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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Exceptive Constructions in Najdi Arabic: A Descriptive Analysis

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#### ABSTRACT

An exceptive construction is the construction that denotes the exclusion of an entity from a set or generalization. This construction has been scrutinized in several languages, like English, Spanish, and Standard Arabic, but has been largely overlooked in Najdi Arabic (NA). Therefore, this paper aims to provide a detailed descriptive analysis of the basic grammatical properties of NA exceptive constructions. The study first indicates that NA includes three major exceptive types: a full positive exceptive, a full negative exceptive, and an empty exceptive. The first two types have an exceptive reading, whereas the latter has only a restrictive reading. Next, it shows that the NA exceptive marker *ʔillaa* is a coordinating conjunction, rather than a preposition or a focal adverb. It also reveals that the exception XP in NA exceptives can be from various syntactic categories, excluding finite VPs. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the associate can generally be a universal quantifier phrase, a definite DP, a generic DP, and the quantifier *ʔaylab* 'most', but cannot be an existential quantifier. Lastly, it has been concluded that exceptive phrases (EP) with nominal exceptions are typically located either next to the associate or at the right-periphery, whereas EPs with non-nominal exceptions are located only at the right-periphery. The left-periphery position is not available to EPs in NA exceptives. Hopefully, the present work contributes to the limited typological research on the syntax of exceptive constructions.

#### KEYWORDS

Exceptive constructions, syntax, Najdi Arabic, theoretical study

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#### 1. Introduction

In the theory of syntax, exceptive constructions are those that express an exclusion or exception to ideas, entities, events, situations, or generalizations (Arnold & Choi, 2003; Polinsky et al., 2024; Potsdam, 2018; Potsdam & Polinsky, 2017, 2019). More specifically, Moutaoukil (2009) states that the exceptive construction "is a relation of exclusion which holds between a set of entities involved in some event and an entity (or a subset of entities) meant to be excluded from this event" (p. 84). As illustrated in (1) from Najdi Arabic (NA)<sup>1</sup>, this construction typically involves three main items: an associate, which is typically the quantifier phrase (QP) or the determiner or noun phrase (DP/NP) that the exceptive phrase associates with, an exceptive marker (EM), and an exception XP, which is the constituent that follows the EM. The phrase that contains both the EM and the exception XP is known as an exceptive phrase (EP), and the entire exceptive sentence will be referred to as an exceptive construction. These basic terms will be used throughout this paper for ease and consistency<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Najdi Arabic is a local Arabic variety spoken largely in the central parts of Saudi Arabia. The Najdi Arabic data in this study were reported based on the speech of people living specifically in the region of Qassim.

<sup>2</sup> Researchers have used various terms for the items used in exceptive constructions, such as *antecedent*, *licenser*, or *correlate* for the associate and the *XP-complement* for the exception XP (see, e.g., Albataineh, 2021; Galal et al., 2019; Moltmann, 1995; Potsdam & Polinsky, 2017; Saeed, 2023; Soltan, 2016; Tahara, 1999).

- (1) *kill* *ʔit-ṭillaab* <sup>(Associate)</sup> *ʔaḥzar-uu* *ʔillaa* <sup>(EM)</sup> *yasser* <sup>3</sup> <sup>{Exception XP}</sup>  
 all the-students came-3.Masc.PI except Yasser  
 'All the students came, except Yasser.'

Although the syntax of exceptive constructions has recently attracted attention in several languages—such as English (Hoeksema, 1987, 1995; Potsdam, 2018; von Fintel, 1993), French (O'Neill, 2011), Spanish (Pérez-Jiménez & Moreno-Quibén, 2012), German (Moltmann, 1995), Italian (Seguin, 2024), and even some Arabic varieties (Albataineh, 2021; Galal et al., 2019; Khalaily, 2019; Moutaoukil, 2009; Ryding, 2005; Saeed, 2023; Soltan, 2016; Zabarah, 2017)<sup>4</sup>—it remains largely overlooked in NA. There is no single study that has examined this interesting construction in NA. Therefore, the current paper seeks to provide a detailed descriptive account of the core syntactic properties of NA exceptive constructions<sup>5</sup>. It also attempts to suggest some preliminary claims about these grammatical properties.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section (2) presents the primary types of exceptive constructions in NA. Section (3) discusses the EMs in NA exceptive constructions as well as the categorical status of the EM *ʔillaa*. Section (4) deals with the exception XP and the associate item in NA exceptive constructions. Section (5) discusses the EP positions in NA exceptives. Section (6) concludes this study and suggests avenues for future research.

## 2. Types of exceptive constructions in NA

As in Classical Arabic, Standard Arabic (SA) (Moutaoukil, 2009; Saeed, 2023; Zabarah, 2017), and other colloquial Arabic varieties, such as Jordanian Arabic (Albataineh, 2021) and Egyptian Arabic (EA) (Soltan, 2016), NA has three main types of exceptive constructions: a full positive exceptive as in (1), a full negative exceptive as in (2), and an empty exceptive as in (3).

- (2) *kill* *ʔit-ṭillaab* *maa* *ḥzar-uu* *ʔillaa* *yasser*  
 all the-students Neg came-3.Masc.PI except Yasser  
 'All the students did not come, except Yasser.'

- (3) *maa* *ḥzar* *ʔillaa* *yasser*  
 Neg came.3.Sg except Yasser  
 'Only Yasser came.'

The full positive type includes all three main items of exceptive constructions: the associate, the EM, and the exception XP. The full negative type involves all three main items together with the negative marker *maa* 'not'. In contrast, the empty type lacks the associate item; this is the key feature that distinguishes this type from the other two types. It should be pointed out that this latter type must always be negative. If the negative marker *maa* 'not' is omitted, the sentence will be ungrammatical, as in (4).

- (4) *\*ḥzar* *ʔillaa* *yasser*  
 came.3.Sg except Yasser

It appears that both of the full types convey an exceptive meaning; that is, the EPs in these constructions subtract an entity from the set of entities introduced by the associate item (i.e., the QP) (see, e.g., Hoeksema, 1987, 1995; Potsdam, 2018; Seguin, 2024; von Fintel, 1993). For instance, the EP *ʔillaa yasser* 'except Yasser' in (1) excludes Yasser from the set of students who came, whereas in (2) it excludes Yasser from the set of students who did not come. On the contrary, the empty type appears to have merely a restrictive meaning due to the fact that it lacks the associate item from which an exception is made. Thus, the sentence in (3) denotes that *Yasser is the only one who came*. It seems that the EM *ʔillaa* in this empty type has a proposition similar to the NA restrictive marker *bass* 'only', as shown in (5). That is why Saeed (2023) uses the term "restrictive construction" for this empty type in SA. Since this empty type denotes a restrictive, rather than exceptive, reading, it will not be examined in the present study. It will be left for future research because it deserves a separate examination.

- (5) *bass* *yasser* *ḥzar*

<sup>3</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this paper: 1 = first person, 3 = third person, AP = adjective phrase, AdvP = adverb phrase, COMP = complementizer, CP = clause phrase, DP = determiner phrase, EA = Egyptian Arabic, EM = exceptive marker, EP = exceptive phrase, Ex = exceptive, ExP = exceptive phrase, Masc = masculine, NA = Najdi Arabic, Neg = negative, NP = noun phrase, PI = plural, PP = prepositional phrase, PST = past, QP = quantifier phrase, SA = Standard Arabic, Sg = singular, VP = verb phrase.

<sup>4</sup> Zabarah's (2017) work was merely a contrastive study of the traditional sources on exceptive constructions in Classical Arabic.

<sup>5</sup> It should be emphasized that the goal of this paper is not to provide a detailed theoretical account for the NA exceptive constructions, as this is left for future work.

only Yasser came.3.Sg  
'Only Yasser came.'

### 3. Exceptive markers in NA and the categorical status of *ʔillaa*

Generally speaking, the various Arabic varieties vary with respect to the number of exceptive markers (EM) that they have. To demonstrate, the EMs in SA include *ʔillaa*, *xala*, *ʕada*, *ħaša*, *yeer*, and *siwa* (Albataineh, 2021; Saeed, 2023). Soltan (2016) also reports that the EMs in Egyptian Arabic are *ʔillaa*, *yeer*, and *maa ʕadaa*. Like EA, but different from SA<sup>6</sup>, NA has three typical EMs: *ʔillaa*, *yeer*, and (*maa*) *ʕadaa*, as shown in (6). While the EM *ʔillaa* is very common and used a lot by native NA speakers, the other EMs are much less common. Particularly, the EM (*maa*) *ʕadaa* is rarely used in NA exceptive constructions; it seems to be used more by the well-educated people.

- (6) a. *kill ʔit-ʔillaab ʔaħzar-uu ʔillaa yasser*  
all the-students came-3.Masc.PI except Yasser  
'All the students came, except Yasser.'
- b. *kill ʔit-ʔillaab ʔaħzar-uu maa ʕadaa yasser*  
all the-students came-3.Masc.PI except Yasser  
'All the students came, except Yasser.'
- c. *maa ħzar yeer yasser*  
Neg came.3.Sg except Yasser  
'Only Yasser came.'

As can be seen in the examples in (6), all three EMs must precede the exception XP. The sentences would be ungrammatical if the EM follows the exception XP, as illustrated in (7).

- (7) a. *\*kill ʔit-ʔillaab ʔaħzar-uu yasser ʔillaa*  
all the-students came-3.Masc.PI Yasser except  
'All the students came, except Yasser.'
- b. *\*kill ʔit-ʔillaab ʔaħzar-uu yasser maa ʕadaa*  
all the-students came-3.Masc.PI Yasser except  
'All the students came, except Yasser.'
- c. *\*maa ħzar yeer yasser*  
Neg came.3.Sg Yasser except  
'Only Yasser came.'

Despite the fact that these three NA EMs have largely a similar behavior, the EM *yeer* has a different grammatical property. As can be seen in (6.c), the NA EM *yeer* can be used only in the empty type (i.e., the restrictive construction). It cannot be used in the NA full exceptive constructions, as illustrated in (8). This property indicates that the EM *yeer* is actually a restrictive marker (i.e., it denotes a restrictive meaning), rather than an exceptive marker. It corresponds to the typical NA restrictive marker *bass* 'only'. This is different from Soltan's (2016) assumption, which states that both the EMs *ʔillaa* and *yeer* in EA exceptive constructions have the same behavior.

- (8) a. *\*kill ʔit-ʔillaab ʔaħzar-uu yeer yasser*  
all the-students came-3.Masc.PI except Yasser  
'All the students came, except Yasser.'
- b. *\*kill ʔit-ʔillaab maa ħzar-uu yeer yasser*  
all the-students Neg came-3.Masc.PI except Yasser  
'All the students did not come, except Yasser.'

<sup>6</sup> Albataineh (2021) states that exceptive constructions in colloquial Arabic varieties have the same syntactic properties of those in SA; the only difference is that the exception DPs/NPs do not have case markers like those available in SA. As will be shown in this paper, this generalization is inaccurate and cannot be extended to all Arabic varieties.

Given the facts that the NA EMs *yeer*, and (*maa*) *sadaa* are much less common and that the EM *yeer* is a restrictive marker, this study will deal only with the typical NA EM *ʔillaa*. This is because the EM *ʔillaa* is mostly used in NA exceptive constructions and is also available in almost all Arabic varieties. The rest of this section discusses the categorical status of the NA EM *ʔillaa* in much detail.

As for the categorical status of the NA EM *ʔillaa*, cross-linguistic literature offers three possible analyses for the categorical status of EMs. The first possible analysis is that the EMs are prepositions, as suggested by Eastwood (2002) for English and Moltmann (1995) for German, or postpositions as suggested Polinsky et al. (2024) for Japanese. This analysis has been rejected by several researchers (Albataineh, 2021; Galal et al., 2019; O'Neill, 2011; Pérez-Jiménez & Moreno-Quibén, 2012; Soltan, 2016). Using the same arguments presented by Soltan (2016) against the analysis of the EA EM *ʔillaa* as a preposition, I also contend that the NA EM *ʔillaa* cannot be treated as a preposition for three reasons. First, while the typical prepositions in NA can be followed by the clitic form of a pronoun, the NA EM *ʔillaa* can only be followed by the strong form of a pronoun, as shown in (9). Second, while the NA EM *ʔillaa* can select any type of prepositional phrases (PPs) as in (10), some NA prepositions select specific types of PPs as in (11). Lastly, the complement of the NA EM *ʔillaa* can be from various syntactic categories, but the complement of NA prepositions is highly restricted. As illustrated in (12), adjective phrases (AP) can serve as a complement of the NA EM *ʔillaa* but cannot do so with the NA prepositions.

- (9) a. *min-k*                **vs.**    *\*min*    *ʔant*  
          from-you                from    you  
       b. *\*ʔillaa-k*        **vs.**    *ʔillaa*    *ʔant*  
          except-you            except    you
- (10) a. *ʔillaa*    *foog*    *l-baab*  
          except    above    the-door  
       b. *ʔillaa*    *fi*        *l-baab*  
          except    in        the-door
- (11) a. *min*    *foog*    *l-baab*  
          from    above    the-door  
       b. *\*min*    *fi*        *l-baab*  
          from    in        the-door
- (12) *maa*    *ʔa-ʃuuf-ik*    *ʔillaa / (\*min)*    *mabsuut*  
       Neg    I-see-you    except / from    happy  
       'Whenever I see you, you are happy.'

The second possible analysis is that the EMs are focal adverbs. Following Soltan (2016), I assume that the NA EM *ʔillaa* cannot be treated as a focal adverb for two reasons. First, focal adverbs in NA can appear at the beginning of the sentence, as in (13.a), whereas the NA EM *ʔillaa* cannot do so, as in (13.b). Second, while it is possible for NA focal adverbs to follow the focused constituent, as in (14.a), this is not possible with the NA EM *ʔillaa*, as in (14.b).

- (13) a. ***hattaa***    *yasser*    *maa*    *jaa*  
          even    Yasser    Neg    came.3.Sg  
          'Even Yasser did not come.'  
       b. ***\*ʔillaa***    *yasser*    *maa*    *ħzar-uu*                *kill*    *ʔit-ṭillaab*  
          except    Yasser    Neg    came-3.Masc.Pl    all    the-students  
          'Except Yasser, all the students did not come.'
- (14) a. *maa*    *ṣallaa*                                *yasser*    ***hattaa***  
       Neg    pray.3.Sg                                Yasser    even  
       'Yasser did not pray even.'  
       b. *\*maa*    *ħzar-uu*                                *kill*    *ʔit-ṭillaab*    *yasser*    ***ʔillaa***  
       Neg    came-3.Masc.Pl                                all    the-students    Yasser    except  
       'All the students did not come, except Yasser.'

The last possible analysis<sup>7</sup> is that the EMs are coordinating conjunctions. This analysis has been suggested by numerous researchers for EMs in several languages, such as English, French, Spanish, Tahitian, SA, and EA (see, e.g., Galal et al., 2019; García Álvarez, 2008; Harris, 1982; Hoeksema, 1987, 1995; Pérez-Jiménez & Moreno-Quibén, 2012; Potsdam, 2018; Potsdam & Polinsky, 2017, 2019; Soltan, 2016). Those researchers basically propose that EMs are coordinating conjunctions that join the exception XP with the associate item or with the main clause that contains the associate item. Given the fact that the NA EM *ʔillaa* is not a preposition nor a focal adverb, and following those numerous researchers, I also assume that the NA EM *ʔillaa* is a coordinating conjunction. One piece of evidence to underpin this assumption comes from the *island of coordinate structure* (Ross, 1967), which bans the extraction of either conjunct. As illustrated in (15), the extraction of the second conjunct makes the NA exceptive sentence ungrammatical. Another kind of evidence is that the NA EM *ʔillaa* is like the typical NA coordinating conjunction *wa* 'and' in that they both can be followed only by the strong form of a pronoun, as demonstrated in (16). These two kinds of evidence indicate that the NA EM *ʔillaa* is a coordinating conjunction, rather than a preposition or a focal adverb.

- (15) \***yasser**    *ʔaħzar-uu*                      *kill*    *ʔiṭ-ṭillaab*                      *ʔillaa* \_\_\_\_  
Yasser      came-3.Masc.PI                      all      the-students                      except  
'Yasser, all the students except \_\_\_\_ came.'
- (16) a.    *ʔanaa*      *wa*      *ʔant*      **vs.**    \**ʔanaa*                      *wa-k*  
         I          and      you                      I                      and-you  
b.    *ʔillaa*      *ʔant*                      **vs.**    \**ʔillaa-k*  
         except    you                      except-you

To recap, this section has pointed out that the NA variety includes three EMs: *ʔillaa*, *yeer*, and (*maa*) *sadaa*. The EMs *yeer*, and (*maa*) *sadaa* are much less common than the EM *ʔillaa*, and the EM *yeer* is a restrictive, rather than exceptive, marker. It has also been concluded that the NA EM *ʔillaa* is a coordinating conjunction, rather than a preposition or a focal adverb. The next section discusses the associate item and the exception XP in NA exceptive constructions.

#### 4. Exception XP and associate in NA exceptive constructions

As indicated above, the EP in NA exceptive constructions comprises the EM *ʔillaa* and the exception XP. The latter is the complement constituent that is selected by the EM. In NA, the EM *ʔillaa*, which has been analyzed as a coordinating conjunction, is basically transitive; it must be immediately followed by an exception XP. If it is not followed by an exception XP, the NA exceptive sentence will be ungrammatical, as in (17).

- (17) \**kill*      *ʔiṭ-ṭillaab*                      *maa*      *ħzar-uu*                      *ʔillaa*  
         all      the-students                      Neg      came-3.Masc.PI                      except  
'All the students did not come, except.'

Like SA (Albataineh, 2021; Saeed, 2023), EA (Soltan, 2016), Palestinian Arabic (Khalaily, 2019), French (O'Neill, 2011), English (Peters & Westerståhl, 2023; Potsdam & Polinsky, 2017, 2019), Malagasy (Potsdam, 2018), and Japanese (Polinsky et al., 2024), the exception XP in NA exceptive constructions can be from various syntactic categories<sup>8</sup>. It can be a determiner or noun phrase (DP/NP), a prepositional phrase (PP), an adverb phrase (AdvP), an adjective phrase (AP), or a clause phrase (CP), as exemplified in (18.a-e) respectively.

- (18) a.    *kill*                      *ʔiṭ-ṭillaab*                      *maa*                      *ħzar-uu*                      *ʔillaa*                      **yasser**  
         all                      the-students                      Neg                      came-3.Masc.PI                      except                      Yasser  
         'All the students did not come, except Yasser.'
- b.    *yasser*                      *yi-ṣtimd*                      *ʔala*                      *kill*                      *ʔixwaan-ih*                      *ʔillaa*  
         Yasser                      3-depend                      on                      all                      brother-his                      except  
         **ʔala**                      **saleh**  
         on                      Saleh  
         'Yasser depends on all his brothers, except on Saleh.'
- c.    *ʔanaa*                      *ʔa-guum*                      *badrii*                      *kill*                      *yuum*                      *ʔillaa*

<sup>7</sup> Other uncommon analyses are that EMs are comparative complementizers (O'Neill, 2009) or functional exceptive heads (Ex) that project exceptive phrases (ExP) (Albataineh, 2021; Saeed, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Unlike these languages, Potsdam and Polinsky (2019) argue that the exception XP in Russian exceptive constructions must always be nominal.

	I	1.Sg-wake up	early	all	day	except
	<b>ʔams</b>					
	yesterday					
	'I wake up early every day, except yesterday.'					
d.	<i>maa</i>	<i>ʔa-ʃuuf-ik</i>	<i>ʔillaa</i>	<b>mabsuuf</b>		
	Neg	I-see-you	except	happy		
	'Whenever I see you, you are happy.'					
e.	<i>yasser</i>	<i>maa</i>	<i>gaal</i>	<i>ʔayy</i>	<i>ʃayy</i>	<i>ʔabadan</i>
	Yasser	Neg	said.3.Sg	any	thing	at all
	<i>ʔillaa</i>	<b>ʔinn</b>	<b>saleh</b>	<b>saafar</b>		
	except	COMP	Saleh	travelled.3.Sg		
	'Yasser did not say anything at all, except that Saleh travelled.'					

Regarding the possible occurrence of the exception XP as a verb phrase (VP), some researchers have argued that in languages, like English, French, SA, EA, and Palestinian Arabic, a non-finite VP can serve as an exception XP, whereas a finite VP cannot do so (Albataineh, 2021; Khalaily, 2019; O'Neill, 2019; Saeed, 2023; Soltan, 2016)<sup>9</sup>. Similar to these various languages, I assume that the exception XP in NA exceptive constructions cannot be a finite VP, as in (19.a), but can be a non-finite VP as in (19.b). It should be pointed out that having the exception XP as a non-finite VP is degraded by very few native NA speakers. That is, they may not accept all instances of NA exceptive constructions in which the exception XP is a non-finite VP.

(19)	a.	<i>yasser</i>	<i>maa</i>	<i>sawwaa</i>	<i>ʔayy</i>	<i>ʃayy</i>	<i>ʔillaa</i>	<b>*naam</b>
		Yasser	Neg	did.3.Sg	any	thing	except	slept.3.Sg
		'*Yasser did not do anything, but slept.'						
	b.	<i>yasser</i>	<i>maa</i>	<i>yi-sawwii</i>	<i>ʔayy</i>	<i>ʃayy</i>	<i>ʔillaa</i>	<b>ya-naam</b>
		Yasser	Neg	3-do.Sg	any	thing	except	3-sleep.Sg
		'Yasser does not do anything, but sleep.'						

In summary, it has been pointed out that, in NA exceptive constructions, the exception XP, which is selected by the EM *ʔillaa*, can be from various syntactic categories. It can be a DP/NP, a PP, an AdvP, an AP, or a CP. It has also been made clear that non-finite VPs can serve as an exception XP in NA exceptives, whereas finite VPs cannot do so.

Let us now turn the discussion to the associate item in NA full exceptive constructions. As stated in Section (1), the associate item is the phrase that the EP associates with. In NA exceptive constructions, the associate is typically a universal QP (i.e., the phrase that includes a universal quantifier, like *kill* 'all', *ʔayy* 'any', and *maa* 'no', as illustrated in (20)). As can be observed from the examples in (20), a universal quantifier can serve as an associate regardless of the positions of the EP (i.e., whether the EP is adjacent to the associate or not). This is in line with the assumption that states that the associate mostly (and always in certain exceptive constructions<sup>10</sup>) denotes a universal quantifier (Hoeksema, 1987, 1995; Moltmann, 1995; von Stechow, 1993).

(20)	a.	<b>kill</b>	<i>ʔit-ʔillaab</i>	<i>ʔaħzar-uu</i>	<i>ʔillaa</i>	<i>yasser</i>
		all	the-students	came-3.Masc.PI	except	Yasser
		'All the students came, except Yasser.'				
	b.	<b>kill</b>	<i>ʔit-ʔillaab</i>	<i>ʔillaa</i>	<i>yasser</i>	<i>ʔaħzar-uu</i>
		all	the-students	except	Yasser	came-3.Masc.PI
		'All the students, except Yasser, came.'				
	c.	<i>yasser</i>	<b>maa</b>	<i>ʃaaf</i>	<b>ʔayy</b>	<i>ʔaħad</i>
		Yasser	Neg	saw.3.Sg	any	one
		<i>ʔal-yuum</i>	<i>ʔillaa</i>	<i>saleh</i>		
		the-today	except	Saleh		
		'Yasser did not see anyone today, except Saleh.'				

<sup>9</sup> While those researchers did not discuss in much detail the occurrence of a VP as an exception XP, some of them reported that for some native speakers the occurrence of a VP, even the non-finite type, as an exception XP is degraded (see, e.g., Soltan, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> In the literature, it has been argued that this assumption may not apply to all exceptive constructions due to the distinction between connected and free exceptives. Since this paper is not concerned with the connected and free exceptives, the details of this assumption will not be discussed here. For further discussion on this assumption, see (e.g., Hoeksema, 1987, 1995; Moltmann, 1995; Pérez-Jiménez & Moreno-Quibén, 2012; Soltan, 2016; Tahara, 1999; von Stechow, 1993).

As for the occurrence of other non-universal quantifiers as an associate, the situation is not consistent. To demonstrate, the existential quantifier *baʕz* ‘some’ never serves as an associate in NA exceptive constructions, as shown in (21). However, the quantifier *ʔaylab* ‘most’ can serve as an associate only when the EP is not adjacent to the associate, as in (22.a), but cannot do so when the EP is adjacent as in (22.b). This latter fact is attested in English and EA exceptive constructions (Moltmann, 1995; Soltan, 2016).

- (21) a. *\*baʕz*    *ʔit-ʔillaab*    *ʔillaa*    *yasser*    *ʔaħzar-uu*  
           some    the-students    except    Yasser    came-3.Masc.PI  
           ‘\*Some students, except Yasser, came.’  
       b. *\*baʕz*    *ʔit-ʔillaab*    *ʔaħzar-uu*    *ʔillaa*    *yasser*  
           some    the-students    came-3.Masc.PI    except    Yasser  
           ‘\*Some students came, except Yasser.’
- (22) a. *ʔaylab*    *ʔan-naas*    *saafar-uu*    *ʔillaa*    *ħinna*  
           most    the-people    travelled-3.Masc.PI    except    we  
           ‘Most people travelled, except us.’  
       b. *\*ʔaylab*    *ʔan-naas*    *ʔillaa*    *ħinna*    *saafar-uu*  
           most    the-people    except    we    travelled-3.Masc.PI  
           ‘\*Most people, except us, travelled.’

In addition to that, definite DPs can serve as an associate in NA exceptive constructions regardless of the EP positions, as in (23). Unlike NA, it has been argued that definite DPs can occur as an associate in EA, English, and Spanish exceptives only when the associate and the EP appear non-adjacently (Hoeksema, 1987, 1995; Moltmann, 1995; Pérez-Jiménez & Moreno-Quibén, 2012; Soltan, 2016; von Stechow, 1993).

- (23) a. *ʔanaa*    *ʕif-t*    *ʔit-ʔillaab*    *ʔillaa*    *yasser*    *ʔams*  
           I    saw-1.Sg    the-students    except    Yasser    yesterday  
           ‘?I saw the students, except Yasser, yesterday.’  
       b. *ʔanaa*    *ʕif-t*    *ʔit-ʔillaab*    *ʔams*    *ʔillaa*    *yasser*  
           I    saw-1.Sg    the-students    yesterday    except    Yasser  
           ‘I saw the students yesterday, except Yasser.’

Conversely, generic DPs can occur as an associate in NA exceptives only when the associate and the EP are non-adjacent, as in (24.a). If the EP appears next to the associate, generic DPs cannot occur as an associate, as in (24.b). Similarly, Soltan (2016) argues that generic DPs in EA exceptives cannot license EPs unless the associate and the EP are not adjacent.

- (24) a. *ʔal-ʕaskar*    *ʕumuuman*    *ya-naam-uun*    *badrii*    *ʔillaa*    *yasser*  
           the-soldiers    generally    3-sleep-Masc.PI    early    except    Yasser  
           ‘Soldiers generally sleep early, except Yasser.’  
       b. *\*ʔal-ʕaskar*    *ʔillaa*    *yasser*    *ʕumuuman*    *ya-naam-uun*    *badrii*  
           the-soldiers    except    Yasser    generally    3-sleep-Masc.PI    early  
           ‘Soldiers, except Yasser, generally sleep early.’

In a nutshell, this section has shown that the exception XP in NA exceptives can be from various syntactic categories, excluding finite VPs. It has also been revealed that the associate item in NA exceptives can be a QP with a universal quantifier or a definite DP regardless of the positions of the EP. However, the existential quantifier *baʕz* ‘some’ cannot occur as an associate. Lastly, the quantifier *ʔaylab* ‘most’ and generic DPs can serve as an associate only when the EP and the associate are not adjacent. The following section discusses the possible positions of EPs in NA exceptive constructions.

## 5. EP positions in NA exceptive constructions

In the literature, it has been revealed that languages generally vary with respect to the positions of EPs. Some languages may have several possible positions for EPs, whereas others have more restricted positions. For instance, EPs in English have three possible positions: next to the associate, in a sentence-initial position, or in a sentence-final position (Hoeksema, 1987; von Stechow, 1993). In EA, EPs can generally appear either next to the associate or at the right-periphery of the sentence (Soltan, 2016). Soltan adds that when the exception XP is not nominal, such as a PP or a CP, the EP in EA appears only at the right-periphery of the sentence. Conversely, the typical position for EPs in SA is the right-peripheral position (Moutaoukil, 2009). In Tahitian, the EP and the associate cannot be adjacent (Potsdam & Polinsky, 2017).



As suggested by Soltan (2016) for EA, the EPs in NA exceptive constructions have two canonical positions: next to the associate or at the right-peripheral position. These two positions are possible only when the exception XP is nominal, as shown in (20.a-b), repeated in (25) for convenience. In contrast, when the exception XP is not nominal, the only available position for EPs is the right-periphery of the sentence, as illustrated in (26-28) for PPs, AdvPs, and CPs, respectively.

- (25) a. *kill*    *ʔit-ʔillaab*    *ʔaḥzar-uu*    *ʔillaa*    *yasser*  
all    the-students    came-3.Masc.PI    except    Yasser  
'All the students came, except Yasser.'
- b. *kill*    *ʔit-ʔillaab*    *ʔillaa*    *yasser*    *ʔaḥzar-uu*  
all    the-students    except    Yasser    came-3.Masc.PI  
'All the students, except Yasser, came.'
- (26) a. *yasser*    *yi-ʔtimd*    *ʔala*    *kill*    *ʔixwaan-ih*    *b-l-bait*  
Yasser    3-depend    on    all    brother-his    at-the-home  
*ʔillaa*    *ʔala*    *saleh*  
except    on    Saleh  
'Yasser depends on all his brothers at home, except on Saleh.'
- b. *\*yasser*    *yi-ʔtimd*    *ʔala*    *kill*    *ʔixwaan-ih*    *ʔillaa*  
Yasser    3-depend    on    all    brother-his    except  
*ʔala*    *saleh*    *b-l-bait*  
on    Saleh    at-the-home  
'Yasser depends on all his brothers, except on Saleh, at home.'
- (27) a. *ʔanaa*    *ʔa-guum*    *kill*    *yuum*    *badrii*    *ʔillaa*  
I    1.Sg-wake up    all    day    early    except  
*ʔams*  
yesterday  
'I wake up every day early, except yesterday.'
- b. *\*ʔanaa*    *ʔa-guum*    *kill*    *yuum*    *ʔillaa*    *ʔams*  
I    1.Sg-wake up    all    day    except    yesterday  
*badrii*  
early  
'I wake up every day, except yesterday, early.'
- (28) a. *yasser*    *maa*    *gaal*    *ʔayy*    *ʃayy*    *ʔabadan*  
Yasser    Neg    said.3.Sg    any    thing    at all  
*ʔillaa*    *ʔinn*    *saleh*    *saafar*  
except    COMP    Saleh    travelled.3.Sg  
'Yasser did not say anything at all, except that Saleh travelled.'
- b. *\*yasser*    *maa*    *gaal*    *ʔayy*    *ʃayy*    *ʔillaa*  
Yasser    Neg    said.3.Sg    any    thing    except  
*ʔinn*    *saleh*    *saafar*    *ʔabadan*  
COMP    Saleh    travelled.3.Sg    at all  
'\*Yasser did not say anything, except that Saleh travelled, at all.'

As for the left-peripheral position (i.e., the sentence-initial position), which is usually resulted from the displacement of EPs as in English (Hoeksema, 1987; Soltan, 2016; von Stechow, 1993), Spanish (Pérez-Jiménez & Moreno-Quibén, 2012), Classical Arabic (Zabarah, 2017), SA (Albataineh, 2021; Galal et al., 2019; Khalaily, 2019; Moutaoukil, 2009; Saeed, 2023), and Palestinian Arabic (Albataineh, 2021; Khalaily, 2019)<sup>11</sup>, this position is not available to EPs in NA exceptive constructions. Empirically speaking, the EP in NA exceptives never appears at the left-periphery of the sentence, regardless of the syntactic category of the exception XP. As demonstrated in (29-30), fronting the EP, which may contain an NP, a PP, an AdvP, or a CP as an exception XP, will yield the NA exceptive sentences ungrammatical. It should be pointed out that the EP fronting is disallowed in both types of NA exceptive constructions (i.e., positive and negative), as shown in (29). These pieces of evidence indicate that NA is similar to other languages, such as EA (Soltan, 2016) and French (O'Neill, 2011), which ban the EP fronting in their exceptive constructions.

<sup>11</sup> It should be realized that some of these languages have certain cases where the EP fronting is impossible.



- (29) a. *\*ʔillaa* *yasser*, *kill* *ʔit-ʔillaab* *ʔaḥzar-uu*  
except Yasser all the-students came-3.Masc.Pl  
‘Except for Yasser, all the students came.’
- b. *\*ʔillaa* *yasser*, *kill* *ʔit-ʔillaab* *maa* *ʔaḥzar-uu*  
except Yasser all the-students Neg came-3.Masc.Pl  
‘Except for Yasser, all the students did not come.’
- (30) a. *\*ʔillaa* *ʔala* *saleh*, *yasser* *yi-ʔtimd* *ʔala*  
except on Saleh Yasser 3-depend on  
*kill* *ʔixwaan-ih*  
all brother-his  
‘Except on Saleh, Yasser depends on all his brothers.’
- b. *\*ʔillaa* *ʔams*, *ʔanaa* *ʔa-guum* *badrii* *kill*  
except yesterday I 1.Sg-wake up early all  
*yuum*  
day  
‘Except yesterday, I wake up early every day.’
- c. *\*ʔillaa* *ʔinn* *saleh* *saafar*, *yasser* *maa*  
except COMP Saleh travelled.3.Sg Yasser Neg  
*gaal* *ʔayy* *ʕayy* *ʔabadan*  
said.3.Sg any thing at all  
‘Except that Saleh travelled, Yasser did not say anything at all.’

In short, this section has indicated that, in NA exceptives, the canonical positions for EPs with nominal exceptions are either next to the associate or at the right-periphery. However, when the exception XP is not nominal, the only possible position for EPs is the right-periphery. This section has also shown that the EP fronting in NA exceptive constructions, whether positive or negative, is not allowed irrespective of the category of the exception XP.

## 6. Conclusions

This study has closely examined the core syntactic properties of NA exceptive constructions and made some preliminary claims about them. First, it has shown that NA involves three main exceptive types: a full positive exceptive, a full negative exceptive, and an empty exceptive. While the two full types have an exceptive meaning, the empty type has only a restrictive meaning. Second, it has been revealed that NA includes three EMs, namely *ʔillaa*, *yeer*, and (*maa*) *ʔadaa*. The EM *ʔillaa*, which is the most common marker in NA exceptives, has been analyzed as a coordinating conjunction, rather than a preposition or a focal adverb. Third, it has been indicated that the exception XP in NA exceptives can be from various syntactic categories, except finite VPs. Fourth, it has been pointed out that, although universal QPs and definite DPs can occur as an associate in NA exceptives regardless of the positions of the EP, the quantifier *ʔaylab* ‘most’ and generic DPs can serve as an associate only when the EP and the associate are not adjacent. The existential quantifier *baʕʕ* ‘some’ never occurs as an associate. Lastly, it has been concluded that, in NA exceptives, EPs with nominal exceptions are generally located either next to the associate or at the right-periphery positions, whereas EPs with non-nominal exceptions are located only at the right-periphery. The EP fronting in NA exceptive is disallowed, irrespective of the category of the exception XP. It is hoped that the present work contributes to the scarce typological research on the syntax of exceptives by examining exceptive constructions in NA, a relatively under-studied language.

Due to the scope of this study, two significant points have been left for future research. First, since this study is descriptive in nature, a more analytical study on the syntax and semantics of NA exceptive constructions is strongly recommended. Second, the assumptions that the empty exceptive type in NA denotes a restrictive reading and that the EM *yeer* is a restrictive marker require an in-depth and separate examination. This study’s conclusions may provide a robust foundation for these future research directions.

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