A SYNTACTIC CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS
OF THE RELATIVE CLAUSES IN ARABIC AND ENGLISH
IN THE GB WITH REFERENCE TO TRANSLATION

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1. Theoretical Framework

The analysis we adopt, in this paper, assumes a fair knowledge of the main properties of the Government and Binding framework, henceforth, (GB) developed in Chomsky (1981), Bouchard (1984), Radford (1988), Lasnik and Uriagereka (1988), Haegeman (1993) and Chomsky (1997).

Some vital concepts to our argument are the following:

(1)   (i)   Case assignment takes place at S-structure only:
      "We assume that case assignment takes place at S-structure"
      (Chomsky 1981: 94)

    (ii)   Adjacency is a condition for case assignment at the syntactic level only:
      "We assume that case-marking takes place at the syntactic level only...
      Therefore, the notion of adjacency is that of S-structure". (Chomsky 1981: 94)

    (iii) The basic word-order in Arabic is VOS. "In conclusion, the basic word-order in Modern Standard Arabic is VOS where the verb inflects for gender only as a language specific property, while it inflects for person, number and gender if the sentence starts with an NP in the nominative, in which case we have a movement into COMP". (Homeidi 1991: 26)
      For a comprehensive analysis of this issue, see Homeidi (1991, 1994).

2. Arabic Clause Structure

We are not seeking a lengthy or comprehensive analysis of Arabic clause structure in this brief section. Our main objective is just to outline the basic structure of Arabic

clauses as relevant to this paper. The interested reader is referred to, amongst others, Homeidi (1991), ?alrajihi (1988), Antakki (1987), Hilwanii (1977).

Homeidi (1991: 23) concludes his analysis of word order in Modern Standard Arabic in the Government and Binding framework as follows:

> The above argument proves quite clearly that we can take VOS to represent the basic word-order in modern Standard Arabic, and then by reversing the object and subject in postverbal position, we can derive the VSO order, while the opposite is not possible.

While in Homeidi (1991: 138), we find the following:

> One major result of this paper is that the classic classification of Arabic sentences into Nominal and Verbal is not standing any more. Instead we have just one type of sentence with a base rule of the form:
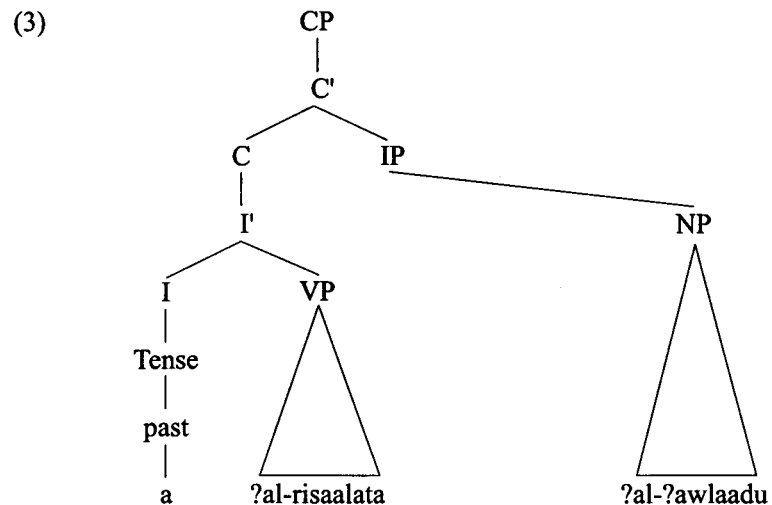>
> (46) S → *VP NP*
>
> and all the other types of sentences are derived through movements within the government and binding theory.

Accordingly, a simple sentence as the following:

(2)   katab-a   ?al-risaalat-a   ?al-?awlaad-u
        wrote   the letter-acc   the boy-nom
        the boys wrote the letter

should have the following DS and LF structure:

(3)

However, Arabic has many different word orders on the surface level which can all be derived from the basic structure in (3) through different types of movements either at the syntactic level or the phonetic level. For lack of space we are not going to deal with them here, but there are detailed in Homeidi (1991, 1994), and other relevant literature.

3. Relative Clauses in English

The structure of relative clauses in English has been the subject of much debate (see, amongst others, Keyser (1975), Truckenbrodt (1993), Jackendoff (1977), Hendrick (1982), and Cinque (1982), and Safir (1986)).

However, a typical example would be the following:

(4)   A book which John read.

From a syntactic point of view (4) would have the following S-structure according to Haegeman's (1993) framework.

(5)
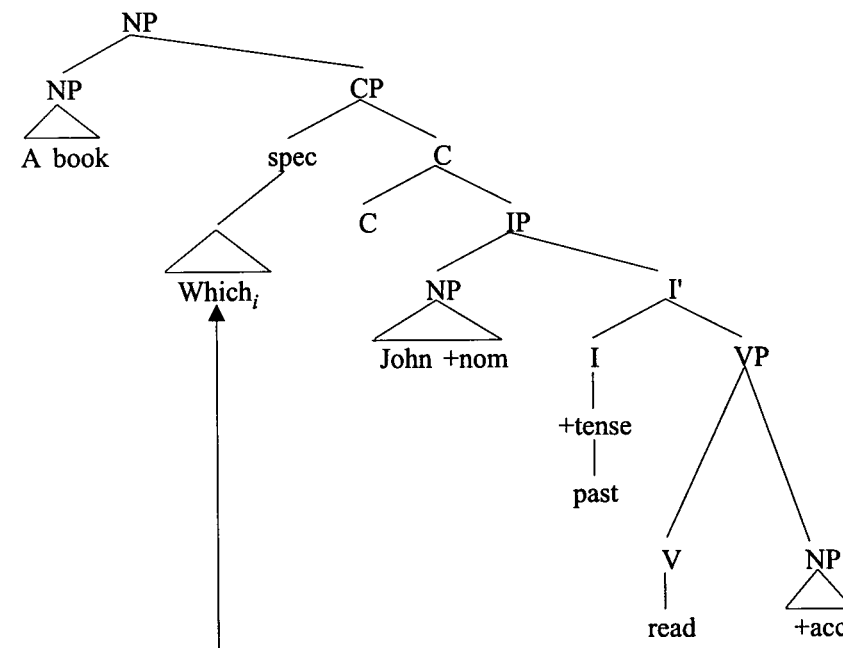
Case assignment and θ-roles marking are done within the GB framework quite properly. We notice that the trace of the relative pronoun in the embedded clause is co-indexed with *which* and the two form one chain with one θ-role. (And probably through predication with the head NP *a book*.)

In fact, the equivalent of (4) in Arabic will give the following (putting word order differences aside):

(6)   kitaab-un   qara?   hu   Aḥmadu
       A book-nom   read-past it-acc Ahmad-nom

What is striking is the absence of the relative pronoun *which* from the Arabic equivalent though we have a resumptive pronoun co-indexed with the preceding NP for reference. The S-structure of (6) might be the following:

(7)
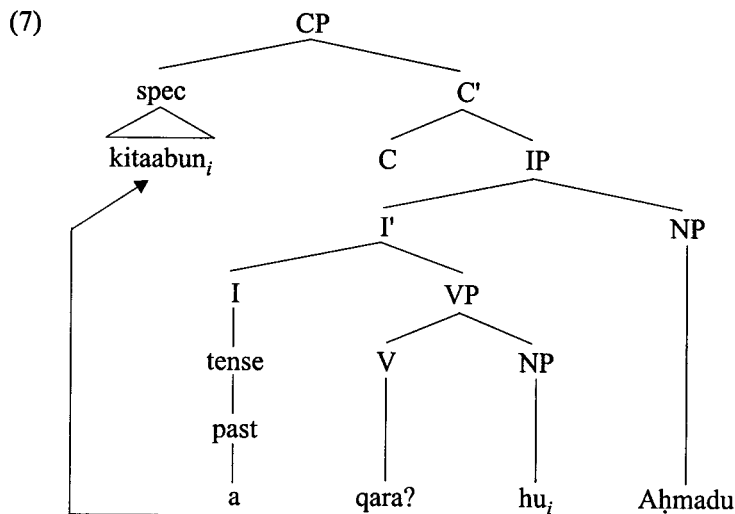
So we notice that although the NP *kitaabun* is co-indexed with the resumptive pronoun *hu*, we do not have a relative clause structure. More than that (7) does not allow the insertion of a relative pronoun:
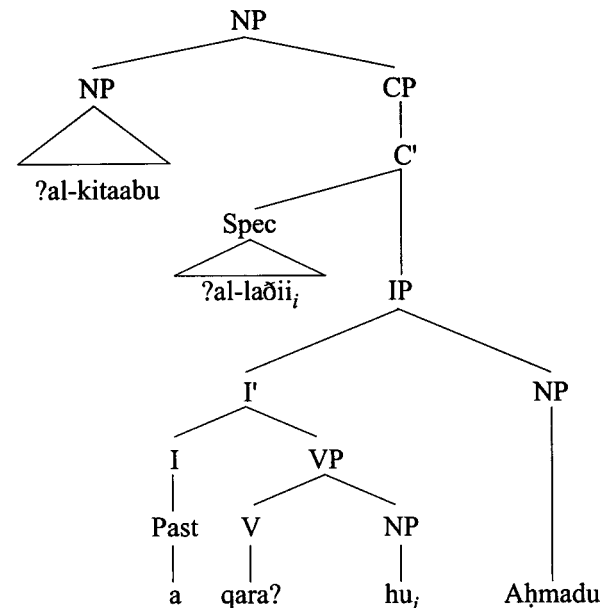
(8)   *kitaabun ?al-laðii qara?a-hu Aḥmadu.

In fact (8) is not allowed in Modern Standard Arabic. (8) can be grammaticalized if the head NP *kitaabun* is made definite by adding the definite article *?al* 'the', then we get:

(9)   ?al-kitaab-u   ?al laðii   qara?a   hu   Aḥmadu
       The book-nom   which/that   read-past   it-acc Ahmad

(9) would have the following S-structure:

(10)

What is noticeable is that Arabic does not allow the deletion of the relative pronoun in (10) i.e. (11) does not have a relative clause meaning although it is quite grammatical in Arabic:

(11)   ?al-kitaabu-nom qara?-a-hu-acc Aḥmadu-nom.

However, (11) is a relative clause in English with the option of Zero relative pronoun:

(12)   The book (zero relative pronoun) Ahmad read.

We have a crucial difference between Arabic and English in this respect. This difference can be formulated as follows:

(13) (i)   Whereas the relative clause in English can start with an indefinite NP, in Arabic it can start with a definite NP only.

(ii)   The chain of indices in Arabic is marked for θ-role only. i.e. the relative pronoun *?al-laðii*, and the resumptive pronoun *hu* form a chain that is marked for θ-role only i.e. they all have one θ-role as patient of the verb *qara?a*; whereas their cases are different:

hu : accusative.
?al-laðii : nominative.

(iii)   Arabic has a resumptive pronoun which is co-indexed with the relative pronoun; whereas English has a co-indexed trace only.

In fact the case in (ii) above also holds for English. In (4) the embedded empty NP is in the accusative whereas the NP *a book* with which it is co-indexed is in the nominative. This is clear from the following:

(14)   The book which Ahmad read is interesting.

(14) could be assigned the following S-structure:

(15)
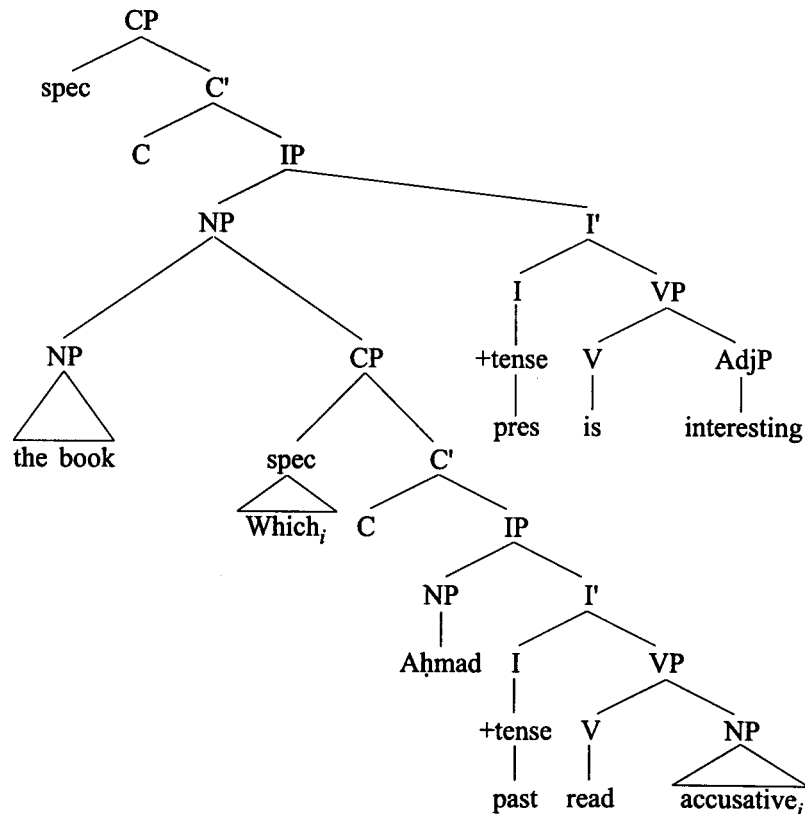
However, the linguistic tradition in English distinguishes between three types of relative clauses:

(16)   (i)   Restrictive Relative Clauses
         (ii)   Appositive Relative Clauses
         (iii)   Free Relative Clauses

Let us discuss the syntactic properties of each type briefly and see what the Arabic equivalents could be.

3.1. Restrictive Relative Clauses

This type of clauses can best be clarified by the following examples:

(17a) I met the man [*who lives next door*] in town.
(17b) The book [*that you lent me*] was interesting.
(17c) I enjoyed the meal [*you made us*]. (Radford 1988: 480)

All the bracketed clauses are called Restrictive because they restrict the class of *men* in (17a) to the one [*who lives next door*] and *the books* in (17b) to [*the one you lent me*] and the *meals* in (17c) to [*the one you made*].

The main properties of this type are characterized in (Radford 1988: 480) as follows:

(18)   (i)   Can be introduced by a wh-pronoun like *who* in (17a)
         (ii)   Can be introduced by a complementizer like *that* in (17b)
         (iii)   Contain no overt wh-pronoun or complementizer in (17c)
         (iv)   Can sometimes be extraposed and separated from their antecedent (the expression they modify) like:

(19)   Someone came to see me [who said he was from the bank].

Let us see whether the examples in (17) and the properties in (18) can be found in the Arabic equivalents of (17) (word-order differences aside):

(20)   I   met   the man
        tu-nom   qaabala-past   ?al-radjula-acc
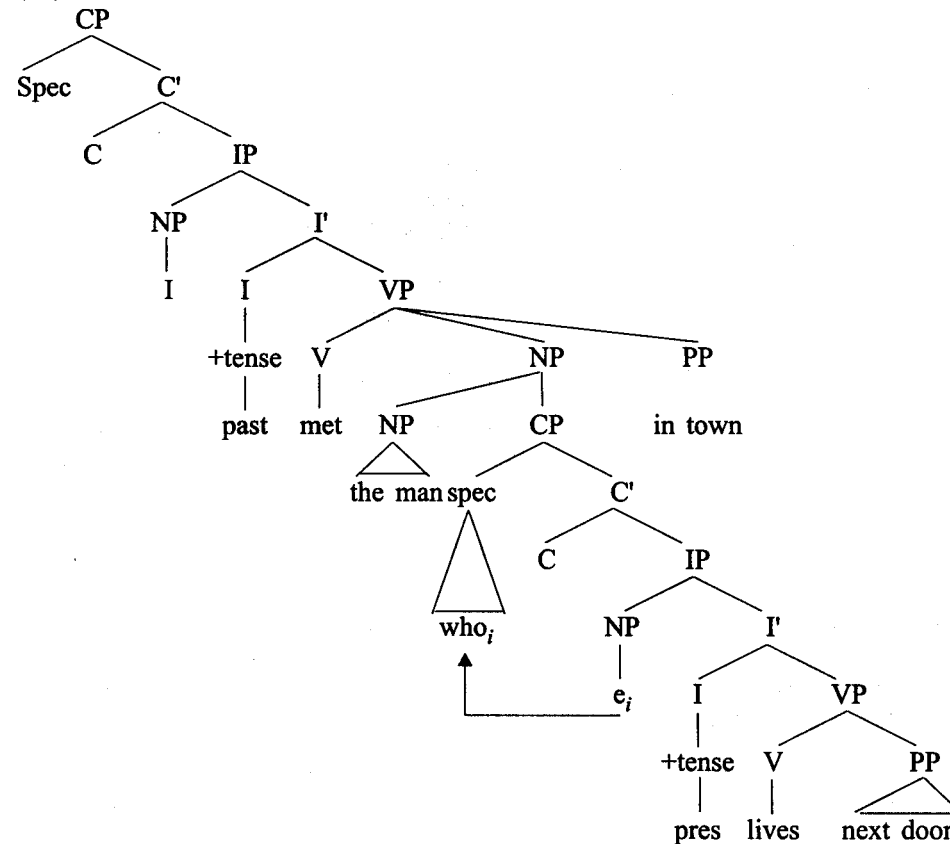
        [who   lives   next door]   in   town.
        [?allaðii-acc   yaʕiiʃu   bijiwari-obliq]   fii   ?al-baldati-obliq.

The S-structure of (20) is (21) which is identical to the one underlying (17a) represented in (22) if we drop word order differences between the two languages from our discussion.

(21)
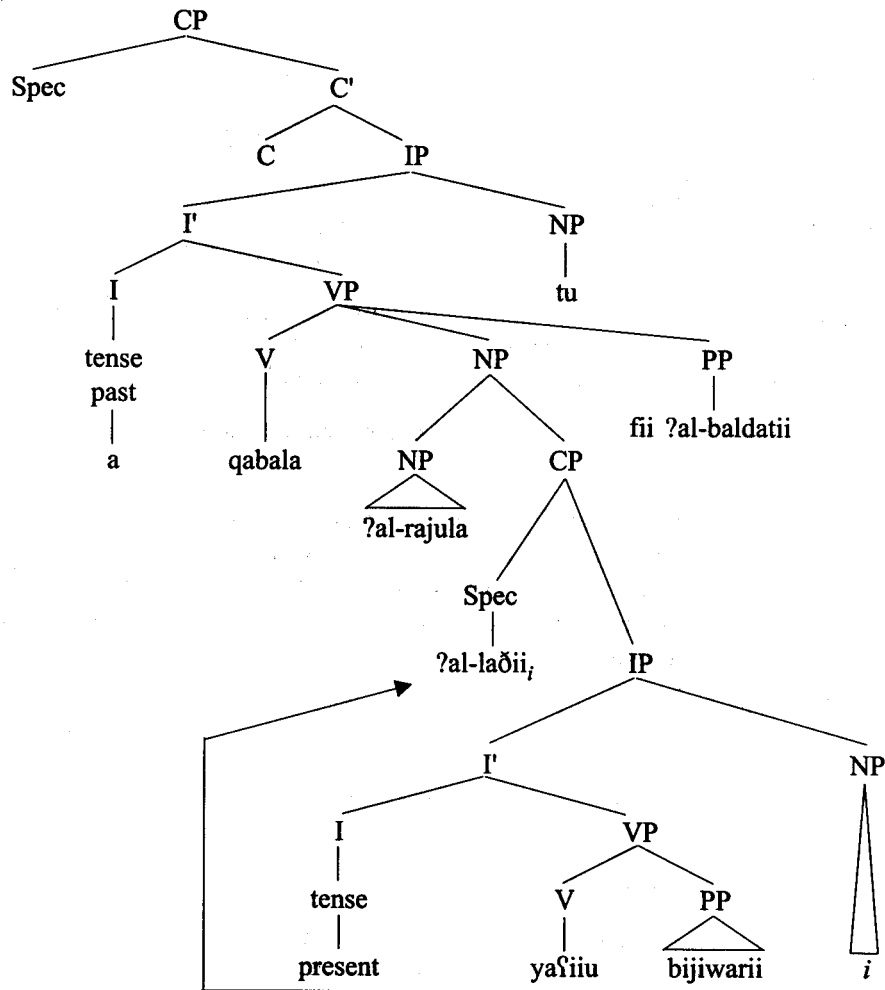
(22)

In fact Arabic and English are identical syntactically and semantically as far as (17a) is concerned. Can the same conclusion be drawn in (17b) and (17c)?

(23) the book   [that   you   lent   me]
      ?al-kitaabu-nom [?alaðii ta-nom ?arʕ-past nii-acc]

      was   interesting.
      kaana   mumtiʕan-acc

The only difference is that Arabic does not have a complementizer form different from the relative pronoun form. In both cases Arabic uses the same relative pronoun *?allaðii* meaning 'who/which'.

Now what about (17c), modified slightly for easier transliteration forms:

(24)   I   liked   the book
        * tu-nom   ?a ḥḥbab-past   ?al-kitaab-acc
        [(zero relative)   you   lent   me].
        [(zero relative)   ta-nom   ?aʕr-past   nii-acc].

The Arabic equivalent of (24) is obviously ungrammatical. In fact Arabic Restrictive Relative Clauses do not drop their relative pronouns.

Let us move to the last property in (18) , namely that restrictive relative clauses in English can be extraposed. We repeat (19) as (25) for convenience:

(25)   some one   came   to   see   me
        *shaxsun maa-nom   ?ataa   li   mushahada   tii-obliq
        [who   said   he was   from   the bank]
        [?allðaii qaala   ?inna-hu-acc   min   ?al-masrafi-obliq]

In fact the Arabic equivalent of (25) is highly ungrammatical. The reason is the presence of the relative pronoun *?allaðii*. The sentence could be grammatical if the relative pronoun is dropped:

(26)   ?ataa –past li-muqabalatii-obliq shaxsun-nom maa qaala-past ?inna-hu-acc
        min ?al-masrafi-obliq.

We have here a very interesting difference which deserves precise formulation:

(27)   Arabic extraposed Restrictive Relative Clauses do not allow the presence of
        the relative pronoun.

In conclusion to this section, we can characterize the similarities and the differences between English Restrictive Relative Clauses and the Arabic ones as follows:

(28)   (i)   Syntactically, the structure of this type of relative clauses is identical in
                both languages, (regardless of word order differences).
        (ii)   Whereas English enjoys the merit of using a relative pronoun, a
                complementizer, or a zero relative pronoun, Arabic conforms to the rel-
                ative pronoun form only.
        (iii)   Whereas both languages allow the extraposition of restrictive relative
                clauses, Arabic does not permit the insertion of the relative pronoun if
                the restrictive clause is extraposed.

The tutor of translation should take (28) into account.

3.2. Appositive Relative clauses

Appositive Relative Clauses in English are exemplified by the following:

(29a)   John [*who was at Cambridge with me*] is a good friend of mine.

(29b)   Yesterday I met your bank manager, *who was in a filthy mood.*

(29c)   Mary has left home – *which must be very upsetting for her parents.*
        (Radford 1988: 481)

The semantic properties of Appositive Relative Clauses are briefly characterized in Radford (1988: 481) as follows:

> They generally serve as 'parenthetical comments' or 'afterthoughts' set off in a separate intonation group from the rest of the sentence (this being marked by a comma, or hyphen, or brackets in writing); unlike Restrictives, they can be used to qualify unmodified proper nouns i.e. proper nouns not introduced by a determiner like *the*). They are always introduced by an overt wh-phrase (i.e. neither that-relatives, nor 'zero relatives' can be used appositively).

The above properties are crucial to the appositives; this is seen from the ungrammaticality of the following:

(30a)   John – whom you saw in town – is a good friend of mine.

(30b)   *John – that you saw in town – is a good friend of mine. (that complementizer).

(30c)   *John – you saw in town – is a good friend of mine. (zero relative).

Appositives can not be extraposed; i.e. they can not be separated from their antecedent:

(31a)   *John came to see me – who you met last week.

(31b)   *Mary is living at home – who is very nice.

Syntactically, the structure of Appositives does not differ from that of Restrictives; i.e. the base rule is the same as in:

(32)   CP   → spec C'
        C'   → C IP
        spec → relative pronoun
        IP   → clause

Let us see whether Arabic has the same type of appositives with the same properties. For convenience, we repeat the sentences in (29):

(33)   John   (*who   was   at Cambridge   with me*)
        joun-nom   (?allaðii kaana   fii kaambridj-obliq   maʕii-obliq)
        is a good friend   of mine.
        ṣadiiqun-nom jayyidun-nom   min ?aṣdiqaa?ii-obliq.

The Arabic version of (33) does not have any unpredictable properties, syntactic or semantic with the exception of the deletion of the main verb in the main clause

i.e. *is*. This is a language specific property; for more about this point see Homeidi (1991).

(34) Yesterday   I   met   your   bank   manager,
      ?al-barrihata-acc tu-nom qabal-past ika-obliq maṣrif-obliq mudira-acc
      who   was   in   a filthy   mood
      ?allaðii kaana fii   sayyi?n-oblqi   mizaajin-obliq

(35) Mary has left   home-   which   must
      mary qad yaadarat ?al- bayta-acc ?al-?amru-nom ?allaðii yajibu
      be   very   upsetting for her parents.
      ?an   yakuuna qad ?aqlaqa ha   waaliday

The Arabic equivalent of (35) shows a slight difference; whereas the relative pronoun does not modify any single word in the English clause, Arabic does not use a relative pronoun only but an NP in apposition of the whole sentence *Mary has left home*, followed by the proper relative pronoun *?alladii* and then the appositive relative clause.

Semantically, English and Arabic are identical. Syntactically, they are different in the sense that Arabic needs an NP in apposition of the antecedent (the whole sentence) followed by the proper relative pronoun.

In fact Arabic appositive relative clauses can not be extraposed:

(36a) Aḥmadu-nom ?alladii qabalta-past-hu-acc ?al-?usbuuʕa-acc
       ?al-maadii-a-acc jaa?a-past li-mushahadatii-obliq

(36b) *jaa?a-past Aḥmadu-nom li-mushahadati-obliq ?al-laðii qabalta-past-hu-acc
       ?al-?ussbuʕa-acc ?al-maadii-a-acc

This brings us to the last type of English relative clauses.

3.3 Free Relative Clauses

Free Relative Clauses are those such as the italicised in the following:

(37a) *What(ever)* he says is generally true.

(37b) You can have *whichever one you want*.

(37c) I will go *where(ver) you go*.

(37d) *Whatever happens, I'll stand with you*.

(Radford 1988: 481)

Semantically, Free Relative clauses are characterized as follows:

...they are apparently antecedentless – i.e. the Wh-expression they contain does not appear to refer back to any other constituent in the sentence containing them. As in the case of Appositives, they are always introduced by an overt-wh phrase (i.e. neither *that* relatives nor 'zero relatives' can function as free relative clauses).

(Radford 1988: 481)

Syntactically, Free relatives do not differ from the other two types. They include a movement from the embedded IP into *spec* as can be seen from the S-structure of (37b), presented as (38).

(38)
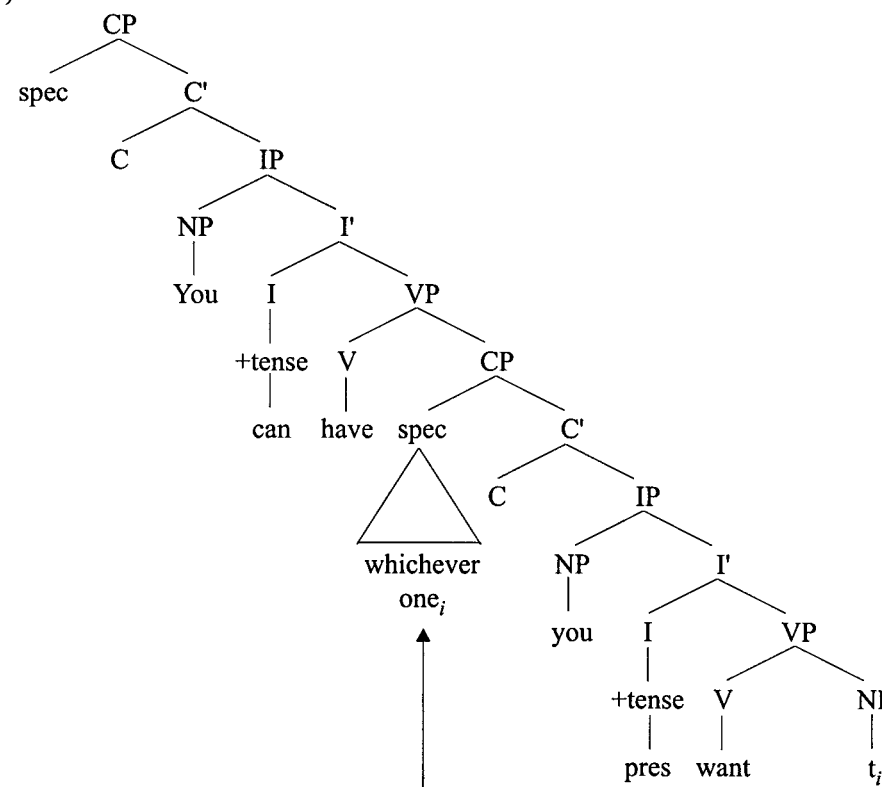
What is interesting, however, is their semantic behaviour and the fact that they do not allow *that* complementizer or zero relative.

These two points should be kept in mind especially when translating.

Let us see whether Arabic has the same characteristics. I will repeat (37) for convenience (word-order differences aside):

(39) What(ever) he   says   is generally true.
      Maa-nom   (pro-subj) hu-acc yaquulu ʕaadatan-acc ṣahiihun-nom

In fact *maa* in the Arabic equivalent could be an antecedent to the whole sentence and does not refer to any single word in itself or the object of the verb as might be thought. Moreover, it can not be deleted, i.e. (40) is ungrammatical:

(40) *yaquulu-hu   ʕaadatan   ṣaḥiiḥun
      says-he-it   generally   true

It seems to me that Arabic and English are identical in this respect.
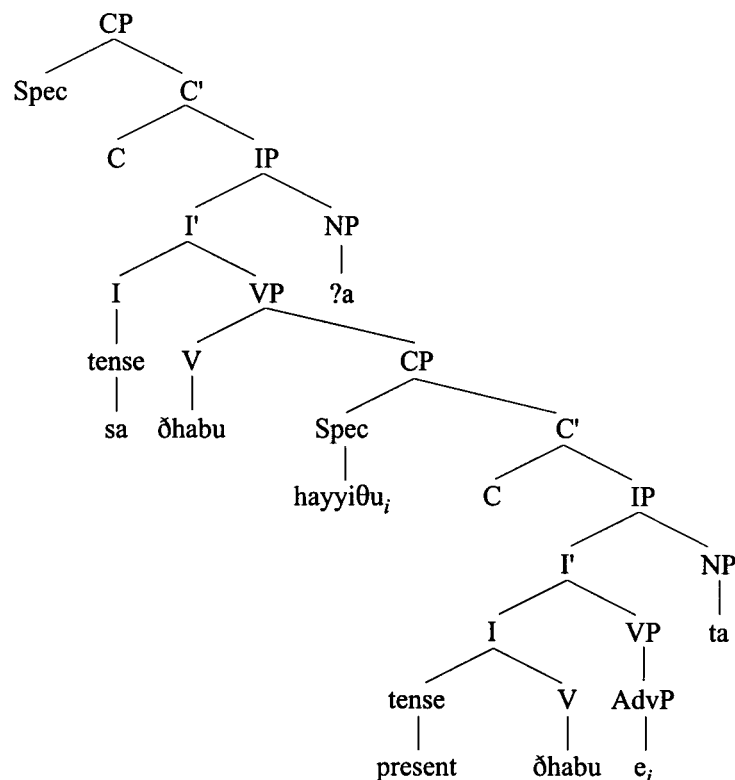
(41) I   will   go   wherever   you   go
      ʔaa   sa   ðhabu   hayiθumaa   ta   ðhabu

Arabic and English are identical in this respect also. Deletion of *hayiθumaa* will render the sentence ungrammatical:

(42) *sa-ʔaðhabu taðhabu
      go you   will   I go
      *I'll go you go

The structure of (41) is the following, the tree should be read from right to left:

(43)

The last sentence I would like to discuss is the relative clause that expresses possession, i.e as in (word-order differences aside):

(44a) I   saw   the girl   whose   father is dead.
      tu-nom   shaahad-past   ʔal-fataata-acc   ʔallatii ha-obliq   ʔabuu mayyitun-nom

(44b) I   saw   the girl   whose
      tu-nom   shaahd-past   ʔal-faatata-acc   ʔallatii ha-obliq

    house is   on sale
    manzilu-nom   li-lbyyiʕI-obliq

We notice that the equivalent of *whose* in Arabic takes the form of the proper relative pronoun at the start of the relative clause and a resumptive possessive pronoun that appears on the inflectional ending of the NP that immediately precedes the relative pronoun.

4. Conclusions

It seems that Arabic and English relative clauses share many identical semantic and syntactic properties. In both languages, we have a movement of a constituent from the embedded clause into spec of the higher clause; the use of *a relative pronoun*, a *zero relative* or *that* complementizer in English and only a *relative pronoun* in Arabic. These similar properties should be known to the translator who translates between the two languages.

This paper has clarified some points of difference between the two languages which should be known to the translator trainee as well as to the syntactician who is interested in a contrastive analysis. These points can be summarized as follows:

(45) (i)   Whereas English has three distinct relative forms (i.e. *relative* pronoun, *that* complementizer or *zero* relative), Arabic has only one, in the sense it uses the proper form of the relative pronoun (i.e. Arabic does not have a form equivalent to *that* complementizer or *zero* relative).

    (ii) Whereas English drops the relative pronoun or that complementizer optionally, Arabic does not allow that.

    (iii) Whereas both languages allow the extraposition of restrictive relative clauses, Arabic drops the relative pronoun obligatorily in these structures.

    (iv) Arabic adds, in its equivalents of some kinds of appositive relative clauses, an NP that functions as an antecedent of the whole clause followed by the proper relative pronoun (example (36)).

    (v) The translation of *Whose* takes the form of a relative pronoun + a possessive pronoun that appears on the inflectional ending of the NP that immediately precedes the relative pronoun.

We believe that these points should be taken into account in any syntactic contrastive analysis between the two languages as well as when translating between the two languages.

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