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The Syntactic Analysis of siwā, ghayr, (mā)khalā, (mā)ʿadā and ḥāshā

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Article Info		Abstract:
Received	June, 2025	This study aims to provide a comprehensive syntactic analysis of exceptive constructions that involve various Arabic exceptive markers, namely siwā, ghayr, (mā)khalā, (mā)ʿadā and ḥāshā ‘except’. These markers exhibit distinct syntactic properties and distributional patterns. Drawing on the analyses of Saeed (2022) and Al-Batianeh (2021), this study argues that while these exceptive forms possess unique grammatical traits, they all share a foundational underlying structure rooted in an Exceptive Projection headed by these elements. The study also explores how, in constructions lacking explicit antecedents (empty exceptives), some markers, particularly siwā and ghayr, convey a restrictive interpretation that leads to a different syntactic configuration than constructions with antecedents. These two are shown to establish a syntactic role in their constructions due to their nominal properties. More specifically, siwā and ghayr are shown to function in both restrictive (R-ExP) and subtractive (S-ExP) constructions, depending on context. Conversely, (mā)khalā, (mā)ʿadā and ḥāshā, which are limited to affirmative exceptive constructions, are not verbal or prepositional elements, but rather function as distinct grammatical heads within exceptive clauses.
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Introduction

Arabic employs several exceptive markers—'illā, siwā, ghayr, (mā)khalā, (mā)'adā, and ḥāshā—all translating roughly as 'except (for)', 'other than', 'apart from' or 'excluding'. Among these, 'illā is the most commonly studied in both classical and contemporary Arabic (see e.g., Saeed, 2022; Al-Bataineh, 2021; Soltan, 2016; Moutaouakil, 2009). However, this study focuses exclusively on the lesser-analyzed markers listed above, which lack comprehensive syntactic accounts. Traditionally, Arabic grammar identifies three types of exceptive constructions: negative empty (or incomplete), affirmative, and negative full exceptives. These types differ in the logical relationship between the exceptive phrase and the preceding clause, influencing the grammatical case of the excluded element (Badawi, Carter, & Gully, 2016). Despite the significance of these constructions, little attention has been paid to them in modern syntactic literature. Existing discussions—such as those by Moutaouakil (2009), Soltan (2016), Al-Bataineh (2021), and Saeed (2022)—focus mainly on 'illā.

This paper aims to offer a detailed syntactic analysis of five exceptive elements, siwā, ghayr, (mā)khalā, (mā)'adā, and ḥāshā, that have received limited attention in the syntactic literature. The paper seeks to determine the syntactic configuration in which these elements operate, and to identify their syntactic behavior within the frameworks of Restrictive Exceptive Projection (R-ExP) and Subtractive Exceptive Projections (S-ExPs). This study addresses an important gap in the literature by providing a systematic and comparative analysis of these understudied elements. The results are important not only to the theoretical understanding of Arabic syntax but also to broader discussions in generative grammar about the interaction between syntax, semantics, and lexical structure. In addition, the study makes further progress on the recent theoretical proposals of Saeed (2022) and Al-Bataineh (2021), providing fresh empirical insights and deepening the theoretical discussion.

The analysis demonstrates that while siwā and ghayr appear in both negative empty (restrictive) and negative full (subtractive) exceptives, the remaining markers are restricted to affirmative (subtractive) usage. Additionally, although all markers typically accept determiner phrase (DP) complements, siwā and (mā)'adā can also take prepositional phrase (PP) and complementizer phrase (CP) complements, with ghayr permitting CPs as well. More specifically, the analysis posits that in empty exceptive contexts, siwā and ghayr contribute to a restrictive interpretation and are incorporated into construct states that function within an R-ExP. It is proposed that siwā and ghayr rise up to lexicalise R-Ex, and receive their case marking through the nominal apposition they form with the covert Negative Polarity Items (NPIs) 'aḥad 'one' and shay' 'thing'. In contrast, in full exceptives, these markers suggest subtractive-exceptive constructions and serve as adjuncts or appositional modifiers. As adjuncts, they are introduced into the clause by late Merge. As DP modifiers, they form nominal appositional constructions with the DP antecedents in the main clause added via right-adjunction. The other three markers—(mā)khalā, (mā)'adā and ḥāshā—are treated as functional heads within S-ExPs, and are attached as adjuncts.

The Arabic data used in this study are drawn from arabiCorpus, and referenced sources. The arabiCorpus is a large-scale digital corpus of a variety of modern Arabic texts. The corpus contains millions of words cited from authentic resources, such as novels, newspapers, and religious texts. Other examples, and whenever applicable, are cited from published grammatical studies, such as Badawi, Carter, & Gully (2016). The research method applied involves a syntactic analysis of sentences that involve the given exceptive elements. The analysis is conducted within the framework of the Minimalist Program (MP) of syntactic theory. This framework emphasizes the roles of Merge and case assignment as fundamental syntactic processes (Primus, 2010; van Gelderen, 2008; Stepanov, 2001). Furthermore, each Arabic word within the

sentences is glossed to enable accurate and thorough understanding of their meaning.¹ Finally, the syntactic derivations of the exceptive constructions are illustrated through structural tree diagrams to clearly depict the hierarchical relations between the words and phrases. The paper is structured as follows: the next section outlines the characteristics and distribution of each of these exceptive markers. Later the syntactic analyses of *siwā* and *ghayr*, and of *(mā)khalā*, *(mā)ʿadā*, and *ḥāshā*, are presented respectively. The paper concludes with a summary and final remarks.

Characteristics and Distribution

This section offers a descriptive overview of the Arabic exceptive expressions *siwā*, *ghayr*, *(mā)khalā*, *(mā)ʿadā*, and *ḥāshā*. It focuses on their grammatical classification, meanings, functions, and syntactic behavior in different contexts.

Siwā

Traditionally labeled as a noun, *siwā* generally conveys the meaning of 'except' or 'other than' (see Badawi, Carter and Gully 2016: 47; Ryding 2005: 653). It frequently appears in negative exceptive constructions and is commonly followed by DPs (Badawi, Carter and Gully 2016: 759-760). Although standard grammar resources describe its occurrence mainly before DPs, corpus data suggest it also functions with a wider variety of complements, such as PPs, and CPs. Consider the following examples:

- (1) a. *lā yatanāwalu al-baṭ-u siwā al-ʿaghdyyat-i al-khaḍrāʾ-i faqaṭ*
 NEG eat.PRS.3SG DEF-duck-NOM except DEF-food-GEN DEF-green-GEN only
 'Ducks do not eat other than green food.' (Badawi, Carter and Gully 2016: 760)
- b. *ḥaḍara al-ʿabnā-u siwā al-ʿibin-i al-ʿakbar-i*
 come.PST.3PL DEF-son.PL.NOM except DEF-son-GEN DEF-elder-GEN
 'All the sons came except the elder one'.
- c. *lam yara aṣ-ṣahrāʾ-a siwā fy al-ʿaflām-i wa*
 NEG see.PST.3SG DEF-desert-ACC except in DEF-movies-GEN and
aṣ-ṣuwar-i
 DEF-photos-GEN
 'He has not seen desert except in movies and photos.'
- d. *laysa ʿind-y siwā mā warithuhu ʿan wālidy*
 NEG with-me except what inherit.PST.1SG from father.POSS.1SG
 'I do not own (anything) except what I have inherited from my father.'

As demonstrated in the examples above, *siwā* is typically used in formal contexts rather than everyday spoken language. In examples (1a and b), *siwā* is followed by DP complements; in (1c), it is followed by a PP complement; and in (1d), by a CP.

In terms of case inflection, *siwā* does not display visible case markings, primarily due to its phonological structure ending in an alif maqṣūra 'restricted alif'. According to traditional Arab grammarians, *siwā* serves a similar syntactic function to the complement of *ʾillā* in exceptive constructions (Abu-Chacra 2018: 389). More specifically, traditional grammar holds that *siwā* receives abstract case depending on its syntactic context. For instance, in empty exceptives, it takes nominative or accusative case depending on position. In affirmative exceptives, it usually takes the accusative case, and in negative full exceptives, it may take either. I argue that *siwā* possesses abstract inflectional features that are not morphologically realized.

¹ The abbreviations used in the glosses are: ACC = Accusative case, CL = pronominal clitic, DEF = definite article, GEN = Genitive Case, NEG = negation element, NOM = Nominative case, PST = past, PL = plural, PRS = present, SG = singular, 1/2/3 = first/second/third person.

As an example, in (1a), *siwā* is used in an incomplete exceptive, which does not include a subtractive domain. The phrase *siwā al'aghdyati alkhaḍrā'i* 'except green food' forms a *iḍāfa* (construct phrase), more accurately rendered as 'the exception of green food'. In this structure, the DP takes an oblique case, and *siwā* serves as the syntactic head governing the object position [*siwā* + 'of green food']. Consequently, *siwā* is assigned an abstract accusative case. If *siwā* is replaced with 'illā, the case marking of the DP shifts to accusative because, in this construction, the DP now functions as the object and 'illā operates solely as an exceptive particle (see example (2a)).

In (1c), *siwā* is followed by a PP, and the entire construction illustrates an empty exceptive. The antecedent is *aṣṣahrā* 'the desert', while the excepted element *fy al'aflām wa aṣṣuwar* 'in the movies and photos' represents a different syntactic category. In this context, *siwā* is presumably assigned accusative case due to its appositional relationship with the object argument *aṣṣahrā*'. In example (1d), another empty exceptive is presented, this time involving the negative verb *laysa* 'not to be', with *siwā* followed by a CP.² The phrase *siwā mā warithtuhu* 'an wālidy 'except what I inherited from my father' functions as the subject of *laysa*, while the PP 'indy serves as its predicate. Here, the CP *mā warithtuhu* 'an wālidy 'what I have inherited from my father' is in a construct state relationship with *siwā*. A corresponding example using 'illā is provided in (2b). However, a direct syntactic parallel does not exist between *siwā* and the constituents that follow 'illā. While *siwā* is traditionally classified as a noun in Arabic grammar, it lacks typical nominal features such as *tanwīn* (indefiniteness) and the definite article. Therefore, it should not be treated as a standard noun, but rather as a nominal functional head, projecting a phrase that does not combine with a determiner (see section 3.2 for further discussion).

- (2) a. *lā yatanāwalu al-baṭ-u 'illā al-'aghdyat-a al-khaḍrā-i faqaṭ*
 NEG eat.PRS.3SG DEF-duck-NOM except DEF-food-ACC DEF-green-GEN only
 'Ducks do not eat other than green food.'
- b. *laysa 'ind-y 'illā mā warithtuhu 'an wālidy*
 NEG with-me except what inherit.PST.1SG from father.POSS.1SG
 'I do not have except what I have inherited from my father.'

In conclusion, *siwā* can be followed by DPs, PPs, or CPs. The examples above show that *siwā* appears in both empty and full exceptive constructions. Its default inflectional status is generally determined by the type of exceptive construction in which it occurs, and it typically mirrors the case marking of the DP complement found in 'illā-based exceptives.

Ghayr

Like *siwā*, *ghayr* functions as a noun and typically means 'except' or 'other than'. Unlike *siwā*, *ghayr* exhibits visible case inflection and tends to appear in both empty and full exceptive constructions (see Badawi, Carter and Gully 2016: 759). It can be followed by DPs and CPs and is sensitive to the presence or absence of antecedents and negation in the sentence. Consider these examples in (3a-d):

- (3) a. *mā jā'a-ni ghayr-u zaid-in*
 NEG come.PST.3SG-1SG except-NOM Zaid-GEN
 'No one came to me except Zaid.'
- b. *jā'a aṭ-ṭulāb-u ghayr-a muhammad-in*

² *laysa* displays two syntactic functions: *laysa* as a negative verbal element and *laysa* as a negative particle element (Al-Horais 2017: 6). As a negative verbal item, it is similar to *kāna* in selecting a subject in the nominative case and a predicate in the accusative, and in its negative particle function it acts similarly to the negative contrastive marker *mā* 'not'. In (2b), *laysa* is used as a verbal element, more specifically as an auxiliary verb.

come.PST.3SG DEF-student.PL-NOM except-ACC Muhammad-GEN

'The students came except Muhammad.'

c. laysa hunāka ghayr-u-nā

NEG there.CO.PRS.3SG except-NOM-CL.1PL

'There is no one other than us.'

d. laysa 'ind-y ghayr-u mā qultu-hu la-k

NEG with-me except-NOM what say.PST.1SG-3SG to-CL.2SG

'I do not have other than what I told you.'

In (3a), which illustrates an empty exceptive construction, *ghayr* occurs as the subject argument of the sentence and hence the nominative case. The excepted element *Zayd* is in a construct state with *ghayr*. In (3b), *ghayr* takes the accusative case because it functions as the object, and the DP *Muḥammad* again appears in construct with *ghayr*, thereby receiving oblique case. The DP *aṭ-ṭullābu* 'the students' establishes the subtractive domain, from which *Muḥammad* is excluded.

In (3c), *ghayr* is followed by a pronominal clitic, and the construction represents an empty exceptive. The implied antecedent is likely the negative polarity item (NPI) 'aḥad 'one', as in the phrase *laysa hunāka 'aḥadun ghayrunā* 'there is no one there except us'. Since the antecedent is not overtly expressed, *ghayr*, similar to (3a), takes nominative case by functioning as the subject of the negative verb *laysa*, while *hunāka* 'there' acts as the predicate. In (3d), another example of an empty exceptive is presented, with *ghayr* followed by a CP, forming a construct state. In this structure, *ghayr* is again the subject of *laysa*, thereby receiving nominative case, and the predicate is the PP 'indī 'with me'.³

In summary, *ghayr* may be followed by DPs or CPs and can appear in both empty and full exceptive constructions—that is, in both restrictive- and subtractive-exceptive types.

(mā)khalā, (mā)'adā and ḥāshā

These markers are primarily used in classical Arabic and are found in affirmative exceptive constructions. These markers are all conveying the meaning of 'except' or 'excluding', and are typically used in affirmative exceptive constructions that involve an explicit antecedent and lack any negative elements. As noted by Badawi, Carter, and Gully (2016: 761), exceptive constructions containing (mā)khalā, (mā)'adā and ḥāshā "function either as verbs + noun in dependent [accusative] case (when used with mā) or as particles + pronoun or noun in oblique case". That is, they are often considered to function either as prepositions or as verbs, depending on whether they are preceded by the particle mā.

When functioning as verbs, *khalā* and 'adā—unlike ḥāshā—can be preceded by the subjunctive particle mā ('that, what'), with the following DP serving as the verb's object (see Abu-Chacra 2018: 389).⁴ The absence

³ It is worth mentioning that *ghayr* as a noun has other uses and meanings, as shown in the glosses below:

(i) a. *hiya lā-ghayr-hā*

she NEG-person-3SG

'It is her, no one else.'

b. *fa'alahu ghayr-a marat-in*

do.PST.3SG another-ACC time-GEN

'He did it more than once.'

c. *bi-ghayr-i ḥdūd*

with-other-GEN limit.PL

'without limits.'

⁴ While traditional Arab grammarians agree on the existence of *mā'adā* and *mākhalā*, they do not support the use of *mā* with *ḥāshā*. However, a search in the internet revealed very few examples of *māḥāshā*. To avoid further discussion, I refer interested readers to traditional Arab resources such as *Lisān al-Arab*, and *al-Mu'jam al-wasīṭ*.

of mā renders these markers as prepositions. Grammarians note that when these elements are treated as verbs, they assign accusative case to their complement DPs, whereas if taken as prepositions, the complement receives an oblique case. Moreover, traditional Arab grammarians consider the mā in (mā)khalā and (mā)ʿadā syntactically superfluous, attributing to khalā and ʿadā no grammatical function. The examples below further illustrate these constructions.

- (4) a. kul al-manhaj dākhil bi-l-ʿimtiḥān-i ʿadā
whole DEF-course included in-DEF-exam-GEN except
al-faṣl-a/i al-ʾakhyr-i
DEF-chapter-ACC/GEN DEF-last-GEN
'The whole course is included in the exam except the last chapter.'
- b. al-kul yadrus māʿadā samir-an
DEF-everyone study.PRS.3PL except Samir -ACC
'Everyone studies except Samir.'
- c. huwa lā-yadkhul bi-shikl-in mubashir-in fy suq-i
it NEG-enter.PRS.3SG at-form-GEN direct-GEN in market-GEN
al-ʾintāj-i māʿadā fy miḥan-in muḥadadat-in
DEF-production-GEN except in job.PL-GEN specific-GEN
'It does not enter directly into production market except in specific jobs.'
- d. ...fy māʿadā mā ʾariftuhu ʾan ṭabʾa-tayn fy al-hind
at except that know.pst.1sg about copies-dual in def-india
'...except what I have known about two copies in India.'

- (5) a. raʾayt-u at-talāmydh-a khalā tilmydh-an/in
see.PST-1SG DEF-student.PL-ACC except student-ACC/GEN
'I saw all students except one student.'
- b. qaṭaft-u al-ʾazhār-a mākhālā al-qurnful-a
pick.PST-1SG DEF-rose.PL-ACC except DEF-carnation-ACC
'I picked up all roses except the carnation.'

- (6) ʾad-a aṭ-ṭulāb-u ḥāshā ṭālib-an/in
come-PST.3PL DEF-student.PL-NOM except student-ACC/GEN
'All students came back except one.'

First, as can be seen, while (mā)ʿadā can be followed by DPs, (4a-b), PPs, (4c), and CPs, (4d), (mā)khalā and ḥāshā are followed by DPs only. A search in the arabiCorpus revealed no other XPs, other than DPs after (mā)khalā and ḥāshā. Second, in (4a), (5a) and (6), the DP complements following the exceptive markers can be assigned accusative or oblique case based on the grammatical category of, or more specifically the way we grammatically and lexically name, (mā)khalā, (mā)ʿadā and ḥāshā (Badawi, Carter and Gully, 2016; Shamsaldeen, 2016). If they are taken as prepositions, then the oblique case would be the normal case marking of the following DP complement; and if they are taken as verbs then what follows should be objects assigned accusative case. This double function of (mā)khalā, (mā)ʿadā and ḥāshā is worth investigating more closely. In (4b) and (5b), ʿadā and khalā act as verbs due to the availability of mā which accompanies verbs only. Therefore, the excepted elements Samir and alqurnfula 'the carnation' in (4b) and (5b), are assigned accusative cases because they function as objects. The question that arises here is 'What is the subject argument of (mā)khalā, (mā)ʿadā and ḥāshā when they act as verbs?' One of the assumptions

given in Arabic grammar is that it is incorporated in these elements as a covert pronoun when taken as verbs (Shamsaldeen, 2016; Abu Alabas, 2014). This description seems unjustifiable and lacks evidence; more will be discussed in section 3.3. To sum up, table (1) below summarizes the characteristics of Arabic exceptive markers *siwā*, *ghayr*, *(mā)khalā*, *(mā)ʿadā* and *ḥāshā* 'except, excluding', types of XP-complements following them and type of exceptive construction they can occur in.

Table 1: Summary of Arabic Exceptive Markers

Exceptive marker	Characteristics	Type of XP-comp	Type of Exceptive Construction
<i>siwā</i>	- Noun - DP-complement is assigned Gen	DPs, PPs and CPs	Empty and full exceptives (affirmative)
<i>ghayr</i>	- Noun - DP-complement is assigned Gen	DPs and CPs	Empty and full exceptives (affirmative)
<i>(mā)ʿadā</i>	- Preposition and verb - DP-complement is assigned Gen or Acc	DPs, PPs and CPs	Affirmative exceptives
<i>(mā)khalā</i> and <i>ḥāshā</i>	- Preposition and verb - DP-complement is assigned Gen or Acc	DPs	Affirmative exceptives

As can be noted, while *siwā* and *ghayr* can be used in empty and full exceptive constructions, *(mā)khalā*, *(mā)ʿadā* and *ḥāshā* are restricted to affirmative exceptives. This entails that the first two elements can be licensed with or without negative elements, while the second three elements do not need negative elements. It reflects the perpetual negative component incorporated in *(mā)khalā*, *(mā)ʿadā* and *ḥāshā* that does not allow the presence of negative elements. In addition, all the examples of full exceptives with these exceptive markers are those of affirmative; no examples of full negative exceptives have been noted.

In the next section, a detailed analysis is presented to account for the underlying syntactic structures of *siwā*, *ghayr*, *(mā)khalā*, *(mā)ʿadā* and *ḥāshā*. The intricacies and differences given in Table (1) will be fed into the analysis proposed. It will be shown that despite the different grammatical categories Arabic exceptive markers belong to and the various inflections they impose on their DPs, they all function as exceptives and thus conform to the underlying structure of exceptive constructions. In this paper, I will focus only on constructions that include DP complements and will leave the discussion of other XP complements for future research.

Syntactic analysis

In the previous subsections, the characteristics and distribution of the exceptive markers *siwā*, *ghayr*, *(mā)khalā*, *(mā)ʿadā* and *ḥāshā* 'except (for), but, other than, apart from or excluding' have been discussed. In this section, a syntactic analysis in line with what has been presented in the previous section will be developed for exceptive constructions that include these markers. The analysis is based on Saeed's (2022) analysis of 'illā in exceptive constructions, as summarized below.

Saeed (2022)

In her analysis of the Arabic exceptive marker 'illā, Saeed (2022) presents a distinction between empty exceptives and negative full exceptives. She shows that empty exceptives are r(estrictive)-exceptive constructions with a unique structure that differs from affirmative and negative full exceptives which are s(ubtractive)-exceptive. A syntactic analysis of r-exceptive and s-exceptive constructions is presented as well, displaying the differences between their structures and readings. The two constructions are exemplified below, cited from Saeed (2022: 43).

- (7) a. mā jā'a 'illā aḥmed-un
 NEG come.PST.M3SGexcept Ahmed-NOM
 'Only Ahmed came.'/'There did not come but Ahmed.'
- b. mā jā'a aḍ-ḍyūf-u 'illā aḥmed-an
 NEG come.PST.M3SG DEF-guest.PL-NOM except Ahmed-ACC
 'No one out of the guests came except Ahmed.'

In (7a), 'illā is taken to restrict the DP complement aḥmedun to a specific event and introduce an exception. Moreover, the exceptive phrase 'illā aḥmedun is argued to involve the DP constituent ['aḥad/ shay' 'illā XP] where the NPIs 'aḥad 'one' and shay' 'thing' do not form a subtractive domain but an antecedent which form "a referent to whom or to which the DP complement is referring but is not subtracted from" (see Saeed 2022: 47). In contrast, in (7b), 'illā is taken to be a subtractive element because it subtracts the DP complement aḥmedan from the quantificational domain aḍḍyūfu 'the guests' and introduces an exception.

In Saeed (2022), it is argued that 'illā is a syntactically separate function that projects R-ExPs (restrictive-exceptive phrases), since its function and properties support the creation of such a projection. However, in s-exceptive constructions 'illā acts as an exceptive marker associated with the unvalued domain subtraction feature and consequently projects as a functional head into S-ExPs (subtractive-exceptive phrases). The linear structures of (7a-b) can be represented in (8a-b) respectively; (8b) is cited from Saeed (2022: 59).

- (8) a. [_{TP} [_{VP} mā jā'a [_{DP1} [_{DP2} ('aḥadun) 'one' [_{R-EXP} 'illā aḥmedun 'except Ahmed']]]]]]
 b. [_{CP1} [_{CP2} mā jā'a aḍḍyūfu 'the guests did not come'] [_{S-EXP} 'illā aḥmedan 'except Ahmed']]]

As shown in (8a), in r-exceptive constructions 'illā-DP adjoins as an adjunct to the NPI 'aḥad 'one', while in s-exceptive constructions in (8b), 'illā-DP adjoins as an adjunct to the main clause (for further details, see Saeed 2022). In what follows, I will present a syntactic analysis of the exceptive constructions that involve siwā, ghayr, (mā)khalā, (mā)'adā and ḥāshā in line with the proposed analysis by Saeed (2022). As will be shown, Saeed's (2022) analysis of 'illā does not seem to apply intact to these exceptive markers due to their nominal and verbal features.

Syntactic structure of siwā- and ghayr-XPs

Siwā and ghayr are classified as nouns and they receive case according to their position in the sentence, although not overtly marked in the case of siwā. In their representative examples given in the sections of Siwā and ghayr, empty and full affirmative exceptives were recognized. The question that arises then would be whether, similar to 'illā, they suggest a restrictive meaning in empty exceptives or not. Consider (9a-b), repeated from (1a) and (3a):

- (9) a. lā yatanāwalu al-baṭ-u siwā al-'aghdyat-i al-khaḍrā'-i faqat
 NEG eat.PRS.3SG DEF-duck-NOM except DEF-food-GEN DEF-green-GEN only
 'Ducks do not eat other than green food.'

b. mā jā'a-ni ghayr-u zaid-in
 NEG come.PST.3SG-1SG except-NOM Zaid-GEN
 'No one came to me except Zaid.'

It has been demonstrated that both examples represent examples of empty exceptives. In the main clause, there is no subtractive domain from which the DP complements 'green food' and 'Zaid' could be subtracted. If an exceptive marker such as *siwā* or *ghayr* is to convey a restrictive meaning, a negative element or a polarity question particle such as *hal* is necessary. Furthermore, an NPI such as 'aḥad 'one' or shay' 'thing' can be used as a referring antecedent for the DP complements. These NPIs are licensed by the negative elements *lā* and *mā* (see Saeed 2022). Incorporating these NPIs into examples (9a-b) results in the equivalent examples in (10a-b).

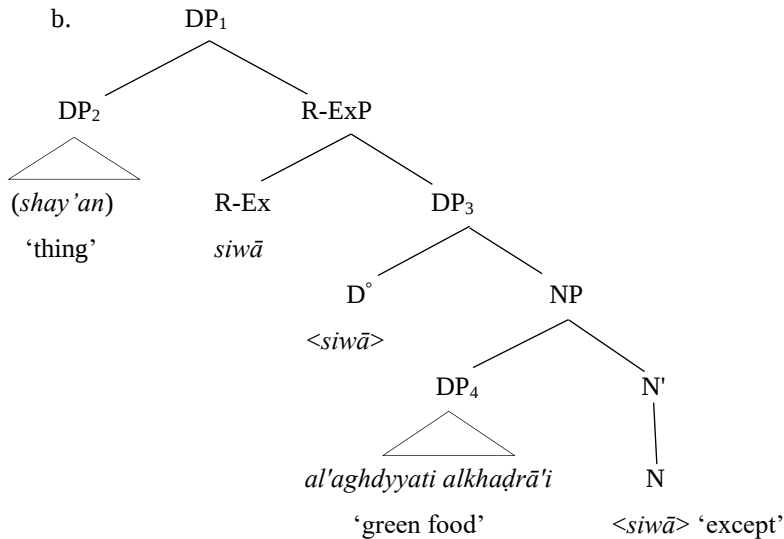
(10) a. lā yatanāwalu al-baṭ-u shay'-an siwā al-'aghdyyat-i
 NEG eat.PRS.3SG DEF-duck-NOM thing-GEN except DEF-food-GEN
 al-khaḍrā'-i faqaṭ
 DEF-green-GEN only
 'Ducks do not eat (anything) other than green food.'

b. mā jā'a-ni 'aḥad-un ghayr-u zaid-in
 NEG come.PST.3SG-1SG one-NOM except-NOM Zaid-GEN
 'No one came to me except Zaid.'

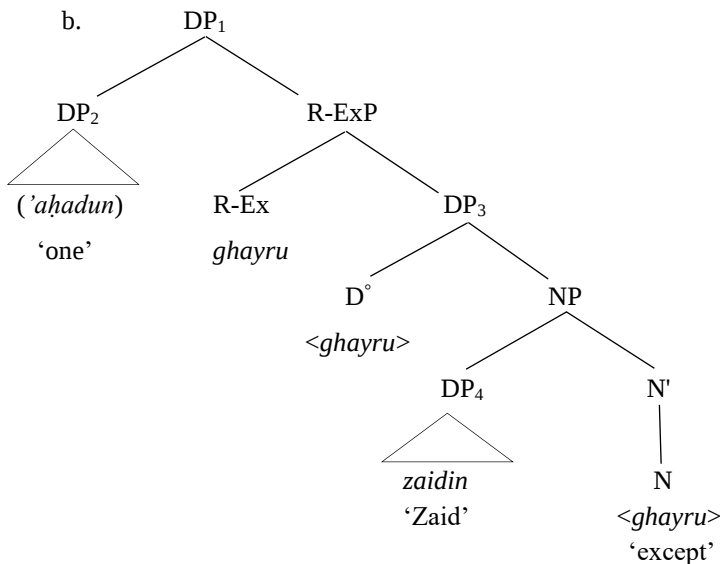
As can be seen, the case markings of neither the exceptive markers nor their complements have changed. The reason is that these NPIs serve as the anchor of the appositives *siwā* and *ghayr*. This means that *siwā* and *ghayr* receive their case marking through the nominal appositional construction they form with the NPIs. In (10a), *siwā* receives a covert accusative case from the anchor *shay'an*, and in (10b) *ghayr* receives a nominative case from the anchor 'aḥadun. Accordingly, in the constructions given in (10a-b) *siwā* and *ghayr* suggest a restrictive meaning rather than a subtractive exceptive one on a par with 'illā (see Saeed, 2022). Therefore, I assume that *siwā* and *ghayr*-XPs project an R-ExP.

Although I refer to *siwā* and *ghayr*-XPs as R-ExPs, *siwā* and *ghayr* should not be taken to lexicalise the functional head R-Ex straightaway. R-ExP is licensed by *siwā* and *ghayr* but these exceptive markers are part of a construct state. In Arabic, construct states are composed of two parts: the construct head and the inner NP. According to Fassi-Fehri (1993) and Ritter (1995), construct states are analysed as a phrase where a DP with a null D is assumed which c-commands an NP. The construct head is the head of that NP which then moves up to incorporate with the null D, while the inner-NP is base generated in Spec-NP, which would be a DP in this case to receive the oblique case. In case of construct states that include *siwā* and *ghayr*, the construct head would be represented by *siwā* and *ghayr* and the inner-NP would be the second element attached to them, here *al'aghdyyati alkhadrā'i* 'the green food' and *zaidin* 'Zaid'. In addition to being part of a construct state, *siwā* and *ghayr* function as exceptive markers which have a restrictive meaning in (10a-b), thus they license the restrictive-exceptive projection R-ExP. In view of that, I assume that *siwā* and *ghayr* are introduced within the DP of the construct state and the whole DP is dominated by an R-ExP licensed by *siwā* and *ghayr* which rise up to lexicalise R-Ex. *Siwā* and *ghayr* receive their grammatical case through the nominal appositional construction that pairs them with the covert anchors, the NPIs *shay'* 'thing' and 'aḥad 'one'. In (9a), if *siwā* appears in the accusative case, it's because the implied *shay'an* is accusative (functioning as a direct object). In (9b), if *ghayr* is nominative, it's because the implied 'aḥadun is in the nominative (functioning as a subject). The derivations in (11band 12b) illustrate this process:

(11) a. (shay'an) siwā al'aghdiyyati alkhaḍrā'i [thing except green food]



(12) a. ('aḥadun) ḡhayru zaidin [one except Zaid]



There is a distinction between (11b) and (12b) with regard to the syntactic derivation of the entire propositions in (9a-b). In (11b), DP₁ is the DP object and will be inserted as VP-complement, whereas in (12b), DP₁ is the DP subject and will be inserted as Spec-VP.

As mentioned in the previous section, siwā and ḡhayr can also occur in affirmative full exceptive constructions which involves an overt subtractive domain. Illustrative examples are given below, repeated from (1b) and (3b), respectively:

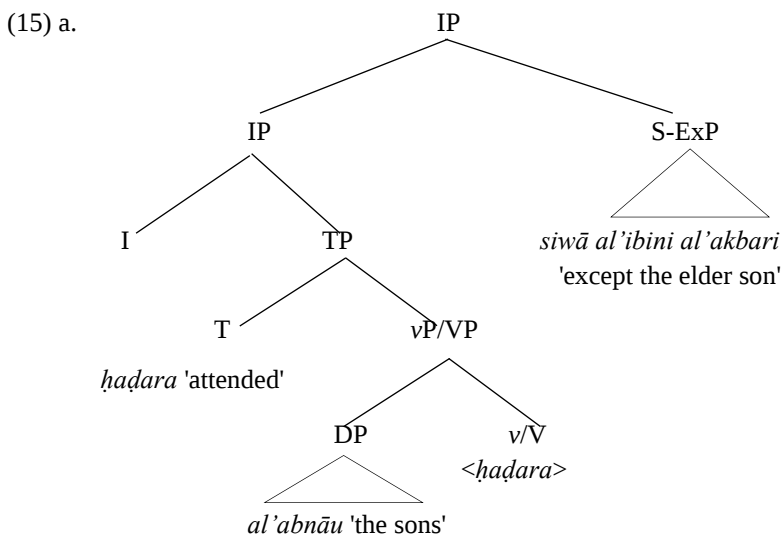
(13) a. ḡḥāḍara al-'abnā-u siwā al-'ibin-i al-'akbar-i
 come.PST.3PL DEF-SON.PL.NOM except DEF-SON.GEN DEF-elder-GEN
 'All the sons came except the elder son'.

b. jā'a aṭ-ṭulāb-u ḡhayr-a muḥammad-in
 come.PST.3SG DEF-student.PL-NOM except-ACC Muhammad-GEN
 'The students came except Muhammad.'

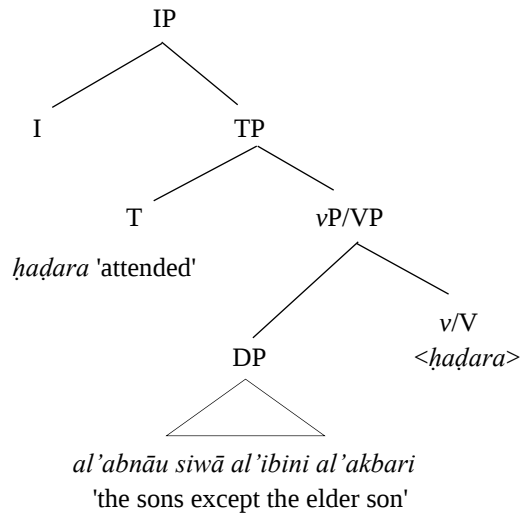
Both examples exhibit properties of connected and free exceptive constructions. They are considered connected because their DP complements, ‘the elder son’ and Muhammad, must remain syntactically adjacent to their antecedents (i.e., ‘the sons’ and ‘the students’) or be extraposed. The exceptive phrases *siwā al’ibini al’akbari* ‘except the elder son’ and *ghayra muhammadin* ‘except Muhammad’ cannot be fronted, a restriction that distinguishes them from free exceptives (cf. Hoeksema 1987, 1990, 1995; García Álvarez 2008). This contrast is illustrated in the ill-formed cases of (14a–b), where fronting results in ungrammaticality.

- (14) a. **siwā* *al’ibin-i* *al’akbar-i* *ḥaḍara* *al’abnā-u*
 except DEF-SON.GEN DEF-elder.GEN come.PST.3PL DEF-SON.PL.NOM
- b. **ghayr-a* *muhammad-in* *jā’a* *aṭ-ṭulāb-u*
 except-ACC Muhammad-GEN come.PST.3SG DEF-student.PL-NOM

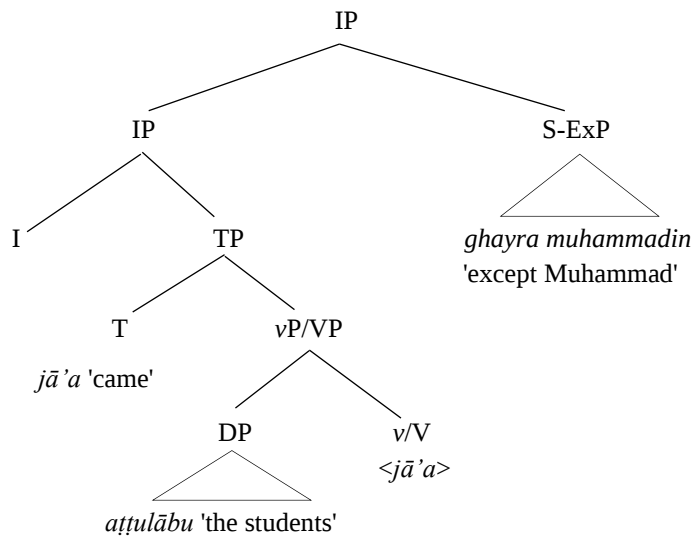
Examples of full exceptives where *siwā* and *ghayr* occur in affirmative exceptives with an overt subtractive domain are referred to as subtractive-exceptive constructions in Saeed (2022). Their syntactic behavior—including positioning, case assignment, and functional role in connected exceptives—supports two potential analyses for the *siwā/ghayr*-DPs in (13a–b). The subtractive-exceptive phrase (S-ExP) can either be merged as an adjunct to the clause by late Merge. This case applies typically when *siwā* and *ghayr* are assigned accusative case. Alternatively, the S-ExP can be treated as a DP modifier added via right-adjunction. In this case, *siwā* and *ghayr* receive nominative case (e.g., via default case or agreement) because the S-ExP forms a right-adjoined nominal apposition with its antecedent DP. In both analyses, the construct state headed by *siwā/ghayr* and their DP complements (e.g., *al’ibni al’akbari* ‘the elder son’) is generated within a Subtractive-Exceptive Phrase (S-ExP). The derivational alternatives are illustrated for (13a) in (15a–b) and for (13b) in (16a–b).



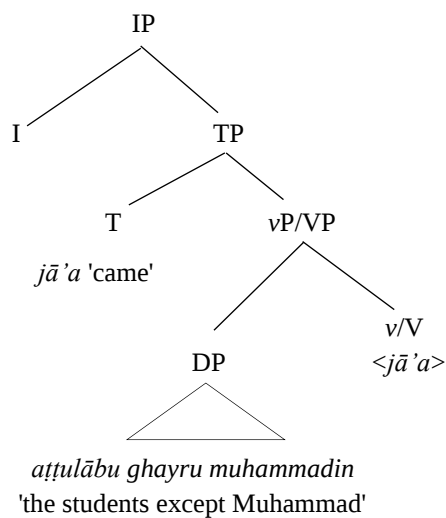
b.



(16) a.



b.



In (15a) *siwā*-DP is merged as an adjunct; its deletion does not affect the core propositional meaning of the sentence. In contrast, in (15b), *siwā*-DP is embedded within the DP structure, forming a nominal apposition with its antecedent DP. This same distinction applies to *ghayr*-DP in (16a-b): (16a) reflects

the adjunct analysis, and (16b) exemplifies the DP-internal appositional structure. The next section will explore exceptive constructions featuring *mā*khalā-, (*mā*)'adā- and ḥāshā-XPs, examining them in light of the syntactic analyses and hypotheses developed so far.

Syntactic structure of (*mā*)khalā-, (*mā*)'adā- and ḥāshā-XPs

The exceptive markers (*mā*)khalā, (*mā*)'adā and ḥāshā 'except/excluding' are found exclusively in affirmative exceptives. As discussed in section about the characteristics and distribution of (*mā*)khalā, (*mā*)'adā and ḥāshā, traditional Arab grammarians classify these markers either as prepositions, or verbs, particularly when 'adā and khalā are preceded by the subjunctive particle *mā* 'that/what'. Under the prepositional analysis, the following DP is assigned oblique case, and under the verbal analysis, the DP receives accusative case. As verbs, grammarians have suggested three interpretations of the subject: (a) a participle pronoun; (b) a gerund of the main verb; or (c) part of all (Shamsaldeen, 2016; Abu Alabas, 2014). While all three markers exclusively select DP complements, (*mā*)'adā may also permit PP and CP complements. This study examines these traditional categorizations and assumptions, focusing on DP-complements as they clearly display case marking patterns (exemplified via (*mā*)khalā for brevity). The following examples are repeated from (5a-b):

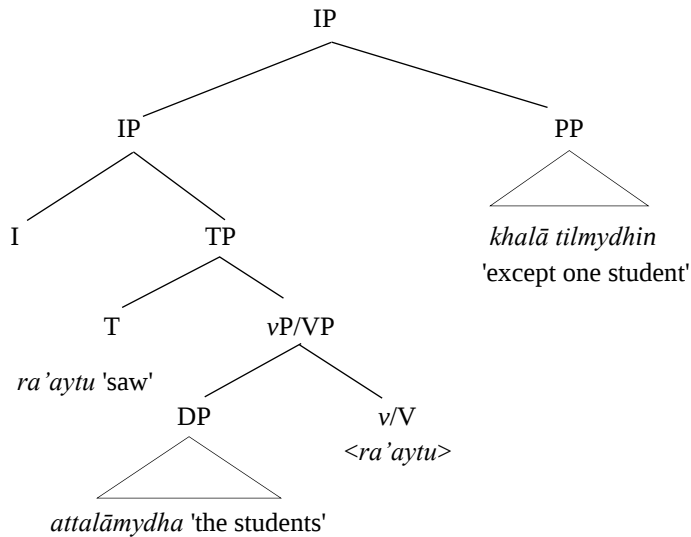
- (17) a. ra'ayt-u at-talāmydh-a khalā tilmydh-an/in
 see.PST-1SG DEF-student.PL-ACC except student-ACC/GEN
 'I saw all students except one student.'
- b. qaṭaft-u al-'azhār-a mākhalā al-qurnful-a
 pick.PST-1SG DEF-rose.PL-ACC except DEF-carnation-ACC
 'I picked up all roses except the carnation.'

Despite the dual categorial classification (as either prepositions or verbs) traditionally ascribed to them in exceptive constructions, the phrases headed by (*mā*)khalā, (*mā*)'adā and ḥāshā are attached as adjuncts. The deletion of khalā tilmydhan/in 'except one student' and mākhalā alqurnfula 'except the carnation' will not affect the syntax or semantics of the main clause. Accordingly, the X-DP headed by these exceptive markers is introduced later into the sentence structure. While the external syntax of these constituents is easy to determine, their internal syntax might not be so due to the double assumptions proposed for them as Ps and as Vs. Nevertheless, what can be easily determined is that the exceptive constructions that contain these elements are only affirmative. Accordingly, they suggest subtractive-exceptive phrases to the exclusion of restrictive-exceptive phrases.

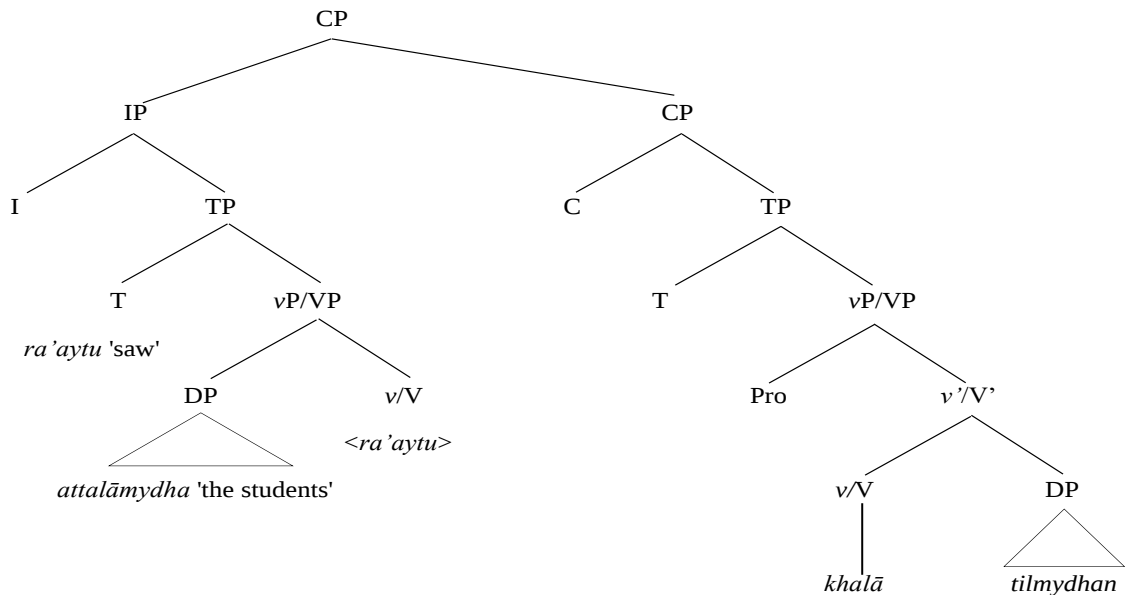
In what follows, I present two analyses that can be suggested for exceptive constructions that involve these exceptive markers. To start with, under the first analysis, khalā in (17a) can be taken either as a preposition or as a verb. Since two grammatical categories are suggested by khalā, two analyses can be proposed. As a preposition, khalā tilmydhan 'except one student' can simply be taken as a PP. This can be represented as in (18a). As a verb, khalā tilmydhan can be taken as a Verbal Phrase introducing a subordinate clause.⁵ Under this analysis, the structure in (18b) can be proposed to account for its clausal nature:

⁵ Note that proposing a clausal analysis for (*mā*)khalā, (*mā*)'adā and ḥāshā differs from the clausal analyses suggested for exceptive phrases in work by Potsdam (2018), Potsdam and Polinsky (2019), Vostrikova (2019), and Pérez-Jiménez & Moreno-Quibén (2012). In these studies, exceptive markers are classified as coordinating conjunctions that introduce elliptical clauses. However, in case of (*mā*)khalā, (*mā*)'adā and ḥāshā, these makers are classified as verbs.

(18) a.



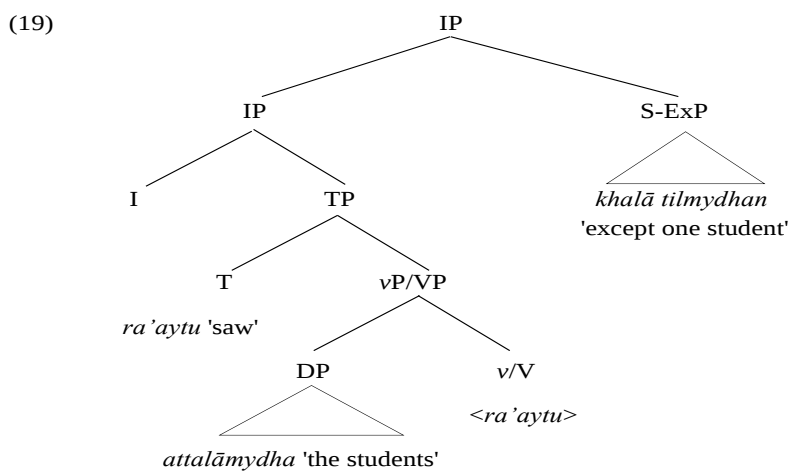
b.



Although traditionally described as either verbs (especially when preceded by *mā*) or prepositions, both categorizations proved problematic. A closer syntactic analysis raises doubts about both traditional views. Firstly, under the preposition hypothesis, the presence of subjunctive *mā*—a verbal complementizer—invalidates the prepositional analysis, as prepositions in Arabic do not follow *mā*. The presence or absence of the latter is a stylistic choice rather than a grammatical constrain. In (18a), it is fully unobjectionable to use *mākhalā*. Therefore, positing two forms of *mākhalā* or *mā'adā* (one verbal with *mā* and one prepositional or verbal without) is unjustified. Furthermore, taking these markers (*mā*)*khalā*, (*mā*)*'adā* and *ḥāshā* as verbal elements is not justifiable either. First, these markers can only appear in the imperfective form, while full-fledged verbs can exhibit perfective and imperfective forms. Second, the proposed subject argument of these markers as verbs does not align naturally with the way these constructions function. For instance, the assumed subject of *khalā* in *qāma alqawmu khalā zaidan* 'all the people rise except Zaid' can either be (a) a participle pronoun *he* that refers to the riser Zaid giving something such as 'to except the riser Zaid'; (b) the gerund of the main verb rising meaning 'to except rising of Zaid'; or (c) the subject is a subset of what was included in the main clause, i.e. 'to except someone or he Zaid'. None of these implicit

subject options seem reasonable or relevant to the examples provided in (17a-b). For example, interpreting *khalā tilmydhan* as 'except he, the student' is confusing let alone be redundant as the pronoun he would be referring to the very noun *tilmydh* 'student' already specified. Assuming the subject of *khalā* to be a gerund (rising of Zaid) adds unnecessary semantic complexity, because the excepted element is not an action or event, but an individual. Moreover, there is no indication in Arabic syntax that *khalā tilmydhan* 'except a student' forms a subject-predicate or partitive clause. Finally, the third reason that stands against the verbal analysis of these exceptive markers is related to the adjuncthood status of X-DPs headed by these markers. Treating the XP they introduce as a VP implies a secondary clause, which is syntactically and semantically unmotivated.

Given these issues, (mā)*khalā* as well as (mā)'*adā* and ḥāshā can neither be prepositions nor verbs. Instead, and following Saeed (2022), this paper posits that (mā)*khalā*, (mā)'*adā*, and ḥāshā are syntactic heads of functional projections (S-ExPs) that license accusative case on their DP complements. Moreover, these functional heads carry an unvalued domain subtraction feature [u-DS] that licenses the exceptive projection and a valued accusative case feature assigned to their DP complements (cf. Al-Bataineh, 2021). The derivation in (19) illustrates the proposed analysis for the exceptive construction in (17a). The same applies to examples of (mā)'*adā* and ḥāshā-exceptives.



Conclusion

This study provided the syntactic analysis of Arabic exceptive expressions: *siwā*, *ghayr*, (mā)*khalā*, (mā)'*adā* and ḥāshā. *Siwā* and *ghayr* were shown to function in both restrictive (R-ExP) and subtractive (S-ExP) constructions, depending on context. Their nominal nature allows them to form construct states with the following DPs and receive case via apposition with NPIs in empty exceptives. However, in full exceptives, S-ExPs headed by these two markers serve as adjuncts or appositional modifiers. In contrast, (mā)*khalā*, (mā)'*adā*, and ḥāshā are limited to affirmative contexts and do not rely on negative licensing. Rather than categorizing them as verbs or prepositions, this paper argues they serve as functional heads in S-ExPs. It was shown that these three markers are treated as adjuncts to the clause, and that they lack typical verbal properties such as tense variation or subject agreement. Thus, no clear syntactic evidence supports the idea of an internal subject for these constructions.

By analyzing them as functional elements with a specific role in subtractive meaning, this approach avoids the inconsistencies present in earlier accounts and better explains their limited distribution and syntactic behavior. The proposed syntactic structures account for how these elements interact with their complements and the larger clause. This analysis not only provides a clearer grammatical picture of Arabic

exceptives but also lays the groundwork for further investigation into other complement types and the semantic implications of exception across different contexts.

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