On Negation and Focus in Standard Arabic: Interface-based Approach

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Abstract

This paper addresses the interface between syntax and information structure by interpreting focus under negation. To this end, data will be examined from the Arabic negative marker laysa, which exhibits interesting focus features that broaden our knowledge of syntactic and semantic aspects of negation and deepen our understanding of what information structural effects play a role at the interface. Focus typology can be expressed by laysa in its two major types, namely the information focus and contrastive focus, resulting in three different ways in which negation and focus can interact at the Syntax-Information Structure Interface. These ways

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are of three different readings of focus (wide, bound, and free). Each of these foci involves a different derivation which reflects how the autonomous notions of information structure – topic, focus, and contrast – interact in systematic ways with syntax as shown by the proposed minimalist analysis for each type.

Keywords: negation, laysa, information structure, focus, contrast, edge feature

1. Introduction

The expression and interpretation of negation in natural language have long fascinated philosophers, logicians, and linguists. One important issue that has attracted much interest in recent linguistics is the interaction of negation with other syntactic and semantic phenomena such as modality, tense, aspect, ellipsis, and information structure (see for example, Ouhalla 1993, de Haan 1997/2013, Zanuttini 1997, Taleghani 2006, Hinterhölzl & van Kemenade 2012, Al-Horais 2013). In this paper, I consider the interaction between negation and information structure by interpreting focus under negation in Standard Arabic (Arabic, for short) via its negative marker (laysa) that has different patterns to express negation. One of these significant patterns, which has not been explored much before, is its distribution of focus features and its role in mapping the syntactic structure to the semantic interpretation.

By borrowing the terminology from the important insights of Herburger (2000) and Etxepare & Uribe-Etxebarria (2008), the current paper argues that laysa uses three different ways to show the interaction between negation and focus. Under the first way, negation takes scope over the whole clause, which is interpreted as focalized
(wide focus). Whereas in the second way, negation takes scope only over the element in final position, which constitutes the focus of the sentence (bound focus). Finally, in the third way, the focus in final position is out of the scope of negation (free focus). Each of these foci (wide, bound, free) involves a different derivation and a different syntactic structure located at the syntax-information structure interface. In order account for the derivation of these three types of focus, the paper, by looking at information structure from the vantage point of generative syntax (especially, in its latest theoretical model ‘the Minimalist Program’), argues for a licensing mechanism which is strongly tied to the focus properties interacted in systematic ways with syntax.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 begins by laying out data providing an overview of the richness of the Arabic negation system which is expressed in various ways. As a starting point, section 3 briefly touches on the linguistic origin of laysa and then gives a detailed description and explanation of the two syntactic functions exhibited by laysa to express sentential negation (verbal and particle laysa). Section 4 clarifies what exactly the term information structure denotes and how its autonomous notions (topic, focus, and contrast) can be defined and distinguished. The rest of the section discusses and analyzes the interaction between negation and focus in Arabic via accounting for the range of focus interpretations expressed by the negative marker laysa. Section 5 concludes with a summary that concisely recaps the paper’s most important results.

2. The Distribution of Arabic Negative Markers

Arabic has, morphologically, six negative markers. These are laa,
lam, lan, lammaa, laysa, and maa (see Fassi Fehri 1993, Benmamoun 2000, Al-Tamari 2001, among others). The distribution of these negative markers falls into three broad classes, which give rise to three main strategies for negating a clause in general:

(i) Negative markers specified only for a [+V feature] (laa, lam, lammaa, lan):

(1) a. qadima r-rijaal-u.
    came-3m-past the-men-Nom
    ‘The men came.’

   b. lam ya-qdum-Ø r-rijaal-u.
    Neg 3m-come-JUS the-men-Nom
    ‘The men did not come.’

(2) a. ?arsala Ahmad-u r-risalat-a.
    sent-3ms Ahmad-Nom the-letter-Acc
    ‘Ahmad has sent the letter.’

   b. lammaa yu-sel-Ø Ahmad-u r-risalat-a.
    Neg 3m-send-JUS Ahmad-Nom the-letter-Acc
    ‘Ahmad has not sent the letter yet.’

(3) a. sa-yu-safir-u r-rijaal-u ghadan.
    fut-3m-travel-IND the-men-Nom tomorrow
    ‘The men will travel tomorrow.’

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1 The abbreviations, which will be commonly used in the gloss for the examples throughout the paper, are the following: Nom = nominative case; Dat = dative case; Acc = accusative case; Gen = genitive case; 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; s = singular number; p = plural number; f = feminine; m = masculine; Q = question particle; Neg = negative marker; IND = Indicative; JUS = Jussive; SUB = Subjunctive; Pres = present; Pastperf = past perfect.
b. lan yu-safir-a r-rijaal-u ghad-an.
   neg-fut 3m-travel-SUB the-men-Nom tomorrow-Acc
   ‘The men will not travel tomorrow.’

(4) a. ya-naam-u l-ʔawlad-u bakir-an.
    3m-sleep-Pres the-children-Nom early-Acc
    ‘The children sleep early.’

b. laa ya-naam-u l-ʔawlad-u bakir-an.
   neg-Pres 3m-sleep-IND the-children-Nom early-Acc
   ‘The children do not sleep early.’

(ii) A negative marker specified only for a [+N feature] (laysa):

(5) lays-at l-bent-u fii l-madrasat-i.
   neg-3fs the-girl-Nom in the-school-Gen
   ‘The girl is not in the school.’

(6) laysa xalid-un ya-ktubu Š-Šíf-r-a.
    neg-3ms khalid-Nom 3m-write-Pres the-poetry-Acc
    ‘Khalid does not write poetry.’

(iii) A negative marker specified for both [+N/+V feature] (maa):

(7) maa ?anta mujtahid-un.
    neg you-Nom hardworking-Nom
    ‘You are not hardworking.’

(8) maa ?a-arif-u.
    neg 1s-know-Pres
    ‘I do not know.’

Leaving the classes in (i) and (iii) aside as they are beyond the
scope of current paper, I turn, in the next section, to illustrate some basic facts about laysa before getting down into the discussion of major aim of this paper, namely, the interaction of the negative laysa with the three types of focus.

3. Syntactic Functions of laysa

Originally, laysa is typically taken to be the result of incorporation of the negative morpheme laa\(^2\) and the word ?ysa ‘existence’. For morphological reasons, the second vowel a in laa and the glottal stop in ‘?ysa’ are omitted, allowing la to be merged with ysa and ending up yielding the form laysa (al-Faraheedi, 8th Century, 1998 edn, also see Wright 1896). laysa exhibits two main syntactic functions to express negation: (i) The first function is by means of negative auxiliary verb; (ii) the second one is via functioning as just a negative particle. The intent of the next subsection is to explain the properties of these two functions.

3.1. Verbal laysa

In its main function as a negative verb, laysa occurs with nonverbal predicates (NP, AdjP, advP, PP) and imperfective verbs as shown respectively in (9) and (10) below. Thus, laysa is neither compatible with future tense interpretations (11), nor with verbs inflected for past tense (12) (Fassi Fehri 1993: 208, n. 25).

\(^2\) Laa is considered to be the default form of negation in Arabic laa is the original source of all negative markers, apart from maa. (see Benmamoun 2000).
(9) a. hum laysuu Tullab-an.
    they-Nom neg-3mp students-Acc
    ‘They are not students.’

b. heia lays-at hulwat-an.
   she-Nom neg-3fs beautiful-Acc
   ‘She is not beautiful.’

c. ?al-walad-u laysa huna.
   the-boy-Nom neg-3ms here-Acc
   ‘The boy is not here.’

d. laysa T-Tulab-u fii l-madrasat-i.
    neg-3m the-students-Nom in the-school-Gen
    ‘The students are not in the school.’

(10) laysa xalid-un ya-ktubu Š-Šiʕr-a.
     neg-3ms Khalid-Nom 3m-write-Pres the-poetry-Acc
     ‘Khalid does not write poetry.’

(11) lays-at fatimat-u *(sa-takoonu) fii l-bayt-i.
     neg-3fs Fatimah-Nom will be in the-house-Gen
     ‘Fatimah will not be in the house.’

(12) laysa xalid-un *(kataba) Š-Šiʕr-a.
     neg-3ms Khalid-Nom 3m-write-past the-poetry-Acc
     ‘Khalid did not write poetry.’

From the above examples, it can be noted that laysa, as being specified for +N feature, must select NP as pointed out in section 2. Thus, it is ungrammatical for verbal sentences to be negated directly by laysa as illustrated in (13).
    neg-3ms 3m-write Khalid-Nom the-poetry-Acc

This selected NP by *laysa can be a full NP as in (9-12) above or a
null pronoun that is incorporated with *laysa and has a feature bundle
(i.e., 3M/F. S/P) indicated by the agreement as in the following examples:

(14) xalid-un *laysa ya-ktubu Š-Šifr-a.
    Khalid-Nom neg-3ms 3m-write poem-Acc
    ‘Khalid is not writing a poem.’

(15) lays-at jamilat-an.
    neg-3fs beautiful-Acc
    ‘She is not beautiful.’

(16) ?aT-Tulab-u laysuu fii l-madrasat-i.
    the-student-Nom neg-3mp in the-school-Gen
    ‘The students are not in the school.’

As can be observed in the above examples, *laysa cannot act as a
full lexical verb since it is not inflected for tense, although it carries
number and gender agreement (i.e., enters into agreement with the
subject) (al-Khawalda 1997, Ouhalla 2008). This leads early Arab
grammarians to treat it “an incomplete verb” (see e.g., Sibawayhi 8th
Century, 1938 edn; Abū Ḥayyān 14th Century, 2001 edn). And
because *laysa assigns nominative case to the subject and accusative
case to the predicate as in (17) below, it is reasonable to be
considered as an auxiliary verb (al-Khawalda 1997).

(17) a. ahmad-u muʕallim-un.
    Ahmad-Nom teacher-Nom
    ‘Ahmad is a teacher.’
b. *layṣa* ahmad-u muṣallim-an.
   neg-3m Ahmad-Nom teacher-Acc
   ‘Ahmad is not a teacher.’

The other justification to consider *layṣa* as an auxiliary verb is its mobility in the sense that it can be separated from the verb by the subject. Moreover, it displays the same word order alternations as verbs namely, Neg Subject order and Subject Neg order. Consider the following examples in (18) & (19) below.

   neg-3ms Khalid-Nom 3m-write-Pres the-poetry-Acc

   b. xalid-un *layṣa* ya-ktubu Š-Šīr-a.
   Khalid-Nom neg-3ms 3m-write the-poetry-Acc
   ‘Khalid does not write the poetry.’

   the-weather-Nom neg-3ms nice-Acc
   ‘The weather is not nice.’

   b. Jamiil-an *layṣa* T-Taqs-u.
   nice-Acc neg-3ms the-weather-Nom
   ‘The weather is not nice.’

Additional evidence to sustain this argument is that *layṣa* can be replaced by *kaana* or *maa kaana* which both function in Arabic as an auxiliary verb (El-Rakhawi 1982). Reconsider the example in (19) above, with *layṣa* being replaced by *kaana* in (20) and *maa kaana* in (21):

(20) kaana xalid-un ya-ktubu Š-Šīr-a.
    was-3ms-pastperf Khalid-Nom 3m-write-pres the-poetry-Acc
    ‘Khalid had written the poetry.’
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(21) maa kaana xalid-un ya-ktubu
neg was-3ms-pastperf Khalid-Nom 3m-write-Pres
Š-Sifr-a.
the-poetry-Acc
‘Khalid had not written the poetry.’

In both sets of examples in (20) and (21), it can be seen that laysa can be replaced by kaana and maa kaana. This is strong evidence that laysa, in all the previous contexts, must be treated as an auxiliary verb.

3.2. Particle Laysa

Laysa, in its second function as a negative particle, does not select a particular tense or carry agreement features. Its lack of inflection singles it out from the negative verb laysa mentioned earlier in the previous section. Laysa functioning as a particle occurs in two different constructions: (i) stripping constructions and (ii) negative-contrast constructions. In both constructions, the particle laysa behaves like a focusing adverb. The following subsections outline the syntactic and semantic properties of laysa as a focusing adverb before dealing with its focusing function in section 4.

3.2.1. Laysa in Stripping Constructions

Stripping is defined as “a rule that deletes everything in a clause under identity with corresponding parts of a preceding clause, except for one constituent (and sometimes a clause-initial adverb or negative” (Hankamer & Sag 1976: 409, cf. Ross 1969). Stripping always occurs with two-place connectives or determiners which require two paired constituents such as not (22) but not (23), except
for (24), too (25) ..., and so on (Kempson 1993: 64).

(22) John speaks German, not French.
(23) Sammy played the piano but not Lisa.
(24) No-one kissed his mother, except for me.

There are three major ways of expressing stripping constructions by laysa. The first one is that of negating the remnant by laysa contingent to coordinator particle wa. This wa conveys the meaning of English but or and. The second one is via laysa alone without wa. The third way is via negating the remnant with the meaning of except for. In the last way, laysa is traditionally called ‘exceptional particle’ and occurs in Exceptional Sentences that contain two parts: the general thing from which the exception is made, that is, the antecedent, which is the part that generally precedes the particle laysa, and the excepted element. The three ways are spelt out in the following examples respectively.

(26) a. Gabal-tu xalid-an fii l-Gahirat-i wa laysa fii a-rrabat-i.  
met-I-3s Khalid-Acc in Cairo-Gen and neg In Rabat-Gen  
‘I met Khalid in Cairo, but not in Rabat.’

b. tatakallmu Hind-un al-engliziat-a wa laysa al-faransiat-a.  
speak-I-3f Hnid-Nom English-Gen and neg French-Gen  
‘Hind speaks English, but not French.’

c. kaana xalid-un wa laysa fii  
was-past-3ms Khalid-Nom and neg in  
zaid-un al-jamiʕat-i.  
Zaid-Nom the-university-Gen  
‘Khalid was in the university, but not Zaid.’
(27) a. Gabal-tu xalid-an fii l-Gahirat-i \(\text{laysa}\) fii a-rrabat-i.
   met-I-3s Khalid-Acc in Cairo-Gen neg in Rabat-Gen
   ‘I met Khalid in Cairo not in Rabat.’

   b. tatakallmu Hind-un al-engliziat-a \(\text{laysa}\) al-faransiat-a.
   speak-I-3f Hnid-Nom English-Acc neg French-Acc
   ‘Hind speaks English not French.’

   c. kaana xalid-un \(\text{laysa}\) zaid-un
   was-past-3ms Khalid-Nom neg Zaid-Nom
   fii al-jami\(\text{ʕ}\)at-i.
   in the-university-Gen
   ‘Khalid was in the university not Zaid.’

(28) a. hadhar l-ʔawlaad-u \(\text{laysa}\) zaid-an.
   came-past the-boys-Nom except Zaid-Acc
   ‘The boys came expect (for) Zaid.’

   b. raʔit-u l-ʔawlaad-a \(\text{laysa}\) zaid-an.
   saw-I the-boys-Acc except Zaid-Acc
   ‘I saw the boys expect (for) Zaid.’

   c. garaʔ-tu li-l-ʔawlaad-u l-giSat-a \(\text{laysa}\) zaid-an.
   read-I-past for the-boys-Gen the-story-Acc except Zaid-Acc
   ‘I read the story for the boys expect for Zaid.’

As can be noted, the remnant preceded by \(\text{laysa}\), in the first two types, has syntactic features appropriate to its being a part of a sentence which is structurally identical to the antecedent clause such as having case-marking appropriate to the particular verb or predicate in the antecedent clause. This syntactic requirement, which is met in (26) and (27), proves that the syntactic structure of the remnant is fully projected but not phonologically realized and hence
that remnant must be licensed as a part of a full clause. As for the third type, the excepted element (Zaid) is excluded from the action and therefore has default dependent case (always in accusative case) as indicated by the gloss in (28) above. That is, Zayd is excluded from the action and so cannot agree in case with *al-walaad* ‘the boys’. To summarize, the remnant must have syntactic features that are either identical to the antecedent clause such as having case-marking as in the first two types or both being homogeneous, namely the antecedent and excepted element as in the third type.

### 3.2.2. *Laysa* in Negative-Contrast Constructions

In some contexts, *laysa* as a focusing adverb negates negative-contrast constructions. It behaves like an indeclinable negative particle, stronger than *lāa*, to deny the sentence part which is merged with (*Wright 1896*). This special function of *laysa* is illustrated by the following examples:

(29) *laysa* li-haatha l-ʔamr-i daʕao-tu-ka.
    neg for-this the-matter-Dat invite:I-Nom:you-Acc
    ‘Not for this matter, I invite you.’

(30) *laysa* li-ʔjli-ka faʕal-tu thalika.
    neg for-sake-your did-I that
    ‘Not for you, I did that.’

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3 This is called deletion approach to ellipsis. This approach defines all ellipsis contexts (including stripping) as an interface phenomenon at PF (as a deletion procedure) (*Chomsky 1965; Hankamer & Sag 1976; Depiante 2000; Merchant 2001, 2003, 2004*). In contrast, movement approach defines stripping as an interface phenomenon. However, it is not at PF as a deletion procedure as claimed by the deletion approach, but at LF as a covert movement (*Reinhart 1991*). For more detailed and recent discussion about these approaches, see *Konietzko (2016: 29-54)*. The current study adopts the first approach as will be demonstrated later in section 4.
From the above examples in (29) and (30), the prepositional phrase (PP) must be merged with laysa as one constituent to create greater negative emphasis. This use of laysa with negative-contrast constructions results in having a contrastive focus negation. Accordingly, the presupposition in (29) and (30) implies contrastiveness and can be read respectively as follows:

(31) the man was invited for another matter not for that matter which was thought to be the reason for the invitation.

(32) for someone else, something was done.

Note that laysa here cannot be substituted by either kaana or maa kaana. This means that it is not an auxiliary verb and differs from verbal laysa discussed in section 3.

(33) a. *kaana li-haathaa l-ʔamr-i daʕal-tu-ka.
   was for-this the-matter-Dat invite:I-Nom:you-Acc

      neg was for-this the-matter-Dat invite:I-Nom:you-Acc

   was for-sake-your did-I that

      neg was for-sake-your did-I that

Moreover, verbal laysa does not imply contrastive focus negation in compared with laysa as a focusing adverb. Consider the contrast in (35) and (36):
(35) laysa min-ka ?akhafu.  
   Neg from you I-fear  
   ‘Not from you, I fear.’

(36) las-tu ?akhafu min-ka.  
   Neg-I I-fear from-you  
   ‘I do not fear you.’

In (35) when laysa used as a focusing adverb, the contrastive focus reading is obvious and can be read as:

(37) for someone else, I fear:

By contrast, in (36) when laysa is verbal, the contrastive focus reading does not exist. The kind of focus there is merely information focus as will be explained in the following section.

4. Information Structure and Focus Typology

It is appropriate here to provide a clear definition of Information Structure before illustrating the focus typology within the generative syntax framework. Zimmermann & Féry (2010: 1) define Information Structure\(^4\) as a “cognitive domain that mediates between

\(^4\) According to Gupton (2010: 73), the idea of the notion of Information Structure goes back to Weil (1844/1879: 29), when he proposes an informational split distinct from that of subject-predicate. He describes this split as starting with “the ground upon which the two intelligences (speaker and hearer) meet”. For more discussion about the main theories of the information structure and their distributions to syntactic theory, see the edited book by Schwabe & Winkler (2007): *On Information Structure, Meaning, and Form: Generalizations across Languages*. 
the modules of linguistic competence in the narrow sense, such as syntax, phonology, and morphology, and other cognitive faculties which serve the central purpose of the fixation of belief by way of information update, pragmatic reasoning, and general inference processes”.

In generative tradition, it is a widely accepted view that focus provides a highlighted piece of information with respect to the rest of the sentence (e.g., Chomsky 1957). Many recent works on focus typology have shown that two types of foci can be distinguished: information focus and contrastive focus⁵ (Kiss 1998, López 2000, López & Winkler 2000, Drübig 2003, Winkler 2005, Biezma 2014, among many others). According to Winkler (2005: 28) the essential differentiation of these focus types “is seen in the way these foci are licensed: while information focus, which marks new information in the sentence, is assumed to involve in situ licensing […], contrastive focus is assumed to involve LF-movement of the focus phrase in an appropriate A-bar position”. To explain this syntactic distinction more precisely, she (p. 29) suggests the derivation represented in (38) below:

(38) a. information focus:
   Licensed in situ: [ X¹ [...Focus¹...]]

b. contrastive focus:
   formation of an operator-variable chain at LF
   [Focus¹[ ...t¹ ...]]

⁵ It should be here noted that this distinction relates to the pragmatic nature of focus. But for the semantic approaches to focus, focus is always contrastive because it conveys a contrast between the actual element in focus and the potential alternatives (Rooth 1992).
Contrastive focus (also known as “identificational focus”: Kiss 1998) does not introduce new information in the same way that information focus does. Contrastive focus may use to correct information or to mark information that contrasts with previously stated (or implicit) information (see Biezma 2014: 95, and references therein). To put it differently, contrastive focus is connection with exhaustive answers in question-answer pairs (39a), contrastive statements (39b), or instances of corrective focus (39c) (Zimmermann 2007: 147).

(39) a. Q: Who did you invite?  
    A: PAUL, I invited (but nobody else).

b. I did not invite PETER, but PAUL.

c. A: You invited PETER?  
    B: No, I invited PAUL.

4.1. Laysa and Focus

Interpreting focus under negation by laysa is achieved in various types, depending on its function as explained in the preceding section. The two types of focus: information and contrastive focus can be distributed by laysa via three readings of focus. These are wide,

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6 Contrast is a notion that is frequently in connection with focus or topic (Repp 2009, Molnár & Winkler 2010). There are some interpretive differences between contrastive topic and contrastive focus, which derive from the widely held view that focus is a propositional notion, while a topic is an utterance level notion (Tomioka 2010, Neeleman & Vermeulen 2012). I will not go into the details of the syntactic and semantics of the notion ‘topic’, due to the paper specific aim (about focus), but I will, in section 4, touch on some representative discourse contexts of contrastive topic with negative laysa in compared with the contrastive focus.
bound and free. The following subsections take up these three readings in more detail.

4.1.1. Wide Focus

Wide Focus is distributed by laysa used as a verbal negative to take scope over the whole clause. That is, negation with verbal laysa, like the other Arabic negative markers negating verbal sentences (as shown in section 2), is sentential negation which is realized in the clausal spine as NegP\(^7\) positioned between FinP and TP (40), and a result of being in this derivational position, it has wide scope: it negates the whole clause. Let us consider the sentence in (10), repeated here as (41):

\[
(40)
\begin{array}{c}
\text{FinP} \\
\text{Spec} & \text{NegP} \\
\text{Spec} & \text{Neg'} \\
\text{Neg} & \text{TP} \\
\text{Spec} & \text{T'}
\end{array}
\]

\(^7\)“The NegP Hypothesis” is a result of a more general hypothesis known as “Split Inflection Hypothesis” which was first suggested by Pollock (1989) and later adopted by Chomsky (1991, 1995). According to this hypothesis, sentential negation receives its own functional projection, NegP. That is, neg is an element which is syntactically encoded as a functional head, on a par with tense, agreement, mood, and aspect.
(41) *laysa xalid-un ya-ktubu Š-Šiyr-a.*

neg-3ms Khalid-Nom 3m-write-Pres the-poetry-Acc

‘Khalid does not write the poetry.’

The negation, by *laysa*, in (41) above, takes scope over the whole clause, which is focalized. This is shown by the fact that the kind of focus in (41) is information focus as it gives new information that is assumed not to be common knowledge between the speaker and the hearer. The sentence in (41) is the expected answer for the following question in (42):

(42) *hal xalid-un ya-ktubu Š-Šiyr-a?*

Q Khalid-Nom 3m-write-Pres the-poetry-Acc

‘Does Khalid write poetry?’

As wide focus reading in verbal *laysa* is always associated with information focus, there is no movement involved. It is, as assumed by Winkler (2005), involved *in situ* licensing. Based on this assumption, I propose that the wide focus reading by verbal *laysa* is derived as follows. Verbal *laysa*, by virtue of selecting a particular type of tense (present tense interpretation) and having a NEG feature occupies the head position of the negative projection (NegP) located above TP\(^8\), and hence it can attribute the right selectional properties, and their complement is TP, not VP as shown in the simplified derivation in (43) below:

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\(^8\) I am adopting here the important insight of Fassi Fehri (1993, cf. Ouhalla 1994, Bahloul 1996, Benmamoun 2000) that NegP in Arabic is located above TP.
Note that the derivation in (43) further illustrates that the verb moves from V to T achieving the VSO order\(^9\), and then the NP moves into Neg to satisfy + N that laysa is specified for as illustrated in section 2. This being the case, the whole clause in (41) is focalized by laysa and no element of the sentence escapes its scope.

### 4.2. Bound Focus

The bound focus reading occurs with laysa functioning as a focusing adverb. This reading is realized with contrastive focus distributed by laysa in stripping constructions and negative-contrast constructions as illustrated, respectively, in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2. In the bound focus construal, negation takes scope only over one element and lets the rest of the sentence escape its effect. This element is either located in the final position as in stripping constructions in (26-28), reproduced here once again in (44-46), or in the initial position contingent to the negative by being merged with it.

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\(^9\) VSO order is unmarked word order in Arabic. It is assumed to be derived by merging the subject in Spec VP, and raising the verb to T to inflect for the tense and agreement features which the functional category T is valued with (see among many others, Fassi Fehri 1993, Ouhalla 1994).
as in negative-contrast constructions in (29) and (30) repeated here for convenience as (47) and (48).

(44) a. Gabal-tu xalid-an fii l-Gahirat-i wa laysa fii a-rrabat-i.  
met-I-3s Khalid-Acc in Cairo-Gen and neg in Rabat-Gen  
‘I met Khalid in Cairo, but not in Rabat.’

b. tatakkallmu Hind-un al-engliziat-a wa laysa al-faransiat-a.  
speak-I-3f Hnid-Nom English-Acc and neg French-Acc  
‘Hind speaks English, but not French.’

c. kaana xalid-un wa laysa zaid-un  
was-past.3ms Khalid-Nom and neg Zaid-Nom  
fiī al-jamiʕat-i.  
in the-university-Gen  
‘Khalid was in the university, but not Zaid.’

(45) a. Gabal-tu xalid-an fii l-Gahirat-i laysa fii a-rrabat-i.  
met-I-3s Khalid-Acc in Cairo-Gen neg in Rabat-Gen  
‘I met Khalid in Cairo not in Rabat.’

3fs-speak Hnid-Nom English-Acc neg French-Acc  
‘Hind speaks English not French.’

c. kaana fii l-jamiʕat-i xalid-un  
was-past.3ms in the-university-Gen Khalid-Nom  
laysa zaid-un.  
neg Zaid-Nom  
‘Khalid was in the university not Zaid.’

came-past the-boys-Nom except Zaid-Acc  
‘The boys came expect (for) Zaid.’
b. raʔit-u l-ʔawlaad-a laysa zaid-an.
saw-I the-boys-Acc except Zaid-Acc
‘I saw the boys except (for) Zaid.’

read-I-past for the-boys-Gen the-story-Acc except Zaid-Acc
‘I read the story for the boys expect (for) Zaid.’

(47) laysa li-haatha l-ʔamr-i daʃao-tu-ka
neg for-this the-matter-Dat invite:I-Nom:you-Acc
‘Not for this matter, I invite you.’

(48) laysa li-ʔjli-ka faʃaltuthalika
neg for-sake-your did:Ithat
‘Not for you, I did that.’

In the above examples, contrastive focus with laysa gives information which is in conflict with questioner’s expectation, and represents a felicitous answer to disjunctive yes/no questions by delivering a bound negation reading that takes scope only over one element. To illustrate this more, let us, for instance, have the questions of (44c) and (48) to see how the contrastive focus with laysa gives information that is in conflict with questioner’s expectation, and consequently, yields the bound reading over the element in initial or final position which constitutes the focus of the sentence.

(49) Q: hal Gabal-ta xalid-an fii r-rabat-i?
Q met-you Khalid-Acc in rabat-Gen
‘Did you meet Khalid in Rabat?’

A: laa, Gabal-tu xalid-an fii l-Gahirat-i laysa fii r-rabat-i.
not, met-I Khalid-Acc in Cario-Gen neg in Rabat-Gen
‘No, I met Khalid in Cairo not in Rabat.’
Now, let us turn to give a generative analysis to how bonding reading under contrastive focus is derived with laysa in (44c) and (48). In both constructions, I propose that as laysa is a focusing adverb, it has to select a focus projection as its complement. This requires the movement of the focalized element to the specifier of a Focus Phrase located between NegP and TP. However, this movement in (44c) (stripping) is preceded by a process of deletion, resulting in structure that is not phonetically realized. For instance, the focalized remnant in the sentence in (44c) above will have the derivation in (51) below:

(51) NegP
    Spec
    Neg'
    Neg:laysa FocP
    DP Foc'
    Zaid-un Foc
    TP
    t kaan fii al-jamiṣat-i

That is, the overt movement of the remnant to the specifier of focus projection is followed by deletion of TP. This idea is originally due to Depiante (2000, cf. Merchant 2001, 2003), who convincingly argues that the remnant phrase escapes deletion by having moved out of the elided TP into a Focus position.
As for the bounding reading of contrastive focus with laysa negating negative-contrast constructions as in (47) and (48) above, I propose, following Cinque (1999) and Rizzi (2004), who argue that adverbs are licensed in the Spec of dedicated projections, that the bounding reading is derived by movement of the focalized element (PP) to the specifier of a Focus Phrase (FocP). Laysa, as being a focusing adverb, is generated first in the head of FocP then moves to the head of NegP to satisfy its NEG feature and, as a result, it selects a focus projection as its complement. The resulting derived structure is shown in (52) below:

(52) NegP
    Neg'
    Neg-laysa FocP
    PP li-ʔajli-ka
    Foc' TP
    laysa Spec T' T VP
    faʕalt thalika li-ʔajli-ka

4.3. Free Focus

The free construal of focus also occurs with contrastive laysa negating stripping constructions, but with those involve a different derivation and a different syntactic structure in contrast with
stripping constructions of bound reading of focus discussed in the previous section. The free reading of focus can be established with laysa negating stripping constructions with two conditions. (i) stripping constructions must have a negation in their two clauses, namely both antecedent and deleted clauses (i.e., laysa must be preceded by a negative clause). (ii) laysa must be merged with the coordinator particle *wa* which conveys the meaning English *but* or *and*. This can be shown by the following example in (53) below:

(53) lam yaʔti Ahmad-u li-lhaflat-i
neg-past 3m-come-JUS Ahmad-Nom to-the-party
wa laysa Zaid-un.
And neg Zaid-Nom
‘Ahmad did not come to the party but not Zaid.’

Note that the focused phrase (*Zaid*) in the final position is out of the scope of negation and the right interpretation is (*Zaid* DID in fact come to the party) [free reading]. If laysa is preceded by a positive clause, only a bound reading is possible, and this reading results as the negation effectively takes scope over the conjunct containing the focus. This can be shown in (44a), repeated here as (54):

(54) gabal-tu xalid-an fii l-Gahirat-I (wa) *laysa* fii a-rrabat-i.
met-I-3s Khalid-Acc in Cairo-Gen and neg in Rabat-Gen
‘I met Khalid in Cairo, but not in Rabat.’
(I DID meet Khalid in CAIRO, but not in RABAT.)
[bound reading]

Having demonstrated the syntactic structure of the free construal of focus with laysa, let us now turn to propose how this reading is derived. I argue that the contrastviness in (53) is a sort of contrastive topic and laysa functions as its particle. Fintel (1994), Molnár (1998),
and Lee (2003) define contrastive topic as a combined effect of topicality and focusing ‘in the sense that it comes from a potential Topic and somewhat focal in the sense that the choice of the particular part is not known to the hearer’ (Lee 2003: 155). In (54), the hearer thought that *Zaid didn’t come to the party*, whereas Khalid did. However, the fact was reversed: Zaid DID come to the party, not Khalid. Zaid in the final position is out of the scope of negation, and hence the free reading of focus is only possible.

Based on the above assumption that contrastive topic is a combined effect of topicality and focusing, and following Krifka (1989), Selkirk (1984), and Winkler (2005) who assume that contrastive topics are actually foci, I propose that free reading of focus with laysa is derived as follows. Like the bound focus reading occurred with laysa functioning as a focusing adverb in stripping constructions, the derivation of free focus reading is a combination of movement and deletion. However, the movement operation with free focus construal operates in two steps. First, the focalized remnant (Zaid) escapes deletion by having moved to Spec of FocP lower than NegP deriving the structure shown in (55) below:

(55) NegP
    Spec
     Neg
     Neg'
     FocP
     Spec
     Fop'
     Foc
     TP
     Lam yaʔti Zaid-un li-haflat'i

Zaid-un
Second, the remnant and the negative laysa (by virtue of having the contrastiveness feature) move to the left periphery, to the specifier of a functional projection (TopP) higher than NegP. This movement is triggered by two motivations: (i) the conjunction *wa* must select (topic), and most importantly, (ii) the Edge-feature in sense of Chomsky’s Minimalist Program (1995, 2008) must be satisfied. Following Winkler (2005: 33), contrastiveness consists of two features: F(oc) and T(op) features and, consequently, it is endowed with the Edge-feature. The only way of satisfying this feature is for a nominal constituent to be moved into the specifier of TopP or FocP\(^{11}\) as what we previously did in both readings of focus: bound and free. If the proposed analysis is along the right lines, this derives the overt structure shown in highly simplified form in (56) below:

(56) Conj-*wa*

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TopP} \\
\text{Spec} \\
\text{NegP} \\
\text{Spec} \\
\text{Neg':laysa} \\
\text{Spec} \\
\text{FopP} \\
\text{Spec} \\
\text{Fop'} \\
\text{Foc} \\
\text{TP}
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{Laysa Zaid-un} \]
5. Conclusion

The paper has considered the role played by the negative laysa in interpreting focus under negation. By fostering an interface-based approach to the interaction between syntax and semantics from a formal generative perspective, the paper has demonstrated that focus can be expressed by laysa in two major types: the information focus and contrastive focus. These major types of focus have led laysa (whether it is verbal or particle) to produce three different readings of focus, namely, wide, bound, and free. These readings, which attributes to the scope of the negation, involve a different derivation in which reflects how the autonomous notions of information structure: topic, focus and contrast interact in systematic ways with syntax. This adds additional support to a large body of empirical and theoretical contributions which cover a wide variety of languages and types of focus to understand what information structural effects play a role at the interface (see, for example, Vallduvi 1992, Rizzi 1997, Vallduvi & Vilkuna 1998, Kennelly 1999, Aboh 2004, Frey 2004, Winkler 2005, Kolokonte 2008, Biezma 2014, Konietzko 2016).

Finally, the paper has proposed a minimalist analysis for each different derivation of these readings and captured the fact that the syntactic position of the negative laysa vis-à-vis negation and its adjacency effect determines the reading of the focus construction as wide, bound, or free. When laysa heads the sentence in its verbal function, the resulting reading is wide, whereas the reading is bound or free in its function as a particle, though they diverge into different derivational directions at the end.
References


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