-phrase is in Spec-head relation with the negative marker in the former but not in the latter.

(60) Moroccan Arabic (Ouhalla 2002: 313)
   a. *ħətta   waħəd   ma-huwwa mrid/f-l-dar.*
       NDET   one   NEG-PRON sick/in-the-house
       'No one is sick/in the house.'
   b. **ħətta   waħəd   huwwa   ma   mrid/f-l-dar.*
       NDET   one   PRON   NEG   sick/in-the-house
       'No one is sick/in the house.'

In contrast, a preverbal *wala*-phrase that appears in the subject position in a negative nominal sentence in Jordanian Arabic cannot be licensed by the negative marker regardless of whether the negative marker precedes or follows the pronoun as shown in (61). The ungrammaticality of the sentences in (61) suggests that preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic are located in the left-periphery outside the specifier and c-command domain of the negative marker.

(61) Jordanian Arabic
   a. **wala   waaħad   ma-huu   mariið/f-d-daar.*
       NDET   one   NEG-PRON sick/in-the-house
       'No one is sick/in the house.'
   b. **wala   waaħad   huu   muu   mariið/f-d-daar.*
       NDET   one   PRON   NEG   sick/in-the-house
       'No one is sick/in the house.'

The analysis of preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic as left-peripheral elements is supported by another type of empirical evidence. This evidence comes from constructions in which a preverbal *wala*-phrase follows a question word as shown in the example in (62) from

Jordanian Arabic or a subordinating particle as shown in the example in (63) from Palestinian Arabic.[23]

(62) Jordanian Arabic (Hoyt 2010: 248)
leeʃ   wala   ħada   ma-katab   ɪt-taʕqiib?
why   NDET   one   NEG-wrote.3SG.M   the-commentary
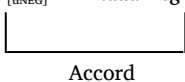'Why didn't anyone write the commentary?'

(63) Palestinian Arabic (Hoyt 2010: 249)
ħɛssa   bɪddkʊm   itkuluu-l-i   ʔinnu   wala   ħada   ma-bɪkuul
now   want.2PL.M   say.2PL.M-to-me   that   NDET   one   NEG-say.3SG.M
la-ʔʊmm-u   'la'.
to-mother-his   no
'Now you all should tell me that not one says 'no' to his mother.'
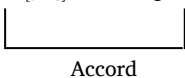
Both example (62) and example (63) include a preverbal *wala*-phrase and a negative marker; however, both examples have a concordant reading rather than a double negation reading, contrary to what I would expect of such constructions. I have previously noted that constructions that involve a preverbal *wala*-phrase and a negative marker in Jordanian Arabic yield a double negation reading which makes the examples in (62) and (63) exceptional cases.

Following Hoyt (2010), I interpret the examples in (62) and (63) as exceptions that prove the rule. Assuming that question words such as *leeš* 'why' in (62) and subordinating particles such as *ʔinnu* 'that' in (63) provide 'brackets' for the left-periphery of the clause, I propose that a preverbal *wala*-phrase that follows a question word or a subordinating particle is forced to be interpreted clause-internally in the specifier domain of the negative marker where they can be properly licensed as represented in (64) and (65).[24]

(64) Jordanian Arabic
[$_{CP}$ *leeš* [$_{NegP}$ wala$_{[uNEG]}$ *ħada* Neg *ma*$_{[iNEG]}$ [$_{TP}$ T *katab* [$_{vP}$ … *ittaʕqiib*]]]]
                        └──────────────┘
                            Accord

(65) Palestinian Arabic
… [$_{CP}$ *ʔinnu*   [$_{NegP}$ wala$_{[uNEG]}$ *ħada* Neg *ma*$_{[iNEG]}$ [$_{TP}$ T *bɪkuul* [$_{vP}$ … *laʔʊmmu 'la'*]]]]
                        └──────────────┘
                            Accord

A reviewer raised the question of what is different in Moroccan Arabic n-words *vs* Jordanian Arabic n-words to result in the former

occupying the specifier domain of the negative marker, but the latter being base-generated in a functional projection in the left-periphery outside the specifier domain of the negative marker. Following Hoyt (2010), I suggest that this difference between Moroccan Arabic n-words and Jordanian Arabic n-words does not follow from some lexical/feature specification of n-words per se, but rather from a typological difference of word order in Levantine Arabic and Maghrebi Arabic.[25] Hoyt shows that while preverbal indefinite and definite nominals in Levantine Arabic are interpreted as left-peripheral topical phrases, preverbal indefinite nominals in Maghrebi Arabic are interpreted as fronted foci with a clause-internal interpretation. In support of this, he notes that the pivot or focus noun phrase in an existential construction can either follow or precede the verb in Maghrebi Arabic as shown in (66) but can only follow the verb in Levantine Arabic as shown in (67).

(66) Maghrebi Arabic (Hoyt 2010: 254)
    a. *zebda*   *baladiyya*   *kaayna?*
        butter.SG.F   local.SG.F   exist.SG.F
        'Is there local butter?'
    b. *kaayna*   *zabda*   *baladiyya?*
        exist.SG.F   butter.SG.F   local.SG.F
        'Is there local butter?'

(67) Levantine Arabic (Hoyt 2010: 255)
    a. *fii*   *zɛbdi*   *bɛladiyyi?*
        exist   butter.SG.F   local.SG.F
        'Is there local butter?'
    b. **zɛbdi*   *bɛladiyyi*   *fii?*
        butter.SG.F   local.SG.F   exist

Hoyt argues that the examples in (66) and (67) suggest that preverbal indefinites in Maghrebi Arabic "can have not only non-topical interpretations, but even new information focus interpretations". He further shows that these facts extend to NC constructions in the two languages. While a *ħatta*-phrase that is the pivot of an existential construction can either follow or precede the verb as shown in (68), a *wala*-phrase pivot cannot do so as shown in (69).[26]

(68) Maghrebi (Moroccan) Arabic (Hoyt 2010: 255)
    a. *iħtaħadd*   *ma-kaayn*   *ɣeer*   *allaah*   *waħdu.*
        NDET-one   NEG-exist.SG.M   other   God   self.his
        '… there is no one other than God Himself.'
    b. *ma-kaayn*   *iħtaħadd*   *ɣeer*   *allaah*   *waħdu.*
        NEG-exist.SG.M   NDET-one   other   God   self.his
   'And we know that there is no one other than God Himself.'

(69) Levantine Arabic (Hoyt 2010: 255)
    a. *maa-fi*   *wala*   *ħada*   *ɣeer*   *allaah*   *nafsu.*
         NEG-exist   NDET   one   other   God   self.his
         'There is not even one other than God Himself.'
    b. **wala*   *ħada*   *maa-fi*   *ɣeer*   *allaah*   *nafsu.*
         NDET   one   NEG-exist other   God   self.his

5.4 The abstract negative operator

The question that arises at this point is how preverbal *wala*-phrases are licensed in Jordanian Arabic. Following Zeijlstra (2004), I argue that preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic are licensed by an abstract negative operator $Op\neg$ through Accord under c-command as represented in (70) below.

(70) Jordanian Arabic

$[Op\neg_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{FP}$ wala$_{[uNEG]}$ $[_{NegP}$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ ...$]]]]]$

            Accord
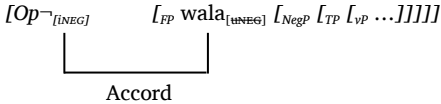
As pointed out by a reviewer, the abstract operator analysis might be problematic because if this mechanism is available in the language, one wonders why a negative marker would still be needed. I argue that the insertion of $Op\neg$ is a last resort option that is invoked when a negative marker fails to license an element with a [uNEG] feature. For concreteness, I assume that the last resort nature of the abstract operator exists in the form of an economy condition that keeps abstract material that is necessary for the derivation of the semantics of a sentence to a minimum. The economy condition on $Op\neg$ requires its presence under the condition that a [uNEG] feature would otherwise remain unchecked even when a negative marker is present in the structure, as stated in (71).

(71) Economy Condition on $Op\neg$:
     An $Op\neg$ is inserted only when the derivation involves an element with a [uNEG] feature that would remain unchecked otherwise, even in the presence of an overt negative marker.
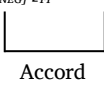
It follows then that the abstract operator is invoked as last resort in (70) because the preverbal *wala*-phrase is neither c-commanded by nor is it in the specifier domain of the negative marker. In addition, the economy condition on $Op\neg$ makes it straightforward why the negative abstract operator is not an option when *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic appear in object position as shown in the ungrammaticality of (72).

(72) Jordanian Arabic
  *šuft wala waaħad.
  saw.1SG NDET one
  Intended: 'I saw nobody.'

  It is not possible to insert the abstract operator in (72) because the derivation can still be rescued by the presence of the negative marker, see (73).

(73) Jordanian Arabic
  *(ma)-šuft wala waaħad.
  NEG-saw.1SG NDET one
  'I saw nobody.'

  This analysis predicts that sentences that include a combination of a preverbal *wala*-phrase and a negative marker in Jordanian Arabic can induce only a double negation reading, but never a concordant reading. This predication is borne out. These sentences involve two semantic negations, the one associated with $Op\neg$ and the one associated with the negative marker as shown in the syntactic representation in (74).

(74) Jordanian Arabic
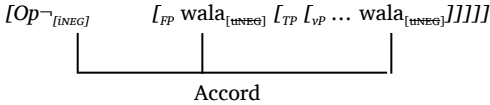 $[Op\neg_{[iNEG]} [_{FP} wala_{[uNEG]} [_{NegP} Neg_{[iNEG]} [_{TP} [_{vP} …]]]]]$

  Accord

  The nature of the abstract negative operator mechanism as last resort is further supported by data from Moroccan Arabic. The economy condition on the insertion of $Op\neg$ bans sentences that include a preverbal *ħətta*-phrase and a negative marker in Moroccan Arabic to have a double negation reading. I have previously seen that, unlike preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic, preverbal *ħətta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic can be licensed by an overt negative marker as they are located in the specifier domain of the negative marker at Syntax. Therefore, the insertion of $Op\neg$ will render the abstract negative marker uneconomic and cause the derivation to crash at LF as represented in (75).

(75) Moroccan Arabic
  $*[Op\neg_{[iNEG]} [_{NegP} ħətta_{[uNEG]} Neg_{[iNEG]} [_{TP} [_{vP} …]]]]$

  The economy condition on $Op\neg$ correctly predicts Jordanian Arabic to permit Negative Spread constructions but Moroccan Arabic not so as shown earlier in the data in (35). In Jordanian Arabic, multiple *wala*-

phrases can co-exist in the absence of an overt negative marker because a preverbal *wala*-phrase cannot be licensed by the negative marker in the head of NegP as it is neither c-commanded by nor is it in the specifier domain of the negative marker, in which case the abstract negative operator is invoked as last resort to rescue the derivation and license both the preverbal as well as the postverbal *wala*-phrase as represented in (76a). In Moroccan Arabic, on the other hand, multiple *ħatta*-phrases cannot co-exist in the absence of an overt negative marker because a preverbal *ħatta*-phrase is located in the specifier domain of the negative marker in the head of NegP where it can properly be licensed, in which case the insertion of the abstract negative operator will violate the economy condition on *Op¬* and cause the derivation to crash at LF as represented in (76b).

(76) a. Jordanian Arabic

$[Op¬_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{FP}$ wala$_{[uNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ ... wala$_{[uNEG]}]]]]]$

Accord

b. Moroccan Arabic

$*[Op¬_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{NegP}$ ħatta$_{[uNEG]}$ $Neg_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ ... ħatta$_{[uNEG]}]]]]$

It follows from this analysis that constructions which involve multiple n-words and an overt negative marker will result in a double negation reading in Jordanian Arabic but a concordant reading in Moroccan Arabic as shown in the examples in (77) and (78), respectively. Example (77a) from Jordanian Arabic involves two semantic negations, the one associated with the abstract negative operator inserted as last resort and the one associated with the overt negative marker as shown in the syntactic derivation in (77b). Example (78a), on the other hand, involves only one instance of semantic negation, which is the one associated with the overt negative marker as shown in the syntactic derivation in (78b).

(77) Jordanian Arabic
   a. *wala   Taalib   ma-ʤaawab   ʕla   wala   suʔaal.*
       NDET   student   NEG-answered.3SG.M on   NDET   question
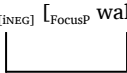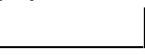   'No student did not answer any question.'
   b. $[Op¬_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{FP}$ wala$_{[uNEG]}$ *Taalib* $[_{NegP}$ *Neg* ma$_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ *T* ʤaawab $[_{vP}$ ... ʕalaa
       wala$_{[uNEG]}$ *suʔaal]]]]]*

(78) Moroccan Arabic
   a. *ħatta   Taalib   ma-ʒawəb   ʕla   ħatta   suʔaal.*
       NDET   student   NEG-answered.3SG.M on   NDET   question
       'No student answered any question.'
   b. $[_{NegP}$ ħatta$_{[uNEG]}$ *Taalib Neg* ma$_{[iNEG]}$ $[_{TP}$ *T* ʒawəb $[_{vP}$ ... ʕla ħatta$_{[uNEG]}$ *suʔaal]]]*

Finally, the abstract negative operator analysis can account for the licensing of n-words in fragment answers in both Jordanian Arabic and Moroccan Arabic. I conjecture that n-words in fragment answers check their [uNEG] feature against the [iNEG] feature of the abstract negative marker *Op¬* through Accord under c-command in both Jordanian Arabic and Moroccan Arabic as shown in the derivations in (79a) and (79b), respectively.[27]

(79) a. Jordanian Arabic
         [*Op¬*[iNEG] [FocusP wala[uNEG]   ...
                       |_____|
                            Accord
     b. Moroccan Arabic
         [*Op¬*[iNEG] [FocusP ħətta[uNEG]   ...
                       |_____|
                            Accord

The n-words in both (79a) form Jordanian Arabic and (79b) from Moroccan Arabic are not in a proper licensing configuration with an overt negative marker; therefore, the abstract negative operator is inserted as last resort to rescue the derivation.

5.5 Locality of n-words licensing

Before I conclude, one final point is in order. The locality of n-words licensing illustrated earlier with the data in (9) follows immediately form the treatment of NC as syntactic agreement. An n-word cannot establish an agreement relation with negation in a higher clause because agreement is subject to the Phase Impenetrability Condition (Chomsky 2001), which allows licensing to take place into one phase down, but no further. Consequently, the ungrammaticality of (80a) below from Jordanian Arabic follows from the Phase Impenetrability Condition; the negative marker cannot license the n-word because the n-word belongs to a lower C-Phase as shown in the syntactic derivation in (80b).

(80) Jordanian Arabic
     a. *Maryam ma-gaalat   ʔinn-ha   ištarat   wala   ktaab.
         Mary   NEG-said.3SG.F   that-her bought.3SG.F.IND NDET book
         'Mary did not say that she bought any book.'
     b. *[C-Phase Maryam ma[iNEG]-gaalat [C-Phase ʔinn-ha ištarat wala[uNEG] ktaab

A reviewer raises the question of how the economy condition mentioned in (71) in the previous section prevents the abstract operator from being inserted in (80). The Phase Impenetrability Condition is mentioned to account for the negative marker to be unable to do the licensing, which means that an element with a [uNEG] feature remains unchecked, even in the presence of an overt negative marker. This should make it possible for the abstract operator to be inserted and for the example in (80) to have a double negation reading, contrary to fact as illustrated in (81).

(81) Jordanian Arabic
    a. *Maryam ma-gaalat   Ɂinn-ha   ištarat   wala   ktaab.*
        Mary   NEG-said.3SG.F that-her bought.3SG.F.IND NDET book
        'Mary did not say that she bought no book.'
    b. *[$_{C\text{-}Phase}$ Maryam ma$_{[iNEG]}$-gaalat [$_{C\text{-}Phase}$ Ɂinn-ha ištarat [Op¬$_{[iNEG]}$ wala$_{[uNEG]}$ ktaab*

In fact, the unacceptability of (81) supports the economy condition on *Op*¬. It is not possible to insert the abstract operator in (81) because the derivation can still be rescued by the presence of the negative marker in the embedded clause, see (82).

(82) Jordanian Arabic
    a. *Maryam ma-gaalat   Ɂinn-ha ma-ištarat   wala   ktaab.*
        Mary   NEG-said.3SG.F that-her NEG-bought.3SG.F.IND NDET book
        'Mary did not say that she did not bought any book.'
    b. *[$_{C\text{-}Phase}$ Maryam ma$_{[iNEG]}$-gaalat [$_{C\text{-}Phase}$ Ɂinn-ha ma$_{[iNEG]}$-ištarat wala$_{[uNEG]}$ ktaab*

In (82), the negative marker in the embedded clause and the n-word belong to the same C-Phase, hence no violation of the Phase Impenetrability Condition is incurred.

    To test this analysis, I can contrast the behavior of n-words in embedded clauses that are preceded by a predicate in the indicative mood such as the one in (80) above with those that are preceded by a predicate in the subjunctive mood. The prediction is that the subjunctive predicate will license *wala*-phrases since it does not project a CP (i.e. it does not have its own phase) and thus it is transparent to long-distance licensing.[28] This prediction is borne out as shown in (83) below.

(83) Jordanian Arabic
    *Maryam   *(ma)-biddha   tištari   wala   ktaab.*
    Mary   NEG-want.3SG.F buy.3SG.F.SUBJ NDET book
    'Mary does not want to buy any book.'

This analysis can further be tested by the contrast in the ability of adversative predicates in Jordanian Arabic to license n-words in their complement clauses.[29] For example, the adversative predicate *rafað* 'refuse' selects for a subjunctive complement clause; whereas the adversative predicate *ankar* 'deny' selects for an indicative complement. This predicts *rafað* to allow an n-word in its complement clause, but *ankar* not so. The prediction is borne out as exemplified in (84) below.

(84) Jordanian Arabic

   a. *Maryam   rafaðat   ʔinn-ha   tiħki   wala   kilmih.*
      Mary   refused.3SG.F that-her said.3SG.F.SUBJ NDET word
      'Mary refused to say any word.'

   b. **Maryam ankarat   ʔinn-ha   ħakat   wala   kilmih.*
      Mary   denied.3SG.F   that-her said.3SG.F.IND NDET   word
      'Mary denied that she said any word.'

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that previous accounts of NC as syntactic agreement in Arabic face conceptual and empirical inadequacies. I propose that the syntactic agreement approach to NC in Arabic can still be maintained under the assumption that syntactic agreement can work under Spec-head relation as well as c-command. For this assumption to work, I suggest that n-words in Arabic are licensed through an Accord relation which allows feature checking to take place under Spec-head relation or c-command.

N-words do not create a challenge for compositionality under the syntactic agreement approach. N-words do not contribute semantic negation to the interpretation because they are only formally negative. The modified syntactic agreement approach presented in this paper also offers a straightforward answer for the parametric variation between Strict NC languages like Moroccan Arabic and Non-strict NC languages like Jordanian Arabic. Preverbal n-words in Moroccan Arabic are interpreted in the specifier domain of the negative marker at Syntax where they can properly be licensed. In contrast, preverbal n-words in Jordanian Arabic are neither in Spec-head relation with the negative marker nor are they in its c-command domain.

Preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic are assumed to be licensed by an abstract negative operator that is subject to an economy condition that requires its presence only in structures where an n-word would remain unlicensed even in the presence of a negative marker.

The abstract negative operator analysis can account for the licensing of preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic, the licensing of n-words in fragment answers in both Moroccan Arabic and Jordanian Arabic and the ban on Negative Spread constructions in Moroccan Arabic but not Jordanian Arabic.

The clause-boundedness of NC follows immediately from the syntactic agreement approach under the assumption that syntactic agreement is subject to the Phase Impenetrability Condition (Chomsky 2001), which allows licensing to take place into one phase down, but no further.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 = first, second, third person; FP = functional projection; SG = singular; PL = plural; M = masculine; F = feminine; MFU = Minimize Feature Uninterpretability; NBODY = neg-body; NC = Negative Concord; NDET = neg-determiner ; NEG = negation marker; NPI = Negative Polarity Item; DET = determiner; COMP = complementizer; IMP = imperative; IND = indicative; SNI = Surrogate Negative Imperatives; SUBJ = subjunctive; PRON = pronoun; TNI = True Negative Imperative.

Notes

[1]   The data from other sources have been slightly modified so that they meet the transliteration and gloss practice used in this paper.

[2]   NC is attested in many languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Italian, Polish, Russian, Romanian, modern Greek, Hungarian, Japanese, among many others).

[3]   Non-standard varieties of English are NC languages rather than double negation languages, as the combination of a negative marker with a negative indefinite in those varieties yields a concordant reading rather than a double negation reading.

[4]   For a critical review of those approaches in the context of Arabic, see Hoyt (2010), Alsarayreh (2012), Ouali & Soltan (2014) and Alqassas (2021).

[5]   Ouali and Soltan adopt Zeijlstra's modified version of Agree whereby an interpretable feature may function as a Probe that needs to Agree with a Goal that carries a matching uninterpretable feature. In particular, their system requires an element that is endowed with an interpretable feature (i.e. a Probe) to Agree with an element that carries a matching uninterpretable feature (i.e. a Goal) as represented in the structure in (11) in order for the derivation not to crash.

[6]   Ouali and Soltan remain open with regard to the exact identity of FP that hosts preverbal DPs in Arabic. They argue that it could be TP of TopP, an issue that is debatable in Arabic generative literature (see Fassi Fehri 1993; Benmamoun 2000; Aoun *et al.* 2010; Soltan 2007).

[7]   A reviewer notes that (23b) may be taken to be a case of top-down Agree if licensing of the n-word does not require movement to Spec, NegP, but can take place with the n-word in its original *v*P-internal position. That is, the conceptual problem mentioned is 'fixable'. I argue that assuming top-down Agree in this sense is not appealing as it makes wrong predictions about the distribution of preverbal *ħətta*-phrases in Moroccan Arabic. In section 5.3, I provide robust evidence that preverbal

ħətta-phrases in Moroccan Arabic need to be overtly in the specifier domain of the negative marker.

⁸   *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic and Algerian Arabic qualify as n-words because they can provide fragment answers in both languages as illustrated in (i) and (ii), respectively.

(i) Jordanian Arabic

    A: *miin   ʤa?*
        who   came.3SG.M
        'Who came?'

    B: *wala   waaħad.*
        NDET   one
        'No one.'

(ii) Algerian Arabic

    A: *škun   šuft?*
        who   saw.2SG.M
        'Who did you see?'

    B: *wala   ħadd.*
        NDET   one
        'No one.'

⁹   I assume that fragment answers are located in Spec-Focus in the left periphery of the clause in the spirit of Merchant (2004).

¹⁰   Alqassas (2015) argues that preverbal *wala*-phrases in Jordanian Arabic are located in the left periphery of the clause (i.e. the CP layer). He supports this assumption by showing that the NPI adverbial *ʕumr* 'ever', which he assumes is located in Spec,TP, can intervene between a preverbal *wala*-phrase and the verb as shown in the example below, suggesting that the preverbal *wala*-phrase is a Topic rather than a subject.

(i) Jordanian Arabic (Alqassas 2015: 124)

    wala ħada ʕumr-o   zaar   el-batra.
    NDET one   ever-him visited.3SG.M DET-Petra
    'No one has ever visited Petra.'

¹¹   Following Hoyt (2007) and Aoun *et al.* (2010), Alqassas assumes that the negative constituents *maʕumriš* 'never' and *maħadaaš* 'nobody' are lexical compounds that do not branch in syntax.

¹²   Alqassas supports the assumption that lexical compounds like *maʕumriš* 'never' and *maħadaaš* 'nobody' are inherently negative by showing that they can license NPIs like *ħada* 'anyone' and *ʕumr* 'ever' as shown in the following examples.

(i) Jordanian Arabic (Alqassas 2021: 126)

    a. *maʕumriš   ħada   zaar   el-batra.*
        never   one   visited.3SG.M   DET-Petra
        'Never has anyone visited Petra.'

    b. *maħadaaš   ʕumr-o   zaar   el-batra.*
        no-one   ever   visited.3SG.M DET-Petra
        'No one has ever visited Petra.'

¹³   Alqassas convincingly shows that examples like (34) from Jordanian Arabic pose a serious challenge for Ouali & Soltan's (2014) lexical ambiguity account of *wala*-phrases in Arabic. Ouali and Soltan argue that postverbal *wala*-phrases are specified for a [uNEG] feature whereas preverbal *wala*-phrases are specified for an [iNEG] feature. Their account predicts the preverbal *wala*-phrase in (34) to be specified for an [iNEG] feature and for the sentence to have a double negation reading rather than a concordant reading, contrary to fact.

¹⁴   The tendency of preverbal n-words in Moroccan Arabic to be in the specifier

domain of the negative marker is also observable in other constructions such as clitic-left dislocation constructions and negative nominal sentences that include a pronominal copula as will be discussed in the following section.

[15] The examples in (38) show that n-words in Moroccan Arabic are in complementary distribution with the suffix -*š*. Similar facts have been reported about n-words and the suffix *pas* in French (see Zanuttini 1991). See Ouhalla (2002) for an argument against this complementary distribution as a reflection of the competition between n-words and the suffix -*š* for the same syntactic position, namely Spec, NegP.

[16] Note here that while the sentential negative marker *ma* can occasionally be used in negative imperatives in Jordanian Arabic, it is more common in the language to negate imperative sentences with the discourse negation particle *la* as shown in (i).

(i) *la-tilʕab!*
   NEG-play.2SG.M.SUBJ
   'Don't play!'

[17] The Spec-head agreement is not new in the analysis of NC; it has been proposed since Zanuttini (1991) and Haegeman (1995).

[18] Accord as a licensing operation of n-words in Arabic was first proposed by Hoyt (2005), but in a feature matching context rather than a feature checking context.

[19] One analysis of the syntax of negation in Arabic (Mohammad 1989; Diesing & Jelinek 1995; Shlonsky 1997; Jelinek 2002; Hoyt 2007; Soltan 2007) advocates that NegP is located above TP as represented in (ia). A second analysis (Ouhalla 1993; Benmamoun 1996, 1997, 2000; Aoun *et al.* 2010) places NegP below TP and further assumes that the verb must incorporate with the negative head to avoid minimality violations on the assumption that it undergoes V-to-T movement as shown in the representation in (ib). The current study assumes the first analysis; however, nothing hinges on this assumption. The analysis I propose of NC in Arabic in the current study is consistent with either hypothesis.

(i) a. $[_{NegP} [_{TP} [_{vP} ...]]]$
   b. $[_{TP} T Neg+verb [_{NegP} <Neg+verb> [_{vP} <verb> ...]]]$

[20] Note here and throughout the remainder of this study that the asterisk in examples that involve a preverbal *wala*-phrase and the negative marker such as (53) is meant to indicate the ungrammaticality of the sentence in question under a concordant reading. Note also that those sentences are well-formed with a double negation reading.

[21] Benmamoun shows that the contrast in (56) cannot be ascribed to the unacceptability of reconstruction in the presence of preverbal subjects as such reconstruction is possible with preposed anaphors as shown in the example in (i) below.

(i) *mʕa baʕḍhum lə-wlad kanu taylʕbu.*
   with each-other the-boys were.3PL play.3PL
   'The children were playing with each other.'

[22] Ouhalla (2002) assigns the structure in (i) below to nominal sentences in Arabic, suggesting that NegP is below TP and that nominal sentences have a T category that can be occupied by a pronoun when present, but not an Agr category. He further suggests that NEG must be in T when a preverbal polarity phrase (an n-word in our terminology) is present in Spec-TP.

(i) $[_{TP} (SUBJ) T [_{NegP} NEG [_{PredP} PRED ...$

[23] The same facts in example (63) from Palestinian Arabic extend to Jordanian Arabic.

[24] A reviewer notes that while it seems obvious that *wala* is in Spec,TP or in another subject position in (64) and (65), one could maybe argue that if Spec,FocP is occupied (by a *wh*-word for instance) that the negative subject needs to stay in subject position. This would mean that *wala* is not only endowed with a [Neg] feature, but also with a [Foc] feature which allows for its appearance in a left peripheral position

(cf. Haegeman 2000, Poletto 2010, Breitbarth *et al.* 2013).

[25] Maghrebi Arabic and Levantine Arabic represent examples of geographical linguistic groupings of the various Arabic dialects. Maghrebi Arabic includes the Arabic vernaculars spoken in North Africa (other than Egypt): Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania and Western Sahara. Levantine Arabic, on the other hand, includes the Arabic vernaculars spoken in the Levant: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Other geographical groupings of Arabic include Egyptian Arabic spoken in Egypt and Gulf Arabic spoken in the Arabian Golf. The various Arabic dialects have differences in terms of their vocabulary, pronunciation, and even some basic grammar. As one would predict, the mutual intelligibility of any two dialects decreases as the geographical distance between them increases (Aoun *et al.* 2010).

[26] Hoyt observes that *ħatta* in Moroccan Arabic is not pronounced as an independent word by his informants, but rather as a proclitic on the noun that it precedes.

[27] See Alonso-Ovalle & Guerzoni (2003), Hoyt (2010) and Alsarayreh (2012) for an argument against the assumption that the negative meaning associated with n-words in fragment answers is a property of a negative marker that has undergone deletion under ellipsis.

[28] I here assume Giorgi's (2004) analysis which assigns different structures for indicative and subjunctive clauses. While indicative clauses are argued to project a full CP with a ForceP and a FinP, subjunctive clauses are said to project only a FinP but not a ForceP (cf. Zeijlstra 2004, 2008).

[29] Zeijlstra (2004) suggests that adversative predicates like *refuse* are not only intuitively negative but also formally negative. He argues that such elements can be lexically decomposed into a negative element and a non-negative element. For example, the adversative predicate *refuse* can be decomposed into *not agree* with an [iNEG] feature against which n-words can check their [uNEG] feature.

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