Case-Checking in >> an Clause in Standard Arabic (SA): A Minimalist Account

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Abstract

The study aims to analyze the feature of case-assignment in ≫an clause in Standard Arabic (SA). ≫an clause in SA has two determiner phrases (DPs). The first DP is assigned the nominative case and the second DP is assigned the accusative case. The study provides an account of how case is assigned for both DPs in ≫an clause. The analysis in this study is conducted within the framework of Minimalist Program (MP) of Chomsky (1995, 1999, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2008). The study shows that MP can account for the case assignment in ≫an clause in SA. The study introduces two modifications for the structure of Tense (T) in SA. The first modification suggests that Extended Projection Principle (EPP) should be deleted from the node T to manage the derivation of verb-subject word order in ≫an clause in SA. The second modification suggests that phi features (·.-features) of person, number should be deleted and to keep only the agreement feature of gender. This modification would help to account for the verb-subject agreement in ≫an clause.

Keywords: Standard Arabic, clause structure in Arabic, Minimalist analysis of Arabic clause, ≫an clause in SA.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the present study is to provide an analysis for the structure of embedded ≫an clause in Standard Arabic (SA). ≫an clause always follows specific verbs such as "≫arada" (to want), "faDDala" (to prefer) and "Talaba" (to ask. The complementizer ≫an is followed by a verb that is in the subjunctive mood and can be followed by two DPs. The first DP is in the nominative case and the second DP has the accusative case, as the following example shows:

1- ≫arada   ≫al-mu‿lem-u   ≫an   yaktuba   ≫a- TTaalib-u
    wanted.3sgmas   the-teacher-NOM   C   write.3sgmas   the-student-NOM

    ?-ddars-a
    The-lesson-ACC
    "the teacher wanted the student to write the lesson

The verb "≫arada", in the above example, is assigned the subjunctive case by the mood assigner "≫an". Although the verb shows no inflection for tense, it is followed by two DPs that have two different cases.

The analysis of ≫an clause in SA is conducted within the frame of Minimalist Program (MP) as outlined by Chomsky (1995, 1999, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2008). The analysis aims to encounter two issues related to ≫an clause in SA.

The first issue is to provide an account for the feature of case – assignment in ≫an clause. As example (1) shows, the verb that follows the complementizer ≫an is in the subjunctive form and shows no inflection for tense. However, it is followed by two DPs. The first DP is assigned nominative case, whereas the second DP has accusative case. The study investigates how these two different cases are assigned despite the fact that the verb of ≫an clause is untensed.

The second issue of the study is to discuss the structure of T of TP in SA. As example (1) shows, the word order of ≫an clause has the canonical verb-subject order (VS). The analysis provides an explanation for VS word order by introducing a modification for the structure of Tense (T) in Tense Phrase (TP) of SA. This modification will render MP to account for the derivation of VS word order in SA

The analysis of ≫an clause is based on principles of MP such as VP shell, light accusative v, c-command, and probe and goal.

2. Problem of the Study

There are two observations that can be noticed in ≫an clause in SA. First, within ≫an clause, there are two NPs with two different cases that follow a verb that has no inflection for tense. Second, the canonical word order in ≫an clause is VS word order. The structure of T in SA in its present form fails to account for the derivation of VS word order in SA (Soltan 2007, Mohamed, 2113).

Taking these two observations into consideration, the study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1- How is accusative case assigned to the second DP in ≫an clause?

2- How is nominative case assigned to the first DP in ≫an clause?

3- How is VS word order in ≫an clause derived?

3. Review of Literature

The analysis of ≫an clause in SA within the framework of MP has been the topic of many studies. In the present study, we have reviewed the works of Mohamed (2000), Cowper

(2002, 2005), Cowper & Hall (2007), Soltan (2007), and Al-Balushi (2011). However, these studies do not focus on topic of case assignment for DPs in ≫an clause. Instead, their focus is on ≫an clause in relation to other syntactic movements such as the feature of raising in SA, A-movement, and control constructions.

Mohamed (2000), for instance, discusses the feature of raising in SA. He concludes that SA does not exhibit any feature of raising, whether from subject to subject or subject to object. Moreover, he stresses the fact that SA has no A-movement at all. Cowper (2002, 2005) discusses certain features which are related to ≫an clause such as Inflection features, the syntactic properties of the verb that follows ≫an, and the syntactic features of ≫an. He concludes that though the verb in the ≫an clause is in the subjunctive form, it is finite as it agrees in number and gender either with the subject or the object of its main clause. Subjunctive forms in ≫an clause in SA are finite verbal forms and ≫an can be considered as "mood assigner" (Cowper & Hall 2007), a conclusion that was announced before by Kamel (1991).

Soltan (2007) surveys the different structures of the embedded clauses with ≫an clauses. He classifies the verbs which are followed by ≫an clauses into three different categories. His main objective is to investigate the A-movement in SA. He concludes that "structures in SA do not involve raising to subject or any movement for that matter" (Soltan, 2007, P:135). Accordingly, he concludes that the DP that functions as the subject of ≫an clause cannot move via raising or any other A-movement to function as the subject or the object of its main clause.

Al-Balushi (2011) focuses only on cases of nominative-assignment in different embedded structures in SA such as control, Raising, ECM constructions. He argues that structural nominative and accusative cases are allowed by what he calls "Verbal Case" (VC). He argues against the approaches that structural Case in SA is licensed as a reflex of agreement features, as expressed by Chomsky (2000), and Soltan (2007). Instead, he claims that structural case in SA is licensed by the feature of VC. However, Al-Balushi's proposal for case assignment in SA is against the Economy principle which is the core of MP. To value its unvalued case, the DP has to pass through more than two cycles.

The review of literature introduced above shows that ≫an clause has been investigated in relation to syntactic features such as raising, A-movement, mood, and whether DP in the matrix clause is base-generated or raised from the subject position of ≫an clause. However, no study has ever investigated the syntactic and semantic features of ≫an or has accounted for case-assignment in its clause, as the present study seeks to accout for.

4. Features of ≫an Clause in SA

In SA, the complementizer ≫an is usually followed by a clause that indicates "doubt and hope", and cannot be used in contexts of "certainty and verification" (Hasan, 1974). It is observed that ≫an clause in SA has specific syntactic features that distinguish it from other embedded clauses in SA. Moreover, there are semantic features that affect the interpretation of the clause that follows ≫an.

4.1 Syntactic Features of ≫an Clause in SA

There are specific verbs in SA that can be subcategorized with ≫an and its clause. These verbs can be classified as follows:

- Verbs which express wishes such as"≫aHaba" (to like),"faDDala" (to prefer), "tamanna" (to wish) and "Talaba" (to ask).
- Verbs which express command and request such as "≫amara" (to order), "taraja" (to implore) and "≫ista≫ðana" (to ask for permission).
- Verbs which express possibility and capability such as "≫araada" (to want), "≫istaTaa⌢a" (can), "wa⌢ada" (to promise) "tamakkana" (to be able to) and "Haawala" (to try).
- Verbs which express obligation, acceptance and refusal such as "yajibu" (to have or must), ` "yanba I" ` (ought to), "qabila" (to accept), "taraddada"(to hesitate) and "rafaDa" (to refuse).

≫an clause, moreover, has specific features that can be observed in the following examples:

2- Wa⌢ada   ≫al ≫aTfaal-u   ≫an   yarHal-uu   sari⌢-an
 promised 3sg mas   def. boys-NOM   C   leave.3plmas   soon
"The boys promised to leave soon."

3- Talaba   mohamd-un   ≫an   yarHala   ≫a-≫awlaad-u.
  Asked.3sgmas Mohamed.NOM C   leave3plmas   the boys.NOM
  " Mohamed asked the boys to leave.

4- faDDala   mohamad-un   ≫an yaktub-a   ≫a-?awlaad-u
  Preferred.3sgmas mohamed-NOM   C   write.3sgmas   the.boys-NOM
  ≫a-ddars-a
  the lesson.ACC
  "Mohamed preferred the boys would write the lesson."

The above examples reflect the major syntactic features of ≫an clause in SA which can be summarized in the following points:

1-   ≫an is a mood assigner as it assigns subjunctive mood to its verb (Kamel,1991, Soltan, 2007, Al-Balushi, 2011)
2-   The verb in ≫an clause is in the subjunctive mood where it has no inflection for tense.
3-   The verb in ≫an clause can be followed by two DPs which are assigned nominative case and accusative case respectively.
4-   Although the verb in ≫an clause is in the subjunctive mood, it has ˙·. features of person and gender either with the subject NP or the object DP in the matrix clause.
5-   The nominative DP which appears in postverbal position inside the subjunctive clause suggests that subjunctive T is indeed able to assign nominative case.

6-   Although the verb in ≫an clause does show ˙·. features of person and gender, it does not agree in tense with the verb in the main clause. As shown in the examples above, the verb in the main clause is in the past form whereas the verb in? An clause is in the subjunctive form.

4.2 Semantic Features of ≫an Clause in SA

≫an clause has specific semantic features that make it different from its matrix clause. One of these features can be observed in example (6):

5. qarrara-   Ø r-rajul-ui   la-≫aan
decided.3sgmas   the-man-NOM.   now
[?an yarHal-a   *pro*i   al-≫usbuu⌢ a al-qaadim
to -leave   the-week   the next
"the man decided now to leave next week".

The above example shows that the embedded ≫an clause and its matrix clause can have two distinct tense operators. In the matrix clause, we have the temporal adverb "≫al-≫aan" (now), whereas, the time of the action in ?an clause is modified with the temporal adverb " al-≫usbuu ≫al-qaadim (next week)

However, though the embedded ≫an clause has its own distinct temporal operator, its interpretation must be introduced in relation to the tense operator of the matrix clause. This can be shown in the following example:

6. qarrara-Ø   r-rajul-ui   l- ≫aan
. decided.3sgmas   the-man-NOM   now
[≫an ya-rHal-a *pro*i   al-≫usbuu⌢a al-qaadim-I /* al-≫usbuu⌢ al-maaDi.]
 To   leave   the-week   next   the- week   the- last
 "the man decided now to travel next week/*last week".

The action of "leaving" introduced in ?an clause must be interpreted as occurring after, neither at the same time nor before, the action that referred to in the matrix clause. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the verb in ≫an clause does not encode tense.

More interestingly, the embedded ≫an clause in SA cannot have a temporal reference which is distinct from that of the matrix clause, as (8) shows.

7. qarrara-Ø   r-rajul-ui   l- ≫aan
. decided.3sgmas   the-man-NOM   now
  ≫an ya-rHal-a   al-≫usbuu⌢ l- qaadim /* al-≫usbuu⌢   al-maadi.
  To   leave   week   next   the- week   the- last
 "the man decided now to travel next week/*last week"

5. Case-Assignment in the ≫an Clause

5.1 Accusative Case-Assignment in ≫an Clause

The syntactic and semantic features of the embedded ≫an clause, as surveyed above, reflect specific features that can be subsumed in the following points:

- the verb of ≫an clause can be followed either by one or two DPs.
- The immediately post verbal DP is assigned nominative Case, and the second DP is assigned accusative Case.
- Different from English, where case is assigned by a probe that has "finite tense" (Radford, 2004, 2009), T in ≫an clause assigns nominative Case and the accusative light v assigns accusative Case. These features are shown in the following example:

8- ≫arada   ≫al-mu͡alem-u   ≫an   yaqra≫-a   ≫al-≫awlad-u
   wanted-3-sgmas. the.teacher-NOM to   read-sub.   the-boys-NOM
   book-ACC
   kitaab-an
   "The teacher wanted the boys to read a book"

Although the verb in the above example is in the subjunctive case, it assigns nominative case to the DP "≫al-≫awlad-u". Moreover, the DP "kitaab-an" has the accusative inflection. How is case assigned in ≫an clause in SA? Assuming the principle of vP shell of MP, ≫an clause is derived as follows: the verb "yaqra≫" enters the derivation with valued case and unvalued agreement features while the noun "≫al-≫awalad-u" is introduced with its phi-features (person/number/gender) valued, but its case feature is unvalued. Also, the noun "kitaab-an" enters the derivation with its case unvalued. The verb 'yaqra≫" merges with "kitaab-an" to form the VP "yaqra≫a kitaab-an"; the VP then merges with a light affixal verb to form the v', the v' then merges with the agent subject forming a vP, as shown in the following diagram:
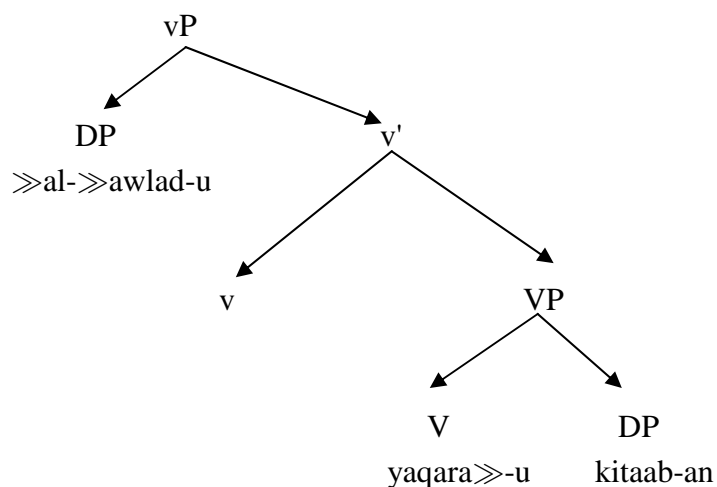
The DP "kitaab-an" is in the domain of the light v and is c-commanded by it, in this way, it functions as its goal. The light accusative v, on the other hand, functions as its probe. As the

probe – goal relation is established; the light v values the unvalued case of the DP and assigns accusative case to it.

To sum up, MP can provide a justification for accusative case – assignment to the complement DP in the ≫an clause in SA.

5.2 Nominative Case-assignment in ≫an Clause

In the embedded ≫an clause in SA, as referred to above, the verb is assigned subjunctive mood by the complomentizer ≫an and is inflected for gender and number, but shows no inflection for tense. Nevertheless, T of TP assigns Nominative case to the postverbal DP, as shown in (9), where the verb "yaqra≫" is in the subjunctive mood and the postverbal DP "≫al-≫awlad-u" is assigned Nominative case. Within the MP, as the light accusative v has the ability to assign accusative case, T can also assign Nominative case to the DP in thepostverbal position. In example (8), repeated here for convenience:

10- ?arada   ?al-mu‿alem-u   ≫an   yaqra≫-a   ≫al-≫awlad-u
    wanted -3-sing. the.teacher-NOM to   read-sub.   the-boys-NOM
    kitaab-an
    book-ACC.

Let's begin with the vP structure in (9) where the verb "yaqra≫"has the DP "≫al-≫awlad-u" as its specifier and the DP "kitaab-an " as its complement. The light accusative v attracts the verb "yaqra≫a" from its original position as the head of VP to adjoin to its node giving the structure, as in (11):
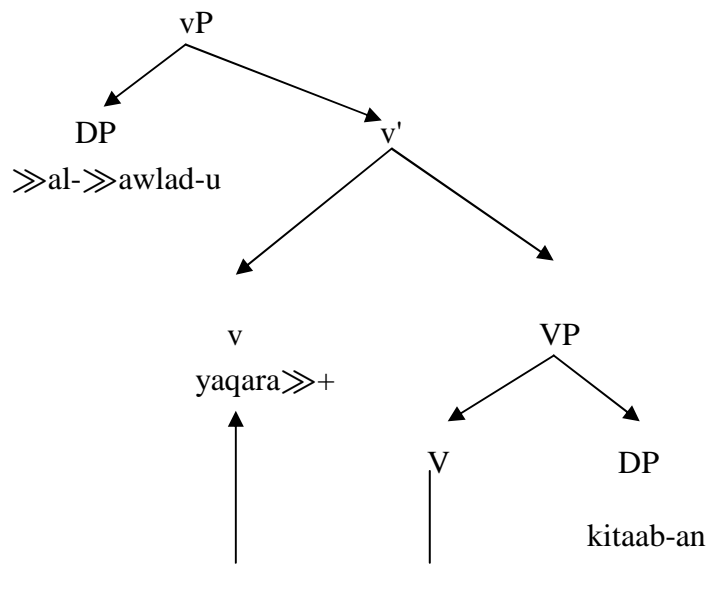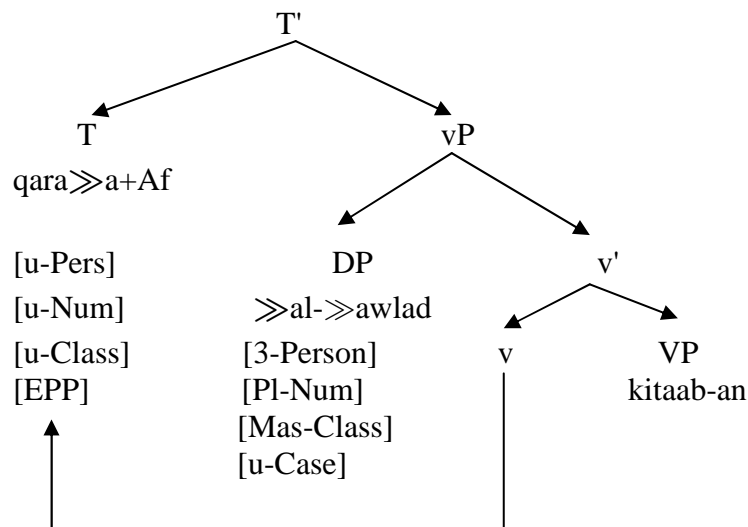
The resulted derivation is merged with the affixal T to form the T' as shown below in (12):
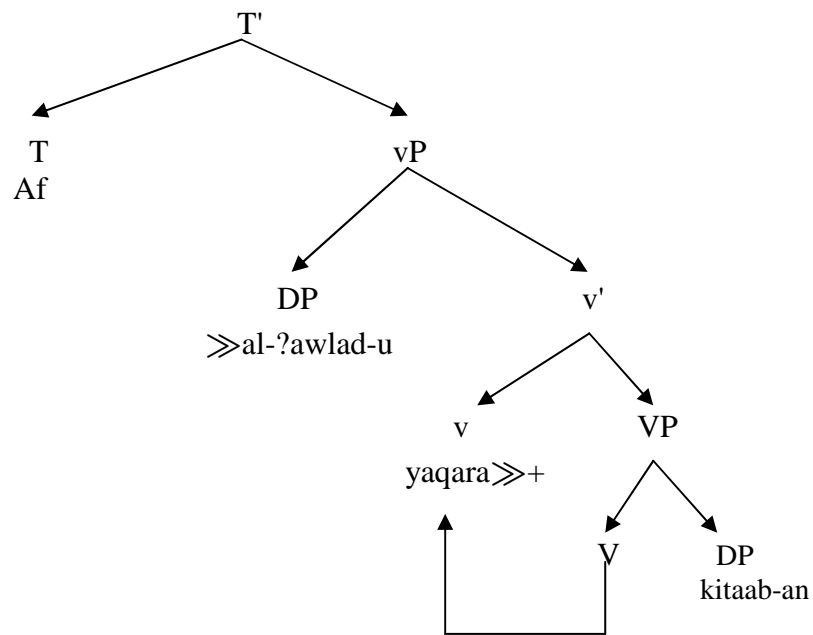
It has been assumed that T is a strong affix in (SA) (Fassi, 1993, 19), which means that it triggers the movement of the verb "yaqra≫a" to adjoin to it. As a result we will have the following structure, as in (13):

13-

The Af is an active probe as it still has uninterpretable Phi features. As result, it searches for a local goal within its c-commanding domain to value these features. The goal which it c-commands is ≫al-≫awlad. ≫al-≫awlad values the Phi-features features on the probe Af, and the Af, in turn, assigns nominative case to ≫al-≫awlad-u

However, there are two problems exist with the adoption of MP. The first problem is that the verb values its unvalued features of person, number and gender against its agent the DP "≫al-≫awlaad-u" to be read as "yaqra≫-un", not "yaqra≫a". The resulted derivation will be ungrammatical, as (14) shows:

*14- ≫an yaqra≫-u   ≫al-≫awlad-u   kitaab-an
    to read-sub.pl.   the boys-NOM-PL   a book.ACC

The second problem with the adoption of MP is the structure of T. Since T has an EPP feature that should be valued, the T has to project a TP where "≫al-≫awlad-u" moves to spec-T, giving the following structure:

TP

DP   T'

≫al-≫awladu

T   vP

yaqara≫-u+Af

DP   v'

v   DP
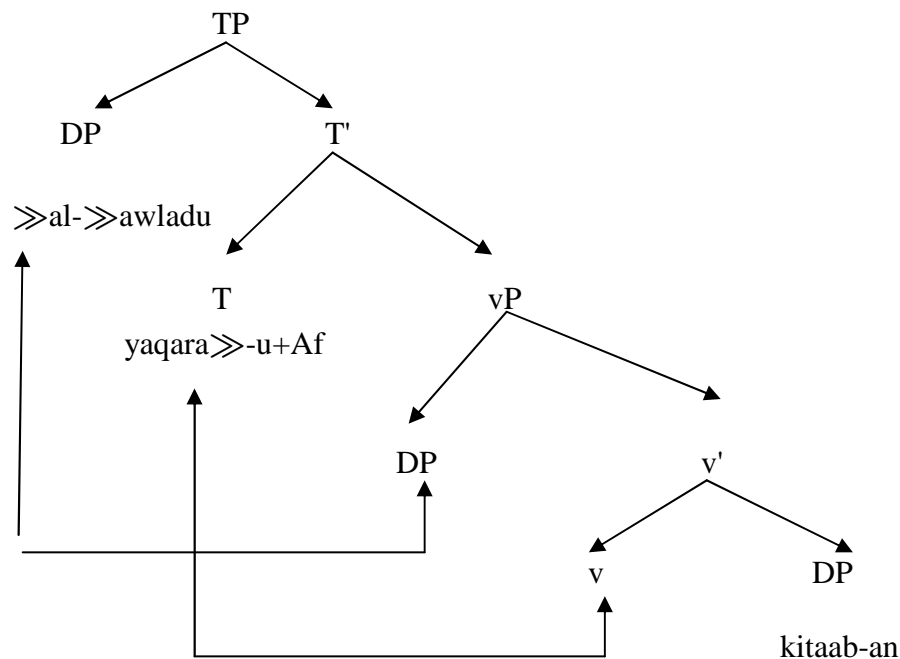
kitaab-an

Which ends up with an ungrammatical derivation, as (16) shows:

*16- ≫an ≫al-≫awlad-u yaqra≫-un kitaab-an.

The discussion as surveyed above, shows that T in MP succeeds to assign Nom case to the postverbal DP in ≫an clause. However, as T has EPP that should be valued, The DP "≫al-≫awlad-u" should move to the specifier position of TP. This movement leads to the ungrammatical derivation, as shown in (16). Generally speaking, EPP of MP represents a problem for the derivation of VS order in SA (Soltan,2007, Mohamed, 2013, for further details).

To solve this problem, I would like to adopt a modification for the structure of TPP which is based on a modification suggested by Soltan (2007) and Uriagereka (2005). To overcome the problem of the derivation of VS in SA, Soltan (2007) suggests that T in SA should include neither Phi features nor EPP. Instead, T should contain the two features of "default T" and "CLASS". CLASS feature represents Gender feature and it is introduced as a separate feature from the other phi features of number and person, as shown in (17), (Soltan, 2007, p. 71):
17- CP C [TP T DEFAULT/CLASS [v*P DP v* [VP read the book]]]]

The suggested structure of TP in SA, as shown in (17), shows that the vP-internal subject position is occupied by the lexical DP. Second, T has neither phi nor EPP features. The feature "CLASS" is an obligatory feature on T that values gender feature of the verb against its c-commanded DP in the subject position. The absence of TPP on T prevents the DP to move to the specifier position of TP. Accordingly, VS order in SA can be derived within MP frame.

If the structure of T in VS order, as modified by Soltan (2007), is extended to ≫an clause in SA, MP can justify the SV order in ≫an clause. According to the structure of TP in (17), the verb in ≫an clause would never agree in number and person with the postverbal DP. Moreover, the deletion of EPP in the node T would prevent the DP "≫al-≫awlad-u" from being moved to specifier position of TP to precede the verb in ≫an clause. As a result, the modification of TP structure in SA to include the notions of "Class" and "Default T" with the absence of TPP would enable MP to account for the VS word order in ≫an clause in SA.

6. Conclusion

The present study has provided an analysis for the feature of case-assignment in ≫an clause in SA within the frame of MP. The analysis has shown that MP presents an adequate account for the assignment of Nom case to the postverbal DP in ≫an clause. The modification of the TP in SA to contain only CLASS, to assign gender, and the deletion of features of person and number would give a verb that agrees only in gender with the postverbal DP. Moreover, the deletion of EPP from the structure of TP would prevent the postverbal DP to move in a higher position preceding the verb. MP, in addition, provides an adequate justification for the accusative case-assignment to the second DP in ≫an clause. The light accusative v can assign the accusative case to the DP that follows it.

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