

## Theta – Role Distribution and Feature Valuation of pro in Arabic: Phase Syntax

## تقييم وتوزيع السمات الدلالية للفاعل المستتر في العربية: نظرية المرحلة

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### Abstract:

**Objectives:** This study investigates the intricate issues of valuations and distributions of null subjects in Arabic syntax by exploring the complexities revealed by empirical evidence.

**Methodology:** This study adopts theoretical and qualitative approaches to analyze data gathered from Modern Standard Arabic and sentences checked by professors in Arabic syntax by referring to Chomsky's (2005) phase theory.

**Conclusion:** This study contributes to a deeper understanding of Arabic syntax by discovering the details of valuations and distributions of null pronouns by challenging the relevant literature views and proposing new insights to fill the gap in research. This study advances linguistic research in Arabic syntax and sheds light on the broader implications for linguistic theory.

**Keywords:** theta roles; valuations; distributions; phase theory; Arabic.

### الملخص:

**الأهداف:** تناقش هذه الدراسة مشاكل تقييم وتوزيع الفاعل المستتر في النحو العربي وذلك بعرض الاختلافات المعقدة بينهم من خلال مناقشة أمثلة ومعلومات علمية بحتة.

**المنهجية:** اتبع الباحث في هذه الدراسة الأسلوب النظري والنوعي في جمع البيانات من اللغة العربية الفصحى وكذلك جمل من تأليف الباحث تم تدقيقها من قبل أساتذة في النحو العربي وتم تحليلها بالاستعانة بأفكار العالم اللغوي تشومسكي (2005) في نظرية المرحلة.

**الخلاصة:** تساهم الدراسة بفهم عميق للنحو العربي وذلك بمناقشة وكشف معلومات مكثفة عن تقييم وتوزيع الفواعل المستترة في تحدي واضح للأفكار الواردة في الدراسات السابقة وفرض وجهات نظر جديدة ملء الفراغ في البحث اللغوي العلمي في النحو العربي وتبسيط الضوء على تداعيات جديدة في النظرية اللغوية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** سمات معنوية; تقييم; توزيع; نظرية المرحلة; العربية.

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## 1 Introduction

This paper investigates the intricate issues of valuations and distributions of null subjects in Arabic syntax by exploring their complexities revealed by empirical evidence. Therefore, the researcher posited the following two questions: How are lexical and functional features valued and checked in the phases? How are theta roles of *pro* distributed in Arabic sentences? Linguistically, *pro* was a place of study in pro – drop – languages due to cross – linguistic variations in the literature for a long time. This is because it is a noun phrase and must carry the same features of the overt one; it is identified by both inflection (INFL) and agreement (AGR) properties. As its occurrence is confined by these two factors, it causes problems for syntax, semantics and phonology. In previous research, a language which is rich in INFL and AGR allows a pronominal subject to be left unexpressed; thus, it is called a pro drop – language as Italian; however, a language with poor INFL and AGR fails to do so as English (cf. Haegeman (1991. p. 416). This issue has been supported by Rizzi (1986) who argued that, in pro – drop – languages, *pro* is licensed under head government of INFL and rich agreement specifications. Also, Hyams (1986) supported this logic and argued that the empty category *pro* is allowed in languages which are rich with agreement (AGR) features. However, Borer (1980, 1983, 1986, p. 392) argued that the pro – drop possibility in Modern Hebrew is restricted. *Pro* is not allowed to be dropped in the present tense at all; however, first and second persons are allowed in main clauses with future and past tense. Thus, not all types of inflection are strong enough to allow pro – drop. Huang (1984, 1989) argued that Japanese, Korean and Chinese languages allow null subjects though they lack AGR, and they are considered pro – drop – languages. This generalization does not hold universal; for instance, Mainland Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish) are generally not considered pro-drop languages in the same way as Spanish and Italian. While they can sometimes allow null subjects to be unexpressed though they lack AGR in sentences with expletive pronouns; however, they do not generally permit the free dropping of referential subjects like those found in pro-drop languages (cf. Platzack (1987). Arabic is categorized as a pro – drop language as that of Italian; it is rich in both INFL and AGR. Jalabneh (2004, 2005) argued that in Arabic in sentences in which *pro* occurs, AGR is rich and phonologically mapped to PF by phonological rules. In the interpretation processes, *pro* has [+interpretable] power at LF while Tense and AGR have [-interpretable] features. Rima (2022) argued that inflection means the change of word form to another to mark grammatical distinctions; it occurs in a variety of grammatical classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, etc. Arabic verb inflectional morphology is richer and varied from that of the English; therefore, *pro* is licensed to occur by both tense and AGR. Zimmermann and Kaiser (2014) and Zimmermann (2014, 2018) emphasized that as for French, it allows the realization of null subjects in some specific structural contexts and with a limited number of verbs, especially in impersonal constructions. They highlighted that the omission of *il* is most frequent with a selected set of impersonal verbs, such as *y avoir* ‘to exist’ (i.e., existential constructions) and *falloir* ‘to have to’, which are more likely to appear without the overt expression of *il*. Other verbs like *valoir mieux* ‘to be better’ and *faire* ‘to make’ + adjective (+infinitive) exhibit a lower frequency of null *il*, while verbs such as *paraître* ‘to appear’, *sembler* ‘to seem’, and *suffire* ‘to be sufficient’ show the least frequent occurrences of null *il*. Jalabneh (2022) argued that *pro*, in Arabic, occupies the position of [Spec, T’] which is the subject position of finite independent clause; all lexical and functional features are inherited by [C]. *Pro* occurs in the subject position of (i) embedding, (ii) subordinate and (iii) independent clauses related to expletive verbs related to weather; it is semantically identified by AGRs feature which is visible at the end of the verb used. The empty *pro* bears different theta roles that determine correct c-selection at spell out and leads to correct semantic interpretations at LF. Uygun (2022) propagated that though Turkish is a pro-drop language and as a typical feature of pro-drop languages, it requires obligatory verb agreement marking for sentences with null subjects. However, Turkish subject-verb agreement marking is an example of optional agreement in which the 3<sup>rd</sup> person null subject plural subject has optionality and can be used with singular verb forms under certain conditions. Frascarelli and Carella (2024) confirmed that null subjects (NSs) occur in Colloquial French, especially in the case of expletive subjects. Furthermore, there is a crucial connection between subject omission, expletive types, and the morpho-syntactic categories of person/number for argument pronouns. As an alternative to the above relevant literature, this paper follows Chomsky’s (2005) phase theory in an attempt to solve the complexities of *pro* with regard to valuations and distributions by checking its features in phases to contribute to a deeper understanding of Arabic syntax.

## 2 Methodology and Framework

This paper adopts theoretical and qualitative approaches to analyze data gathered from Standard Arabic. The sample of data was restricted to (8) grammatical sentences from Arabic syntax; it was collected in part and full form from published books mentioned in the analysis; also, there are sentences that suit the covert occurrence of *pro* with different verbs proposed by the researcher and checked by three professors specialized in Arabic syntax (Prof. Hashim Mana, Prof Fuad Shtaiyat and Dr Basil Zubi). The data was analyzed by following Chomsky's (2005) phase theory in syntax. The data collection process encompasses selected resources such as syntactic work and authentic texts in Arabic, including work by Jalabneh (2004, 2005, 2007, 2022). The collected data is utilized, in this work, to explore the interplay of valuations and distributions of *pro* in Arabic syntax within Chomsky's (2005) framework of phase theory.

In my analysis, I adopted this approach to minimize the analysis by checking features of *pro* rather than using rules and parameters. Chomsky (2005) phase syntax clarified the process of feature checking to build up a well-formed sentence, how features are checked at the phases to get correct grammatical sentences and finally get correct semantic interpretation at LF without causing a clash between syntax and semantics. He was assured that the strong inflectional system in *pro*-drop languages allows the agreement (AGR) of the noun phrase to recover the entity of the null subject by the agreements markers which appear on the verb. The co-indexation between AGR and the null subject is very important to satisfy the recoverability of *pro* contents. *Pro* must receive its theta role at phase [vP\*]. Because a *pro* is a subject of a finite clause, it must check the nominative case as well as the subject noun  $\Theta$ -features at the same level in syntax before phase two. Tense (T) fails to function as a phase boundary with the complementizer (C) because, on the surface, it is [T] but not [C] that functions as the place for agreement ( $\phi$ -features) that contain (i) the nominative-agreement system and (ii) raising of the external covert subject. As a syntactic fact [T] and  $\phi$ -features appear to be derivative but not inherent. However, the basic tense feature is determined by [C] in which it is inherent from (T'') at LF. [T] lacks these features in the lexicon. [T] manifests the basic tense features if and only if it is selected by [C]. Thus, AGR- and Tense features are inherited by [C] at LF in the phase head for correct semantic interpretation. Transmission of AGR- feature is the property of phase head [C]. He (2005) confirmed that the size of phase is in part determined by uninterpretable features, namely, [Agrs, Tense, Case and theta – roles]. Such features are redundant, and they are fixed by structural position during derivation at spell out; thus, they are unvalued in the lexicon before numeration to be essential parts of semantic interpretation at (LF). Since these features have no semantic interpretation, they must be deleted before interface for semantic convergence. If the same features have phonetic value, they cannot be deleted before being transferred to the phonological component at the phonetic form (PF). They must be valued in computation and transferred at phase [C]. Thus, uninterpretable features are deleted by mapping them to the semantic components and given whatever phonetic properties they have in a language by the phonological component. They become indistinguishable from interpretable features and there is no indication of their relation to the interpretable features that match them and assign them their values. Hence, they must be transferred at the point where they are valued at phase [C] but not [T]. [T] operates only as a probe derivatively by virtue of its relation to [C]. All features are checked with the mechanisms of move (lexical entities) and merge (functional entities). Such new theoretical phase views will be our platform to discuss the objectives of the article.

## 3 Results

### 3.1 Valuation and Checking of Lexical and Functional Features of *Pro* in Arabic Syntax

The relationship between *pro* and predicate is not only studied from a syntactic and semantic but also from phonological point of view. Thus, the phases, namely, [vP\*] and [C''] are necessary to apply move and merge mechanisms and check both lexical [+interpretable] and functional [-uninterpretable] features in Arabic syntax. The former feature is represented by *pro* at spell – out and must be interpreted at LF, whereas the functional features are represented by [nominative case, Agrs, Tense and theta – roles]. They are fixed by structural positions during derivation at spell out; thus, they are unvalued in the lexicon before numeration. Since these features have no semantic interpretation, they must be deleted before they reach the semantic interface at LF to get convergence. To get proper results, Arabic is dealt with as SVO at spell out, but VSO at LF (cf. Jalabneh, 2007; 2017 for V- movement in Arabic syntax).

LF / PF

1a. *jalas* - *e* - *at* *ba'da* *al* - *ghuruubi*.  
*sat* *past* *fem* *after* *det* *sunset*  
 'She sat after the sunset'

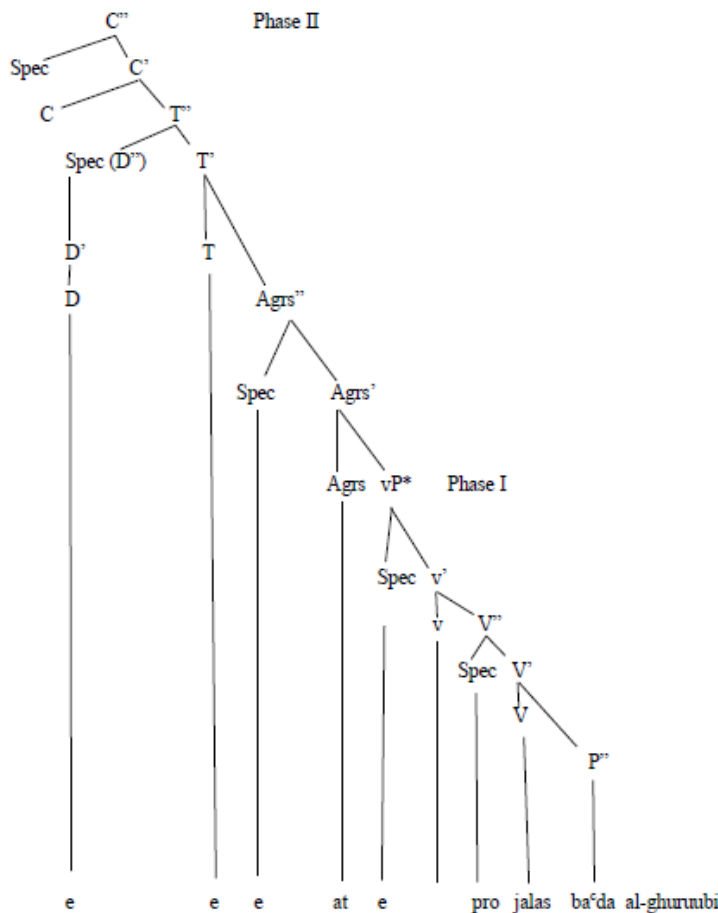
(1b) is the spell out representation of (1a).

Spell out

1b. *pro* *jalas* - *e* - *at* *ba'da* *al* - *ghuruubi*  
*she* *sat* *past* *fem* *after* *det* *sunset*  
 'She sat after the sunset'

(1c) is the spell out tree - diagram representation of (1b).

1c.

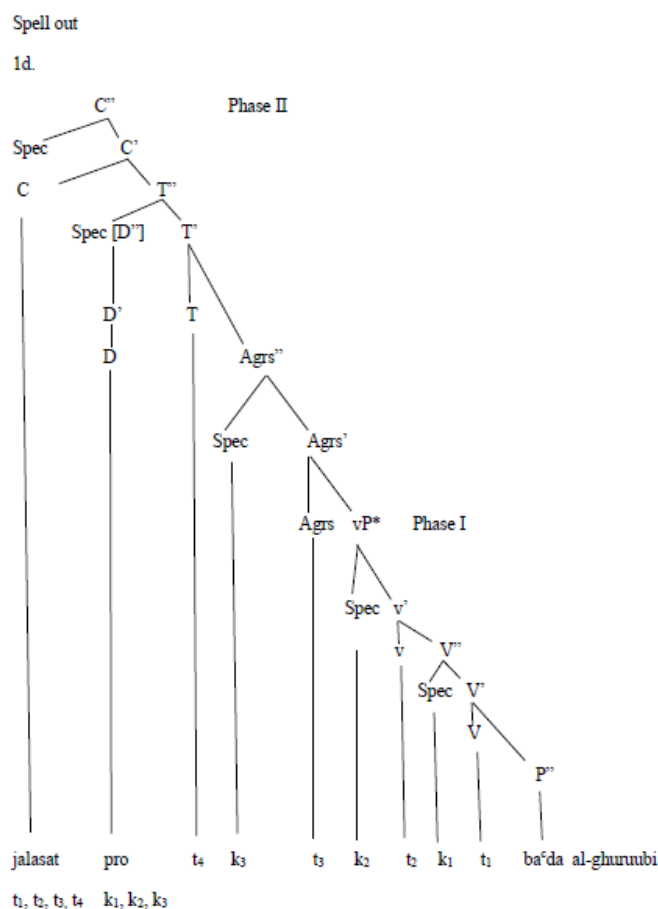


Let us start with the valuation and checking the lexical features related to the lexical category *pro*, and then we move to its functional features. In (1c), the entity *pro* 'she' occupies the position of [Spec, V'']. As it is not the actual subject position to occupy, it must move to [Spec, vP\*] to check the theta role of agent. It checks this theta role exactly by the whole [V''] *jalas ba'da al-ghuruubi* 'sit after the sunset' in this phase. It is interpreted as a female person who intentionally performed the act of setting *ba'da al-ghuruubi* 'after the sunset' which is illustrated by AGRs feminine marker [at]. As this position is caseless, it must move to [Spec, T''] to form [Spec – head] relation to check the nominative case feature at [T, T'] by the empty marker [e]. Syntactically, the nominative case cannot be checked in this phase [Spec, vP] because the feature of tense is in [T, T'] but not in [v, v']. In other words, the empty tense will be attached to the verb *jalas-e* which is meant for case. In this situation, in which tense is weak in Arabic syntax, the nominative case is checked by the empty tense feature [e]; this universal mechanism proposal is optimally accepted in minimalist and phase views and produced optimal results (cf., Radford, 1988). Thus, the empty tense [e] is the only syntactic solution used in syntax to meet both case filter stipulations and adjacency parameter. In short, *pro* is basically overt at spell out and occurs at [Spec, V''] in distribution; it is valued as a lexical category that wills the action of the verb *jalasat* 'sat' in interpretation.

However, the functional features of *pro* are checked in this fashion; the light verb *jalas* 'sit' occupies the position of [V, V']; it allows [P''] *ba'da al-ghuruubi* 'after the sun set' to check the theta role of location in situ in overt syntax. Then it moves to phase I i.e., [v, v'] to check the theta role feature with *pro* as discussed above. In

a cyclic movement, it moves to the position of [A<sub>grs</sub>, A<sub>grs</sub>'] to get the agreement feminine feature subject [at], and it becomes *jalasat* 'sat- agrs' after merging with it in this position. In a similar cyclic movement, the same verb must move to the position of [T, T'] to check the empty tense feature [e] and becomes *jalasat* 'sat- Tense - Agrs' in the same position. The verb is in default form because the feminine feature [at] is attached to it. Finally, in a covert movement, the verb *jalasat* 'sat' must move to the position of [C, C'] to meet the word order of VSO at PF in phase II (in accordance with Jalabneh, 2007 and 2017 for V- movement in Arabic syntax). This phase inherits the following functional features from [T'']: (i) A<sub>grs</sub>, (ii) Tense [e], (iii) Case and (iv) the theta marking. Thus, the syntactic mechanisms move and merge are essential factors for feature checking of all features without discrimination. In syntax, phase I [vP\*] is necessary in which the syntactic and semantic features were checked. Phase II [C] is also necessary because it inherits all syntactic, semantic and phonological features at LF (cf. Chomsky, 2005 for UG). In the phases, a *pro* is interpreted at LF, but functional features are not. As Arabic is rich in morphological realizations, the necessary [A<sub>grs</sub> / at] but not [T] marker must be mapped to PF by phonological rules in Arabic syntax (cf. Chomsky, 2005 for mapping).

**Verb and noun - movements are represented in (1d) below:**



(1d) illustrates move, merge and co-indexation processes. *Pro* moved to Spec - positions in Spec-to-head movement; it merged with the nominative case in [Spec, T''] position. It is co-indexed with [t<sub>1</sub>, t<sub>2</sub>, t<sub>3</sub> and t<sub>4</sub>]; however, the verb *jalasat* 'sat' moved to head positions in head – head movement. It moved to [v] and merged with it for theta marking; then it moved to [T] to merge with tense. In a final movement, it lands in [C] and merges with it to check word order VSO. It is co-indexed with [k<sub>1</sub>, k<sub>2</sub> and k<sub>3</sub>] respectively.

### 3.2 Distribution of Theta Roles of *pro* in Arabic Syntax

Though the subject *pro* 'is phonetically covert, it occurs in the subject position of various types of verbs and tenses, and it checks several theta roles depending on the semantic nature of the predicate used. The examples in this section were proposed by the researcher and checked by the same experts. For instance, it checks the theta role of theme, in (2). The theme is the person or thing which is either undergone or affected by the action expressed by the predicate.

LF

- 2a. maat- e - a fi al- manzili  
die past 3<sup>rd</sup>,sg, masc. in det house  
'He died in the house'

(cf. Jalabneh, 2007, p. 76).

Spell out

- 2b. [C'' [T'' [V'' pro maat fi al- manzili.]]]  
he died in det house  
'He died in the house'

In (2b), the subject *pro* 'he' checks the theta role of the theme. It is interpreted as the male person who undergone the process of expiring. There are other groups of verbs that can take the theta role of theme as an essential argument with covert subjects. We list specimens *yatbrra?u* 'to get acquitted', *yanfajiru* 'to get exploded' etc... (cf. Jalabneh, 2007, p. 80).

Not only does *pro* check the theme role but also it checks the theta role of experiencer in (3). The experiencer means the argument that perceives or experiences some psychological state expressed by the predicate.

LF

- 3a. ʿaṭas - e - a  
sneeze past 3<sup>rd</sup>, sg, masc  
'He sneezed'

(cf. Jalabneh, 2007, p. 69).

Spell out

- 3b. [C'' [T'' [V'' pro ʿaṭasa ]]]  
he sneezed  
'He sneezed'

In (3b), *pro* 'he' has the theta role of experiencer since it is the argument that experiences the unintentional act of sneezing. It is interpreted as the male person who experienced *al-ʿaṭs* 'sneezing'. There are other verbs that take this theta role, namely, *tathaaba* 'yawned', *saʿala* 'coughed', *ʿariqa* 'perspired', *tanahhada* 'sighed', *barada* 'felt cold' etc... (cf. Jalabneh, 2007, p. 71, 72, 75).

The subject *pro* 'he' checks the theta role of goal as in (4b); it is the argument toward which an activity expressed by the predicate.

LF

- 4a. ?istalam - e - a al- hadiyata min ʿaliyin  
receive past 3<sup>rd</sup>, sg, masc. det gift from Ali  
'He received a gift from Ali'

Spell out

- 4b. [C'' [T'' [V'' pro ?istalama al- hadiyata min ʿaliyin. ]]]  
he received det gift from Ali  
'He received a gift from Ali'

In (4b), *pro* 'he' checks the theta role of goal; it is the argument toward which the activity is expressed by the predicate. It is interpreted as the male person to which *al-hadiyata* 'the gift' was handed. There are other verbs that assign this theta role, namely, *talaqqa*, *?iltaqata*, *?istaqbala* 'received', *?istahwa* 'draw' etc...

The subject *pro* 'he' carries the theta role of beneficiary as in (5b); it is the entity that benefits from the action expressed by the predicate.

LF

- 5a. ?istafaad e - a min ?amwaali- hi  
benefit past 3<sup>rd</sup>, sg, masc. from money his  
'He benefited from his money.'

Spell out

- 5b. [C'' [T'' [V'' pro ?istafaada min ?amwaali- hi. ]]]  
he benefited from money his  
'He benefited from his money']



In (5b), *pro* ‘he’ checks the theta role of beneficiary since it is the entity that benefits from the action expressed by the predicate? *istafaada* ‘benefited’. It is interpreted as the male person who benefited from? *amwaalihi* ‘his money’. There are other verbs that assign this theta role to *pro(s)*, namely, *kasiba*, *rabiha*,? *intafa’a* ‘profited’ etc ...

The covert *pro* ‘he’ can be assigned the theta role of agent in (6).

LF

6a. *sabah* - e - at  
swam past 3<sup>rd</sup>, sg, fem  
‘She swam’

(cf. Jalabneh, 2007, p. 60)

Spell out

6b [C'' [T'' [V'' *pro* *sabahat*.]]]  
she swam  
‘She swam’

In sentence (6b) *pro* ‘she’ checks the theta role of agent. It is interpreted as the female person who willingly swam. For the convenience of the discussion, there are other Arabic predicates that behave and checks the theta role of agent to the subject *pro*, namely, *saqata* ‘fell down’, *sarakha* ‘cried’, *balagha* ‘reached’, *?inzalaqa* ‘sled’ etc ... (cf. Jalabneh, 2007, p. 63, 65, 66, 68).

The category *pro* can bear the theta role of instrument in (7).

LF

7a. [ T'' *tahatam* - e - at ]  
got crashed past 3<sup>rd</sup>, sg, fem  
‘It crashed.’

Spell out

7b. [ C'' [ T'' [V'' *pro* *tahatamat* ]]]  
it got crashed  
‘It crashed.’

In (7b), *pro* ‘it’ is the expletive instrument since it is the instrument that had been crashed (i.e. *al-taa?iratu* ‘the plane’ as a specimen of correct interpretation for this *pro* in this context). There are other Arabic predicates that behave and check the theta role of instrument to the subject *pro*, namely, *takassarat*, ‘broke’ *tashqaqat*, ‘cracked’, *talifa* ‘got spoiled’ *?ubiida* ‘got annihilated’, *khariba* ‘got ruined’ etc ...

The covert *pro* ‘he’ can check the theta role of location in (8).

LF

8a. [T'' *tadammar* - e - at ]  
got destroyed past 3<sup>rd</sup>, sg, fem  
‘It got destroyed.’

Spell out

8b. [ C'' [T'' [V'' *pro* *tadammarat* ] ]]  
it got destroyed  
‘It got destroyed.’

In (8b), *pro* ‘it’ is the location since it is the place that has been destroyed; it is interpreted as (i.e. *al-madiinatu* ‘the city’ as a specimen for correct interpretation of this *pro* in such context). There are other Arabic predicates that behave and check the theta role of location to the subject *pro*, namely,? *inhaarat*, ‘fell down’ *tashqaqat*, ‘cracked’? *inhamat* ‘destroyed’, etc ...

In short, *pro*, in Arabic syntax, occurs with various types of verbs, persons and tenses and with different theta roles; they are theme, experiencer, goal, beneficiary, agent, instrument and location respectively. Theta roles are essential to understand correct semantic interpretation of *pro* structures at LF in Arabic syntax.

## 4 Discussions

### 4.1 Discussing Results of Question One

It was proved that the mechanisms move and merge of phase theory are essential syntactic mechanisms to check all features related to *pro* in Arabic syntax in phases. Thus, in (1c), *pro* ‘she’, acts like an overt lexical subject in fulfilling the requirement of Extended Projection Principle (EPP) at spell out; it checks the theta role of agent in phase I [Spec, vP\*]. However, it checks the nominative case feature at [Spec, T'']. As it is a lexical

entity, it is interpreted as a feminine singular person because of *Agrs* [at]. Likewise, the light verb *jalas* 'sit' checks *Agrs* feature of *pro* at [*Agrs*, *Agrs*'] and becomes *jalas- at* 'sat'; however, it checks the past tense feature [e] at the position [T, T'] and becomes *jalasat* 'sat- Tense - *Agrs*' in the same process. Finally, in a covert movement, the verb *jalasat* 'sat' must move to the position of [C, C'] to meet the word order of VSO at PF. Semantically, all functional features, namely, [Case, *Agrs*, T and Theta roles] are checked in phases II [C''] at LF after [D''] and [V] movements took place; it is because they are inherited by [C] from the finite phrase [T'']. As they do not have semantic values, they must be deleted before interface for correct semantic interpretation but retain their phonological values; however, the lexical items, namely, *pro* 'she' and *jalasat* 'sat' must be interpreted as they are parts of numeration in the lexicon at LF. As [*Agrs*] is phonetically visible, it must be transferred by the phonological components at PF. Thus, *pro* and its functional features are primary syntactic factors to construct a grammatical sentence which lead to correct semantic interpretation at LF.

If the result of question one is compared to the relevant literature in terms of valuation and licensing, the researcher agreed with (Haegeman 1991; Rizzi 1986; Hyams 1986) who argued that *pro* – drop – languages, which are rich in AGR, allow a pronominal subject to be left unexpressed and licensed by the head INFL. This work agreed with Jalabneh (2004, 2005) who argued that Arabic is rich in AGR whenever the subject is covert (*pro*). *Agrs* has [-interpretable] features and must be deleted before the logical form. *Pro* is semantically identified and licensed by AGRs feature which is visible at the end of the verb used. It also agreed with Jalabneh (2022) who argued that *pro* occupies the subject position of [Spec, T''] in a finite independent clause in which the nominative case is licensed by [T]. However, it disagreed with Borer (1980, 1983, 1986) who argued *pro* is not allowed to be dropped in the present tense at all; however, first and second persons are allowed in main clauses with future and past tense in Hebrew. On the contrary, in Arabic *pros* are allowed to be unexpressed with all types of persons and in both tenses, namely, present and past as in (1c). It also disagreed with Huang (1984, 1989) who confirmed that Chinese, Japanese and Korean languages allow null subjects to be dropped though they lack AGR as *pro* - drop languages. It is because Arabic allows *pros* to be unexpressed as it is rich in AGRs. In so far as the factor of distribution is concerned, this work agreed with Jalabneh (2022) in the sense that *pro* occurs with all types of verbs and tenses and bears different semantic theta roles. It also agreed with Frascarelli and Carella (2024) in the sense that, in Arabic, *pro* occurs with expletive subjects as in colloquial French; for instance, Arabic has a sentence with expletive subjects as in [*?amtar - at* (rained – *pro* – fem) 'it rained']. However, this work disagreed with Zimmermann and Kaiser (2014) and Zimmermann (2014, 2018) in the sense that *pro* occurs in specific structural contexts with a limited number of verbs, especially in impersonal constructions; however, Arabic *pro* occurs with personal and impersonal constructions and with all types of persons, verbs and tenses. It also disagreed with Uygun (2022) in the sense that Turkish subject – verb agreement marking is optional agreement in which 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural has optionality and can be used with singular verb forms under certain conditions; however, Arabic has obligatory subject – verb agreement marking system though the form of the verb is singular for all types of persons.

## 4.2 Discussing Results of Question Two

It was proved that *pros* occur with various types of verbs, tense and persons and bear various theta roles; for instance, in (2b) the subject *pro* 'he' checks the theta role of theme. It occurs with verb *maata* 'died'. In (3b), *pro* 'he' checks the theta role of experiencer and occurs with the verb *ʿatasa* 'sneezed'. In (4b), *pro* 'he' bears the theta role of goal; it occurs with the verb *istalama* 'received'. In (5b), *pro* 'he' checks the theta role of beneficiary; it occurs with the verb *istafaada* 'benefited'. In (6b) *pro* 'she' is the agent; it occurs with verb *sabbaha* 'swam'. In (7b), *pro* 'it' has the theta role of instrument; it occurs with verb *tahatamat* 'got crashed'. And, finally, in (8b) *pro* 'it' checks the theta role of location; it occurs with verb *tadmarat* 'got destroyed'. Thus, in distribution, *pro* occurs with different verbs, tenses and persons.

If results of question two were compared to the relevant literature, this work agreed with Jalabneh (2022) who emphasized that *pro* bears different theta roles that determine correct constituent (c-selection) at spell out and lead to correct semantic interpretations at LF. However, the researcher disagreed with Zimmermann and Kaiser (2014) and Zimmermann (2014, 2018) in the sense that Arabic is not restricted in the occurrence of *pro* to specific structural constructions and with a limited number of verbs as those of French.



## 5 Conclusions

The qualitative study, based on Chomsky's (2005) phase theory, can be considered a new addition to research as it fills the gap in research. The sample data was restricted to (8) grammatical sentences to achieve the objective of the study. Though the relevant literature confirmed that there is a tight syntactic relation between INFL /AGR and *pro* to occur, it did not specify the mechanisms by which this relation was manifested. It was a traditional style and based on the surface facts. However, this work explored all the features related to valuation, licensing and distribution of *pros* in Arabic syntax at all levels of syntax. This fact is obvious because sometimes a sentence can be grammatically correct but semantically unacceptable and sometimes the situation is otherwise. The new approach specified that without the presence of theta roles at spell out, no way, we can construct a grammatical sentence which is semantically correct at LF. The study is also significant because the new approach specifies that the features of *pro* were checked in a systematic manner in the process of derivation to avoid clashes between syntax and semantics in the phases. In a final conclusion, this work filled the gap in research because the approach in use considered syntactic, semantic and phonological issues at one time which no previous approach could tackle and come out with empirical results.

### Recommendations:

The researcher recommended the following:

- The study of *pro* needs more attention from Arab scholars to explore its valuations and distributions in Arabic varieties.
- It is also recommended that, in language acquisition, Arab children must know that Arabic and all its varieties permit null subjects to occur at all tenses and with all persons. They have to know that the sentence "I speak" can be shown by two Arabic sentences, namely, (i) ? *ilʔab* 'play' and ? *anta ? ilʔab* ' You play'; thus, they must adopt this approach in their analyses.
- It is recommended that this approach is very helpful for scholars who are interested in the interpretation process in the sense that only lexical items can be interpreted at LF as they are parts of numeration, but functional features are not though they appear at the same level.

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