

## RESEARCH

# Vocatives as parenthetical adjuncts: Evidence from Arabic

Youssef A. Haddad

University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, US

yah@ufl.edu

Vocatives are noun phrases that are generally used as calls to attract an addressee's attention or as addresses to maintain contact with her/him. In her 2014 book, Virginia Hill analyzes vocatives as forms of address; they are converted to syntax as nominal functional projections in the form of vocative phrases. Drawing on work by Speas and Tenny (2003) and Moro (2003), she further posits that vocatives merge as arguments of a speech act phrase in the left periphery. This merging site, Hill 2014 and others (e.g., Slocum 2016) argue, is fixed. This is so despite the fact that vocatives may appear in different positions in their host clause. Under this account, pre-vocative elements appear in that location as a result of movement. This paper presents counterevidence to this argument from Arabic. Using naturally occurring data, mainly from Twitter, the paper shows that Arabic vocatives do not merge in a fixed position in the left periphery. Rather, they are parenthetical adjuncts whose relationship with their host clause is minimally constrained. If correct, the analysis serves as an invitation for a closer and more data-driven look at vocatives in other languages, including those in which vocatives have already been explored.

**Keywords:** Arabic; adjuncts; countercyclic merge; late merge; external syntax; parentheticals; vocatives

## 1 An overview

Vocatives are noun phrases that are generally used as calls “to catch the addressee’s attention” or as addresses “to maintain or emphasize contact between the speaker and the addressee” (Zwicky 1974: 787). About four decades ago, Levinson described vocatives as “an interesting grammatical category” and characterized them at the time as “under-explored.” He went on to define vocatives as “noun phrases that ... are not syntactically or semantically incorporated as the arguments of a predicate; they are rather set apart prosodically from the body of a sentence that may accompany them” (1983 [1985]: 71). Little work had been done on vocatives prior to that; Downing (1969) and Zwicky (1974) are two exceptions. More elaborate research has been done in recent years. Hill (2014) is the first book-length monograph on the topic, and Sonnenhauser & Noel Aziz Hanna (2013) is the first edited volume. Most recent work, however, focused on English and other European languages, with work on non-European languages, including Arabic, the focal language of this paper, as rare and far in between. To my knowledge, the earliest work on Arabic vocatives outside the Arabic grammatical tradition is Rieschild (1998); the focus there is on reverse role vocatives. In the past few years, more research on the topic started to materialize in the form of journal articles and conference presentations. These include Abu-Haidar (2013), Soltan (2015), and more recently Shormani and Qarabesh (2018) and Al-Bataineh (2020).

Vocative phrases in Arabic, as in many languages, may be headed by a vocative particle. The most common vocative particle – and in some varieties, the only one – is *ya:*. Vocative

phrases may stand alone, as the tweets in (1) and (2) illustrate. Alternatively, they may be part of a host clause, in which case they may appear sentence-initially, (3), sentence-finally, (4), or sentence-medially, (5).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) ya: ?ami:r-i: ya: ħabi:b-i: ya: ?ust<sup>u</sup>:rt-i: ya: sult<sup>a</sup>:n-i: ya:  
VOC prince-my VOC love-my VOC legend-my VOC sultan-my VOC  
?iʕzu:bt-i: ya: malak-i:  
miracle-my VOC king-my  
'My prince, my love, my legend, my sultan, my miracle, my king.'  
يا أميري يا حبيبي يا أسطورتَي يا سُلطاني يا إجبوتي يا ملكي  
[https://twitter.com/cxd\\_/status/1137920894146400260](https://twitter.com/cxd_/status/1137920894146400260)
- (2) ya: ?ibn l-ʕarmu:t<sup>a</sup> ya: falla:h ya: ʕars<sup>ʕ</sup>  
VOC son the-whore VOC peasant VOC cuckold  
'You son of a bitch, you peasant, you cuckold.'  
يا ابن الشرموطة يا فلاح يا عرض  
<https://twitter.com/HeshamShoqer12/status/1235207812520779776>
- (3) ya: ħabi:b-i: l-yo:m l-zumʕa w-iĥna: mawʕad-na:  
VOC love-my the-day the-Friday and-we appointment-our  
l-sabt !  
the-Saturday  
'Darling, today is Friday, and our appointment is on Saturday.'  
يا حبيبي اليوم الجمعة  
واحننا موعدنا السبت !  
<https://twitter.com/3nzi26/status/1251191884984262660>
- (4) ?alla:h yirĥam-ak w-ysa:mĥ-ak w-ʕaʕal  
God have.mercy.on-you and-forgive-you and-make  
maθwa:-k l-ʕanna ya: ru:h-i:  
resting.place-your the-paradise VOC soul-my  
'May God have mercy on you and forgive you and make the heavens your final  
resting place, my soul.'  
الله يرحمك ويسامحك وجعل مثواك الجنة يا روي  
<https://twitter.com/rahmeyf/status/1251092658371661824>
- (5) w-alla: ma: la-k bi-ʔalb-i: ya: ħabi:b-i: ʕari:k.  
by-God NEG for-you in-heart-my VOC love-my partner  
'I swear to God that you have in my heart, my love, no partner.'  
والله ما لك بقلبي يا حبيبي شريك.  
[https://twitter.com/amoreals\\_/status/628201290951061505](https://twitter.com/amoreals_/status/628201290951061505)

The vocative particle is not always required. However, all the examples in this paper include vocative phrases headed with *ya:*. There are two reasons behind this choice. First, the inclusion of *ya:* simplifies the search for naturally occurring examples. Second, most

<sup>1</sup> Two remarks about the examples used in this paper:

- The paper relies predominantly on tweets. Most of the Arabic tweets seem to come from the following Arabic varieties: Gulf, Levantine, and Egyptian. Some of the tweets tend to be long. When this is the case, I only include the portion that is relevant to the topic of discussion. I also include the Arabic tweets without correction. I include punctuation but not emojis. The URL of each tweet is provided for readers who would like to examine the whole text. These tweets were retrieved between November 10, 2019 and July 10, 2020.
- There is a small number of constructed examples in the paper. These come from Levantine Arabic and have been judged as acceptable/grammatical by native speakers of different Levantine Arabic varieties.

examples include mid-sentential vocatives. Unlike sentence-initial vocatives that are mainly employed to grab the hearer's attention, mid-sentential vocatives are addresses that carry more evaluative and relational information (see Slocum 2016: 12) and tend to be either endearing or disparaging. Evaluative vocatives of this type in Arabic are often only licensed with *ya:*. For example, terms like *kalb* 'dog' and *ħma:r* 'jackass' may not be used as vocatives without *ya:*.

Most work on vocatives, including Arabic vocatives, focuses on their pragmatic functions, their distribution, and/or their internal syntax. As to the external syntax of vocatives, the literature falls into two camps. There are those like Levinson (1983) who consider vocatives as elements that are set apart from their host and are only inserted parenthetically. Espinal (1991) belongs to this camp; she groups vocatives with other parentheticals and analyzes them collectively as disjuncts that merge in a separate plain in a three-dimensional structure; see Section 5. On the other side of the fence, there are researchers who analyze vocatives as syntactically incorporated in the host construction; see, for example, Ashdowne (2002), Hill (2014), and Slocum (2016). Using data from Latin, Ashdowne (2002) argues that vocatives are not parentheticals. To him, parentheticals, but not (Latin or English) vocatives, are structurally minimally constrained.

- (6) Parentheticals vs. vocatives (Ashdowne 2002: 154–155)
- a. Parentheticals may interrupt their host structure freely. Vocatives are more constrained; they do not have “complete freedom of placement.”
  - b. Any connection between parentheticals and their host is optional. Vocatives, however, “do have some *necessary* connection with the accompanying utterance through something in the discourse context, viz. they must refer to the addressee(s) and are unacceptable if they do not.”<sup>2</sup>
  - c. There is no limit on the number of parentheticals that may be present in a construction; the number of vocatives, on the other hand, is not so unlimited.

Hill (2014) agrees with Ashdowne's conclusion. She provides an account that details how vocatives merge in a fixed position in the left periphery. Slocum (2016) makes a similar argument. She uses Ashdowne's criteria to argue against a parenthetical account of vocatives. She builds on Hill (2007; 2013) to argue for a syntactic account of vocatives as elements that are structurally incorporated in the left periphery of their host. In the rest of this paper, I use Ashdowne's three criteria in (6) to argue against a left-periphery account of vocatives, focusing mainly on Arabic. I present evidence, mostly from Twitter, to show that Arabic vocatives are best analyzed as parenthetical adjuncts. If the analysis is correct, it serves as an invitation for a closer and more data-driven examination of vocatives in other languages, including those in which vocatives have already been explored. Much of the work on vocatives in recent years, along with the theoretical conclusions presented in that work, relied on constructed examples and/or grammaticality judgment and elicitation. A closer look at vocatives in naturally-occurring data is bound to get researchers to rethink some of their conclusions, as this paper hopes to show.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Sections 2, 3, and 4 address points (6a, b, & c) respectively. Together these sections show that Arabic vocatives exhibit behavior that is typical of parentheticals and thus they should be analyzed as such. Section 2 summarizes two accounts that argue that vocatives merge in a fixed location in the left periphery while other sentential elements move around them: Hill (2014) and Slocum (2016). The

<sup>2</sup> Ashdowne's characterization of parentheticals in (6c) needs closer examination, as Slocum (2016: 181) points out. For example, Vries (2013) shows that some parentheticals, such as appositions, “are directly attached to an anchor/antecedent, and they seem to form a constituent with it” (154). Also connection is defined too narrowly in Ashdowne (2002). It will be explored in broader semantic and syntactic terms in Section 3.

section provides counterevidence to these arguments; it concludes that vocatives merge in the locations where they are pronounced and that they have freedom of placement. Section 3 deals with the topic of connection. It approaches the topic from semantic and syntactic perspectives and shows that there is no necessary connection between vocatives and their host clause. It also examines the pragmatic restriction that vocatives must refer to the addressee(s) of their host clause and shows that vocatives may refer, not only to addressees, but also to unaddressed overhearers. Section 4 examines whether the number of vocatives in a given structure is limited. It shows that multiple vocatives are allowed in a host clause, both consecutively and intermittently. Section 5 briefly presents a possible derivation of vocatives as parenthetical adjuncts. Section 6 offers a few final remarks.

## 2 Freedom of placement

Ashdowne (2002) states that parentheticals but not vocatives have “complete freedom of placement.” That is, parentheticals like *as far as I know* in the English and Arabic examples in (7) through (9) may freely merge with the host clause sentence-initially, sentence-medially, or sentence-finally. Vocatives, however, are more restricted in terms of where they may merge.

(7) a. *English*

**As far as I know**, my content does not violate any screen guidelines.

<https://twitter.com/Iammisterpaul/status/1277640102743887874>

- b. **ʔala: hadd ʕilm-i:** ʔinn-ik xarri:ʒet mutawassitʕ  
 on extent knowledge-my that-you graduate middle.school  
 wa-yattadʕih ʕa:lik min l-ʔuslu:b wa-l-ʔaxtʕa:ʔ l-ʔimla:ʔiyya..  
 and-become.clear that from the-style and-the-mistakes the-orthographic  
 ‘As far as I know, you only finished middle school, and that is clear from  
 your style and orthographic mistakes.’

على حد علمي انك خريجة متوسط ويتضح ذلك من الأسلوب والاختفاء الإملائية ..

[https://twitter.com/Yara\\_5454/status/1279720495945060352](https://twitter.com/Yara_5454/status/1279720495945060352)

(8) a. *English*

So you’re fighting toxicity with toxicity? I will admit I was really heated to see this thread because **as far as I know** all the accusations (except pedophilia) are true.

[https://twitter.com/Forest\\_J3llyBea/status/1279140984639676416](https://twitter.com/Forest_J3llyBea/status/1279140984639676416)

- b. ʔana: min l-ʒaza:ʔer ʔax-i: nʃalla: tku:n thibb  
 I from the-Algeria brother-my God.willing you.be like  
 l-ʒaza:ʔiriyyi:n liʔanno ʔala: hadd ʕilm-i: l-suʔu:diyyi:n  
 the-Algerians because on extent knowledge-my the-Saudis  
 ma: ytʕi:qu:-na:  
 NEG stand-us

‘I am from Algeria, brother. I hope you like Algerians because, as far as I know, Saudis cannot stand us.’

انا من الجزائر أخي نشالله تكون تحب الجزائريين لأنو على حد علمي السعوديين ما يطيقونا

<https://twitter.com/hanzada93718493/status/585416242967740416>

(9) a. *English*

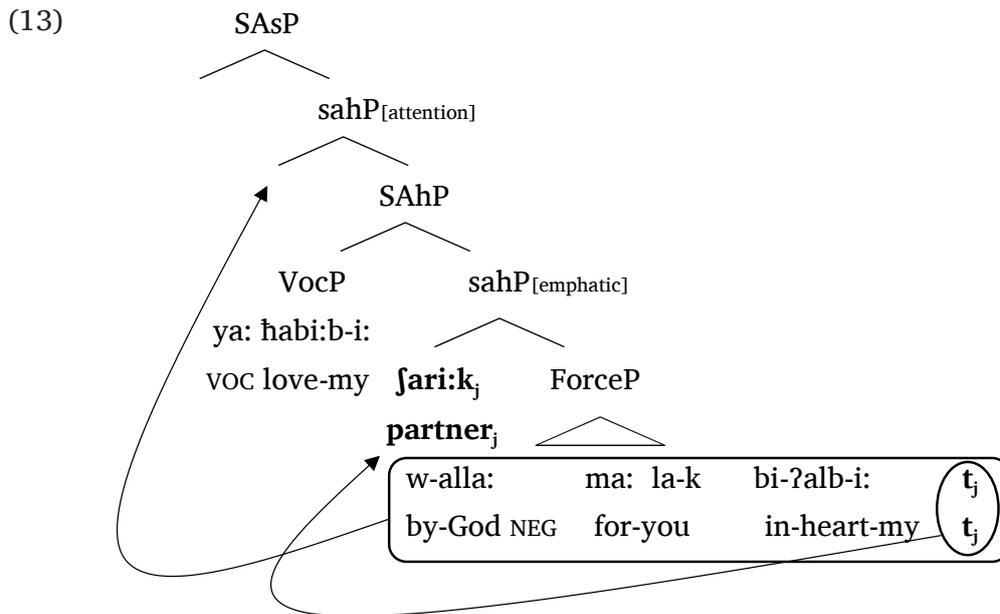
This black car ran through protesters on 3rd just now. No one was seriously hurt **as far as I know**.

<https://twitter.com/LindseyPSmith7/status/1277474910038704128>



Crucially, for Hill, Vocatives are realized above CP. As (11) shows, they are part of a speech act projection that takes ForceP as an argument. To her, mid-sentential vocatives as in (5), repeated here as (12), are the outcome of movement; the pre-vocative material starts out in ForceP before it moves to Spec,sahP, as (13) illustrates. Movement is triggered by two features: [emphatic] and/or [attention]. These two features may be mapped to two separate heads; that is, to Hill, sahP may be split on a par with a split TopP. See Chapter 6 in Hill (2014) for more details.

- (12) w-alla: ma: la-k bi-ʔalb-i: ya: **habi:b-i:** ʃari:k.  
 by-God NEG for-you in-heart-my VOC love-my partner  
 ‘I swear to God that you have in my heart, my love, no partner.’

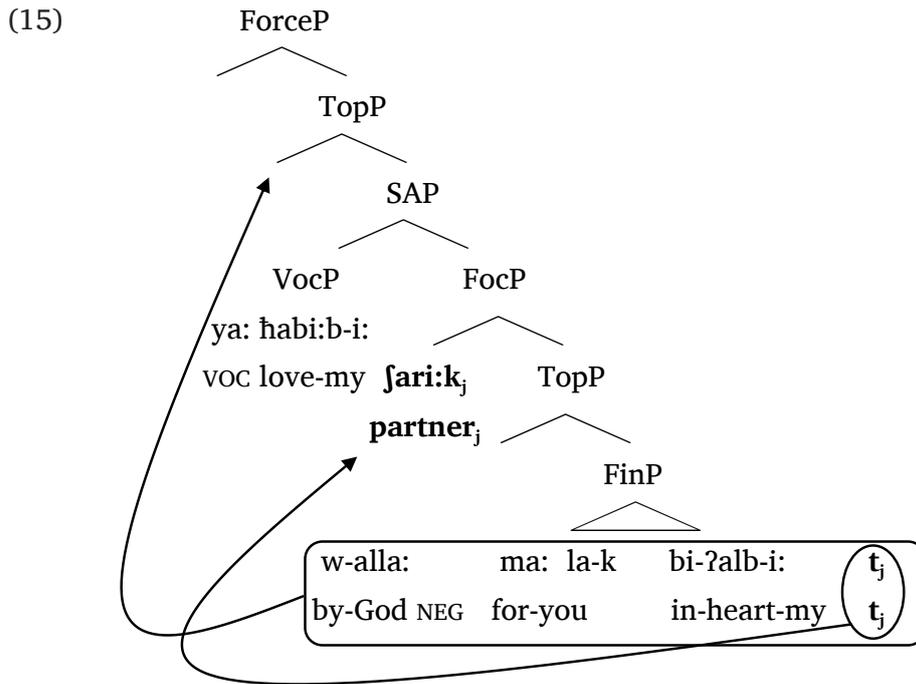


Note that movement in (13) takes the form of remnant movement. This type of movement is especially necessary if the syntactic string that ends up in a pre-vocative position is a nonconstituent. In (12), *w-alla: ma: la-k bi-ʔalb-i:* ‘I swear that you do not have in my heart’ is not a constituent. This is why, *ʃari:k* ‘partner’ moves first, allowing phrasal remnant movement of the entire ForceP to follow. Under Hill’s (2014) account, movement targets the two projections of sahP.

Slocum (2016) proposes a similar, though not identical, approach. She draws on intuition by Taglicht (1984) that vocatives may be used to mark the boundary between old information and new information in a sentence, and she formalizes this intuition as (14). Using Rizzi’s (1997) split CP, she argues that vocative phrases merge in the left periphery above the focus phrase (FocP) but below the higher topic phrase (TopP).

- (14) [ForceP [TopP [**VocP** [FocP [TopP [FinP [...

Under Slocum’s (2016) approach, mid-sentential vocatives are the outcome of topicalization. Any material that appears before a vocative phrase does so as a result of movement to TopP. In other words, (12) has the derivation in (15). The vocative starts out in the left periphery. The host clause merges below FinP before the pre-vocative part undergoes topicalization. Topicalization takes the form of remnant movement, allowing a nonconstituent to move to a pre-vocative position. Thus, ‘partner’ moves to FocP before remnant movement to TopP takes place.



The following subsection presents data that challenge Hill's (2014) and Slocum's (2016) accounts of the external syntax of vocatives.

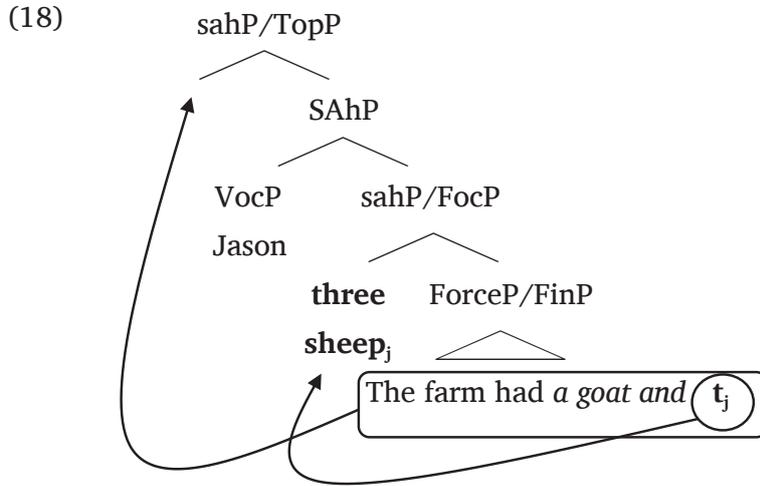
### 2.1 Vocatives and syntactic island

If vocatives always merge in a fixed location in the left periphery, as maintained in Hill (2014) and Slocum (2016), and if any material that precedes a vocative phrase moves to that location from a post-vocative position, then we should expect sentences in which vocatives interrupt syntactic island to be ungrammatical. Slocum (2016) tests this prediction on English. She ran an online survey whose goal was to elicit grammaticality judgments on mid-sentential vocatives that interrupted syntactic islands versus the same type of vocatives outside of syntactic islands. The survey yielded results from 128 participants. Slocum reports that sentences with vocatives that interrupt islands, such as those in (16), were rated significantly worse than their counterparts with mid-sentential vocatives outside of an island in (17) (2016: 117).

- (16) *English* (Slocum 2016: 118, Table 1)
- Subject island – [The winner, **Jason**, of the race] finished in less than 10 minutes.
  - Adjunct island – I always wore my seatbelt [after my mother, **Jason**, got in an accident].
  - Coordinate structure island – The farm had [a goat and, **Jason**, three sheep].
  - Wh-island – Steve forgot [how to change his bike tire, **Jason**, by himself].
- (17) *English* (Slocum 2016: 118, Table 1)
- [The winner of the race], **Jason**, finished in less than 10 minutes.
  - I always wore my seatbelt, **Jason**, [after my mother got in an accident].
  - The farm, **Jason**, had [a goat and three sheep].
  - Steve was thrilled to change his bike tire, **Jason**, by himself.

Under Slocum's and Hill's accounts, the structures in (16) are expected to be ungrammatical because their derivation involves movement out of an island, which is illicit. Take (17c), for example. The string *The farm had a goat and* is not a constituent. For its movement to be licit, *three sheep* has to move first. That is, the derivation would look like

(18). We know that the movement of *three sheep* leads to ungrammaticality as it violates the Coordinate Structure Constraint (Ross 1967). This is why, for example, the question in (19) is ungrammatical, and this is why, according to Slocum (2016), the sentence is judged as unacceptable or degraded by native speakers.



(19) \*What<sub>k</sub> did the farm have a goat and \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub>?

Arabic vocatives defy the expectations presented in Hill (2014) and Slocum (2016) as they may interrupt islands freely. They have what Ashdowne calls freedom of placement. As such, they present a serious challenge for any account that argues that vocatives merge in a fixed location and that other sentential elements move around them. We start with Arabic vocatives in subject islands. Movement out of subject islands is illicit in Arabic, just as it would be in English, as (20) and (21) illustrate. The questions in (b) are ungrammatical under the designated reading.

- (20) a. l-ʔami:s<sup>ʃ</sup> yalli: ʃtare:-ha: ziya:d la-xayy-o ke:nit ya:lye.  
 the-shirt that bought-it Ziad to-brother-his was expensive  
 ‘The shirt that Ziad bought for his brother was expensive.’
- b. \*la-mi:n<sub>k</sub> l-ʔami:s<sup>ʃ</sup> yalli: ʃtare:-ha: ziya:d \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub> ke:nit ya:lye?  
 for-whom<sub>k</sub> the-shirt that bought-it Ziad \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub> was expensive  
 ‘For whom<sub>k</sub> was the shirt that Ziad bought \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub> expensive?’
- (21) a. l-qara:ra:t llati: ttuxiḏat ʔams / fi: ʃamma:n fi: rafʃ  
 the-decisions that were.taken yesterday / in Amman in raising  
 baʃd<sup>ʃ</sup> ʔasʔa:r l-silaʃ wa-l-xadama:t ʔaḏḏarat ʃala l-muwa:t<sup>ʃ</sup>in.  
 some prices the goods and-the-services affected on the-citizen  
 ‘The decisions that were taken yesterday/in Amman about raising the prices  
 of some goods and services had an effect on citizens.’
- b. \*mata:/ʔayn<sub>k</sub> ʔaḏḏarat l-qara:ra:t llati: ttuxiḏat \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub>  
 when/where<sub>k</sub> affected the-decisions that were.taken \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub>  
 fi: rafʃ baʃd<sup>ʃ</sup> ʔasʔa:r l-silaʃ wa-l-xadama:t ʃala  
 in raising some prices the goods and-the-services on  
 l-muwa:t<sup>ʃ</sup>in?  
 the-citizen  
 ‘When/Where<sub>k</sub> did the decisions that were taken \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub> about raising the  
 prices of some goods and services have an effect on citizens?’

Although extraction out of subject islands is not allowed, the tweets in (22) and (23) show that vocatives may interrupt such islands (between square brackets) without leading to ungrammaticality. The islands in these examples also qualify as complex NP islands – or DP islands, as Adger (2003) prefers to call them.

- (22) [l-qara:ra:t llati: ttuxiðat **ya: dawlat l-raʔi:s** fi: raff baʔd<sup>ʕ</sup>  
the-decisions that were.taken VOC Mr. Prime Minister in raising some  
ʔasʔa:r l-silaʕ wa-l-xadama:t] ʔaθθarat ʕala l-muwa:tʕin ...  
prices the goods and-the-services affected on the-citizen  
'The decisions that were taken, Mr. Prime Minister, about raising the prices of  
some goods and services had an effect on citizens.'  
القرارات التي اتخذت يا دولة الرئيس في رفع بعض اسعار السلع والخدمات اثرت على المواطن ...  
<http://www.jordanzad.com/print.php?id=145706>

- (23) [ʕami:ʕ l-qara:ra:t llati: ttaxaðta-ha: **ya: bu fays'al** bi-ʕaʔn  
all the-decisions that you.took-them VOC Abu Faysal in-regard  
l-muwaððafi:n] walladat ʔirtiya:h  
the-employees generated relief  
'All the decisions that you took, Abu Faysal, with regard to employees generated  
relief.'  
جميع القرارات التي اتخذتها يا بوفيسل بشأن الموظفين ولدت ارتياح  
<https://twitter.com/Althuwaikh999/status/311502630230831104>

Arabic vocatives may also interrupt adjunct islands, as (25) through (27) illustrate. This is so despite the fact that movement out of an adjunct island leads to ungrammaticality, (24).

- (24) a. lamma: yaʕmil ba:ba: fatʕa:yir bi-sba:nix, bħibb ʔitfarraʕ.  
when make Dad pies with-spinach I.like watch  
'When Dad makes spinach pies, I like to watch.'  
b. \*ʕu:<sub>k</sub> biħibb titfarraʕ lamma: ʔabu:k yaʕmil \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub>?  
what<sub>k</sub> you.like watch when father-your make \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub>?  
'What do you like to watch when your father makes \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub>?'  
(25) [lamma: taʕmli: **ya: no:fa:** ʔatʕa:yif w-kne:fe bi-l-zibde]  
when you.make VOC Nofa qatayef w-kanafeh with-the-butter  
ʔibʔi: ʕzimi:-ni:  
remain invite-me  
'When you make, Nofa, qatayef (sweet dumplings) and kanafeh (cheese-based  
pastry) with butter, please invite me.'  
لما تعملى يا نوفا قطايف و كنافة بالزبده ابقى اعزميني  
<https://twitter.com/maiart1/status/355434280165449729>

- (26) [ʔabl ma: tʔu:l **ya: ʕabʔari:** ʔidda:m kamera l-ʔaxba:r ʔinno  
before that you.say VOC genius in.front.of camera the-news that  
fi: musa:wa:t be:n l-marʔa wa-l-raʕul bi-l-dustu:r  
there equality between the-woman and-the-man in-the-constitution  
bi-ʔiʕtʕa:ʔ l-ʕinsiyye] ru:h tʕa:lib bi-ħaʔ-ha: tiftaħ ħsa:b  
in-granting the-citizenship go demand of-right-her open account  
banki: li-ʔawla:d-ha:  
bank for-children-her

‘Before you say, genius, in front of the news camera that there is equality between women and men with regard to granting citizenship, go demand that she be granted the right to open a bank account for her children.’

قبل ما تقول يا عبقرى قدام كاميرا الأخبار انو في مساواة بين الرجل والمرأة بالدستور بإعطاء الجنسية روح طالب بحقها التصير تفتح حساب بنكي لأولادها

<https://twitter.com/basfarah/status/780089413334364161>

- (27) ?ana: miʃ hanzal [ʔabli ma: txallas<sup>ʕ</sup> ya: xu:ya  
I NEG go.out/leave before that you.finish VOC my.brother  
ʔimtiha:na:t-ak]  
Exams-your  
‘I will not leave before you complete, brother, your exams.’

أنا مش هنزل قبل ما تخلص يا خويا امتحاناتك

<https://twitter.com/alminshawy25/status/1245508803870838789>

Similarly, vocatives may interrupt coordinate structure islands, (29) through (32), although violations of the Coordinate Structure Constraint (Ross 1967) in Arabic, just as in English, lead to ungrammaticality, (28).<sup>3</sup>

- (28) a. layla: bihibb l-sbe:ħa w-sabaʔ l-sayya:ra:t.  
Leila like the-swimming and-race the-cars  
‘Leila likes swimming and car racing.’

- b. \*ʃu:<sub>k</sub> bihibb layla: \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub> w-sabaʔ l-sayya:ra:t?  
what<sub>k</sub> like Leila \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub> and-race the-cars  
‘What<sub>k</sub> does Leila like \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub> and car racing?’

- (29) ʔuhibb [l-ʕarab ya: ʒama:ʕa wa-ʔaqwa:la-hum] l-ħikma tazri:  
I.love the-Arabs VOC folks and-sayings-their the-wisdom run  
fi: ʕuru:qi-him ʒari:.  
in veins their running  
‘I love Arabs, folks, and their sayings. Wisdom certainly runs in their vein.’

أحب العرب يا جماعة و أفوالهم  
الحكمة تجري في عروقهم جري.

[https://twitter.com/ja22\\_/status/1227729300620795906](https://twitter.com/ja22_/status/1227729300620795906)

- (30) [l-ħudu:ʔ ya: s<sup>ʕ</sup>adi:ʔ-i: w-l-saba:t] ʔahamm ħa:ga  
the-tranquility VOC friend-my and-the-perseverance Most.important thing  
‘Tranquility, my friend, and perseverance are the most important thing.’

الهدوء يا صديقي والثبات أهم حاجة

<https://twitter.com/lanamohamed55/status/905302993809047552>

<sup>3</sup> A reviewer states that (29) through (32) are “all expected to be good under a gapping analysis: the coordination concerns two clauses, the second one having verb ellipsis ... The examples should have been of the type: ‘John<sub>i</sub>, and you idiot<sub>k</sub>, Mary<sub>j</sub> are those who get married.’” I was not able to find a tweet that is similar to the reviewer’s example. However, the following constructed example is readily available and judged as acceptable by native speakers.

- (i) [l-fiʔir ya: ʔax-i: w-l-ʒu:ʔ] hinne min l-ʔaʃya:ʔ l-ʔasa:siyye: lli:  
the-poverty VOC brother-my and-the-hunger are of the-things the-main that  
ħaffazit l-na:s ʕa-l-sawra  
incentivized the-people on-the-revolution  
‘[Poverty, brother, and hunger] are some of the main things that pushed people to revolt.’

- (31) fi: na:s btiktub [ʃan faransa: ya: ʒama:ʃa w-ʃan  
there people write about France VOC folks and-about  
l-ʃaʔn l-da:xili: li-faransa:] ma: yinfaʃ yʃaddu: min  
the-affair the-internal for-France NEG be.good pass from  
ʔudda:m safa:rat-ha: ʔasa:san  
front emabassy-its in.principle  
'There are people writing about France, folks, and about the internal affairs of  
France who do not qualify to walk by the French embassy to begin with.'  
فيه ناس بتكتب عن فرنسا يا جماعة و عن الشأن الداخلي لفرنسا ماينفحش يعدوا من قدام سفارتها اساسا  
<https://twitter.com/seksek/status/856505070149656576>
- (32) ha:ða: [mari:d<sup>f</sup> ya: na:s w-safi:h] wa-qulna:-ha min zama:n  
this sick VOC people and-obscene] and-we.said-it from long.time.ago  
yazib ʔi:qa:f ʒami:ʃ muqa:bala:t-u l-telefizyo:niyya wa-mawa:qiʃi-hi  
must stop all interviews-his the-televised and-locations-his  
fi: l-net  
in the-net  
'This person is sick, people, and obscene, and we said a long time ago that it was  
necessary to stop all his TV interviews and internet websites.'  
هذا مريض يا ناس و سفيه و قلناها من سمين يجب إيقاف جميع مقابلاته التلفزيونية و واقعه في النت  
<https://twitter.com/alshehrisv/status/1156134991673397248>
- Finally, Arabic vocatives may interrupt wh-islands, (34) through (36), without leading to ungrammaticality. This is so although extraction out of a wh-island is illicit, (33).
- (33) a. ziya:d nisi: le:ʃ layla: se:farit ʃa-ʔit<sup>a</sup>:lya:.  
Ziad forgot why Leila travelled to-Italy  
'Ziad forgot why Leila travelled to Italy.'  
b. \***la-we:n<sub>k</sub>** ziya:d nisi: le:ʃ layla: se:farit \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub>?  
to-where<sub>k</sub> Ziad forgot why Leila travelled \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub>  
'Where<sub>k</sub> did Ziad forget why Leila travelled \_\_\_\_\_<sub>k</sub>?'  
(34) mumkin ʔaʃrif [ki:f ya: ma:ma: txarraʒti: w-s<sup>ʃ</sup>ur<sup>t</sup>i:  
possible I.know how VOC mom you.graduated and-became  
mudarrise maʃ ha-l-kutub l-maʃu:qa]  
teacher with these-the-books the-handicapped  
'May I know how, Mom, you graduated and became a teacher with such  
handicapped books.'  
ممکن أعرف كيف يا ماما تخرجتي وصرتي مدرسة مع هالكتب المعوقة  
<https://twitter.com/BaRoRaH/status/16310949138>
- (35) fiyy-i: ʔaʃrif [le:ʃ ya: ʒha:ʃ miʃtird<sup>i</sup>:n ʃa-l-sa:ʃa]  
may-I know why VOC mules objecting to-the-clock  
'May I know why, Jackasses, you are objecting to the clock/daylight saving.'  
في اعرف ليش يا جحاش معترضين على الساعة  
<https://twitter.com/AliSayed231/status/1115023617635516416>
- (36) la: ʔaʃrif [ʔila: ʔayn ya: mis<sup>r</sup> tattazihi:].  
NEG I.know to where VOC Egypt you.head  
'I do not know to where, Egypt, you are heading.'  
لا اعرف الي اين يا مصر تتجهي .  
[https://twitter.com/hossam\\_mahmoud2/status/315865873887936512](https://twitter.com/hossam_mahmoud2/status/315865873887936512)

- (37) *za:lis ʔataðakkar [mata: ya: ʔuxwa:n l-ʔirha:biyyi:n*  
 sitting I.remember when VOC brother the-terrorists  
*wa:zahtum mili:ʃya: l-ħu:θi: ʃaskariyyan wa-siya:siyyan]!*  
 you.faced militia the-Houthi militarily and-politically  
 ‘I am (sitting here) trying to remember when, you brothers – the terrorists,<sup>4</sup> you  
 confronted the Houthi Militia militarily or politically!’

جالس اذكرك متى يا اخوان الارهابيين واجهتم مليشيا الحوثي عسكرياً وسياسياً!

[https://twitter.com/Akram\\_Albsesi/status/1163740470222237696](https://twitter.com/Akram_Albsesi/status/1163740470222237696)

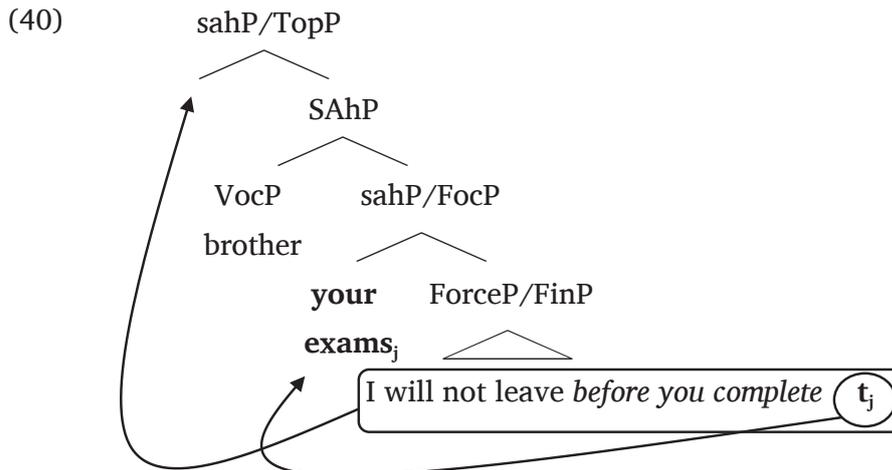
It is important to note that not only do vocatives interrupt different types of islands without leading to ungrammaticality, but they also have a great amount of flexibility as to where inside the island they may appear. Take (34), for example; the vocative in this tweet is adjacent to the *wh*-word. This is not the only available location, however. Other locations inside the *wh*-island are readily available for the vocative, as (38) illustrates.

- (38) *mumkin ʔaʃrif [ki:f (ya: ma:ma:) txarraʒti: (ya: ma:ma:)*  
 possible I.know how (VOC mom) you.graduated (VOC mom)  
*w-sʔurti: (ya: ma:ma:) mudarrise (ya: ma:ma:) maʃ ha-l-kutub*  
 and-became (VOC mom) teacher (VOC mom) with these-the-books  
*l-maʃu:qa]*  
 the-handicapped  
 ‘May I know how, (Mom), you graduated, (Mom), and became, (Mom), a  
 teacher, (Mom), with such handicapped books.’

Examples like the ones presented in this section pose a serious challenge for accounts that argue for a fixed merging location for vocative phrases. This is so because their main premise is that vocative phrases always merge in a sentence-initial position and that any pre-vocative material moves to that location. As we mentioned earlier, an important prediction follows: it should be illicit for vocatives to interrupt islands. This section has presented naturally-occurring data from Arabic to show that vocatives may in fact occur inside different types of syntactic islands without inducing any violation. Consider (27), repeated here as (39). Under the accounts examined in this section, the derivation of this sentence would involve remnant movement of ‘I will not leave before you complete *t<sub>j</sub>*.’ As (40) demonstrates, this step is preceded by the movement of ‘your exams’ out of an adjunct island. We know that this type of movement is illicit and, therefore, this sentence is expected, contrary to facts, to be ungrammatical.

- (39) *ʔana: miʃ hanzal [ʔabli ma: txallasʔ ya: xu:ya*  
 I NEG go.out/leave before that you.finish VOC my.brother  
*ʔimtiha:na:t-ak]*  
 Exams-your  
 ‘I will not leave before you complete, brother, your exams.’

<sup>4</sup> ‘Terrorists’ here could be an appositive, and this is the meaning that the translation tries to capture. Alternatively, the whole vocative could be *ʔidʔa:fa* ‘construct state nominal,’ in which case the translation should be ‘you brothers of terrorists.’



Since (39) and the other structures presented in this section are in fact grammatical, the reasonable conclusion is that no movement is involved in their derivation. In other words, it is not the case that vocative phrases merge in a fixed location while other elements move around them. Vocative phrases have freedom of placement, which allows them to merge at different locations in their host structure. This is expected if vocatives are parentheticals.

This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the phenomenon of vocatives interrupting islands is not unique to Arabic. The examples in (41) and (42) show that vocatives may interrupt different types of islands in English and Spanish respectively. These include subject islands, (a), adjunct islands, (b), and *wh*-islands, (c).

(41) *English*

- a. But the reality **Mr President** of not pursuing it ... is something that I would request my colleagues reflect on.  
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?14684-1/senate-session> (at 8:10:25)
- b. ... and many children ... are now visited with the sins of their fathers, because we, **Mr. President and Gentlemen**, unlike the good Samaritan, have neglected our duty towards our neighbor.  
(From *Transactions of the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society: At its fourth annual meeting in June 1854, Vol. 2, No. 1, page 102*)  
<https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10524/2022/RHAS-v2n1-1854.pdf>
- c. You may wonder why, **Mr. President**, we mention so many court decisions.  
(From *Draft of Second Emancipation Proclamation*, submitted May 17, 1962 by The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.)  
<https://www.crmvet.org/info/emancip2.htm>

(42) *Spanish*

- a. Lo único que quiero, **Señor**, en este mundo es predicar el evangelio hasta que me muera.  
'The only thing I want, **Lord**, in this world is to preach the gospel until I die.'  
<https://www.facebook.com/Conectados-con-la-Biblia-227936174644588/videos/el-ultimo-mensaje/2245031432480960/>
- b. Añez ha estado regentado por la CPE, porque nosotros **señor**, no somos gente que viola la constitución.  
'(Jeanine) Añez has been run by the CPE (Constitución Política del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia; the Constitution of Bolivia)', because we, **sir**, are not people who violate the constitution.'  
<https://twitter.com/lichyta23/status/1194407065340522497>

- c. Yo me pregunto por qué nosotros, **señor Uribe**, tenemos que pagar por tanto clientelismo y normas que nos perjudican.  
‘I wonder why we, **Mr. Uribe**, have to pay for so much patronage and rules that harm us.’  
based on the following tweet: <https://twitter.com/BohorquezArenas/status/1237067033117851648>

Recall that Slocum (2016) ran a survey to test the grammaticality of mid-sentential vocatives that interrupted syntactic islands and found they were judged as degraded. The examples in (41) and (42) cast doubt on the results of this survey. One reason Slocum’s survey yielded unfavorable results may be the fact that all sentences were presented out of context, as Slocum herself points out. This may have been compounded by the fact that the vocative used in all the sentences was the proper noun *Jason*. While a proper noun may be used as a sentence-medial address and may carry some emotional load, it is unlikely to be interpreted as such in an out-of-context statement. I found that titles that emphasize hierarchy, such as *Mr. President*, as well as terms of endearment and insult, fare much better.

The next subsection presents additional challenges to the account in Slocum (2016).

## 2.2 Vocatives and topicalization

An account that argues for a fixed merging site for vocatives faces additional challenges, especially if the argument assumes that pre-vocative material is the outcome of a special type of movement: topicalization. This is the case with Slocum’s (2016) account. As we saw at the beginning of this section, according to Slocum, VocP merges above FocP in the left periphery, (43). Any material that appears in a pre-vocative position does so as a result of movement to TopP.

- (43) [ForceP [TopP [VocP [FocP [TopP [FinP [...

If this is correct, two predictions follow. First, we should expect wh-questions, in which a vocative phrase follows a wh-word, to be ungrammatical. This is so because, under standard assumptions, wh-words are located in FocP. This prediction is not borne out. Arabic data show that questions with vocatives to the right of a wh-word are readily acceptable, as (44) through (49) show. Note that (44) starts with *w-ʔinti* ‘and you’ as topic, followed with *ʔe:mta* ‘when’ as focus. Under Slocum’s analysis, the vocative should appear between the topic and the focus, which is also possible in Arabic, but not after the focus.

- (44) *w-ʔinti ʔe:mta ya: ʕumr-i: baddik tʃarfi:-na: ʕa-hayy*  
and-you when VOC life-my you.want honor-us to-neighborhood  
*l-sillum la-tiftahi: l-mahalla:t*  
the-Sillum to-open the-stores  
‘And you, when, my darling, do you plan to honor us with your visit to the Sillum neighborhood and open the stores?’  
وانتي أيمتى يا عمري بذك تشرفينا ع حي السلم لتفتحي محلات  
<https://twitter.com/MohamadMyounesm/status/1150034472198430722>

- (45) *la-ʔe:mta ya: hadʕrit l-masʔu:l baddak tistahmir*  
till-when VOC honored the-official you.want treat.like.donkeys  
*ʕaʕb-ak?*  
people-your  
‘Till when, Mr. Official, are you going to treat your people as if they were idiots?’  
#ل-ايمتى يا حضرة المسؤول بذك تستحمر شعبك؟  
<https://twitter.com/TalaTinkerbell/status/659825864826163200>

- (46) **le:ʃ ya: ʔuku:me** tra:ʒaʃti: ʃan l-ʔamn l-qawi:<sup>5</sup>  
 why VOC government backed.away from the-security the-strong  
 l-kuwayti:  
 the-Kuwaiti  
 ‘Why, government, did you back away from strong Kuwaiti security?’  
 ليش يا حكومة تراجعتي عن الأمن القوي الكويتي  
<https://twitter.com/abudhari100/status/1235620277461057537>
- (47) **mi:n ya: ʒama:ʃa** kasar mana:xi:r ʔabu l-ho:l ???  
 who VOC folks broke nose Abu l-Hol  
 ‘Who, folks, broke the nose of Abu l-Hol???’  
 مين يا جماعة كسر منخير أبو الهول ???  
<https://twitter.com/MahmoudHoda2003/status/1247207681938595840>
- (48) **ʃu: ʃmiltu: ya: ʃarab** bi-mawd<sup>u:ʃ</sup> naʔl l-safa:ra ʃala  
 what you.did VOC Arabs with-issue moving the-embassy to  
 l-quds ?  
 Jerusalem  
 What did you do, Arabs, with regard to the issue of moving the embassy to  
 Jerusalem?’  
 شو عملتوا يا عرب بموضوع نقل السفارة على القدس ؟  
<https://twitter.com/HousienD/status/995920136954679297>
- (49) **we:n ya: ma:ma:** l-xami:re baddi: ʔaʃmil bi:tza  
 where VOC Mom the-yeast I.want make pizza  
 ‘Where, Mom, is the yeast? I want to make a pizza.’  
 Me at 12 AM  
 وين يا ماما الخميرة بدي اعمل بيتزا  
[https://twitter.com/amanie\\_geha/status/1243290615623962625](https://twitter.com/amanie_geha/status/1243290615623962625)

A reviewer asks if FocP could be iterative in Arabic, as this would render (44) through (49) less problematic for Slocum (2016). Arabic does not allow multiple FocPs, as illustrated in (50). Examples (b) and (c) show that a direct object – ‘Kareem’ in (b) and ‘Leila’ in (c) – may be focused. However, once a wh-word is involved as in (d), neither ‘Kareem’ nor ‘Leila’ may be focused. As (e) and (f) demonstrate, a fronted ‘Kareem’ or ‘Leila’ would only be grammatical if it is associated with a resumptive pronoun. A resumptive pronoun makes the fronted element a topic and not a focus. Assuming that wh-words occupy FocP, (e) and (f) show that Arabic licenses only one FocP.

- (50) a. ʔamarit kari:m ye:xod layla: ʃa-l-madrased.  
 I.ordered Kareem take Leila to-the-school  
 ‘I ordered Kareem to take Leila to school.’
- b. kari:m ʔamarit ye:xod layla: ʃa-l-madrased, miʃ sa:mi:.  
 Kareem I.ordered take Leila to-the-school not Sami  
 ‘Kareem, I ordered to take Leila to school, not Sami.’
- c. layla: ʔamarit kari:m ye:xod ʃa-l-madrased, miʃ ziya:d.  
 Leila I.ordered Kareem take to-the-school not Ziad  
 ‘Leila, I ordered Kareem to take to school, not Ziad.’

<sup>5</sup> The tweeter could have meant *qawmi*: ‘national.’

- d. la-we:n ?amarti: kari:m ye:xod layla:  
to-where you.ordered Kareem take Leila  
'Where did you order Kareem to take Leila?'
- e. kari:m la-we:n ?amarti:-(h) ye:xod layla:  
Kareem to-where you.ordered-(him) take Leila  
'Kareem, where did you order \*(him) to take Leila?'
- f. layla: la-we:n ?amarti: kari:m ye:xod-\*(ha:)?  
Leila to-where you.ordered Kareem take-\*(her)  
'Leila, where did you order Kareem to take \*(her)?'

Second, Slocum's analysis predicts that vocatives should be ungrammatical if they appear after quantifiers or if they interrupt idiomatic expressions. This is so because these elements resist topicalization.<sup>6</sup> This prediction is not borne out either. The tweets in (51) through (53) show that examples with vocatives following quantifiers are readily available.

- (51) **ma: hada: ya: rafi:?** ma: bixa:f min l-marad<sup>s</sup> w-l-mo:t  
no one VOC comrade NEG fear from the-illness and-the-death  
'No one, comrade, is not afraid of/does not fear illness or death.'  
ما حدا يا رفيق ما بخاف من المرض والموت  
<https://twitter.com/hypothalamus0/status/1242104618194272258>
- (52) **ma: hada: ya: sayn-i:** ma:z<sup>s</sup>lu:m ye:r l-jaʃab  
no one VOC eye-my oppressed except the-people  
'No one, darling, is oppressed/wronged/a victim except the people.'  
ما حدا يا عيني مظلوم غير الشعب  
[https://twitter.com/Alii\\_Wehbi/status/1211745303059193863](https://twitter.com/Alii_Wehbi/status/1211745303059193863)
- (53) **kul wa:hid ya: ?ax riya:d<sup>s</sup>** yara: l-?axari:n bi-ʃe:n nafs-u  
every one VOC brother Riyad see the-others with-eye self-his  
'Everyone, brother Riyad, sees others through his own eyes (projects his own reality onto others).'  
كل واحد يا اخ رياض يرى الاخرين بعين نفسه  
<https://twitter.com/anashri2030/status/1241347934857412608>

Similarly, idiom chunks may be interrupted by a vocative and yet preserve their idiomatic meaning, as (54) through (56) illustrate.

- (54) law bidda: tʃatti: **ya: ʃo:n** ke:nit yayyamid ..!  
if it.wanted rain VOC Aoun it.would be.an.overcast  
'If it were going to rain, Aoun, clouds would have gathered in the sky ..!'  
لو بدها تشتتي يا عون كانت غيمت ..!  
<https://twitter.com/Waelalmatar/status/1194214115314741248>

<sup>6</sup> I thank Eric Potsdam for bringing this point to my attention.

- (55) fasa:d      za:miʕat    l-malik    faysʕal    l-kita:b    **ya: sa:da**      ba:yin  
 corruption university the-king Faysal the-book VOC gentlemen apparent  
 min ʕunwa:n-u  
 from title-its  
 ‘#Corruption\_at\_the\_King\_Faysal\_University. The book, gentlemen, may be  
 judged by its title.’  
 #فساد\_جامعة\_الملك\_فيصل\_الكتاب\_يا\_سادة\_باين\_من\_عنوانه  
<https://twitter.com/BanderAlusaimi/status/792708311028228096>
- (56) yazib    ʔan    yaku:n    l-radd      ʕale:-hum    ʔa:si:    ...    ʔasi:    ...    ʔa:si:  
 must to be the-response to-them harsh ... harsh ... harsh  
 diʔ    l-ħadi:d    **ya: abu: fahad**    w-huwwa    ħa:mi:  
 strike the-iron VOC Abu Fahad while-it hot  
 ‘The response to them must be harsh ... harsh ... harsh. Strike the iron, Abu  
 Fahad, while it’s hot.’  
 يجب أن يكون الرد عليهم قاسي... قاسي... قاسي دق الحديد يا ابو فهد وهو حامي  
<https://twitter.com/alsulmi13579/status/595638776396918784>

The data in this subsection indicate that topicalization cannot successfully account for mid-sentential vocatives. And while the discussion focuses on Arabic, the observation is not limited to Arabic. The examples in (57) and (58) show that mid-sentential vocatives in English and Spanish may occur after wh-words, (a), may be preceded by quantifiers, (b), and may interrupt idioms, (c). The more plausible conclusion then is that vocatives have freedom of placement and may interrupt their host clause freely, which is expected if vocatives are parentheticals.

- (57) *English*
- When, **Mr. President**, did you issue any type of Shelter In Place Order??  
[https://twitter.com/elisa\\_hirt/status/1250874441690566656](https://twitter.com/elisa_hirt/status/1250874441690566656)
  - Your right!!! No one **Mr. President** has been any where near as corrupt as you!!  
<https://twitter.com/talk2mereality/status/1218227325537595395>
  - The cat, **my friend** is out of the bag.  
[https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/ah82t8/who\\_would\\_agree\\_terry\\_crews\\_would\\_make\\_an/](https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/ah82t8/who_would_agree_terry_crews_would_make_an/)
- (58) *Spanish*
- Por qué **Señora** no le pide la donación y solidaridad a CFK ya que su dinero es robado al pueblo Argentino????  
 ‘Why, **Ma’am**, don’t you ask CFK (Cristina Elisabet Fernández de Kirchner) for donation and solidarity since her money is stolen from the Argentinian people?  
<https://twitter.com/GiseBongiovanni/status/1310188193694838784>
  - nadie **señor** tiene la verdad absoluta nadie  
 ‘No one, **Sir**, has the absolute truth. No one.’  
<https://twitter.com/manuelcuenca/status/214952854690082816>
  - El que no llora **mi amor** no mama.  
 ‘That who does not cry, **sweetheart**, does not get fed.’  
<https://twitter.com/albadanph/status/439582896660422656>

Now we turn to (6b) and the topic of connection between vocatives and their host clause.

### 3 Connection with the host clause

In his discussion of vocatives, Ashdowne maintains that, unlike parentheticals, they “have some *necessary* connection with the accompanying utterance through something in the discourse context, viz. they must refer to the addressee(s) and are unacceptable if they do not” (2002: 155; emphasis in original). In this section, I will approach the question of connection from a broader semantic and syntactic perspective before I address Ashdowne’s point. Some of the points discussed here are well-established about vocatives cross-linguistically.

For a start, vocatives, including Arabic vocatives, may stand alone; for example, (1) and (2) in Section 1. They do not have to be part of a larger utterance, and thus no connection with a host clause is required at all. Ashdowne (2002: 147) identifies such vocatives as their own group and calls them ‘isolative.’ There is nothing syntactically special about these vocatives, at least not in Arabic, and therefore they do not warrant a special label. Even proper names, which are more likely to be used as calls to grab an addressee’s attention and are normally followed with an utterance, may be used as stand-alone vocatives. For example, a man called Ziad could be addressed via (59), with any of the material between angle brackets as optional. Depending on the context and intonation, (59) could serve a number of pragmatic functions as the English renditions in (a) through (c) show.

- (59) <ya:> ziya:d <ya: ziya:d>  
 a. Excitement: ‘Ziad, it is so good to see you!’  
 b. Disbelief: ‘Ziad, I can’t believe you did that!’  
 c. Desperation: ‘Ziad, what shall I do with you?!’

Even when they are part of a host clause, vocatives are cross-linguistically optional elements. They may be added or deleted from their host clause without altering its truth-conditional meaning or the conditions under which it is considered true or false. When they are added to an utterance, their contribution is pragmatic, evaluative; they may express the speaker’s evaluation of the addressee and/or of the event in the host clause. They also serve to manage the relationship between the speaker/writer and the addressee; they may maintain, redefine, enhance, or challenge it (see Spencer-Oatey 2002; Haegeman & Hill 2013). This is why, vocatives are characterized in the literature as interpersonal elements (e.g., Hill 2013). The tweet in (60) is a telling example of the interpersonal, evaluative characteristics of vocatives. The tweet is a response to a post about Islam and Muslim holy sites. The post is full of factual errors. The tweeter uses the vocative ‘jackass’ six times, always between parentheses, to express his negative evaluation of the writer of the post.<sup>7</sup> If the relationship between the tweeter and the addressee was once good, this vocative is likely to challenge it and redefine it. If it was already bad, the vocative is likely to make it worse. Importantly, the insertion or deletion of the vocative does not alter the factual veracity of the host construction.

<sup>7</sup> While it is not possible to get into the tweeter’s mind and know for sure why he uses parentheses, we could fairly interpret the choice of punctuation as an indication that he perceives the vocative as an optional parenthetical that may be inserted as needed.

- (60) To begin with, there is no mosque called Jerusalem, **(you jackass)**, and Al-Aqsa mosque is the first of the two Qiblas, **(you jackass)**, and from there the prophet ascended into heaven, **(you jackass)**, and even if it were a prayer room in your house and people want to make it impure, you should defend it, **(you jackass)**, because all places of worship are equally sacred, **(you jackass)**, and as a Muslim, you are expected to give sacred persons, places, and things a priority, **(you jackass)**.

ما في مسجد اسمه قدس مبدئياً (يا حمار) و المسجد الاقصى اولى القبليتين (يا حمار) و الرسول عرج للسماء منه (يا حمار)، و حتى لو مسجد بيتك و ناس بدهم ينجسوه المفروض اتدافع عنه (يا حمار) لانه كلهم قدسيتهم واحدة (يا حمار) المفروض انك مسلم و المقدسات قضيتك الاولى (يا حمار)

<https://twitter.com/farahRobeen/status/1156542549554814978>

Still on the topic of connection, Arabic vocatives, like vocatives in other languages, do not display sensitivity to clause-typing. For example, they are compatible with questions and imperatives; e.g., (47) and (56) respectively. In this sense, they are even less connected to the host clause than some other pragmatic elements may be. For example, discourse particles in Romanian and West Flemish show sensitivity to clause-typing (Haegeman & Hill 2013). And while there is normally a distinction between sentence-initial and sentence-medial vocatives, with the former normally – though not necessarily always – serving as calls used to grab the hearer’s attention and the latter as addresses employed “to establish or reestablish the relationship between the speaker and the addressee” (Slocum 2016: 12), this distribution seems to be informed by pragmatics rather than syntax (Slocum 2016: 128–129).

Further evidence that vocatives are syntactically independent of the host clause comes from scope information. For example, vocatives in Arabic and cross-linguistically fall outside the scope of negation, a behavior that is typical of non-truth-conditional material, including parentheticals (e.g., see Vries 2012). Take the tweet in (61). If someone negates the statement or responds with *la?*, *mif saħi:h* ‘no, incorrect,’ the negation targets the veracity of the virus information. It does not target the vocative to indicate, for example, that the addressees are not *saba:b* ‘guys but, say, *sʿaba:ya*: ‘gals.’ The vocative may be challenged separately, however. For example, one may respond with *saba:b? fu: ʔasʿdak saba:b? niħna: sʿaba:ya*: ‘Guys? What do you mean guys? We are gals’ (see Potts 2011).

- (61) fi: ya: **saba:b** vi:ru:s sʿi:ni: ʕala: ma: yabdu: ʔism-u koro:na  
 there VOC guys virus Chinese on that seem name-it corona  
 ʕaklu raħ yintifir bi-l-ʕa:lam kull-u  
 seem FUT spread in-the-word all-it  
 ‘There is, guys, a Chinese virus, it seems, called corona that seems to spread in the whole world.’

في يا شباب فيروس صيني على ما يبدو اسمه كورونا شكله رح ينتشر بالعالم كله

[https://twitter.com/marwan\\_wafi\\_/status/1240724249125535745](https://twitter.com/marwan_wafi_/status/1240724249125535745)

Arabic Vocatives are even more syntactically independent from their host constructions than some parentheticals might be. For example, while some parentheticals, such as non-restrictive relative clauses, may be “directly attached to an anchor/antecedent” and may “form a constituent with it” (Vries 2012: 154), Arabic vocatives never form a constituent with an element in the host clause no matter where they are linearly pronounced in it. Also, some parentheticals, such as appositions, may “take over the Case of the anchor

in many languages” (Vries 2012: 155). Vocatives are different in this respect. “They are unlike other cases in that they do not mark the relation of dependents to heads” (Blake 1994: 9; cited in Ashdown 2002).

Lack of connection between vocatives and their host construction is also evident in the possible mismatch in number agreement between the vocative nominal and the second-person referent in the host clause. The focus here is on vocatives employed in what Stavrou (2013), drawing on Moro (2003), calls intradeictic address.<sup>8</sup> Both researchers distinguish between extradeictic and intradeictic address. In extradeictic address, the sentence does not contain a 2<sup>nd</sup> person element (e.g., subject, object), and if a vocative is used, there is “no co-indexation between the vocative and a clausal argument” (Stavrou, 2013: 317). Many examples used in the paper so far fit in this category; e.g., (51) through (53). In intradeictic address, on the other hand, the sentence necessarily contains one or more 2<sup>nd</sup> person elements (e.g., subject, object) and “[i]n the presence of a vocative ..., any second person element in the sentence inescapably co-refers with it” (Stavrou 2013: 316). To Stavrou, this co-reference is significant because it “points to the ‘engagement’ of the vocative to the syntactic structure” (2013: 2016). Examples (46) and (48), repeated here as (62) and (63), fit in this category.

(62) le:ʃ ya: **huku:me** tra:zaʔti: ʃan l-ʔamn l-qawi:  
 why VOC government backed.away from the-security the-strong  
 l-kuwayti:  
 the-Kuwaiti  
 ‘Why, government, did you back away from strong Kuwaiti security?’

(63) ʃu: ʃmiltu: ya: **ʃarab** bi-mawdʕu:ʃ naʔl l-safa:ra ʃala l-quds ?  
 what you.did VOC Arabs with-issue moving the-embassy to Jerusalem  
 What did you do, Arabs, with regard to the issue of moving the embassy to  
 Jerusalem?’

Now, observe the tweets in (64) and (65). The vocative in both is singular, but all reference to the addressee in the host clauses is plural. The examples show that it is possible to reference a whole group in the host clause but use a vocative that references each member individually. Of course, it may be argued that the tweeter may address one person with the vocative but make reference to the addressee and her/his cohort in the host clause. This is true; however, the tweets in (64) and (65) are marked as “replying to” two individuals each. In fact, it is not uncommon to find similar tweets in which three or more individuals are marked as addressees via @, and yet the vocative is singular.

(64) ya: **habi:b-i:** ya: **ʔax-i:** ʔintum fhimtu: l-ʔuyniye ʔalatʕ  
 VOC love.SG-my VOC brother-my you.PL understood.PL the-song wrong  
 ‘Darling, brother, you understood the song wrongly.’

يا حبيبي يا أخي أنتم فهمتوا الأغنية غلط

<https://twitter.com/Salemfs2/status/1188830121618235399>

(65) ya: **ʔixt-i:** ʃam-nzibil-kun l-ħaʔi:ʔa w-ma: bidkun !  
 VOC sister-my PROG-we.bring-you.PL the-truth and-NEG you.PL.want  
 ‘Sister, we are bringing you the truth, but you don’t want it!’

يا اختي عم نجيبلكن الحقيقة وما بدكن !

<https://twitter.com/Ahaidar313/status/1141996182887108608>

<sup>8</sup> Moro’s (2003) original term is ‘infradeictic.’

The opposite is also true. It is possible to use a vocative that references a whole group, while at the same time make reference to individual members of the group in the host clause. The tweets in (66) and (67) are examples. They show that a plural vocative may be incorporated in a host clause in which all reference to the addressee is singular.

- (66) **ya: ʃaba:b** ʔiza: baddak tiḥki: msʕi:be la-ʔabu:-k xo:d  
 VOC guys if you.SG.want tell disaster to-father-your.SG you.SG.take  
 ha-l-nasʕi:ḥa stanna-a lamma: yityadda: w-yiʃrab  
 this-the-advice you.SG.wait-him when he.eat.lunch and-he.drink  
 ʃani:na w-ʔiza: ʔakal batʕtʕi:x biku:n ʔaḥsan  
 yogurt.drink and-if he.ate watermelon it.would.be better  
 w-ʔaḥsan...  
 and-better

‘Guys, if you want to talk to your father about a major problem, take this piece of advice. Wait for him until he has had lunch and a yogurt drink, and if he has eaten watermelon, it would be even better...’

يا شباب اذا بدك تحكي مصيبيه لا ابوك  
 خود هالنصيحة  
 استناه لما يتغدى ويشرب شنية  
 واذا اكل بطيخ بيكون احسن واحسن...

<https://twitter.com/nokt3lakefkefak/status/212878708560756736>

- (67) **ya: sʕaba:ya:** ʔiza: fi: ʃabb: byitzakkar ʕi:d mile:d-ik byaʕrif  
 VOC gals if there guy remember birthday-your.SG know  
 ʃu: bithibbi: byihfazʕ sʕuwar-ik ... hayda Mark Zuckerberg  
 what you.SG.like save pictures-your.SG ... this Mark Zuckerberg  
 ʕala fikra miʃ fata: ʔaḥle:m-ik  
 by.the.way not boy dreams-your.SG

‘Gals, if there is a guy: who remembers your birthday, knows what you like, saves your pictures ... this would be Mark Zuckerberg by the way and not the man of your dreams.’

يا صبايا  
 إذا في شب:  
 بيتذكر عيد ميلادك  
 بيعرف شو بتحبى  
 بيحفظ صورك ...  
 هذا مارك زكربيرج على فكرة  
 مش فتى أحلامك

<https://twitter.com/Shusmo/status/1084837017240911873>

Why are examples (64) through (67) significant? There is evidence that speaker and hearer information in the left periphery of a structure controls agreement lower down in the construction; see, for example, Miyagawa (2012) who shows that the allocutive marker on the verb in Basque agrees with the hearer information in the left periphery, irrespective of whether the hearer is lexical or not. Under the analysis that a vocative phrase merges as part of the speech act phrase in the left periphery, we expect the phi-features of the hearer to control the phi-features of coreferential elements in the host clause. This is the type of coreference that Stavrou (2013) seems to point to in her discussion of vocatives used in intradeictic address. The Arabic tweets in (64) through (67) show that full agreement may not always apply and that mismatches are possible. Such mismatches may be easier to explain if vocative phrases are analyzed as parenthetical adjuncts. Under this

analysis, we expect elements referring to the addressee in the host clause to agree with the unpronounced hearer in the left periphery but not necessarily with the pronounced vocative. Agreement with the vocative is pragmatically determined with the possibility of some mismatches.

Further evidence along the same lines comes from the fact that a speaker may address a group of people but use a vocative to anchor parts of the utterance as especially but not exclusively relevant to certain individuals in the group. Consider (68) from a Lebanese play called *bi-l-nisbe la-bukra fu*: ‘what are the plans for tomorrow’ by Ziad Al-Rahbani. In this scene, the owner of a bar in Beirut is talking to three of his employees, Rida, Najib, and Zakaria. He is not satisfied with their work; he believes that they are not trying hard enough to be friendly and to attract more clients. He characterizes Rida as clumsy, Najib as gloomy, and Zakaria as lifeless. He goes on to suggest that the situation may easily improve if the three employees try to be more agile, cheerful, and animated. The suggestions are relevant to all three employees to varying degrees (see Slocum 2016: 23 for a note on relevance). The speaker uses vocatives to anchor each suggestion to one employee based on a salient aspect of that employee’s personality. However, by doing so, he does not imply that Rida needs to be agile but does not need to worry about being cheerful or animated. By the same token, he does not imply that Zakaria only needs to be animated but could otherwise be clumsy. In other words, the manager’s suggestions are expected to be taken seriously by all the employees as a group. At the same time, the manager is able to use a vocative to profile a specific suggestion as especially relevant to one employee. This is only possible if there is no syntactic connection between the vocative and the host clause.

- (68) t<sup>ʕ</sup>arru:-ha:      haliḥlu:-ha:    laḥilḥu:-ha:.    l-ʃayle      badha:    xiffe    ya:  
 you.PL.soften-it    resolve-it    loosen-it    the-situation    need    agility    VOC  
 rid<sup>ʕ</sup>a:,    badha:    basme    ya:    naʒi:b,    badha:    badha:    ru:h    ya:    zakariyya:.  
 Rida    need    smile    VOC    Najib    need    need    spirit    VOC    Zakaria  
 ‘You all need to loosen up. The situation needs some agility, Rida, needs a smile, Najib, needs needs positive energy, Zakaria.’

The constructed example in (69) is further illustration. In this case, the parents of three children are going on a trip for one day. The children’s aunt will be taking care of them. A parent is giving them instructions to make sure they wake up early, put their rooms in order, and eat breakfast before they go to school. They are also expected to be nice to their aunt. All the instructions are relevant to all the children, as the plural agreement on the verbs indicates; yet, the parent anchors some of instructions to some of the children based on their behavioral history. For example, Samir is known to be the most resistant to eating breakfast before school, so the parent anchors the instruction of eating breakfast to him. The parent still uses the verb ‘eat’ with second-person plural agreement, indicating that all three kids are concerned. In this respect, (69), as well as (68), is different from (70) (from Ashdowne 2002; fn. 17-iii) in which there are three presents and three addressees involved, but each addressee receives a different present.

- (69) btu:ʃu:      bakki:r,    btilibso:      tye:b-kun,      w-bithad<sup>ʕ</sup>ro:  
 you.PL.wake.up    early    you.PL.wear    clothes-your.PL    and- you.PL.prepare  
 ḥa:l-kun    la-l-madrase.    ʔuwad<sup>ʕ</sup>-kun    bitd<sup>ʕ</sup>ibbuw-a:.      ma:  
 self-your.PL    for-the-school    rooms-your.PL    you.PL.arrange-them    NEG  
 btitirkuw-a:      mkarkafe    ziya:d.    w-bte:klo:      ʃi:      ʔabl  
 you.PL.leave-them    messy    Ziad    and-you.PL.eat    something    before  
 l-madrase.    ma:    tru:ho:    ʃa-l-madrase    bala:    ʔakel    Sami:r.  
 the-school    NEG    you.PL.go    to-the-school    without    food    Samir

w-xa:lit-kun btismafo: kilmit-a: w-ma: bitʕazbuww-a: **layla:**  
 and-aunt-your.PL you.PL.listen word-her and-NEG torment-her Leila  
 ‘You all wake up early, get dressed, and prepare yourselves for school. You clean  
 up your rooms; you don’t leave them messy, Ziad. Eat something before school;  
 don’t leave for school without food, Samir. And your aunt, you all listen to her  
 and do not give her a hard time, Leila.

(70) *English*

Here are your presents: I’m giving you this, Mark, you this, John, and you this, Mary.

Now we return to Ashdowne’s observation that vocatives show necessary connection with the host clause in that they “must refer to the addressee(s) and are unacceptable if they do not” (2002: 155). This section has shown that any connection between vocatives and the host clause is more likely to be the outcome of pragmatics rather than syntax or semantics. Pragmatically, one could expect a vocative to refer to an addressee. Still, the lack of connection raises the question whether it is possible for a clause to host a vocative that does not refer to the addressee. My data shows that this is possible only if the non-addressee serves as a targeted overhearer, while the actual addressee is not channel-linked. In other words, the utterance event must involve the following two types of participants:

- A. **Addressed Participants:** These are individuals addressed “by the speaker in a manner to suggest that his [sic.] words are particularly for them” (Goffman 1981: 9–10). They are not channel-linked, whereby channel-linkage is “the ability to receive the message” (Levinson 1988: 174) and to respond to it if they choose. The speaker’s message is addressed to them in absentia, solely for the benefit of the group in (B).
- B. **Unaddressed Participants:** These are channel-linked recipients. They are not specifically addressed by the speaker, but the speaker’s message is uttered for their benefit. They serve as the indirect target or the targeted overhearers of the message, and as such they are able to assess the speaker’s message and respond to it if they choose to (see Levinson 1988: 194–197).

At least one scenario meets the conditions in (A) and (B).<sup>9</sup> First, however, some background about a conversational practice in Arabic is in order.

In Arabic conversations, when reference is made to animals, body parts, and other objects that may be considered offensive, disgusting, or otherwise inappropriate, the

<sup>9</sup> Another scenario that satisfies the conditions in (A) and (B) involves optatives like (i). In this case, God is a non-channel-linked addressee. The tweeter may believe that God receives the message, but there is no way to tell for sure. The tweeter does not expect God to assume the role of the speaker. The referent of *ya: ħabi:bi:* ‘darling,’ on the other hand, is a channel-linked recipient serving as a targeted overhearer. In face-to-face communication, the speaker may direct her gaze – and probably point – to the sky when she says *ya: rabb* ‘O Lord,’ followed with a gaze to the earthly being when she says *ya: ħabi:bi:* ‘darling.’ The targeted overhearer cannot fulfil the speaker’s desire; only God can. However, the targeted overhearer may choose to respond with *ʔa:mi:n* ‘Amen.’

(i) **ya: rabb** yku:n jahar xe:r ʕle:na: **ya: ħabi:b-i:**  
 VOC Lord be.SUBJ month good on-us VOC love-my  
 ‘O Lord, may this be a good month for all of us, darling.’

يا رب يكون شهر خير علينا يا حبيبي

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1253035095490953219>

I do not analyze optatives here. Vocatives that involve reference to a deity deserve a closer and more detailed analysis, which I defer for another occasion.

speaker is expected to use an expression such as *l-baʕi:d* ‘the far one’ or *ħa:ʕa: X* ‘to the exclusion of X,’ where X references recipients of the message. The expressions indicate that the inappropriate terms do not reference the recipients and do not mean to offend or show disrespect. The tweets in (71) and (72) are examples. In (72), the tweeter expresses indignation toward another tweet that defends the Syrian regime. Notice that the expression *ħa:ʕa:-kum ya: kira:m* ‘no offense, noble people’ contains a vocative referencing the individuals whose presence the reader is mindful of and to whom he tries to be respectful.

- (71) la: yadʕurru l-saħa:ba nabħu l-kila:bi **ħa:ʕa:** **l-ħa:dʕiri:n**  
 NEG harm the-clouds barking the-dogs exceptive.of the-attendees  
**wa-l-ʔaħra:r**  
 and-the-free.people  
 ‘Clouds are not harmed by the barking of dogs (i.e., honorable people are not affected by the actions or words of lowlives), with no offense to the attendees (followers reading the tweet) and free people.’  
 لا يضر السحاب نبح الكلاب حاشا الحاضرين والاحرار  
<https://twitter.com/jalaljuma8/status/1210906657619881987>

- (72) fa:tiħ timm-o mitil timm l-ħma:r (**ħa:ʕa:-kum** **ya:**  
 opening mouth-his like mouth the-jackass exceptive.of-you.PL VOC  
**kira:m**) w-ʕam-yitfalsaf  
 nobles and-PROG-philosophize  
 ‘He opens his mouth like a jackass (no offense to you, noble people) and pretends he knows what he is talking about.’  
 فاتح تمو مثل تم الحمار ( حاشاكم يا كرام) وعم يتفلسف  
<https://twitter.com/Kojack50/status/1087408092936130560>

Importantly, in a conversation that involves gossip about an absent third party, a speaker may use a turn or an utterance event to address the subject of the gossip directly as if s/he were present. Consider (73), for example. The tweet defends a Palestinian poet and columnist called Tamim Al-Barghouti. Al-Barghouti had recently addressed the United Nations, and a Saudi writer claimed that the address had been dictated to him by the Israeli delegation. The tweeter pretends he is addressing the writer with the comment in (73). The term *l-baʕi:d* ‘the far one’ is an explicit indication that the Saudi writer as an addressee is not channel-linked. And in fact he is not; for example, he is not atted or hashtagged. It is also an indication that the tweeter is aware of the presence of channel-linked overhearers, namely, his followers on Twitter. By using *l-baʕi:d* ‘the far one,’ he states that the vocative *ya: ħma:r* ‘VOC jackass’ is not meant for them and that he is not addressing any of them.

- (73) yaʕni: **ya: ħma:r** l-baʕi:d ʕifit tami:m ka:n ʔa:ʕid maʕ ʔay  
 it.mean voc jackass the.far.one you.saw Tamim was sitting with any  
 wafd ʔisraʕi:li: ??  
 delegation Israeli  
 ‘Do you mean, Jackass, the far one, that you saw Tamim sitting with any Israeli delegation??’  
 يعني يا حمار البعيد شفت تميم كان قاعد مع اي وفد اسرائيل ??  
<https://twitter.com/ahmedyes2/status/104265785554445317>

Now, consider the constructed example in (74). It could be used in the following context: the speaker learns that Ziad was late to an important meeting because he had gone out partying the night before. The speaker is gossiping about Ziad to a group of friends. At one point, she shifts her gaze away from the hearers and pretends she is talking directly to Ziad. The performance is reminiscent of the use of the present tense in story telling in English in that it makes gossip more real and more dramatic. During the performance in (74), the hearers are no longer addressees; rather, Ziad is; he is an addressed participant although he is not channel-linked. The friends who are listening to the speaker are channel-linked recipients; their role is converted into targeted overhearers.

- (74) ʕindak ʔiʒtime:ʕ mhimmm te:ne yo:m ya: zaħeʃ, haʃa:  
 you.have meeting important following day VOC mule exceptive.of  
**l-se:mʕi:n**, w-bitru:ħ btishar.  
 the-listeners and-you.go party  
 ‘You have an important meeting the following day, you mule, no offense to the  
 listeners, and you go party.’

The tweet in (75) is a naturally occurring example. It was written in response to a retweet. The retweet shows a graffiti that reads ‘God is great but the revolution is greater.’ The retweeter expresses disbelief at how blasphemous the graffiti is. The tweeter in (75) agrees and goes further to offend the individual behind the graffiti. That individual is not channel-linked; e.g., s/he is not atted or hashtagged. The retweeter, on the other hand, is a channel-linked recipient; the tweet is anchored to him via @, and thus he serves as a targeted overhearer. The tweeter seems to assume that his followers are also channel-linked since they could read his tweets. In this sense, they are targeted overhearers as well.<sup>10</sup>

- (75) tʕiz fi:-kum w-bi-he:k sawra ya: kle:b (ħa:ʃa:-kum  
 boo to-you.PL and-to-like.this revolution VOC dogs (exceptive.of-you.PL  
 ya: kira:m) tatakabbaru:n ʕala: man xalaqa-kum ya: baʒam.  
 VOC nobles) you.behave.arrogantly with who created-you VOC savages  
 ‘Screw you and screw a revolution of this type, you dogs, (no offense to you,  
 noble people). You behave arrogantly with you creator, you savages.

ظز فيكم و بهيك ثورة يا كلاب(حاشاكم يا كرام) تتكبرون على من خلقكم يا بجم.

<https://twitter.com/Kojack50/status/1201542121766961153>

Example (75), as well as example (i) in footnote 9, shows that Ashdowne’s (2002: 155) statement that vocatives “must refer to the addressee(s) and are unacceptable if they do not” may be an oversimplification and that the term ‘addressee’ needs closer examination. In (75), the vocatives refer to two types of participants: an addressed participant that is not channel-linked and unaddressed overhearers that are channel-linked. The tweet could alternatively only include one or the other or neither.

Many of the tweets we have seen so far contain multiple vocatives, which raises two questions: (i) How many vocatives are allowed in any one host clause? (ii) If more than one vocative is allowed, do they have to be listed continuously or can they be listed intermittently? These questions are addressed in the next section.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that *ħa:ʃa:-kum ya: kira:m* ‘no offense, noble people’ is itself a parenthetical adjoined to the vocative *ya: kle:b* ‘you dogs,’ with *ya: kira:m* as a parenthetical within that parenthetical. See Vries (2012: 155) for the view that recursion applies to parentheticals as well and that “there can be parenthesis within parenthesis (within parenthesis, etc.).”

#### 4 No limit on the number of vocatives

It is clear by now that multiple vocatives may be employed in the same utterance. The number of vocatives normally reflects the intensity of the emotions that the user has toward the addressee and/or the event in the host clause. The more vocatives, the more intense the emotions. For example, the multiple vocatives in (1), repeated here as (76), may be triggered by the intense love the tweeter feels toward the addressee or by something that the addressee has done and that the tweeter views favorably. The emotions in (2), repeated as (77), are as intense but not as positive; the tweeter in this case does not view the addressee and/or any event he is linked to favorably.

(76) ya: ʔami:r-i: ya: ʔabi:b-i: ya: ʔustʔu:rt-i: ya: sultʔa:n-i: ya:  
VOC prince-my VOC love-my VOC legend-my VOC sultan-my VOC  
ʔiʔzu:bt-i: ya: malak-i:  
miracle-my VOC king-my  
'My prince, my love, my legend, my sultan, my miracle, my king.'

(77) ya: ʔibn l-ʔarmu:tʔa ya: falla:h ya: ʔarsʔ  
VOC son the-whore VOC peasant VOC cuckold  
'You son of a bitch, you peasant, you cuckold.'

The tweets in (78), (79), and (80) are additional examples. The tweet in (78) is a fan of Omar Al-Somah, a soccer player. The tweeter obviously thinks very highly of Al-Somah. He employs twenty-five vocatives to express his admiration; only thirteen are transcribed. In (79), the tweeter addresses his ill father; the vocatives express how much he loves his father and how concerned he is about him. In (80), the tweeter is furious because his addressee is not responding to him; as a result, he uses unflattering vocatives to address him.

(78) kul ʔa:m w-ʔinta bi-xe:r ya: ʔustʔu:ra ya: ta:ri:x-i: ya:  
every year and-you in-good.health VOC legend VOC history-my VOC  
ʔalb-i: ya: ru:h-i: ya: ʔumr-i: ya: lazi:z ya: ʔami:l ya:  
heart-my VOC soul-my VOC life-my VOC delicious VOC beautiful VOC  
batʔal ya: mubdiʔ ya: warda ya: ʔamʔa ya riʔza:l ... ya:  
hero VOC innovator VOC rose VOC candle VOC man ... VOC  
kul kalima ʔami:la fi: l-kawn @amoralsomah  
every word beautiful in the-universe @amoralsomah  
'Happy birthday, you legend, my history, my heart, my soul, my life, you delicious thing, you beautiful person, you hero, you innovator, you rose, you candle, you man, ..., you every possible beautiful word in the universe @amoralsomah.'

كل عام وانتا بخير يا اسطورة يا تاريخي يا قلبي يا روعي يا عمري يا لذيذ يا جميل يا بطل يا مبدع يا ورده يا شمعه يا رجال يا فلذة كبدى يا مز يا حلو يا نابغة يا فحل يا رايق يا ذهب يا ملكي يا عطر يا فواحه يا عقيد يا صنديد يا كل كلمه جميله ʔ الكون @amoralsomah

<https://twitter.com/Vieli45i/status/1160321141250170880>

(79) ʔalla: yiʔfi:-k ya: bu:-y, ʔalla: yiʔfi:-k ya: ʔalb-i:, ya: ru:h-i:,  
God heal-you VOC dad-my God heal-you VOC heart-my VOC soul-my  
ya: ʔumr-i:, ya: kul ʔaya:t-i: w-nu:r ʔe:n-i: . ʔalla: yirziʔ-ni:  
VOC life-my VOC all life-my and-light eye-my GOD bless-me  
ʔaʔzʔam farʔa, farʔet ʔifa:ʔ-ak w-ʔo:mt-ak bi-l-sala:me  
greatest joy joy recover-your and-rise-your in-the-soundness  
w-raʔiʔt-ak mitil ʔawwal w-ʔaʔsan.  
and-return-your like before and-better

‘May you get better, Dad, may you get better, my heart, my soul, my life, my whole life and my eyesight. May God bless me with the greatest joy of all, the joy of your recovery and of seeing you come out on the other end of this safe and well like before and even better.’

الله يشفيك يا بوي، الله يشفيك يا قلبي، يا روعي، يا عمري، يا كل حياتي و نور عيني .  
الله يرزقني أعظم فرحة، فرحة شفائك وقومتك بالسلامة و رجعتك مثل أول و أحسن .

<https://twitter.com/11Ksr/status/1230232351583744002>

- (80) **ya: xara: ya: hma:r ya: t'i:z-i: ʕam-ħa:ki:-k le:f ma:**  
VOC shit VOC jackass VOC ass-my PROG-I.talk-you why NEG  
ʕam-tridd ?  
PROG-you.answer  
‘You piece of shit, you jackass, my ass, I am talking to you. Why don’t you answer?’

يا خرا يا حمار يا طيزي عم حاكيك ليش ما عم ترد ؟

<https://twitter.com/AymanSharif4/status/786669495200997376>

It should be noted that the multiple vocatives in (76) through (80) are a sequence of vocative phrases, separated by intonation breaks. In this respect, they are different from (81) in which there is no intonation break between the vocatives. Soltan (2015), drawing on Espinal (2013), labels the first of the three vocatives in (81) as a true vocative, whereas the two that follow are fake vocatives. The fake vocatives serve as modifiers of the true vocative and exhibit concord in the form of *ya:* agreement with it.

- (81) **sʕaħsʕih ya: ʕabb ya: helo ya: xafi:f l-damm**  
wake.up VOC young.man VOC pretty VOC light the-blood  
‘Wake up, you pretty, humorous young man.’

صحصح يا شب يا حلو يا خفيف الدم

<https://twitter.com/s4oSfFN9NIYIahk/status/1142720782965121026>

Following Soltan (2015), I posit that the *ya:* agreement in (81) is equivalent to the definiteness agreement that post-nominal adjectives exhibit in Arabic in general. The vocative particle in Arabic is incompatible with the definite particle *l-* ‘the’; this is why *ya:* is used to mark agreement. In some varieties of Arabic (e.g., Lebanese Arabic), the definite article *l-* is allowed in vocative phrases only if it is separated from the vocative particle *ya:* with a demonstrative, as in (82). In this case, the adjectives that follow the noun may show agreement by using *l-* instead of *ya:*.

- (82) ʔalla: yiʔfi: ʕann-ak w-yku:n maʕ-ak w-ykattir min  
God pardon from-you and-be with-you and-make.abundant of  
ʔamse:l-ak **ya: ha-l-ʕabb l-helo.**  
type-your VOC this-the-young.man the-pretty  
‘May God forgive you and be with you and fill this world with more people like you, handsome young man.’

الله يعفي عنك ويكون معك ويكثر من أمثالك يا هالشب الحلو.

[https://twitter.com/issa\\_chadia/status/1047967316539891712](https://twitter.com/issa_chadia/status/1047967316539891712)

The scenario in (82) is not possible in (76) through (80). This is why I considered each vocative in these examples as a true vocative. I also consider the consecutive vocatives in these examples as conjoined vocatives. The conjunction *w-* ‘and’ may be used, in which

case the vocative particle *ya:* may or may not be shared. For example, *ya: kul ĥaya:ti: w-nu:r ʕe:ni:* ‘VOC my whole life and my eyesight’ in (79) is made of two vocatives conjoined with *w-* ‘and’; they share one vocative particle. The two vocatives could alternatively be realized with *w-* ‘and’ and two vocative particles; i.e., *ya: kul ĥaya:ti: w-ya: nu:r ʕe:ni:* ‘VOC my whole life and VOC my eyesight.’ In this case, *w-* is optional.

Note that the repetition of *w-* ‘and’ in a list of three or more items is the unmarked choice in Arabic. The absence of the conjunction is a marked choice normally used for emphasis, in order to make each item more salient. Since the sequences of vocatives we have seen are meant to express intense emotions, it is not surprising that the conjunction is often deleted.

Ashdowne would agree with the conjoined characterization of the vocatives in (78) through (80). To him, the sequence of vocative phrases *Mary, my friend* in (83) constitutes a single vocative phrase and thus does not challenge the claim that there is a limit on the number of vocatives that may be used in a given construction. Once the vocatives are separated as in (84), they comprise multiple vocative phrases and the sentence becomes ungrammatical.

(83) *English* (Ashdowne 2002: 156; fn. 16-ii)  
The time has come, Mary, my friend, for all good men to come to the aid of the party.

(84) *English* (Ashdowne 2002: 156; ex. 45’)  
\*The time has come, Mary<sub>i</sub>, for all good men, my friend<sub>i</sub>, to come to the aid of the party.

Contra Ashdowne’s claim about English, intermittent vocatives of the type we see in (84) are allowed in Arabic, as the constructed example in (85) and the tweets in (86) and (87) demonstrate. Example (85) is an attempt to replicate Ashdowne’s example in (84). The tweet in (86) is a response to another tweeter accusing the Lebanese President, Michel Aoun, of treason based on an old photograph of then-Colonel Aoun with an Israeli soldier. The tweet in (87) is a response to a criticism of the Egyptian economy by another tweeter. All three examples show that multiple, intermittent vocative phrases may occur within the same host clause. In (87), the relevant host clause is the part that corresponds to the second sentence in the English translation.

(85) s<sup>a</sup>:r mafru:d<sup>ʕ</sup> ya: Layla<sub>k</sub>, ʕala kill ʔafra:d l-ʕayle ya:  
became necessary VOC Leila<sub>k</sub> on all members the-family VOC  
ħabi:bt-i<sub>k</sub>, yhit<sup>t</sup>o: ʔi:d-un ya: ʔalb-i<sub>k</sub>, bi-mas<sup>r</sup>ru:f l-be:t.  
love-my<sub>k</sub> put hand-their VOC heart-my<sub>k</sub> in-expenses the-house  
‘It is necessary, Leila, for all family members, my love, to contribute, my heart, to household expenses.’

(86) haydi l-ʕaqi:d ʕo:n ya: ĥma:r ʕam-yistilim sakanit bada:ro min  
this the-colonel Aoun VOC jackass PROG-take.over barrack Badaro from  
l-ʔisraʔi:li: ya: bayel bine:ʔan ʕala: t<sup>ʕ</sup>alab qiye:dit l-ze:ʃ ya:  
the-Israeli VOC mule according to order command the-army VOC  
**bhi:m**  
brute  
‘This picture is of then Colonel Aoun, jackass, taking over the Badaro military barrack from the Israelis, you mule, in accordance with orders by the army command, you brute.’

هيدي العقيد عون يا حمار عم يستلم ثكنة بدارو من الإسرائيلي يا بغل بناء على طلب قيادة الجيش يا بهيم

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1251108771671277568>

- (87) **ya: ħma:r** ru:h ju:f ?a:xer tas<sup>ni</sup>:f li-mas<sup>r</sup> ?illi: xarag ?ams  
 VOC jackass go see latest ratings for-Egypt that came.out yesterday  
 min fitʃ ?amma: ʃan l-duyu:n **ya: ħma:r** fa-duyu:n turkiyya: **ya:**  
 from Fitch as to the-debt VOC jackass so-debt Turkey VOC  
**bhi:m** 500 milya:r dola:r **ya: ħma:r ya: xaru:f ya: bhi:m**  
 brute 500 billion dollar VOC jackass VOC sheep VOC brute  
 ‘Jackass, go check out the latest Fitch ratings for Egypt that came out yesterday.  
 As to the debt, you jackass, Turkey’s debt, you brute, is 500 billion dollars, you  
 jackass, you sheep, you brute.’

يا حمار روح شوف اخر تصنيف لمصر اللي خرج امس من فيتش اما عن الديون يا حمار فديون تركيا يا بهيم ٥٠٠ مليار  
 دولار يا حمار يا خروف يا بهيم

<https://twitter.com/safsoof72/status/1026864835311673349>

The discussion in this section has shown that multiple vocatives are possible, either as continuous conjoined vocative phrases or as intermittent and thus separate ones. In all the examples, however, all the vocatives within a host clause refer to the same addressee. One question to consider is whether it is possible to have, within the same host clause, multiple vocatives that reference multiple addressees as separate individuals rather than as a group. Ashdowne (2002: 156) rules out this possibility. To him, sentences like (88), his (45), are ungrammatical under the reading that *Mary* and *my friend* are “two suitable people present to be addressed.”

- (88) *English*  
 \*The time has come, Mary<sub>i</sub>, for all good men, my friend<sub>k</sub>, to come to the aid of  
 the party.

Examples (68) and (69) above show that multiple intermittent vocatives that reference individual members of a group separately are possible in Arabic. And while relevance is usually a pragmatic factor, as (68) and (69) illustrate, it does not have to be. Consider the constructed examples in (89) and (90). The former is repetition of (85) above, except now it has three different addressees. It may be uttered by a parent addressing her/his three adult children during a family meeting about household expenses.

- (89) s<sup>a</sup>:r mafru:d<sup>f</sup> **ya: Layla<sub>i</sub>**, ʃala kill ?afra:d l-ʃayle **ya: kari:m<sub>j</sub>**,  
 became necessary VOC Leila<sub>i</sub> on all members the-family VOC Kareem<sub>j</sub>  
 yhit<sup>t</sup>:o: ?i:d-un **ya: Ri:ma<sub>k</sub>**, bi-mas<sup>r</sup>:ru:f l-be:t  
 put hand-their VOC Rima<sub>k</sub> in-expenses the-house  
 ‘It is necessary, Leila, for all family members, Kareem, to contribute, Rima, to  
 household expenses.’

Example (90) may be uttered by the manager of a company addressing her employees. The company is at the verge of bankruptcy. The manager calls for a meeting to discuss a solution. The employees stand in a circle while she walks around and addresses them. Three of the employees are Ziad, Leila, and Samir. As she gets close to them, she places her hand on their shoulder and punctuates her utterance with a vocative that references them. Each vocative is likely to be followed with a short pause to achieve its pragmatic effect of grabbing each individual’s attention. The purpose is to make the issue personal for each employee; this includes, not only those who are mentioned, but also those who are not.

- (90) l-wadʿiʃ      **ya: ʃabe:b**, ma: baʃa: yinħamal. sʿa:r      le:zim  
 the-situation VOC guys      no longer bearable it.has.become necessary  
**ya: ziya:d**, halla? ʔaktar min ʔay waʔit madʿa: **ya: layla:**, ʔinno  
 VOC Ziad now more than any time past VOC Leila that  
 nfakkir bi-tʿari:ʔa mubtakara tʃi:l-na: min ha-l-ʒu:ra **ya: sami:r**,  
 we.think of-way innovative remove-us from this-the-hole VOC Samir  
 w-thassin mustawa: l-ʔinte:ʒ      bi-l-ʃirke.  
 and-improve level the- production in-the-company  
 ‘The situation, guys, is no longer bearable. It has become necessary, Ziad, now  
 more than any time before, Layla, that we think of an innovative way that  
 would remove us from this hole, Samir, and that would improve the level of  
 production in the company.’

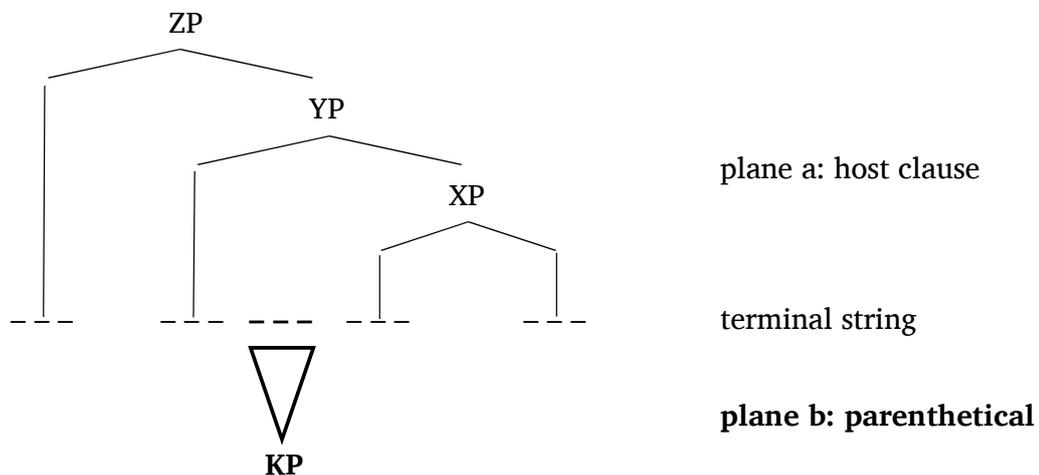
The paper set out to show that Arabic vocatives are parenthetical adjuncts. Parenthetical adjuncts are not a uniform group. They come in different forms (e.g., appositives, comment clauses) and vary a lot in terms of their internal structures. However, their title follows from their external behavior and the way they relate to their host clause. Sections 2, 3, and 4 have shown that Arabic vocatives, like parentheticals in general, are minimally constrained when it comes to their external syntax and how they relate to the host clause. They behave on a par with parentheticals with regard to three criteria put forth by Ashdowne (2002): (i) freedom of placement, (ii) lack of connection with the host clause, and (iii) no limit on the number of occurrences. Still, vocatives are pronounced, often as part of a larger construction. The question that follows is: How are they syntactically integrated with the host clause? The following section provides a possible answer.

### 5 The external syntax of vocatives

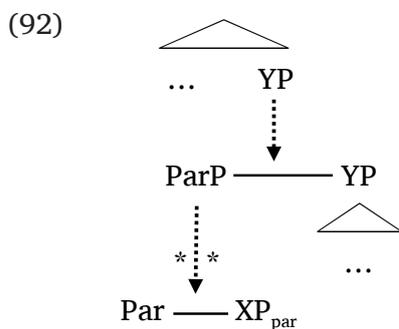
A number of accounts have been proposed to account for parenthetical adjuncts. I briefly present two here: Espinal (1991) and Vries (2012).

Drawing on work on autosegmental phonology, as well as on three-dimensional syntactic theories proposed by Goodall (1987), Haegeman & Van Riemsdijk (1986), and Haegeman (1988), Espinal accounts for the external syntax of parenthetical elements by proposing a three-dimensional approach to syntactic derivations. The approach allocates “the surface structure of a surface string into a number of independent trees that may be located in different planes” (Espinal 1991: 742). To Espinal, the host clause and the parenthetical element merge in separate planes before they intersect at the terminal string, as (91) (an adaptation of Espinal’s Figure 4) illustrates.

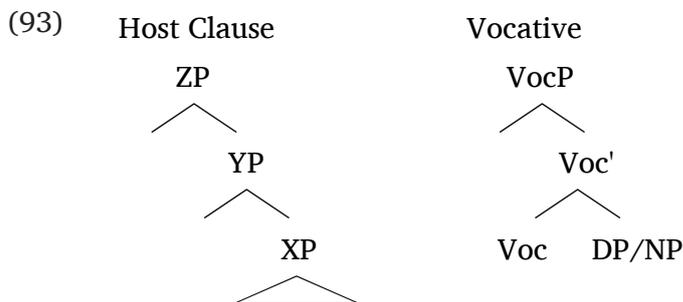
- (91) *Three dimensional syntactic structure*



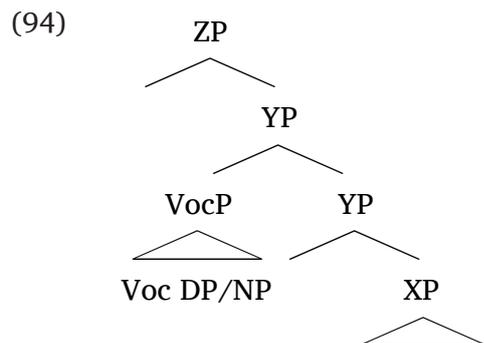
Another approach has been put forth by Vries (2012). To account for the merge of parenthetical elements, Vries proposes a special type of merge; he calls it Parenthetical Merge, and he stipulates that it is “a primitive of the grammar.” He further maintains that a parenthetical adjunct is an  $XP_{par}$ , where ‘par’ stands for parenthetical.  $XP_{par}$  is freely adjoined to a syntactic structure as part of “an abstract parenthetical phrase ParP” as (92), Vries’ (25), demonstrates. ParP, Vries states, is “a specialized discourse connector” comparable to Potts’ (2005) COMMA operator. Like COMMA, ParP marks a syntactic object as parenthetical and thus as secondary in relation to the main message of the host, setting it intonationally apart from the rest of the sentence (Potts 2005: 98; Vries 2012: 158). Importantly, “parMerge breaks the transitive line of dominance in the host structure, and consequently shields parentheses from c-command-based relationships with material higher up in the host,” rendering them invisible for c-command-based relationships (Vries 2012: 166).



Either approach may successfully account for the external syntax of Arabic vocatives. While the two approaches may be compared on theoretical grounds or against a different type or types of parenthetical elements, Arabic vocatives are too unconstrained to serve as an empirical basis for comparison. For the purpose of this section, I adopt an approach that is closer in spirit to Espinal (1991) but without being committal to its details. I suggest that Arabic vocatives start out in a separate, secondary plane that is parallel to the primary plane of the host clause, as (93) demonstrates (see Uriagereka 2003; Chomsky 2004; Gallego 2010; Chomsky, Gallego, & Ott 2019).



After all structure-building operations take place, the vocative undergoes countercyclic merge with the host clause, adjoining freely to a maximal projection in it, as (94) illustrates. Countercyclic merge involves a “last minute Merge” and is only possible after transfer – “after syntactic structure building is complete” – and before spell-out (Wurmbrand 2014: 21). See Haddad (2014) for a similar account of attitude datives, although vocatives are less constrained.



Two questions follow. First, can vocatives adjoin to just any maximal projection? The short answer is ‘yes.’ At the same time, some tendencies and morphosyntactic restrictions may apply. For example, as Espinal (1991: 753) states, “there is a strong tendency across languages to avoid interrupting the linearization between a preposition and a nominal.” That is, it is more likely for parentheticals, including vocatives, to adjoin to PP than to adjoin to its DP complement. This is in fact the case in Arabic. At the same time, it is still possible to find constructions with a vocative interrupting a PP, as (95) and (96) demonstrate. The latter is part of tweet addressed to King Sulaiman Bin Abd l-Aziz of Saudi Arabia with a video of him doing a sword dance.

- (95) *tifri? ʔe: l-raʃʃa fi: mudʕa:zaʃa [ʃan ya: si:d-i: raʃʃit*  
 differ how the-shudder in intercourse from VOC sir-my shudder  
*l-ħumma:]*  
 the-fever  
 ‘How is the shudder of (orgasm in) intercourse different from, sir, the shudder of fever?’

تفرق ايه الرعشة ف مضاجعة عن يا سيدي رعشة الحمى

[https://twitter.com/Abdo\\_Ahmed\\_soli/status/1088988911022604289](https://twitter.com/Abdo_Ahmed_soli/status/1088988911022604289)

- (96) *w-ka:da ʔan ʔitʕtʕahar tura:b-un [taħt ya: si:d-i:*  
 and-was.almost.exactly that got.purified soil-their under VOC sir-my  
*mawtʕa:-k]*  
 tread-you  
 ‘And I could swear that their land got purified under, sir, your tread.’

وكاد ان اطهر ترابن تحت يا سيدي موطاك

<https://twitter.com/saifalneyadi123/status/959413509237993473>

Note, incidentally, that (95) and (96) are expected to be ungrammatical under the accounts in Hill (2014) and Slocum (2016). This is so because their derivation would require the movement of a DP out of a PP – ‘the shudder of fever’ in (95) and ‘your tread’ in (96) – before remnant phrasal movement takes place. The movement of a DP out of a PP results in preposition stranding. Arabic does not allow preposition stranding, as (97c) shows.

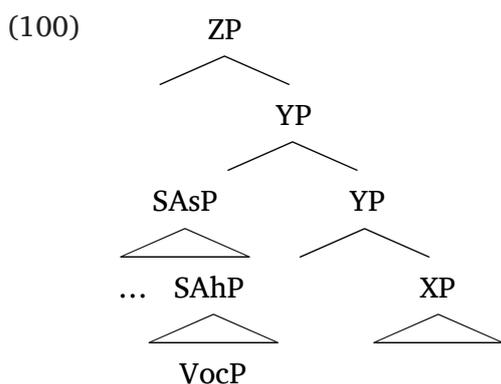
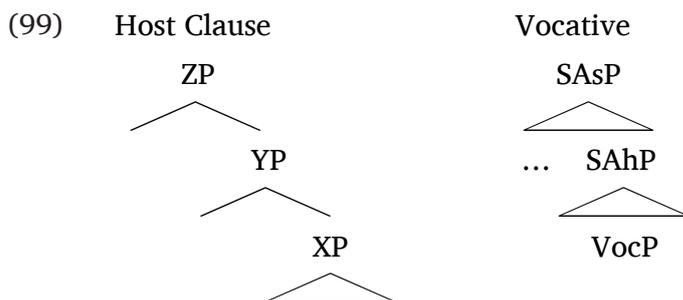
- (97) a. *bħibb ʔilʃab maʃ ziya:d.*  
 I.like play with Ziad  
 ‘I like to play with Ziad.’  
 b. *maʃ mi:n bithibb tilʃab?*  
 with who you.like play  
 ‘With whom do you like to play?’  
 c. *\*mi:n bithibb tilʃab maʃ?*  
 who you.like play with  
 Intended: ‘Who do you like to play with?’

Morphology and morphosyntax may restrict where a vocative may adjoin as well. A vocative may not come between two elements if one of them is a bound morpheme. For example, the definite article *l-* in Arabic is a prefix. Therefore, a vocative may not adjoin to the NP complement of D if D is the definite article *l-*. Also, *ʔidʕa:fa* ‘genitive constructions’ in Arabic are resistant to intervening material. Therefore, it is unlikely for a vocative phrase, or any parenthetical element, to come between two parts of a genitive construction.

The second question has to do with sentence-initial vocatives. Do they merge in the speech act phrase (SAP) in the left periphery or do they also merge as parenthetical adjuncts? Examples (64) through (67) above seem to indicate that they merge as adjuncts. Take (67), repeated here as (98). The sentence-initial vocative is plural, while the reference to the hearers in the host clause is singular. If we assume that there is agreement between the speaker/hearer information in the left periphery and any reference to the speaker and hearer lower in the structure, then the vocative cannot be part of that agreement relationship.

- (98) **ya: sʕaba:ya:** ʔiza: fi: ʃabb: byitzakkar ʕi:d mile:d-ik byaʕrif  
 VOC gals if there guy remember birthday-your.SG know  
 ʃu: bihibbi: byihfazʕ sʕuwar-ik ... hayda Mark Zuckerberg  
 what you.SG.like save pictures-your.SG ... this Mark Zuckerberg  
 ʃala fikra miʃ fata: ʔaħle:m-ik  
 by.the.way not boy dreams-your.SG  
 ‘Gals, if there is a guy: who remembers your.SG birthday, knows what you.SG like,  
 saves your.SG pictures ... this would be Mark Zuckerberg by the way and not the  
 man of your.SG dreams.’

Finally, it may be plausible to suggest that VocP itself does not merge as a parenthetical adjunct. Instead, VocP merges as an argument of SAP, which in turn merges as a parenthetical adjunct, as (99) and (100) demonstrate. Importantly, this SAP is different from the one in the left periphery. This proposal seems to be aligned with Starvou’s (2013) brief observation that mid-sentential vocatives “display the distribution of any other parenthetical,” while also adopting the view that vocatives merge in SAP (301–302). Admittedly, Starvou (2013) does not reconcile the view that SAP resides in the left periphery with the fact that vocatives may also be mid-sentential.



Whether (99) and (100) represent a theoretically feasible proposal is a question that I defer for another occasion. Empirically, the proposal may be motivated on at least two grounds. First, we saw above that vocatives may stand alone; they do not need to be part of a host clause. As stand-alone syntactic objects, they are use-conditional elements (see Gutzmann 2015) that reflect the speaker's attitude toward the addressee and serve as tools for relationship management. Since the speaker's point of view is always present, it is reasonable to assume that a speaker projection – and thus SAP – is always present as well. Second, there is lexical evidence for the speaker's presence in the context of vocatives. Arabic varieties license what is normally referred to as inverse vocatives or reverse role vocatives. These are vocatives in which a senior person addresses a younger person by using a term of address that the younger person normally uses. For example, a mother may address her daughter or son with *ya:ma:ma:* 'VOC mom' or *ya ?imm-i:* 'VOC my mother'; see Rieschild (1998) for an analysis of such vocatives in Lebanese Arabic. Importantly, reverse role vocatives may also serve as stand-alone utterances. The fact that the speaker is spelled out in such vocatives may be used as evidence for the presence of the speaker projection; see Akkuş & Hill (2018) for a recent analysis of the internal syntax of similar vocatives in Turkish.

## 6 Conclusion

Commenting on the external syntax of vocatives, Hill (2014) writes,

[T]he variation in the location of the vocative (i.e., clause initial, medial or final) does not follow from the random insertion of the vocative noun in the sentence, but from constituent movement above the argument position in which VocP is merged. For example, in *The door, Mary, should be closed*, the DP *the door* moves to a hanging topic position in the functional field of SA<sup>o</sup>, above *Mary* in Spec, SAP. In this way, our analysis pre-empties any attempt of treating VocP as parentheticals, adjuncts or appositions in the clause. (11–12)

This paper presents evidence that vocatives may in fact be parenthetical adjuncts. Vocatives, this paper shows, exhibit a variety of behaviors that are characteristic of parenthetical elements. And while any one piece of evidence may be challenged independently (e.g., it may be argued that some idiomatic expressions may be more prone to topicalization), taken collectively, the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the adjunction approach to the external syntax of vocatives. The focus in the paper has been primarily on Arabic. However, Section 2 also presents preliminary evidence from English and Spanish in order to show that the conclusions arrived at here are not limited to one language and that a closer look at vocatives in other languages is warranted, with special attention to be paid to naturally occurring data.

Finally, I suggest that naturally occurring data should be given more weight in studies on theoretical linguistics in general. Reliance on constructed examples, elicitation, and grammaticality judgment may not be sufficient, especially when a study involves the examination of pragmatically loaded expressions like vocatives that crucially rely on context. I would not be surprised if native speakers judge some of the examples examined in this paper less favorably if they were presented to them in shorter forms out of context. When I presented these vocatives as parts of full tweets, however, none of the native speakers I consulted judged them as ungrammatical or degraded. It, therefore, becomes an open question whether a closer look at vocatives in naturally occurring data in other languages, including those in which vocatives have already been examined, would show that they are less constrained than originally thought.

## Abbreviations

DAT = dative, FUT = future, NEG = negation, PL = plural, PROG = progressive, SG = singular, SUBJ = subjunctive, VOC = vocative

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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