Article

On the Syntax of Existential Sentences in Najdi Arabic

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Abstract: The existential sentence is a noncanonical sentence type that is used crosslinguistically to assert the (non)existence of one or more entities. It consists of a set of syntactic items that includes an expletive, a pivot, and a coda. Two different syntactic analyses have been identified in the literature for the existential construction. The first type of analysis, the standard analysis, treats the existential sentence as a nonraising counterpart of copular sentences. In this analysis, both existential and copular sentences are derived from a single underlying structure, which takes the pivot as a subject and the coda as a predicate. The other type of analysis, the nonstandard analysis, treats the existential sentence differently from the copular sentence. In this analysis, the copular verb takes the pivot NP as its complement, and the coda is treated as an adjunct. The purpose of this paper is to examine the syntactic status of the three syntactic items, namely, the expletive fīh, the pivot NP, and the coda XP, in the existential construction in the dialect of Najdi Arabic (NA). Using the nonstandard analysis, I propose that the existential pronoun fīh is an NP merged in the Spec, vP, the pivot is an NP complement selected by a copular verb, and the coda is an adjunct that serves as either an internal or external modifier. This work about NA existentials may fruitfully contribute to the ongoing discussion on the syntax of existential constructions. Examining existential constructions in various unrelated languages may help obtain a better understanding of this interesting syntactic phenomenon, thereby enabling a more plausible analysis.

Keywords: existential sentences; Najdi Arabic; expletive; pivot; coda

1. Introduction

Crosslinguistically, the existential sentence, as in (1) from Najdi Arabic (NA)\(^1\), refers to a noncanonical sentence type that asserts the (non)existence or (non)presence of someone or something. This type of sentence consists of a number of syntactic items, including an expletive, a nominal pivot, and a coda expression, as illustrated in (1).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{fīh} & \quad \text{walad} & \quad \text{b-l-\text{urfah}} \\
\text{there} & \quad \text{boy} & \quad \text{in-the-room.Fem.Sg}
\end{align*}
\]

‘There is a boy in the room.’

The construction of existential sentences has long been a prominent research topic in the framework of generative syntax. A considerable body of work has been conducted on the syntax of existential sentences (e.g., Barwise and Cooper 1981; Chomsky 1981, 1991, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2001; Francez 2007, 2009, 2010; Hazout 2004; Higginbotham 1987; Huang 1987; Kuno 1971; Lasnik 1995; Lyons 1967; McCloskey 1987; McIlvain 1992, 1997, 2011, 2016; Milsark 1974, 1977; Moro 1997, 2006; Safir 1985; Stowell 1978, 1981; Williams 1984, 2006). Two different analytical approaches have commonly been taken to the structure of existential sentences. The first, the standard/copular analysis, suggests that existential sentences are the nonraising counterparts of copular sentences (e.g., Chomsky 1981, 1991, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2001; Freeze 1992; Huang 1987; Kuno 1971; Lasnik 1995; Lyons 1967; McCloskey 2014; McNally 1992, 1998, 2016; Milsark 1974, 1977; Moro 1997, 2006; Safir 1985; Stowell 1978, 1981). That is, both existential and copular sentences are derived from a single underlying structure,
which takes the pivot as a subject and the coda as a predicate. In contrast, the second approach, the nonstandard/noncopular analysis, treats the existential sentence differently from the copular sentence (e.g., Barwise and Cooper 1981; Francez 2007, 2009, 2010; Franco and Lorusso 2018; Jenkins 1975; Law 2011; McNally 1992, 1998, 2011, 2016; Sobin 2014; Sabbagh 2009; Williams 1984, 2006). In this analysis, the existential sentence is analyzed as a typical transitive sentence in which the copular verb takes the pivot NP as its complement (i.e., an internal argument). The coda is treated as an adjunct (i.e., internal or external modifiers).

This paper deals with the syntactic structure of the existential sentence in NA, a variety of Arabic that is acquired natively and spoken by people living largely in the central parts of Saudi Arabia. It particularly aims to examine the syntactic status of the three items in the NA existential construction: the expletive *fiih*, the pivot NP, and the coda expression.

In line with the nonstandard analysis, I argue that the existential pronoun *fiih* is an NP merged in the Spec, vP, the pivot is an NP complement selected by a copular verb, and the coda is an adjunct that serves as either an internal or external modifier.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 discusses the key syntactic properties of existential sentences in NA. Section 3 reviews the two types of analyses proposed for the existential construction. Section 4 presents the analysis suggested for NA existential sentences. Section 5 concludes the work and suggests avenues for future work.

2. Syntactic Properties of NA Existential Sentences

The term existential sentence, which dates back to Jespersen (1924), is used crosslinguistically for noncanonical sentences that express a proposition about the (non)existence of one or more entities (Abdel-Ghafer and Jarbou 2015; Bentley et al. 2013; Görgülü 2019; Jarad 2015; Kuno 1971; Milsark 1974, 1977; McNally 1992, 1998, 2011, 2016; Moro 2006). For example, the NA existential sentence in (1), repeated in (2), is used to assert the existence or presence of the NP *walad ‘boy’ in lجرفت ‘the room’ at the present moment.

Other researchers (e.g., Abbott 1997; Ward and Birner 1995) have defined the existential sentence, from a pragmatic standpoint, as a sentence that primarily serves to introduce a new entity/referent into the discourse.

(2) *fiih walad b-l-جرفت* ‘There is a boy in the room.’

Descriptively speaking, the existential sentence has special syntactic characteristics that distinguish it from other canonical sentences that can also be used to assert the (non)existence of something or someone, such as the sentence in (3) from Standard Arabic (SA)3. Because of these special characteristics, this sentence is known in the literature as noncanonical. This section discusses the defining syntactic properties of NA existential sentences and compares them with other properties observed crosslinguistically.

(3) *yuуд٣اذ-٣ qalam-٣ یلَااا ... تتى٣٣َ٣َََٝٝ٢ََٝ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥َ٥*
that, crosslinguistically, only the pivot is universally obligatory; the other items may not be available, or may be optional, in existential sentences in some languages (Bentley et al. 2013; Francez 2009; McNally 2011). As an illustration, consider the NA existential sentence in (6).

(6) (kaan) fiih mi\_jkilah (b-l-urfah)
be.PST.3.Sg.Masc there problem.Fem.Sg in-the-room.Fem.Sg
‘There was a problem in the room.’

The example in (6) represents the basic order of the NA existential sentence. It starts with a copular verb that is followed by an expletive⁶, a pivot, and a coda. Only the expletive fiih and the pivot NP are obligatory, whereas the other items in the brackets, specifically the copular verb and the coda, are optional. Thus, the existential proposition in NA can be obtained only through the use of the expletive and the pivot. Abdel-Ghafer and Jarbou (2015) also pointed out that in Jordanian Arabic (JA), the existential reading can be attained by using the expletive and an indefinite nominal pivot. The rest of this section scrutinizes the syntactic items used in NA existential sentences.

To start with the expletive, McNally (2011) pointed out that languages vary with respect to the presence of the expletive in existential sentences; that is, some languages require its presence, whereas others do not. For instance, languages such as Ligurian (5), English (7.a), and Italian (7.b) require the use of an expletive in their existential sentences, whereas languages such as Hindi (8) and Russian do not.

(7) (a) There are men in the room. (English)
(b) Ci sono molti cani in strada ‘There are many dogs in the street.’ (Italian: Franco and Lorusso 2018, p. 49)
(8) kamree-mēē aadmii hai.
room-in man COP.3sg.MASC.PRES
‘There is a man in the room.’ (Hindi: Freeze 1992, p. 555)

In the literature (see, e.g., Abdel-Ghafer and Jarbou 2015; Freeze 1992; Jarad 2015; Eid 1993; Mohammad 1989), it has been observed that numerous Arabic varieties, including Lebanese Arabic, Syrian Arabic, Egyptian Arabic (EA), Gulf Arabic (GA), Palestinian Arabic (PA), and JA, use the expletive fii/fiih in their existential sentences. Like these various Arabic varieties, NA also requires the use of the expletive fiih in its existential sentences, as demonstrated in (6) above; otherwise, the sentence will be ungrammatical, as shown in (9).

(9) *walad b-l-urfah
boy in-the-room.Fem.Sg
‘There is a boy in the room.’

The expletive fiih in NA existential sentences is homophonous with the locative PP fiih ‘in it’, as shown in (10). Following Jarad (2015) and Mohammad (1989), I assume that the expletive fiih in NA developed historically from the locative preposition fii ‘in’ and the third-person masculine singular object pronoun clitic (-h)⁷. In Section 4, I argue that the syntactic category of the expletive fiih in NA existential sentences is an NP, not a PP.

(10) Haatim fiih jaraa b-l-urfah
Haatim bought.3.Sg.Masc house and-slept.3.Sg.Masc in it
‘Haatim bought a house and slept in it.’

Although these two elements are homophonous (i.e., they have the same phonetic form), they are entirely different in function. Whereas the expletive fiih has an existential function, the PP fiih has a locative function. Jarad (2015) confirmed that the expletive fii in the existential sentences in the Spoken Arabic of Aleppo (SAA) denotes existence; it no longer denotes location. As supporting evidence, one can use both of these homophonous expressions in a single existential sentence, as illustrated in (11). This fact indicates that these two elements, though homophonous, have different functions.
One can also combine the expletive fiih with a typical locative expression in a single sentence, such as the locative pronoun hnaak ‘there’ in (12). If both the expletive fiih and the pronoun hnaak have locative functions, then this sentence is predicted to be semantically anomalous. However, this sentence is semantically felicitous; the expletive fiih has an existential function, whereas the pronoun hnaak has a locative function.

(12) fiih walad hnaak
there boy there
‘There is a boy there.’

It has been observed crosslinguistically that the expletive in existential sentences is generally homophonous with a locative expression. Consider the examples in (13) from English and SA, in which there and hunaaka have two different functions: existential and locative.

(13) (a) There is a man there. (English)
(b) hunaaka mujkilat-un hunaaka
there problem-Nom there
‘There is a problem there.’ (SA)

Correspondingly, McCloskey (2014) pointed out that Irish existential sentences contain the element ann ‘in it’, which follows the pivot, as shown in (14.a). McCloskey (2014) stated that ‘ann is the third-person singular nonfeminine form of the preposition meaning in and so might be translated ‘in it” (p. 347). In Irish, the element ann can also be used as a locative, as illustrated in (14.b).

(14) (a) Beidh bia ann.
be-FUT plenty food in-it
‘There’ll be plenty of food.’
(b) Pósadh i Meiriceá é, agus tá sé ann ó shin.
was-married in America him and is he there since
‘He got married in America, and he has been there ever since.’

(McCloskey 2014, p. 347)

As pointed out earlier, the presence of the pivot item in NA existential sentences is obligatory because this item represents the entity whose existence is being asserted. One of the syntactic properties of pivots is that they must be nominals (Hazout 2004; Lasnik 1995). This property is attested in NA existential sentences. In other words, the pivot item in NA existentials must always be an NP, as in (15.a); it cannot be from any other syntactic category, such as an adjective or verb, as illustrated in (15.b–c).

(15) (a) fiih walad b-l-yurfah
there boy in-the-room.Fem.Sg
‘There is a boy in the room.’
(b) *fiih gas+iir b-l-yurfah
there short in-the-room.Fem.Sg
‘*There is short in the room.’
(c) *fiih ya-l’ab b-l-yurfah
there 3-play in-the-room.Fem.Sg
‘*There is play in the room.’

Another interesting property of nominal pivots is the phenomenon of the definiteness effect (DE) or definiteness restriction, which states that the nominal pivot must be indefinite (see, e.g., Abbott 1997; Francez 2009; Kayne 2008, 2016, 2020; Kim 2013; McNally 1992, 1998, 2011, 2016; Milsark 1974, 1977; Moro 2006; Rando and Napoli 1978). The pivot in NA existential sentences exhibits the DE. For example, definite NPs, personal pronouns, proper names, and demonstrative NPs cannot occur in the pivot position in NA existentials, as illustrated in (16).
Unlike the pivot, the coda item, which specifies the domain of existence of the entity whose existence is predicated (Francez 2009; Franco and Lorusso 2018; Kim 2013; Moro 2006), is optional in NA existentials. It is possible in NA to have a simple existential sentence (or a bare existential sentence, as stated by Francez 2009) that does not contain a coda, as shown in (17).

(17)  
(a) ma fiih rizz  
Neg there rice  
‘There is no rice.’
(b) fiih Q iz Qaad 3  
there noise  
‘There is noise.’

As observed by Francez (2009), Kim (2013), and McNally (2011), one of the syntactic properties of the coda item in many languages is that it can belong to various syntactic categories, including prepositional phrases, adjectives, verbs, and participles. This property of the coda can also be present in NA existential sentences, as illustrated in (18), where the coda expression is a PP in (18.a), an adjective in (18.b), a verb in (18.c), and a participle in (18.d).

(18)  
(a) fiih walad b-l Qurfah  
there boy in-the-room.Fem.Sg  
‘There is a boy in the room.’
(b) fiih t Qaalib haad Qir  
there student.Sg.Masc present  
‘There is a student present.’
(c) fiih t Qaalib ya-l Qab b-l Qfas Qal  
there student.Sg.Masc 3-play in-the-classroom  
‘There is a student playing in the classroom.’
(d) fiih t Qaalib magtuul  
there student.Sg.Masc killed  
‘There is a student killed.’

The last syntactic item to be discussed in NA existential sentences is the copular verb. Generally speaking, the copular verb in NA copular sentences, as well as in SA and many other Arabic varieties, must be overt only in the past and future tenses. However, the copular verb in the present tense cannot be used in NA copular sentences. Consider the examples in (19), which elucidate this prominent fact in Arabic.

(19)  
(a) kaan Ahmad mirii Q  
be.PST.3.Sg.Masc Ahmad sick  
‘Ahmad was sick.’
(b) Ahmad b-yi-kuun mudiir  
Ahmad Fut-3-be manager  
‘Ahmad will be a manager.’
(c) (*ya-kuun) Ahmad mudiir  
3.Masc-be Ahmad manager  
‘Ahmad is a manager.’

Likewise, in NA existential sentences, the copular verb must be overt only in the past and future tenses but must not be used in the present tense, as illustrated in (20). This fact explains the generalization, stated earlier in example (6), that the copular verb in NA existential sentences is not obligatory.

(20)  
kaan Ahmad mirii Q  
be.PST.3.Sg.Masc Ahmad sick  
‘Ahmad was sick.’

(20)  
Ahmad b-yi-kuun mudiir  
Ahmad Fut-3-be manager  
‘Ahmad will be a manager.’

(20)  
(*ya-kuun) Ahmad mudiir  
3.Masc-be Ahmad manager  
‘Ahmad is a manager.’
(20) (a) kaan fiih miʃkilah b-l-yurfah
    be.PST.3.Sg.Masc there problem.Fem.Sg in-the-room.Fem.Sg
    ‘There was a problem in the room.’
(b) b-yi-kuun fiih zawaad5 kibiir
    Fut-3-be there wedding big
    ‘There will be a big wedding.’
(c) (*ya-kuun) fiih miʃkilah b-l-yurfah
    3.Masc-be there problem.Fem.Sg in-the-room.Fem.Sg
    ‘There is a problem in the room.’

McNally (2011) indicated that languages vary in terms of the presence of a verbal item in existential sentences. While some languages, such as Maori (21.1.a), do not require a verb in their existential sentences, other languages require various types of verbs in their existentials, for instance, a copular verb ‘to be’ as in NA (20.a) and English (21.b), a verb ‘to have’ as in Catalan (21.c), a possession verb as in German (21.d), or a special lexical item as in Hebrew (21.e).

(21) (a) ¯Ae he taniwha
    yes a taniwha
    ‘Yes, there are taniwhas.’
(b) There are men in the room.
(c) Hi ha espai a l’ armari
    there has space to the closet
    ‘There is space in the closet.’
(d) Es gab ein Kind in dem Garten
    it gave a child in the garden
    ‘There was a child in the garden.’
(e) yes harbe tisot ad xacot
    EX many flights until midnight
    ‘There are many flights until midnight.’

A further fascinating syntactic property of the copular verb in NA existential sentences is that it agrees either with the expletive fiih in all $\phi$-features, as shown in (22.a–c), or with the pivot NP in person and gender, but not in number, features, as shown in (22.d)\(^{11}\). Given the assumption, stated earlier in this section, that the expletive fiih in NA existential sentences developed historically from the locative preposition fii ‘in’ and the third-person masculine singular object pronominal clitic (-h), I assume that it has the default $\phi$-features:{third-person, masculine, singular}\(^{12}\).

(22) (a) kaan fiih t³ aalib/t³ illaab b-l-fas³al
    be.PST.3.Sg.Masc there student.Sg.Masc/students.Pl.Masc in-the-classroom
    ‘There was/were a (male) student/students in the classroom.’
(b) *kaan-uu fiih t³ illaab
    be.PST-3.Pl.Masc there students.Pl.Masc in-the-classroom
    ‘There were (male) students in the classroom.’
(c) kaan fiih t³ aalb-ah/t³ aalb-aat b-l-fas³al
    be.PST.3.Sg.Masc there student-Sg.Fem/student-Pl.Fem in-the-classroom
    ‘There was/were a (female) student/students in the classroom.’
(d) kaan-at/*an fiih t³ aalb-ah/t³ aalb-aat b-l-fas³al
    be.PST-3.Sg.Fem./3.Pl.Fem there student-Sg.Fem/student-Pl.Fem in-the-classroom
    ‘There was/were a (female) student/students in the classroom.’

Other languages have demonstrated different agreement patterns. For instance, in English existential sentences, the copular verb agrees with the pivot NP in number, as in (23), whereas in Hebrew existentials, it agrees with the silent expletive pro in number and gender, as in (24) (Hazout 2004).
(23) (a) There is/*are a man in the room.
(b) There are/*is men in the room.

(24) (a) hayta be’aya
| was (SG.FEM) | problem |
| ‘There was a problem.’ |
(b) hayu be’ayot
| were | problems |
| ‘There were problems.’ |

(Hazout 2004, p. 413)

In summary, this section discussed the key grammatical properties associated with the syntactic items used in NA existential sentences. It was shown that only the expletive fiih and the pivot are obligatory in NA existential sentences. Although the expletive fiih is homophonous with the locative fiih, they have different functions: an existential for the former and a locative for the latter. The pivot must always be nominal and exhibits the DE. The coda is an optional item and can be from various syntactic categories. Finally, the copular verb is not obligatory in NA existential sentences and agrees either with the expletive fiih or with the pivot NP.

3. Previous Analyses

In the literature, two different types of analyses have been put forward for the syntax of existential sentences. The subsections to follow review both of these analyses as well as their various versions in considerable detail.

3.1. Standard Analysis

The first type of analysis is known in the literature as the ‘standard or traditional analysis’ or ‘Small Clause (SC) analysis’ (Chomsky 1981, 1991, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2001; Freeze 1992; Groat 1995; Hoekstra and Mulder 1990; Huang 1987; Kuno 1971; Lasnik 1995; Lyons 1967; McCloskey 2014; Milsark 1974, 1977; Moro 1997, 2006; Paul 2000; Pollard and Sag 1994; Safir 1985; Stowell 1978, 1981). This analysis suggests that existential sentences are the non-raising counterparts of copular sentences. To clarify, both the copular sentence (25.a) and existential sentence (25.b) have the same underlying structure, as illustrated in (26).

(25) (a) A man is in the room.
(b) There is a man in the room.

(26) (a) [IP [VP [v is] [SC [NP a man] [PP in the room]]]]
(b) [IP [NP a man] [VP [v is] [SC [NP a man] [PP in the room]]]]
(c) [IP [SPEC there] [VP [v is] [SC [NP a man] [PP in the room]]]]

As shown in (26), the copular verb Be selects for a SC13, which includes both the subject NP a man (the pivot) and the predicate PP in the room (the coda). Based on this analysis, the SC expresses a subject–predicate relation; that is, the PP in the room predicates a property of the subject NP a man. This predicational relation justifies the assumption that the copular and existential sentences are synonymous. In deriving the copular sentence, the subject of the SC, a man in (26.a), raises to the Spec, IP, as illustrated in (26.b), whereas in the existential sentence, the dummy there is inserted in the Spec, IP, as shown in (26.c). It is assumed that both the raising and insertion are required to satisfy the EPP or Case features of the head I14.

Another, albeit somewhat different, version of the standard analysis was proposed by Freeze 1992. According to this analysis, both copular sentences with a locative predicate15 and existential sentences with a locative coda are derived by movement from a single underlying structure, as shown in (27).

(27) [IP [SPEC e] [L [t + AGR/+LOC] [IP [SPEC NP] [P [NP]]]]] (Freeze 1992, p. 558)

Freeze argued that the movement to the subject position, Spec, Infl, is triggered by the feature [+/- definite]: a definite NP moves to the subject position, yielding the copular sentence, and the location moves to the subject position, yielding the existential sentence.
In particular, Freeze suggests that it is the $P'$, which includes both the head $P$ and its complement NP, that moves to the subject position in existential sentences, leaving its specifier in situ. Consider the Hindi existential sentence in (8), repeated in (28), which illustrates Freeze's analysis.

(28) kamree-mẽe aadmii hai. room-in man COP3sg.MASC.PRES
   ‘There is a man in the room.’ (Freeze 1992, p. 555)

Freeze argued that when a language has a proform (i.e., an expletive) in its existential sentences, such as PA and Italian, this proform is not a subject; it should be considered part of Infl. The proform is a spellout of a feature [+LOC] in the head Infl. However, Freeze argued that the pronoun there in English existentials is lexically locative located in the Spec, Infl and coindexed with the locative argument (i.e., $P'$) by predication. This argument is supported by the fact that this pronoun can undergo ‘subject-verb inversion’, as shown in (29).

(29) (a) There is a mouse in the glass.
   (b) Is there a mouse in the glass? (Freeze 1992, p. 574)

Kuno’s (1971) analysis also assumed that existential sentences and copular sentences are derived from the same underlying structure, but this argument differs somewhat from the standard analysis. Kuno suggested that the locative coda, which happens to be in the sentence-initial position (e.g., On the table are two books), moves to the sentence-final position via the process of Locative-Postposing, leaving a trace in the form of a locative pronoun (there) in the base position. Without providing empirical evidence, Kuno argued for the presence of a dummy locative item in simple existential sentences (i.e., existential sentences that have no locative codas). By contrast, in copular sentences (e.g., The two books are on the table), locatives are not located in the sentence-initial position, so Locative-Postposing does not apply to them. In this analysis, it is not clear what motivates the Locative-Postposing process, which moves the locative coda to the sentence-final position in existential sentences. It is also not obvious how such an analysis would account for simple existential sentences in which there is no locative coda or in which the coda is from a different syntactic category (e.g., verbal or adjectival codas).

Lyons (1967) pointed out that existential constructions in many, perhaps all, languages are derived from copular constructions. Indeed, a number of researchers have used this standard analysis for existential sentences in languages other than English. Following Stowell (1978), Huang (1987) analyzed the XP coda in Chinese existential sentences as a predicate and the pivot NP as a subject, and they were both projected in a SC selected by the auxiliary. In addition, Eid (1993), Jarad (2015), and Mohammad (1989) suggested the SC analysis for existential sentences in EA, SAA, and PA, respectively. They all argued that since these Arabic varieties do not generally allow indefinite subjects in copular sentences, as illustrated in (30.a, 31.a, and 32.a), the use of the expletive pronouns fiih in PA and fi in EA and SAA is obligatory to license the indefinite subjects in copular sentences, as illustrated in (30.b, 31.b, and 32.b). These researchers treated the pivot NP as a subject and the locative coda as a predicate. As an illustration, consider the underlying structure in (33) provided by Eid for the EA existential sentence in (32.b).
As demonstrated above, the standard analysis generally assumes that the existential pronoun (e.g., the English *there*) is an expletive NP inserted in the Spec, IP/TP. Nonetheless, there also exists an alternative subapproach that proposes that this pronoun has a semantic content and thus should be analyzed as a predicate in existential sentences (Moro 1997, 2006; McCloskey 2014). Let us first discuss the analysis of Moro, which treats existential sentences as an instance of inverse copular sentences. Adopting the SC analysis, Moro proposed that the English DP *there* can be treated as a predicate of the SC, rather than a subject, and then raised to the Spec, IP, as illustrated in (34.a). This process is equivalent to the analysis of an inverse copular sentence in which the predicate of the SC raises to the Spec, IP, as shown in (34.b).

(34) (a) \[IP [DP there] [r [I AGR] [VP be [SC [DP a problem] [r [I] [VP]]]]]] \[Moro 1997, p. 164\]
(b) The cause of the riot is [some pictures of the wall r]. \[Moro 2006, p. 10\]

Moro argued that the coda, such as the locative PP *in the garden* in *there are many girls in the garden*, must be analyzed as an adjunct of a clausal or nominal structure, as shown in (35).

(35) (a) [There are [many girls l]] [in the garden].
(b) [There are [[many girls [in the garden]] l]]. \[Moro 2006, p. 10\]

However, in simple existential sentences where there is no coda, Moro argued that the coda can be omitted because it is not a predicate, as opposed to copular sentences where the postcopular element is a predicate. The coda is an adjunct and thus can be deleted by definition. Moro pointed out that the fact that DPs, unlike APs and PPs, cannot function as codas in existential sentences, as in (36), follows from the fact that DPs cannot generally occur as adjutants.

(36) There are many girls angry with John/in the garden/*the cause of the riot. \[Moro 2006, p. 3\]

Similarly, McCloskey (2014) proposed that the element *ann* in Irish existential sentences, as in (14.a) repeated in (37.a), which is equivalent to the English *there*, is an existential nonverbal predicate licensed in an SC that functions as a complement selected by the copular verb, as illustrated in (37.b).
(37) (a) Beidh go leor bia ann.
be-FUT plenty food in-it
‘There’ll be plenty of food.’

(b) [SC [DP [XP PRED ann]]]

(McCloskey 2014, pp. 347–49)

Like Moro, McCloskey treated the locative coda in Irish existentials, such as *ar an bhaile* ‘on the town’ in (38), as a modifier.

(38) Tá daoine ann ar an bhaile nach mbeannochadh sa tsráid duit.
be.PRES people in-it on the town NEGC greet.COND in-the street to-you
‘There are people in the town who wouldn’t say hello to you in the street.’

(McCloskey 2014, p. 351)

In summary, both Moro and McCloskey assumed that in English and Irish existentials, *there* and *ann* function as predicates of an SC and do have semantic contents. The only difference is that in English, the predicate *there* raises to the Spec, IP to satisfy the EPP feature, whereas in Irish, this raising is not required as the EPP feature is not active in Irish.

3.1.1. Problems with the Standard Analysis

Numerous researchers (e.g., Francez 2009; Groat 1995; Hazout 2004; Jenkins 1975; Kim 2013; Kimball 1973; Kuno 1971; McNally 2011; Milsark 1974, 1977; Sabbagh 2009; Williams 1984) have shown that this standard analysis, although widely accepted, has several syntactic and semantic problems. This subsection discusses some of the relevant problems. First, Hazout (2004) and Sabbagh (2009) argued that the simple existential sentence that has no coda, as in (39) from NA, raises a complicated issue for the standard analysis. In other words, the pivot NP *miřkilah* ‘problem’ does not seem to be either an argument of a predicate or a predicate to a referential argument, which indicates that, in the structure of simple existential sentences, the position of the SC predicate would be null.

(39) fiih miřkilah
there problem.Fem.Sg
‘There is a problem.’

Second, some existential sentences do not have copular counterparts (Kuno 1971; Williams 1984) and vice versa, i.e., some copular sentences do not have existential counterparts (Francez 2009; Kim 2013; Kimball 1973; Jenkins 1975; McNally 2011; Milsark 1977). The examples in (40) from English and (41) from NA illustrate that these existential sentences do not have copular counterparts, whereas the examples in (42 and 43) from the same languages show that these copular sentences with nominal predicates do not have corresponding existential sentences.
(40) (a) There is a bird in the tree.
(b) ??A bird is in the tree.

(Kuno 1971, pp. 349–50)

(41) (a) fiīh galam ŋalaal t5-.t4aawlah there pen on the-desk.Fem.Sg
   ‘There is a pen on the desk.’
(b) *galam ŋalaal t5-.t4aawlah pen on the-desk.Fem.Sg
   ‘??A pen is on the desk.’

(42) (a) John was a doctor.
(b) *There was an old man a doctor.

(Stowell 1978, p. 461)

(43) (a) Ahmad t5.abiib Ahmad doctor
   ‘Ahmad is a doctor.’
(b) *fiīh Ahmad t5.abiib there Ahmad doctor
   ‘*There is Ahmad a doctor.’

This empirical evidence raises a problem for the standard analysis, which derives the existential and copular sentences from the same underlying structure. Williams (1984) also argued that the coda PP with a green coat in the existential sentence in (44.a) cannot be treated as a predicate of the SC, which can be explained through the ungrammaticality of the copular sentence in (44.b). Consider the examples in (45) from NA, which support this argument provided by Williams. This additional evidence indicates that what is assumed to be a predicate in the SC analysis is not actually a predicate, but it can be sometimes treated as a modifier of the pivot NP.

(44) (a) There is a man with a green coat.
(b) *The man is with a green coat.

(Williams 1984, p. 133)

(45) (a) fiīh t5.aalib min l-braaziil there student from the-Brazil
   ‘There is a student from Brazil.’
(b) *t5.aalib min l-braaziil student from the-Brazil
   ‘A student is from Brazil.’

Third, Williams (1984) argued that the coda in existential sentences cannot be fronted by wh-movement23 because it is a pivot modifier, as shown in (46.a). This is, in general, a property of NP modifiers. Thus, the SC analysis cannot explain this fact because the extraction of the predicate of an SC in copular sentences is permitted, as shown in (46.b).

(46) (a) *How happy was there someone?
(b) How happy do you consider [Bill t]SC?

(Williams 1984, pp. 133–34)

In addition to the above-mentioned syntactic problems, some semantic problems with the standard analysis have been identified in the literature (Francez 2009; Groat 1995; Kuno 1971). First, Groat (1995) argued that copular and existential sentences, as in (47), are obviously not synonymous. The existential sentence allows only a nonspecific reading for the pivot, whereas the copular sentence allows a specific referential reading for the subject. Consider the NA examples in (48), which support this argument. While the pivot NP ridγdqaal ‘a man’ in (48.a) has a nonspecific reading, the subject DP ?arridγdqaal ‘the man’ in (48.b) has a specific referential reading. This semantic evidence indicates that these two sentence types have different interpretations and thus cannot be synonymous.
(47) (a) There is a man in the room.
(b) A man is in the room.  
\[\text{\textit{Groat 1995, p. 355}}\]

(48) (a) fiih ridżdžaall b-l-baait  
‘There is a man in the house.’
(b) ?ar-ridżdžaall b-l-baait  
‘The man is in the house.’

Second, Francez (2009) argued that if codas are taken to be predicates in existential sentences, then both existentials and their copular counterparts are predicted to be truth-conditionally equivalent. However, this is not the case; it is known that existentials and their copular counterparts have different interpretations. For instance, English bare plurals must be interpreted existentially in the pivot position but generically in the subject position in copular sentences, as illustrated in (49).

(49) (a) There are zebras in Africa.
(b) Zebras are in Africa.  
\[\text{\textit{Francez 2009, p. 30}}\]

Francez (2009) also added that existential sentences, unlike their copular counterparts, allow part-whole reading, as illustrated in (50). The existential sentence in (50.a) denotes that the United States (US) does not have a prime minister, whereas the copular sentence in (50.b) denotes that no prime minister of any country is visiting the US at the present moment.

(50) (a) There is no prime minister in the U.S.
(b) No prime minister is in the U.S.  
\[\text{\textit{Francez 2009, p. 35}}\]

Lastly, Hazout (2004) pointed out that the assumption of Moro (1997, 2006), which treats the existential pronoun as a predicate, is indefensible. If the English existential pronoun there is a predicate, then the deictic locative will be its only semantic option, but this is impossible given the clash in meaning between here and there, as shown in (51). Due to this clash, this existential sentence will be semantically incoherent. Similarly, if the NA existential pronoun fiih were treated as a predicate that has a locative meaning, then the NA existential sentence in (52.a) would be semantically incoherent. This is supported by the fact that the NP l'urfah ‘the room’ is feminine, whereas the existential pronoun fiih has a masculine pronominal clitic (-h). It is worth noting that if the feminine pronominal clitic (-haa) were used instead of the masculine pronominal clitic, as shown in (52.b), the NA existential sentence would be ungrammatical.

(51) There are too many people here.  
\[\text{\textit{Hazout 2004, p. 396}}\]

(52) (a) fiih mi'kīlah b-l-yurfaad  
‘There is a problem in the room.’
(b) *fiii-haa mi'kīlah b-l-yurfaad  
‘There is a problem in the room.’

To recap, this section discussed the standard analysis, as well as some of its various versions, which primarily suggests that both existential and copular sentences are derived from a single underlying structure. It also presented a number of syntactic and semantic problems associated with this analysis. The next section discusses the alternative analysis for the structure of existential sentences.

3.2. Nonstandard Analysis

The second analysis, which I call here ‘nonstandard or noncopular analysis’ for the sake of simplicity, treats the existential sentence differently from the copular sentence.
In this analysis, the existential sentence is analyzed as a typical transitive sentence in which the copular verb selects an NP complement (i.e., the nominal pivot) rather than an SC. The coda is treated as an adjunct (i.e., internal or external modifiers), and the existential pronoun, for instance, the NP there, is inserted in the Spec, IP/TP or vP.

In the literature, two approaches have been identified within this analytic framework. The first approach proposes that the pivot NP is an internal argument and the coda is an adjunct (Barwise and Cooper 1981; Franco and Lorusso 2018; Görgülü 2019; Law 2011; McNally 1992, 1998, 2011, 2016; Sabbagh 2009; Sobin 2014; Zucchi 1995). As an illustration, consider the structure in (53.b) suggested by McNally (1992, 1998, 2011, 2016) for the existential sentence in (53.a).

(53) (a) There is a man in the room.
    (b) [S [NP there] [VP [V is] [NP pivot a man]] [PP coda in the room]]

McNally argued that the pivot NP is an argument of an instantiation predicate, namely, be instantiated. The coda can be analyzed as either a VP-modifier or a pivot-internal modifier. Using the structure in (53.b), though somewhat differently, Barwise and Cooper (1981) argued that there be could be considered as a unit similar to the predicate exist. The pivot NP functions as a generalized quantifier that takes the existence predicate as its argument. Barwise and Cooper added that the coda can also be analyzed as a sentential modifier and thus not within the VP. For example, the coda standing on the corner in (54) must be treated as a sentential modifier. This is supported by the fact that standing on the corner can occur at the beginning of the sentence, as in ‘Standing on the corner there is a girl who knows you’.

(54) There is a girl who knows you standing on the corner.  
    (Barwise and Cooper 1981, p. 206)

Sobin (2014) also suggested that the lower VP, which contains the copular verb Be, selects an argumental complement (i.e., the pivot DP), as demonstrated in (55). This construction indicates the existence of the complement DP. Unlike the standard assumption that requires the existential pronoun there to be merged in Spec, IP/TP, Sobin, following the hypothesis of low there-insertion proposed by Deal (2009), Rezac (2006), and Richards and Biberauer (2005), assumed that in the structure of the existential sentence there exists a head v, called the v expletive, which requires the merge of the expletive there (i.e., a nonthematic subject) in its specifier to satisfy the EPP feature on the head v. The head v is defective and thus does not assign an external theta-role. Then, the expletive there raises to Spec, TP to satisfy the EPP feature on the head T.

(55) (a) There is a problem.
    (b) [V [DP there] [V ex] [VP V Be [DP a problem]]]
    (Sobin 2014, pp. 396–97)

This approach of noncopular analysis has been used crosslinguistically for existential sentences. Following McNally’s analysis, demonstrated in (53), Franco and Lorusso (2018) treated the pivot NP in the existential sentence in Romance Creoles as an internal argument (i.e., a complement of the verb) and the coda as a VP adjunct. They pointed out that the coda in Romance Creoles is an adjunct that restricts the discourse universe. Likewise, Sabbagh (2009) suggested that the pivot DP in Tagalog existential sentences, as in (56.a), is an internal argument selected by an existential predicate, as illustrated in (56.b).

(56) (a) May malaki-ng disyerto sa Australya
    ‘There is a big desert in Australia.’
    (b) [TP T [AP [A mayroön] [DP]]]
    (Sabbagh 2009, p. 678)
Sabbagh argued that the coda in Tagalog existential sentences can be analyzed as a pivot modifier. In other words, the coda is a relative clause modifier merged with the pivot DP. In general, this analysis of Sabbagh cannot be extended to NA existential sentences because NA existentials do not involve an adjectival existential predicate such as Tagalog *may*(roin).

In addition to Franco and Lorusso (2018) and Sabbagh (2009), Law (2011) proposed that the Malagasy existential sentence in (57.a) has the structure in (57.b), where the unaccusative predicate of existence *-isy* takes the DP as its complement (i.e., an internal argument). Law analyzed the locative coda as an adjunct adjoined to VP or some other positions.

\[(57) \begin{align*}
(a) & \text{misy (ny) zaza ao an-trano} \\
& \text{exist DET child there ACC-house} \\
& \text{‘There is a child in the house.’}
\\
(b) & [IP [r [VP [V misy] [DP]]]]
\end{align*} \quad (\text{Law 2011, pp. 1588–90})
\]

It is worth noting that this approach of noncopular analysis takes the pivot as an NP/DP argument of some other existence predicates but not the coda as assumed by the standard analysis. In contrast, the second approach of noncopular analysis analyzes the pivot as the main predicate of the existential construction and the coda as an adjunct (Francez 2007, 2009, 2010; Hazout 2004; Higginbotham 1987; Jenkins 1975; Williams 1984, 2006). Let us elucidate this second approach in more detail. Williams (1984), following the bare-NP analysis proposed first by Jenkins (1975), suggested the structure in (58) for existential sentences.

\[(58) \begin{align*}
S & [NP \text{there}] [\text{Aux} \text{is}] [NP \text{someone sick}]
\end{align*} \quad (\text{Williams 1984, p. 135})
\]

As observed in structure (58), the postcopular material is an NP, not an SC, and the NP *there* is still an expletive pronoun in the subject position. Williams takes the pivot NP as a predicate nominal denoting properties of individuals. Kim (2013) pointed out that ‘according to this structure, there is no subject–predicate relation after the copular verb: there is just an NP functioning as the subject denoting the referent of existence’ (p. 26). Regarding the coda, Williams argued that the coda can be treated as either an NP modifier or a sentential modifier, as shown in (59.a–b), respectively. This argument is supported by the fact that with a locative PP coda, the pivot NP can be elided, as in (60.a), since the PP is a sentential modifier, but with an AP coda, the pivot NP cannot be elided, as in (60.b), since the AP is an NP internal modifier.

\[(59) \begin{align*}
(a) & \text{There is someone sick.} \\
(b) & \text{There is a man in the garden.}
\\
(60) \begin{align*}
(a) & \text{There was someone in the parlor, but there wasn’t ___ in the garden.} \\
(b) & \text{*There was someone sick but there wasn’t ___ dead.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[(\text{Williams 1984, pp. 137–38})
\]

Francez (2007, 2009, 2010) suggested the structure in (61) for English existential sentences. Similar to Williams (1984), Francez assumed that the pivot NP is the main predicate of the existential construction, rather than an argument. This assumption is motivated by the fact that pivots are always obligatory in existential sentences across languages, whereas the other elements in the existential sentence, including the expletive, copular verb, and coda, are not universally obligatory.

\[(61) \begin{align*}
S & [S [NP \text{there}]] [VP [V is] [NP \text{pivot a student}]] [PP_{\text{coda in the classroom}}]
\end{align*} \quad (\text{Adapted from Francez 2009, p. 7})
\]

Francez argued that existential sentences are context-dependent propositions. The pivot NP is a generalized quantifier denoting properties of sets, and the coda provides the quantification scope. In other words, the coda plays no role in the main predication in existential sentences; it is a sentential modifier (or a contextual modifier), and its semantic
role is analogous to other adverbials, such as the PP *during my funeral* in example (62). This argument is motivated by the fact that codas are generally optional in existential sentences.

(62) Mary wept [during my funeral]. (Francez 2009, p. 9)

Lastly, Hazout (2004) provided a hybrid analysis that treats the existential construction as an SC (PrP)\(^{31}\), as in (63), but takes the pivot NP to be a predicate of this SC, rather than an argument. He argued that the pivot NP in existential sentences is a syntactic predicate just like the postcopular NP in canonical copular sentences, as illustrated in (64).

(63) (a) There are many problems.
(b) \[IP [NP there] [r [i] VP be] [PrP [i] [Pr' [Pr] [NP many problems]]]]]]

(Hazout 2004, p. 411)

(64) (a) John and Bill are students in this class.
(b) There are students in this class.

(Hazout 2004, p. 395)

As seen in structure (63.b), the expletive NP *there* starts out in Spec, PrP because of the EPP feature and then raises to Spec, IP to enter into a relation of feature checking and Case assignment in a Spec-Head configuration. The pivot NP, which is the main predicate, is a complement of the head Pr. Hazout argued that the pivot NP is engaged in a subject–predicate relation with the NP *there*, a nonreferential element, but he was not explicit about how this predicational relation might be involved. Without providing an adequately explanatory account, Hazout assumed that the coda can be treated as either an NP-internal modifier or an external modifier adjoined to V’, as illustrated in (65).

(65) \[IP [r [i] VP be] [PrP [i] [Pr' [Pr] Modifier]]]]]]

(Hazout 2004, p. 412)

To summarize, this section discussed the nonstandard or noncopular analysis, which treats the existential sentence distinctly from the copular sentence. Two approaches were identified within this type of analysis: one considers the pivot as an internal argument, whereas the other considers it as a main predicate. The following section provides the analysis proposed for NA existential sentences, which employs the nonstandard analysis and its various versions.

4. Analysis of NA Existential Sentences

I have so far discussed the grammatical properties of NA existential sentences and the two main syntactic analyses proposed in the literature for the structure of existential sentences. In this section, I lay out my proposal for the structure of NA existential sentences. Given the problems reported in Section 3.1.1 with the standard analysis, which derives the existential sentence from its copular counterpart, I adopt the nonstandard analysis for NA existential sentences. In other words, I assume the basic structure in (67) for the NA existential sentence, as in (66).
There was a man in the house/sick/playing in the classroom.'

Considering the standard analysis of copular sentences in SA and other Arabic varieties (Alharbi 2017; Aoun et al. 2010; Bahloul 1994; Bakir 1980; Benmamoun 2000; Eid 1993; Fassi Fehri 1993; Mohammad 2000), I assume that the copula verb in NA existentials is an auxiliary base-generated in the head V and then raised to T (i.e., head-to-head movement) for a number of morphosyntactic reasons. As suggested by Bakir (1980) and Fassi Fehri (1993), I also assume that the head V is null in the structure of verbless sentences (i.e., the sentences that do not contain an overt copular verb in the present tense). In this latter case, the tense is realized as present, which has been argued to be the default or unmarked tense in Arabic (Benmamoun 2000; Fassi Fehri 1993; Ouballa 1994). In NA existential sentences, the copular verb, located in the head V, subcategorizes for the pivot NP, as demonstrated in (67).

As shown in structure (67), three key assumptions underlie this proposal suggested for the NA existential construction. Each of these assumptions is fully discussed in the subsequent subsections.

4.1. The NP Fiih

As observed in structure (67), I argue that the element fiih in NA existential sentences is an existential pronoun and is thus categorized as an NP. This assumption is in line with Eid (1993), Hoyt (2000), Jarad (2015), and Mohammad (1989), who proposed that fii/fiih in the existential sentences in PA, SAA, and EA is an NP. It is also in line with the standard assumption that there in English existentials is an NP (see, e.g., Francez 2007, 2009, 2010; Hazout 2004; Jenkins 1975; McNally 1992, 1998, 2011, 2016; Williams 1984, 2006). Two syntactic pieces of evidence in NA support this argument. First, the NP fiih behaves like the nominal ‘ahad ‘one’ in that they both can be merged with the negative marker ma, as shown in (69).
Second, the NP *fiīh* interacts with verbal agreement, as illustrated in (22), repeated in (70). This interaction indicates that the NP *fiīh* is like any other NP subject in NA which also interacts with verb agreement. As illustrated in (71), the verb in NA canonical sentences agrees with the subject in all φ-features.

(70) kaan *fiīh* tʰ-aalib/tʰ-illaab b-l-fasʰ al
be.PST.3.Sg.Masc there student.Sg.Masc/students.Pl.Masc in-the-classroom
‘There was/were a (male) student/students in the classroom.’

(71) (a) ïatʰ-tʰ-illaab kתיב-uu r-risalah
students.Pl.Masc wrote-3.Pl.Masc the-letter.Fem.Sg
‘The (male) students wrote the letter.’

(b) ïatʰ-tʰ-aalb-aat kתיב-an r-risalah
student-Pl.Fem wrote-3.Pl.Fem the-letter.Fem.Sg
‘The (female) students wrote the letter.’

One may argue that the element *fiīh* in NA existential sentences is a PP, not an NP, since it is homophonous with the locative PP *fiīh* ‘in it’. This argument is indefensible for two reasons. First, as demonstrated in Section 2, the NP *fiīh* has an existential function, whereas the PP *fiīh* has a locative function. Second, as pointed out by Mohammad (1989), if *fiīh* in existential sentences is a preposition, then it can be followed by a definite NP because prepositions generally can be followed by a definite NP. The fact that *fiīh* in NA existential sentences cannot be followed by a definite NP due to the DE, as shown in (16), repeated in (72), indicates that this element is not actually a preposition or PP.

(72) ??*fiīh* tʰ-tʰ-aalib haaðʰ ir
there the-student present
‘??There is the student present.’

Another alternative proposal, provided by Potsdam and Alanazi (2014), suggests that *fii* in GA existential sentences is a copular verb. Their approach rests on two pieces of evidence. First, the element *fii* in existential sentences is negated with the verbal negative marker, namely, *ma*, as illustrated in (73). Second, *fii* can follow the auxiliary *kaan* ‘AUX. PAST’, thus supporting its verbal status since *kaan* is followed by a verb, as in (74).

(73) (a) ma/*mu kisart il-jaam il-jaam NEG break.PFV.1SG the window pane
‘I didn’t break the window pane.’

(b) ma/*mu/*la fii gahwa waayid gahwa waayid NEG COP coffee.F.SG much
‘There isn’t much coffee.’

(74) kaan fii qalim AUX.PAST COP pen
‘There was a pen.’

(Potsdam and Alanazi 2014, p. 11)

This proposal of Potsdam and Alanazi, which treats the element *fii* as a copular verb, is untenable for a number of reasons. First, in NA, there are instances in which the negative marker *ma* can be used with pronouns and prepositions, as shown in (75). This fact indicates that the negative marker *ma* is not restricted only to verbs but can also be used with other categories.

(75) (a) ma ant gasʰ iir
Neg you short
‘You are not short.’

(b) ma huu gasʰ iir
Neg he short
‘He is not short.’

(c) Ahmad ma mi_deps ah galam
Ahmad Neg with-him pen
‘Ahmad does not have a pen.’
Second, the auxiliary *kaan* (i.e., the copular verb in Arabic) can be followed by various categories in NA, such as adjective and noun, as in (76). It is inaccurate to claim that the position following *kaan* is reserved only for verbs.

(76)  
(a) Ahmad *kaan* miriið
Ahmad be.PST.3.Sg.Masc sick
‘Ahmad was sick.’
(b) Ahmad *kaan* mudir
Ahmad be.PST.3.Sg.Masc manager
‘Ahmad was a manager.’

Third, as argued by Mohammad (1989), *fiih* requires the noun following it (i.e., the pivot) to be indefinite, as discussed in the DE in Section 2, but this feature is not shared by any other verb. In other words, if *fiih* is a verb in NA existential sentences, then it is not obvious why it is the only verb in NA that requires the noun that follows it to be indefinite. NA verbs, like verbs in many languages, allow both definite and indefinite NPs to follow them. Fourth, if *fiih* is a verb, then it can occur before and after its subject, like any other verb in NA, as shown in (77). This is, however, implausible given that *fiih* in NA existential sentences must always come before the pivot NP, as illustrated in (78).

(77)  
(a) ?atÌ¿t-I illaab ktib-uu r-risalah
students.Pl.Masc wrote-3.Pl.Masc the-letter.Fem.Sg
‘The students wrote the letter.’
(b) ktib-uu t-I illaab r-risalah
wrote-3.Pl.Masc students.Pl.Masc the-letter.Fem.Sg
‘The students wrote the letter.’

(78)  
(a) fiih walad b-l-urfah
there boy in-the-room.Fem.Sg
‘There is a boy in the room.’
(b) *walad fiih b-l-urfah
boy there in-the-room.Fem.Sg
‘There is a boy in the room.’

Having shown that the element *fiih* in NA existential sentences is an NP, rather than a preposition or verb, I now turn to the second part of the first assumption, specifically, the position of the NP *fiih* in the derivation. Following the hypothesis of low *there*-insertion proposed by Deal (2009), Rezac (2006), and Richards and Biberauer (2005) and adopted recently by Sobin (2014), I assume that within the structure of NA existential sentences there exists a head v, called *v* expletive, which requires the merge of the NP *fiih* (i.e., a nonthematic subject) in its specifier to satisfy the formal feature of EPP on the head v, as demonstrated in (67). The head v is defective and thus does not assign an external θ-role. Differently from Sobin, I assume that the NP *fiih* does not raise to the Spec, TP. As supporting evidence, consider the NA embedded existential sentences in (79). The NA embedded existential sentences elucidate that the only available position for the optional expletive pronoun/-ih/, which follows the complementizer *inn* ‘that’, is the Spec, TP. These examples also indicate that the NP *fiih* must be merged in a position lower than the TP, hence a vP.

(79)  
(a) yabduu inn(-ih) fiih ridÌ¿daal b-l-bait
seem.3.Sg.Masc that-it there man in-the-house
‘It seems that there is a man in the house.’
(b) yabduu inn(-ih) *kaan* fiih ridÌ¿daal b-l-bait
seem.3.Sg.Masc that-it be.PST.3.Sg.Masc there man in-the-house
‘It seems that there was a man in the house.’

Additional evidence supporting the assumption that the NP *fiih* is merged in the Spec, vP comes from the behavior of negation. When the NA existential sentence is in the present tense, the negative marker *ma* must precede the NP *fiih*, as in (80). Assuming that the NegP is projected in a position lower than the TP (Aoun et al. 2010; Benmamoun 2000; Pollock...
1989), the NP fiih must be merged in the Spec, vP, as demonstrated in (81), to account for the negation facts.

(80) (a) ma fiih rid3d3aal b-l-bait
   Neg there man in-the-house
   'There isn’t a man in the house.'

(b) *fiih ma rid3d3aal b-l-bait
   there Neg man in-the-house
   'There isn’t a man in the house.'

(81) \[
   \text{TP} \left[ \text{NegP} \left[ \text{Neg} \text{ma} \right] \right] \left[ \text{vP} \left[ \text{NP} \text{fiih} \right] \right] \]

4.2. The Pivot NP

In Section 2, I pointed out that the pivot, which is obligatory in NA existential sentences, must be an NP, specifically, an indefinite NP. In other words, the pivot in NA existentials cannot be from any other syntactic category, such as an adjective or verb. There is further independent syntactic evidence for the categorical status of the pivot NP. As argued by Barwise and Cooper (1981), the pivot NP can occur as a prepositional complement, in which position only NPs are allowed. The examples in (82) support the argument that the pivot in NA existentials is an NP since it can appear as a prepositional complement.

(82) (a) Ahmad kitab b-galam d3idiid
    Ahmad wrote.3Sg.Masc in-pen new
    'Ahmad wrote with a new pen.'

(b) fiih galam laala t1-t1 aawlah
    there pen on the-desk.Fem.Sg
    'There is a pen on the desk.'

Adopting the nonstandard analysis for existential sentences (see, e.g., Barwise and Cooper 1981; Francez 2007, 2009, 2010; Franco and Lorusso 2018; Jenkins 1975; Law 2011; McNally 1992, 1998, 2011, 2016; Sabbagh 2009; Sobin 2014; Williams 1984, 2006), I assume that the pivot in NA existentials is an NP complement (i.e., an internal argument) selected by the copular verb or its null counterpart, as demonstrated in (67). The existential construction denotes the existence of this pivot NP, which is why its presence is universally obligatory. This assumption is motivated by the fact that the pivot NP never precedes the NP fiih in NA existential sentences, as illustrated in (83). This fact indicates that if the assumption, presented in Section 4.1, that the NP fiih must be merged in the Spec, vP is correct, then the pivot NP must be in a position lower than that of the NP fiih. This position, I assume, is the complement of the copular verb.

(83) (a) fiih galam laala t1-t1 aawlah
    there pen on the-desk.Fem.Sg
    'There is a pen on the desk.'

(b) *galam fiih laala t1-t1 aawlah
    pen there on the-desk.Fem.Sg
    'There is a pen on the desk.'

Unlike in the standard analysis, the pivot NP cannot be treated as a subject of an SC for the reasons provided in Section 3.1.1. Specifically, if the pivot is treated as a subject NP, then it must always have a predicate (i.e., coda), but this is not always the case as NA has simple existential sentences that do not contain a coda, as in (39), repeated in (84).

(84) fiih mioskilah
    there problem.Fem.Sg
    'There is a problem.'

This proposal is different from that of Abdel-Ghafer and Jarbou (2015), who suggested that both the expletive fiih and pivot in JA existential sentences form a single syntactic constituent: the expletive phrase (ExplP). The proposal of Abdel-Ghafer and Jarbou cannot be extended to NA existential sentences because adverbs in NA existentials can intervene
between the expletive \textit{fiih} and the pivot NP, as shown in (85). This evidence of adverb placement reveals that it is implausible to consider these items as one constituent.

(85) (a) \textit{fiih daayim} mi'jaakil b-l-bait
there always problems in-the-house

‘There are always problems in the house.’

(b) \textit{fiih ba'ad} mi'jaakil b-l-bait
there also problems in-the-house

‘There are also problems in the house.’

4.3. Coda as an Adjunct

As discussed in Section 2, the coda in NA existential sentences can be from various categories, including prepositional phrases, adjectives, verbs, and participles. For the sake of brevity, I limit the discussion in this section to the first three categories. Assuming the nonstandard analysis (see, e.g., Francez 2007, 2009, 2010; Franco and Lorusso 2018; Hazout 2004; Jenkins 1975; Law 2011; McNally 1992, 1998, 2011, 2016; Moro 1997, 2006; Sabbagh 2009; Williams 1984, 2006), I argue that the coda in NA existential sentences is an adjunct—not, as in the standard analysis, a predicate—that functions as either an NP-internal modifier or external modifier. As demonstrated in (67), the coda can be adjoined to the NP or the VP. Two general pieces of evidence support this assumption. First, as pointed out first by Francez (2009), the optional presence of the coda in NA existential sentences indicates that it is an adjunct. If it is a predicate, then its presence must be obligatory. Second, as mentioned in Section 3.1, Moro (2006) pointed out that the fact that DPs, unlike APs and PPs, cannot function as codas suggests that the coda is an adjunct because DPs cannot generally occur as adjuncts. This fact is attested in NA existentials, as shown in (86), where the coda cannot be a DP.

(86) *\textit{fiih rid} \textit{Zd} \textit{Zaal} t'il-\textit{abiib}
there man the-doctor

‘There is a man the doctor.’

Having shown that the coda in NA existentials is an adjunct, I now discuss each category of possible codas in NA existentials. I begin with the locative PP coda, such as the PP \textit{blbait} ‘in the house’ in (87), which I assume is an external modifier adjoined to the VP (or perhaps some position above it).

(87) \textit{fiih rid} \textit{Zd} \textit{Zaal} \textit{b-l-bait}
there man in-the-house

‘There is a man in the house.’

This assumption is supported by the fact that the locative PP coda can appear in different positions, sentence-initially, between the NP \textit{fiih} and the pivot, and sentence-finally, as illustrated in (88.a). This positioning is similar to the distribution of adverbs in NA, which can appear in different syntactic positions, as shown in (88.b).

(88) (a) \textit{(b-l-bait) fiih (b-l-bait) rid} \textit{Zd} \textit{Zaal (b-l-bait)}
(in-the-house) there (in-the-house) man (in-the-house)

‘(In the house) there is a man (in the house).’

(b) \textit{(hnaak) fiih (hnaak) rid} \textit{Zd} \textit{Zaal (hnaak)}
there there (there) man (there)

‘There is a man there.’

Another piece of evidence supporting the assumption that the locative PP coda is an external modifier comes from extraction facts. Law (2011) argued that if the coda expression is an external modifier, then it is expected to move and leave the pivot behind, but if it is an internal modifier, it cannot move. As illustrated in (89), the locative PP coda in NA existential sentences can move and leave the pivot NP behind.
Furthermore, the ellipsis facts, provided by Williams (1984) and stated in Section 3.2, suggest that the pivot NP can be elided when the coda expression is taken as an external modifier but cannot be elided when the coda is an internal modifier. Examination of the NA existential sentence in (90), in which the pivot NP fiih ridZdZaal ‘students’ can be elided, suggests that the locative PP coda in NA existentials is an external modifier.

(90) kaan fiih tillaab b-l-dZaal______, bass ma kaan fii ______ b-l-qaaYah

There were students in the university, but there weren’t _____ in the classroom.

Regarding the adjectival coda, such as the AP miriido ‘sick’ in (91), I argue that it is an internal modifier (i.e., part of the pivot NP) adjoined to the NP. Unlike the locative PP coda, the AP coda in NA existentials cannot move and leave the pivot NP behind, as illustrated in (92.a). Moreover, in NA existentials, the pivot NP with an adjectival coda cannot be elided, as shown in (92.b), because this coda expression is taken as an internal modifier. These two pieces of evidence support the assumption that the AP coda is an internal modifier.

(91) fiih ridZdZaal miriido

There is a man sick.

(92) (a) *miriido fiih ridZdZaal ______

’Sick there is a man______.’

(b) *fiih t’aalib miriido, bass ma fii _____ mayyit

‘There is a man sick, but there isn’t _____ dead.’

It should be noted that since adjectival modifiers generally follow the noun in NA, one may confuse the sentence in (91), which contains an adjectival coda, with the sentence in (93) that contains an attributive adjective. Following Huang (1987), I argue that although these two sentences have the same form, they have different readings. The sentence in (93) has a restrictive reading; that is, it asserts the existence of ridZdZaal miriido ‘a sick man’, not just ridZdZaal ‘a man’. However, the sentence in (91) has a nonrestrictive reading (i.e., a descriptive reading). In other words, the sentence in (91) asserts merely the existence of ridZdZaal ‘a man’ and continues to provide a description of this existing ridZdZaal ‘man’. As a NA native speaker, it appears that there is comma intonation after the pivot NP in the sentence in (91).

(93) fiih ridZdZaal miriido

There is a sick man.

Following Sabbagh (2009), who suggested that the coda in Tagalog existentials is a relative clause modifier merged with the pivot, and Law (2011), who also suggested that the verbal coda in Malagasy existentials is part of a relative clause modifier, I assume that the verbal coda, such as the VP yal’ab blfas’al ‘play in the classroom’ in (94), is part of a relative clause modifier adjoined to the pivot NP (i.e., an internal modifier). Since the pivot in NA existential sentences is always an indefinite NP, the relativizer tali ‘that’ of this relative clause is deleted. The deletion of the relativizer tali ‘that’ when the modified head noun is indefinite is a common property of NA relative clauses, as illustrated in (95).

(94) fiih t’aalib yali’ab b-l-fas’al

‘There is a student playing in the classroom.’
(95) (a) ?akal Ahmad l-¯halaa *(alli) jaraa-h min ma¯hal Rose
ate.3.Sg.Masc Ahmad the-dessert that bought.3.Sg.Masc-it from store Rose
‘Ahmad ate the dessert that he bought from Rose store.’
(b) ?akal Ahmad h alaa *(alli) jaraa-h min ma¯hal Rose
ate.3.Sg.Masc Ahmad dessert that bought.3.Sg.Masc-it from store Rose
‘Ahmad ate a dessert that he bought from Rose store.’

As pointed out by Law (2011), the possible tense mismatch between the matrix verb and the verbal coda in Malagasy existentials can be taken as evidence that the verbal coda is part of a relative clause. In line with Law, I argue that the tense mismatch between the copular verb and the verbal coda in NA existential sentences, as in (96), indicates that the verbal coda is part of a relative clause modifier and hence can have a different tense independent from that of the matrix clause.

(96) kaan fiih t Qaab ya-l Qab b-l-fas Qal
be.PST.3.Sg.Masc there student.Sg.Masc 3-play.PRES in-the-classroom
‘There was a student playing in the classroom.’

Similar to the AP coda, the VP coda, which is part of a relative clause modifier in NA existentials, cannot move and leave the pivot NP behind, as illustrated in (97.a). As pointed out by Law (2011), the impossibility of the extraction here is expected given the constraint that the extracted phrase is located within a relative clause island. Moreover, in NA existentials, the pivot NP with a verbal coda cannot be elided, as in (97.b), because this coda expression is taken as part of an internal modifier. These two pieces of evidence support the assumption that the VP coda is part of an internal modifier.

(97) (a) *ya-l Qab b-l-fas Qal fiih t Qaab __________
3-play in-the-classroom there student.Sg.Masc
‘*Playing in the classroom, there is a student _____.’
(b) *fiih t Qaab ya-l Qab b-l-fas Qal, bass ma fiih __ yi-hil t-tamaariin
there student 3-play in-the-classroom but Neg there 3-answer the-exercises
‘*There is a student playing in the classroom, but there isn’t ___answering the exercises.’

4.4. Semantics of NA Existential Sentences

In this last subsection, I briefly discuss the interpretation of NA existential sentences, which hinges on the syntactic properties provided in Section 2 and the three key assumptions given in the preceding subsections. Much like the semantic analysis of Law (2011) and Milsark (1974, 1977), I assume that the NP fiih, which is obligatory in NA existential sentences, functions as an existential quantifier that scopes over a bound variable (X) introduced by the pivot NP, which is treated as an internal argument. This variable, denoted by the nominal pivot, ranges over individuals or properties. Following the analysis of Law (2011), I suggest that the NA existential sentence in (98.a) has the interpretation in (98.b). As shown in (98.b), the existential quantifier, represented by the NP fiih, ranges over the variable (X), provided by the pivot NP rid gzaal ‘man’, which also ranges over individuals.

(98) (a) fiih rid gzaal
there man
‘There is a man.’
(b) ∃x [person (x) & rid gzaal ‘man’ (x)]

The coda, which is an optional modifier in NA existentials, can be interpreted as a restrictor that restricts the domain of individuals or properties over which the existential quantifier scopes. A number of researchers (e.g., Francez 2009; Law 2011; Zucchi 1995) have also argued that the semantic role of the coda expression in existential sentences is to restrict the domain of the nominal pivot. As an illustration, the NA existential sentence with a locative PP coda in (99.a) has the interpretation in (99.b), in which the NP complement of the PP coda lbari ‘the house’ restricts the domain of the individual over which the quantifier scopes. This semantic account, although succinct, captures the intuition behind the NA
existential sentence as a sentence that is mainly used to assert the (non)existence of one or more entities in the domain of discourse.

(99) (a) fiih ridʒjaal b-l-bait
there man in-the-house
‘There is a man in the house.’

(b) ℰx [person (x) & ridʒjaal ‘man’ (x) & lbait ‘the house’ (x)]

5. Conclusions

This paper discusses the syntax of the existential construction in NA, a local Arabic variety spoken by people living in the central parts of Saudi Arabia. It begins by providing a detailed account of the key grammatical properties of NA existential sentences. Then, it discusses the existing analyses that have been suggested of the syntax of the existential construction in various languages. Lastly, it presents an analysis of NA existential construction that employs the nonstandard analysis, which treats the existential sentence as distinct from its copular counterpart. The proposed analysis in this paper rests on three main assumptions: the existential pronoun fiih is an NP merged in the Spec, vP; the pivot is an NP complement selected by a copular verb; and the coda expression is an adjunct that functions as either an internal or external modifier. Since much of the literature concerns the existential construction in English and other related languages, the current work about NA existential sentences may contribute to the theory of this interesting syntactic phenomenon. This contribution may, in turn, help improve our understanding of this construction, thereby enabling more thorough analysis.

Due to time and space limitations, a few questions have been left open for future research. First, the phenomenon of DE in NA existential sentences seems to be a promising avenue for future work. A complete, precise description and analysis of this interesting generalization is required. Second, a comprehensive account is needed of the agreement facts in NA existential sentences. To accomplish such an account, a detailed account of the subject–verb agreement in NA—which does not currently exist in the extant literature—should be provided. Third, the syntactic status of the participle coda expressions requires an in-depth investigation. It is recommended to examine first the syntax of participles in SA and NA, since this may lead to a better understanding of this coda expression in NA existentials. Hopefully, the data and analysis provided in the current work will serve as a basis for these directions of future work.

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Notes

1 The following abbreviations are used in this paper: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, ExplP = expletive phrase, DE = definiteness effect, EA = Egyptian Arabic, Fem = feminine, Fut = future, GA = Gulf Arabic, Gen = genitive, IND = indicative, JA = Jordanian Arabic, Masc = masculine, NA = Najdi Arabic, Neg = negative, NegP = negative phrase, Nom = nominative, PA = Palestinian Arabic, Pl = plural, PRES = present, PrP/PredP = predicate phrase, PST = past, SA = Standard Arabic, SAA = Spoken Arabic of Aleppo, SC = small clause, Sg = singular, US = United States.

2 See Abbott (1997) for other possible functions of existential sentences, such as making the addressee aware of the existence (or absence) of some entities.

3 The SA example is used here because NA does not have a similar sentence. As shown below, the only way to assert the existence of an entity in NA is by using the existential pronoun fiih.

4 In the literature, the expletive and proform items are used interchangeably (see, e.g., Franco and Lorusso 2018; Freeze 1992). This is because it is uncommon for a language to have both of these items in its existential sentences.
Chomsky (1993, 2000, 2001) used the term ‘associate’ instead of the pivot.

I use here the standard term ‘expletive’ for simplicity’s sake. Section 4 demonstrates that this element has semantic content and serves as an existential quantifier.

Freeze (1992) pointed out that in languages such as Samoan, Tongan, and Gilbertese, the expletive, i ai ‘P+3sg’, consists of a prepositional phrase with a third-person singular pronominal object.

The DE phenomenon is beyond the scope of this paper. A fully precise description and analysis of this generalization in NA existential sentences are left for future work. For further discussion on this phenomenon, readers are recommended to visit the various sources (e.g., Higginbotham 1987; Mohammad 1989; Moro 1997, 2006; Witkos 2004; Barwise and Cooper 1981; Chung and Ladusaw 2004; Keenan 1987; Kuno 1971; Law 2011; McCloskey 2014; McNally 1998; Milsark 1974, 1977; Sabbagh 2009; Stowell 1978; Zucchi 1995; Abbott 1997; Kim 2013; Pollard and Sag 1994; Prince 1992; Rando and Napoli 1978; Ward and Birner 1995; Ziv 1982).

It is important to mention that these types of pivots may be acceptable in NA when they have a list reading, not an existential reading.

See (Alharbi 2017; Aoun et al. 2010; Bahloul 1994; Bakir 1980; Benmamoun 2000; Mohammad 2000) for extensive discussion on the absence of the copular verb in the present tense in Arabic copular sentences.

The agreement pattern with the pivot NP is less common in NA existential sentences.

Due to space limitations, I will not provide an account of these agreement facts in this paper. These will be left for future work.

Other analyses used a predicate phrase (PredP/PrP) to represent the small clause (see, e.g., Freeze 1992; Hazout 2004).

Chomsky (2000, 2001) proposed that the expletive there does not require a structural Case; it is merged in the Spec-TP to satisfy the formal feature of EPP on T.

Freeze (1992) used the term ‘predicative locative’ for copular sentences with a locative predicate. He did not consider the other predicate types, such as NPs and APs, since his work mainly focused on the locative predicates.

Lyons (1967) used the term ‘locatives’ instead of copular sentences.

Huang (1987) discussed four types of existential sentences in Chinese. See this source for further discussion of Chinese existential sentences.

The works of Eid (1993) and Mohammad (1989) focused mainly on copular sentences in EA and PA and did not provide a fully explanatory analysis for existential sentences.

Mohammad (1989) treated both the expletive fiih and the pivot as subjects and the coda as a predicate.

Kayne (2004, 2008, 2016, 2020) argued against the standard analysis that assumes that there in English existentials is an expletive element, which is externally merged into a sentential Spec-position. He instead suggested that there is a deictic modifier of the pivot NP. In other words, there in English existentials is merged within a DP, which includes an indefinite nominal pivot. Then, it moves from within the DP to its sentential position.

Sabbagh (2009) provided several arguments, based on the facts of Tagalog locative PPs, against the SC analysis to show that the coda could not be treated as a predicate of the SC. Law (2011) also presented further arguments against the SC analysis based on the extraction facts in Malagasy existential sentences.

NA copular sentences with indefinite NP subjects are odd to native speakers and are difficult to find. NA speakers always use the expletive fiih when the subject is indefinite (see Eid 1993; Jarad 2015; Mohammad 1989 for further discussion on the indefinite subjects in Arabic copular sentences).

It is difficult to find similar examples from NA supporting this fact because NA has different strategies to ask similar questions.

Görgülü (2019) suggested, for language—particular reasons, that the coda in Turkish existential sentences is located in the Spec, TP. This type of analysis is not common for the construction of existential sentences.

Sobin (2014) did not discuss the status of the coda in existential sentences.

For other irrelevant reasons, Sabbagh (2009) assumed that the existential predicate maynōn is an adjective.

According to Sabbagh (2009), there is no overt subject in Tagalog existential sentences.

See Law (2011) for other types of Malagasy existential sentences in which the existence predicate takes an IP complement.

Law (2011) asserted that his analysis did not hinge on the precise position of the coda.

Williams’ analysis differs from that of Jenkins, which treats the copular verb as the head of the VP and the postcopular NP as the object of the verb, as demonstrated in (i). (i) [s [IP there] [VP is] [NP someone sick]] (Williams 1984, p. 136).

Following Bowers (1993, 2001), Hazout (2004) assumed that the SC is a predicate phrase (PrP).

Readers are recommended to refer to these cited sources for a further detailed discussion on the syntactic status of the copular verb in Arabic. I do not pursue this line further here, as it would digress from the problem under investigation.

Mohammad (1989) provided similar evidence from PA.

An Arabic variety spoken in the Arab Gulf states. Based on the data that Potsdam and Alanazi (2014) provided, it seems that the variety they investigated is that spoken in Kuwait.
Potsdam and Alanazi (2014) primarily discussed the morpheme *fiː* in the Gulf Pidgin Arabic. This is a different syntactic phenomenon, as *fiː* in this variety may have various uses.

The third and fourth reasons were taken from Mohammad (1989), who argued against the assumption that the element *fiːh* is a verb in PA.

Soltan (2007) proposed that the subject DP in SA does not raise to Spec, IP. In other words, SA lacks the A-movement.

See Law (2011) for further discussion on extraction facts in Malagasy existential sentences.

See Ouhalla (1994) for additional discussion on focus movement in Arabic.

See Huang (1987) for similar sentences in English and Chinese existential sentences.

For language-particular reasons, Law (2011) used the term ‘a thematic predicate’ instead of a verbal coda in reference to Malagasy existential sentences.

See McCloskey (2014), McNally (1992, 1998, 2011, 2016), Sabbagh (2009), and Williams (1984) for similar analyses.

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