



Descriptive Study of Negation Comparing Between Modern Standard Arabic and Najdi Dialect

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Abstract

This paper clarifies the syntactic features of the different negation in the Najdi dialect and Standard Modern Standard Arabic. The Najdi dialect is a Saudi Arabian dialect that is spoken in the central region of the country. The study investigates the negation particles in Najdi *la*, *ma*, and *mahub* and it compares them to the negation particles *laa*, *lam*, *lan*, *maa*, and *laysa* in Modern Standard Arabic. I collected the data for Najdi dialect from the Arabic corpus via twitter. While for the Modern Standard Arabic, I adapted the categorization for the Modern Standard Arabic negation sentences from Alsalem' study in 2012. The current study discusses the negation in Najdi dialect, and one has to consider the origin of these negations. These negations were developed from the standard modern Arabic. So I had to compare the negation in Modern Standard Arabic and in Najdi dialect. Some negation markers in standard Arabic does not exist at all in Najdi dialect or in any other Arabic dialect which is the negation marker *laysa*. The other negation markers in Standard Arabic that still exist in Najdi dialects are *la*, *ma*.

Key words: Arabic negation, corpus data, Najdi dialect, Syntax.

Introduction

The Arabic language refers to the different spoken varieties of Arabic and to the written form, which is the Modern Standard Arabic. Every Arabic country speaks its own variety that is specific to it. Even in one country, one could come across different variety of Arabic. Like in Saudi Arabia, Najdi dialect is spoken in the central region of the country, which is different than Janobi dialect that is spoken in the south of Saudi Arabia. Moroccan Arabic, for example, is completely different

than Saudi Arabic. Speakers of Saudi Arabic may not completely understand the Moroccan Arabic. Most of speakers of Arabic understand the Modern standard Arabic, as it is the variety that is being taught in school and used in mosque, and formal setting. It is also the language that is used in academic writing, newspaper, and so on.

There are some studies that investigated the structure of the Arabic language specifically, the sentential negotiation in Arabic. For example, Shurafa in 2006 investigated the sentential negotiation in standard Arabic with reference to a certain negation principle “ma”. The study stated that the negation principle “ma” usually happens in a certain sentences, which does not contain any verb but is more implemented in nominal, adjectival and prepositional aspects of the sentence. Another study.

Research has shown that every language use negation differently. For example, some languages like English use one element in negation. In English, to negate a sentence like “he is a teacher” ‘not’ which is the negative marker will be added as in “he is not a teacher” (Alsalem, 2012, P.1). Other languages like French, it exhibits the use of two negation elements ‘ne’ and ‘pas’ (Pollock, 1989; Ouhalla & Shonsky, 2002).

A lot of studies have been conducted to examine the structure of Arabic language, these studies revealed some interesting syntax aspects in Arabic such as negation. It has been demonstrated that negation in the Arabic language can use one element of negation or two elements of negation, depending on which Arabic variation is being used. Some dialects exhibit the use of one element, and other dialects exhibit the use of two elements to express negation. For example, Ouhalla and Shonsky (2002) studied the structure of negative sentences in Arabia, and they found that the Moroccan dialect uses two negative element patterns, ma- and -sh. Similarly, Almomani’s study (2011) looked at negative markers in the Jordan dialect, and Brustad in 2000 looked at negation markers in Egyptian Arabic, and they found that both dialects (Egyptian and Jordanian) used two elements of negation just like the Moroccan dialect. This is an interesting conclusion since the Arabic standard language only has one negative marker in a sentence (alsalem, 2012).

This paper sheds light on different types of negative elements in Saudi dialect specifically Najdi dialect and Modern Standard Arabic. The current study investigates the syntactic localization of the negative markers in these two varieties of Arabic language. To obtain this goal, data from Najdi dialect is collected from corpus. The current study adapted the categorization for the Modern Standard Arabic negation sentences from Alsalem' study in 2012:

Negation with *laa, lam, and lan*

Negation with *maa*

Negation with *laysa*

I also looked into sentences in Najdi Arabic that has:

Negation with *la*

Negation with *ma*

Negation with *muhub*

Arabic is different than English and it has its own language- specific negation. Every language has its own unique forms of negation. Arabic is a Semitic language and it is different than indo-European languages like English and also it differs from its colloquial forms. The location of the negative marker and the verb (the word order) of a sentence in Arabic language is different than English language. For the purpose of the study I looked closely at the different negation elements in standard Arabic and in Najdi dialect.

In the Najdi dialect, the negation elements *la, ma, and mahub* have different usages. The negation morphemes *la* and *ma* are verbal negation marker while the negation element *muhub* is non-verbal negation marker. The non-verbal negation marker, negates nouns, adjectives, adverbs (Binturki, 2015)

The negative elements in SA are *laa, lam, lan, maa, laysa, and yayr*. Each of these negative elements have different syntactic feature. *Lam* and *lan*, for example, show tense, *laysa* has to agree with the subject, *laa* doesn't show tense nor inflects for agreement. (Alsalem, 2012). Benmamoun (2000) argues that the main negative elements in SA are *laa* and *maa* while others are forms of *LA*. However, Ryding (2005) argues that all *laa, lam, maa, laysa, and yayr* are the negative elements in Arabic.

Najdi Arabic also has diverse negative elements and it is different than the negative elements in Modern Standard Arabic. The main negative elements in Najdi dialects are: *la*, *ma*, *muhub*. These examples show the different usage of negative elements in SA and Najdi dialect:

(1) ali-un laysa taalib-an (SA)

Ali neg.3ms student-acc

‘Ali s not a student’ (Alsalem, 2012)

(2) Hisham mu nakadi abd (NA)

Hisham neg grumpy at all

‘Hisham is not grumpy at all’

In example one we see the negative marker *laysa* in SA and is not found in any other Arabic dialects (Alsalem, 2012). The negative marker *mu* is used instead of *laysa* in Najdi Arabic.

Negation with *laa*, *lam*, and *lan*

Laa, *lam* and *lan* happens in the present tense, but *lam* indicates the past tense, and *lan* refers to future (Neŕmat, 1937). Further more, all these negation elements happen with imperfective verbs, and if they happen with perfective verbs will result to grammatical errors (Alsalem, 2012).

(3) Laa yafhamu ?al-kitaab-a

Neg understand.3ms the-book-acc

‘he does not understand the book’

(4) **laa fahim- a al-kitaab-a*

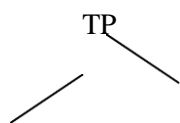
neg understood.3ms the-book-acc

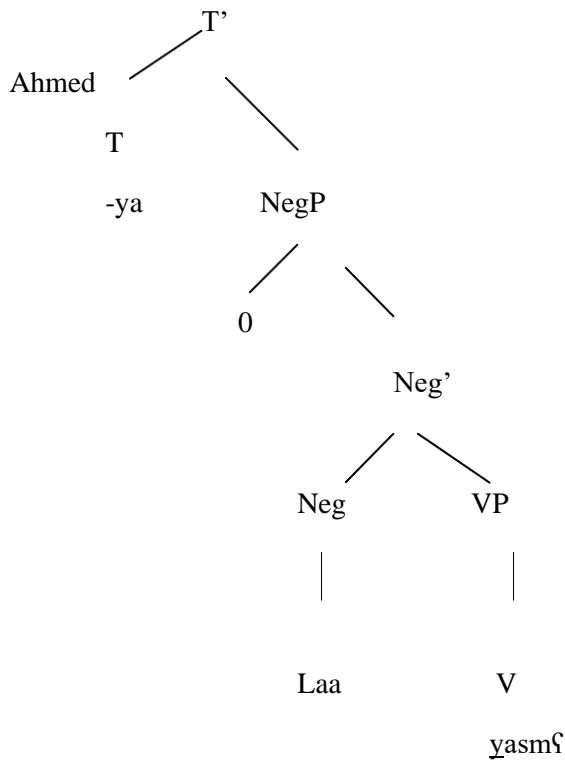
(5) Ahmed -u laa y-smaʕ

Ahmed-nom neg 3ms-listen

Ahmed doesn’t listen

I will present the sentence (5) in a simplex tree as following





Laa in (1) negates a habitual present tense sentence. The negation laa is placed in the negation phrase. Laa carries the present tense. And the verb yasmf is following the NegP. So laa negates the verb following it. Since laa carries a tense we move it from NegP to the specifier of TP.

Negation with *maa*

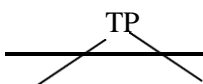
Maa is a neutral negative marker that does not carry a tense. Maa is associated with imperfective form of verbs and perfective forms of verbs (Al-tamari, 2001).

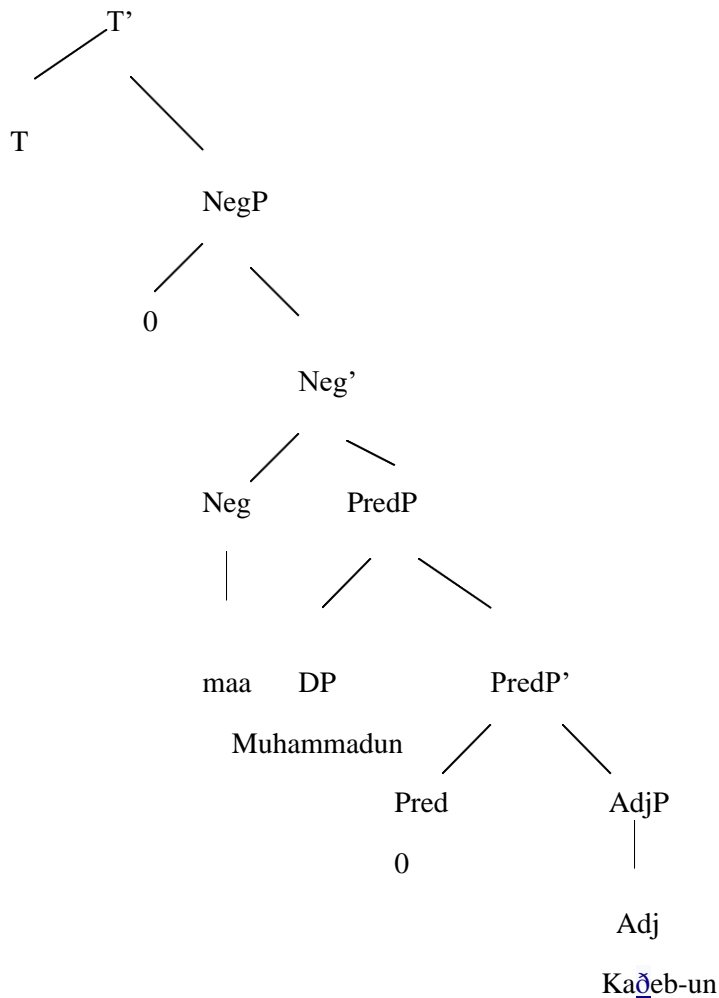
- (6) Ahmad-un maa y-ussali
 Ahmed-nom Neg 3ms-pray
 'Ahmed doesn't pray'

Ma doesn't only negates verbs but also negates nouns.

- (7) Maa Muhammad-un kaḏeb-un
 Neg Muhammad-nom liar-nom.indef

'Muhammad is not a liar'





Here we cannot move the DP to TP because the word order of the sentence will not be right.

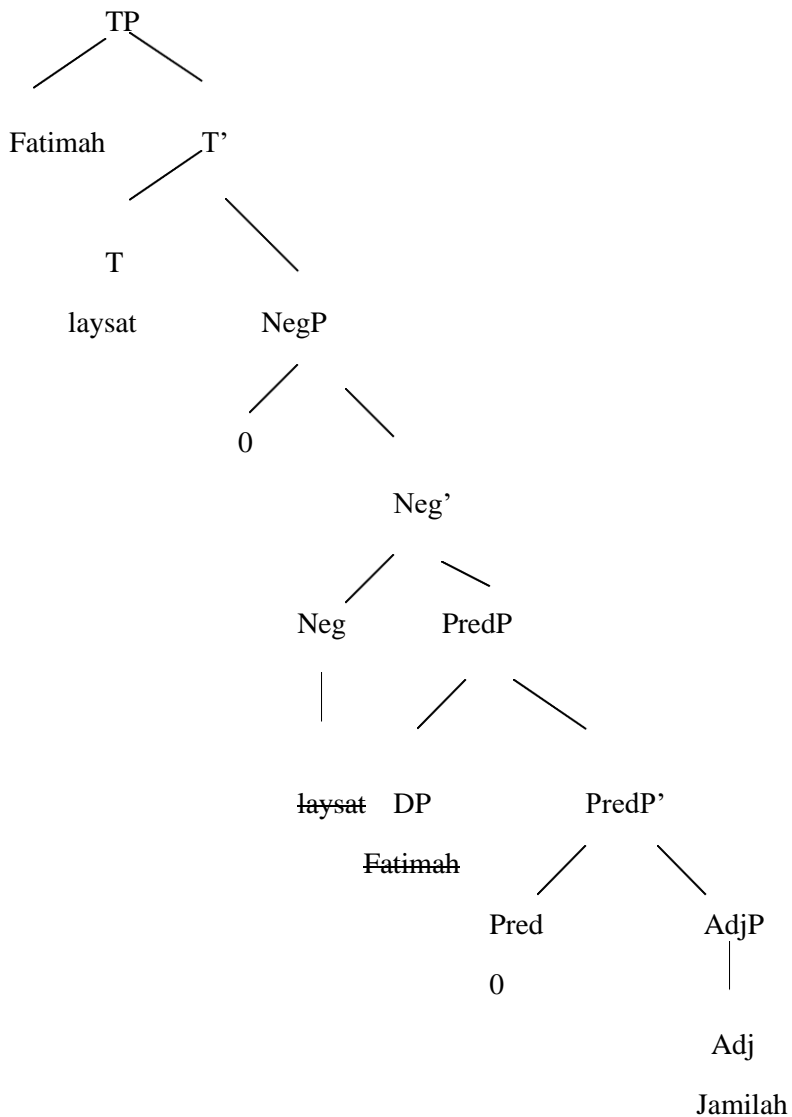
Negation with *laysa*

It has been reported in some studies (Altamara, 2001) that *laysa* negates verbs. But it also negates nouns, and adjectives. It occurs with imperfect verbs and with sentences that doesn't have verbs. *Laysa* can only be used in the present tense. It is grammatically incorrect to use *laysa* with past or future.

- (8) Fatimah *laysa-t* *jamel-ah*
 Fatimah neg-3fs beautiful-3fs
 'Fatimah is not beautiful'

- (9) hwa *lys-a* *y-akul*
 he neg-3ms 3ms-eat
 'he does not eat'

Example number 8 shows that *laysa* inflected for number, gender, and person, and also number 9.



I used predicate phrase because the sentence does not have a verb. And I also moved *laysat* to the tense because it indicates the present tense. *Laysa* is a negative marker that is only used in SA. In standard Arabic *laa/maa* do not agree with the verb in terms of tense and that's why in the syntactic tree they stay in the negation layer while *laysa*, which indicates the tense can move from negative phrase to the tense layer.

Negation with *laa*

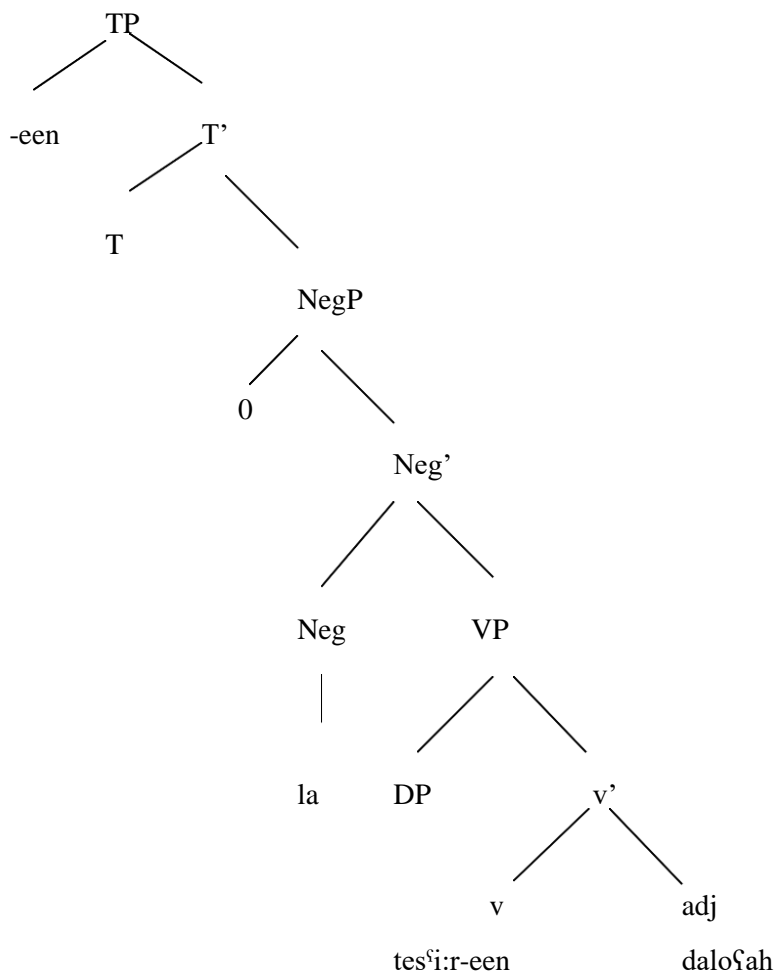
Now we move to the Najdi dialect, I chose 3 najdi dialect sentences from corpus that uses *laa* differently:

- (10) *Laa t-bkoon*
 NEG 2p-cry
 'Don't cry'

(11) Laa t-mzh
 Neg 2ms-joke
 ‘Don’t joke around’

(12) Laa tes^ʕi:r-*een* daloʕah
 Neg become-2fs spoiled-2fs
 ‘Don’t be spoiled’

From these examples we see that *laa* in Najdi Arabic are preceding verbs and it also negates adjectives. When *laa* negates the adjectives, speaker tend to insert the verb “tes^ʕi:reen” which means “become” between the negative marker *laa* and the adjective. We also notice that there is no agreement with the *laa* negative marker and with the subject in gender or in number: it is used with female, male, singular, and plural interchangeably. So I moved the inflected verb –*een* that refers to the subject to the TP



Negation with *ma*

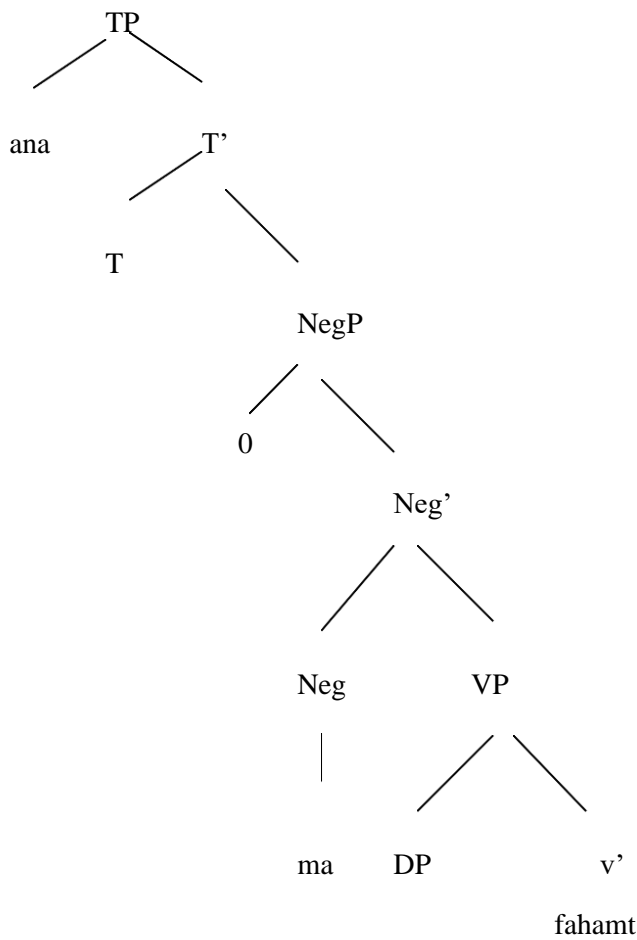
Brustad (2000) states that the function of the negation particle *ma* is a verbal negation, which negates the imperfective and perfective verb forms. However, Alsalem (2012) argues that *ma* can also negate nouns. From my najdi Arabic corpus I found these examples:

(13) Ma faham-t
 Neg understood-1s
 'I didn't understand'

(14) hu ma kaan y3rf
 he Neg was.3ms verb-3ms
 'he doesn't know'

(15) Ma rah nswg
 Neg will drive.2p
 'We won't drive'

A tree for number 13 as follow:



In example 13 we see a case of pro-drop in Arabic, the pro should be 'ana' which means 'I' and I placed it in the TP layer. Ma comes with past tense like in example 13 and with the present tense like in

example 14. Najdi speakers can make ma refers to the future if they insert “raḥ” between ma the negation element and the verb like in example 15.

Ma negates verbal sentences and it does not negate nominal and adjectival sentences. Therefore, we need coupla ‘huu’ to negate nominal and adjectival, which created a new negative element muhu (ma+hu=muhu). Ma can be attached to a coupla. Now I move to a next section where mahu is one element.

Negation with *muhub*:

There are multiple forms of muhub that agrees with number and gender as showing in Bin Turki, 2015, p74

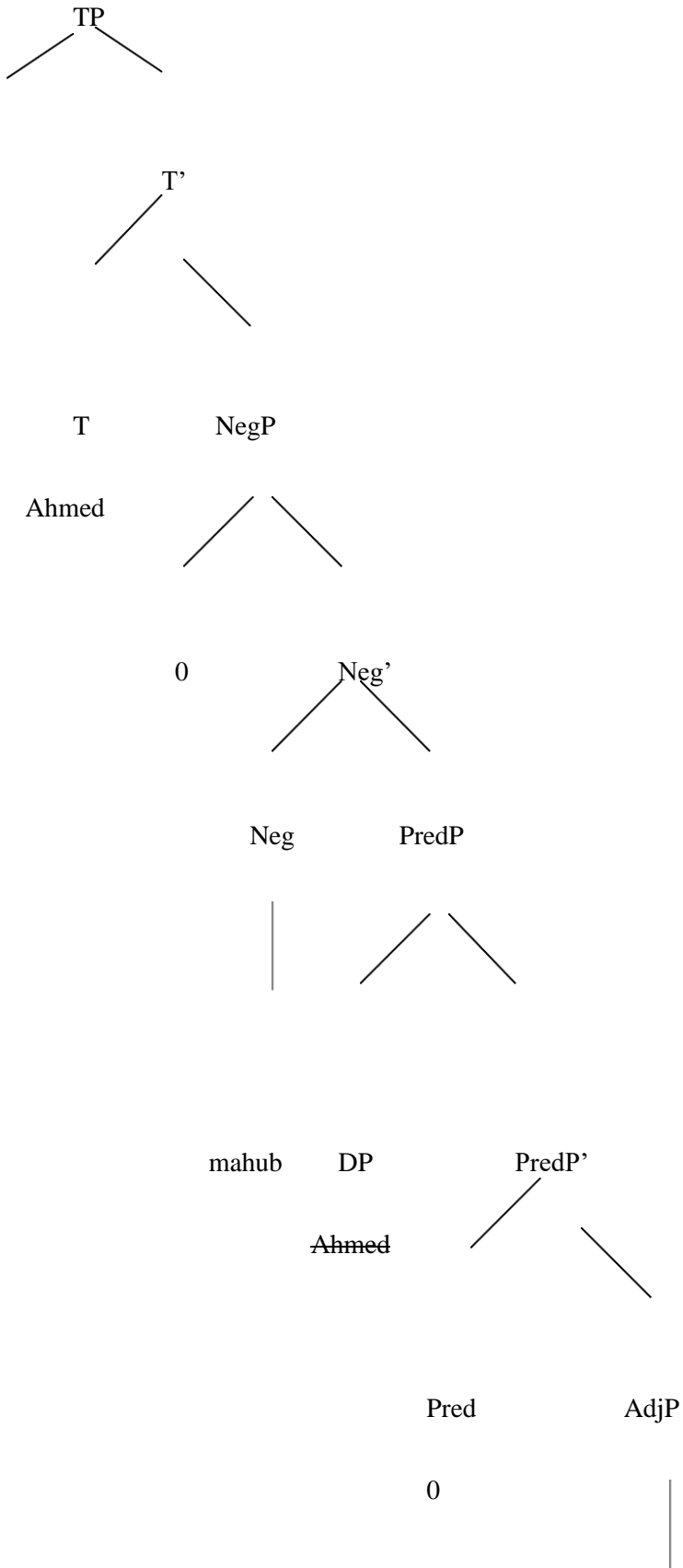
1SG.	Maniib
1PL	Mannaab
2SG.MSC	Manntab
2SG.FEM	Manteb
2PL	Mantumb
3SG.MSC	Muhub
3SG.FEM	Maheeb
3PL	Muhumb

Matar 2015_states that muhub is basically contains the negation element maa, “pronominal hu’ and an “emphatic-b”. Bin Turki in 2015 claims that Muhub is used in Najdi Arabic to negates non-verbal negation only.

I will concentrate on muhub, which is the third singular masculine morpheme in my examples.

(16) Ahmed muhub jameel
Ahmed NEG handsome-3ms

‘He is not handsome’



As we illustrated in the previous section *ma* negates only verbal sentences. So, we need a linker for *ma* to negate nominal and adjectival sentences, the linker is copula *hu*. *Mahu* or *mahub* contains a negative marker *ma* and copula *hu*, which creates a new nominal negation but *ma* by itself can not do that. *Mahu* has a part of agreement inside the negation, which is the copula. This is similar to Benmamoun's study in 2000 when he argued that negation marker combined with pronominal in different Arabic dialect (eg. Moroccan, Egyptian, and Kuwaiti). He said the pronominal *hu*, which indicates Singular masculine, merges with the negative *ma* to form *mahu*.

However, I found from in my najdi corpus that *muhub* also negates verbs. Like in this example:

- (17) *mahub* *y-nam*
 Neg *3ms-sleep*
 'He doesn't sleep'

In this example, *mahub* negates the verb and there is a negation- verb agreement.

Summary and Conclusion:

The paper discussed the negation in Najdi dialect, and one has to consider the origin of these negations. These negations were developed from the modern standard Arabic. So I had to compare the negation in Modern Standard Arabic and in Najdi dialect using data from corpus and the examples in Alsalem's study (2000). Modern standard Arabic has six negative elements: *laa*, *lam*, *lan*, *maa*, *laysa*, and *yayr*, whereas Najdi dialect has four negative elements: *la*, *ma*, and *mahu*.

In conclusion, the finding of this paper predicts that *mu* is taking over *ma* in the next generations, which may lead to the deletion of *ma* and use *mu* in all sentences in all environment. It was interesting to see how *muhub* starts from *ma+copula* that only negates nominal and adjectival sentences. Then, it has been adapted by Najdi speakers to negate verbal sentences as well.

Some negation markers in standard Arabic does not exist at all in Najdi dialect or in any other Arabic dialect which is the negation marker *laysa*. The other negation markers in Standard Arabic that still exist in Najdi dialects are *la*, *ma*.

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