

Abdullah Ben Sáad ben Mohamed Al-Sahli
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Languages & Translation
King Saud University , Riyadh
K.S.A

Some Linguistic Aspects of the Standard Arabic Noun Phrase

1- Introduction

It is appropriate here to give a brief analysis of some issues relevant to the subject of this paper, from a traditional point of view. The two main parts of the English sentence are the noun phrase (traditionally called the subject), and the verb phrase (traditionally called the predicate). The noun phrase must contain a noun or a pronoun but can have several other elements. The noun phrase is a word or group of words that can function as the subject, the object, or the complement in a sentence.

- 1) The company manager interviewed all the applicants on Tuesday.
- 2) Ali was the successful applicant.

A noun phrase may consist of only one word. It will be either a noun or a pronoun:

- 3) Mary left late
- 4) She left late

A noun phrase may also consist of more than one word. One of these words, a noun or a pronoun, is the head element (or the headword). The other words describe or modify the head element:

- 5) The tall girl
- 6) The very tall boy
- 7) The tall guy with blue eyes

The words that go before the head element are called premodifiers. A noun can be premodified by: a) a determiner like the boy, a spider, b) one or more

adjectives, like, young boy, tall dark man, c) a number, another noun, or the present participle or past participle of a verb, like, three days, the railway station shop, an annoying habit, a worried man.

The words that go after the head element are called postmodifiers. Usually a noun can be postmodified by a) a prepositional phrase like the person in the corner b) a subordinate clause like All the woman who had gathered there finally went away.

In English there are definite and indefinite articles. The indefinite article is a or an. The form an is used before a word that starts with a vowel sound. The indefinite article is used with singular count nouns: *a boy*, a cat, an engineer. The definite article is the. It is used with singular and plural nouns. It is also used with count and uncountable nouns: Let's take the children to the swimming pool; The Dutch are very skillful engineers.

In Arabic language, nouns are marked for either definiteness or indefiniteness. Definiteness is marked by the article الـ *al*, while indefiniteness is usually indicated by *tanween* the suffix *-n* which follows the case marker:

8)

Nominative (definite)	الكتاب	<i>al-kitaabu</i>	the book
Nominative (indefinite)	كتاب	<i>kitaabun</i>	a book

1-1 Genitive construction (al-Idāfa)

A noun may be defined more closely by a subsequent noun in the genitive. The relation is hierarchical; the first term (*al-muḍāf*) governs the second term (*al-muḍāf ilayhi*), e.g. بيت رجل 'a house of a man'. The construction as a whole represents a nominal phrase, the state of which is inherited from the state of the

second term. The first term must be in construct state, and thus cannot be marked definite or indefinite. Genitive constructions of multiple terms are possible. In this case, all but the final term take construct state, and all but the first member take genitive case.

This construction is typical for a Semitic language. In many cases the two members become a fixed coined phrase, the *iḍāfa* being used as the equivalent of nominal composition in Indo-European languages (which does not exist in Semitic), *بيت الطلبة* thus may mean either 'house of the (certain, known) students' or 'the students' hostel'.

The above was a brief traditional account of noun phrase in both English and Arabic languages. Similar analysis can be found in most traditional grammar books. In this paper, however, I will try to give a modern analysis of some linguistic aspects of the noun phrase in Arabic language.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The basic set of principles which forms the basis for my analysis in this paper is the linguistic theory of axiomatic functionalism, developed by J.W.F. Mulder in collaboration with S.G.J. Hervey (1972 and 1980). Although their theory *i.e.* axiomatic functionalism employs some ambiguous terminologies which are difficult to understand by non-specialists, their basic principles are fairly simple, and the analyses which it yields are in most cases presentable and universal.

In this paper I shall look at aspects of the Arabic noun phrase, making informal use of some axiomatic functionalist models, as well as other linguistic notions, particularly Greenberg's word-order typology (Greenberg et al. 1978). I shall compare the proposed description of Arabic with aspects of Mulder's description of similar phenomena in English (Mulder, 1989: 330-331; 335-340; 370-371), which in many respects corresponds closely to traditional analyses of the phenomena. Part of my objects is to make some of the technical linguistic ideas accessible to the non-specialist reader.

2- Commutation

The notion of commutation can be illustrated from the phonology (sound system) and grammar of English as follows.

Consider the following from English phonology:

- 9) /cat/
/rat/
/fat/
/hat/
/mat/
etc.

As can be seen in single syllable words in English, where the second and third elements (phonemes) are /a/ and /t/, the first phoneme may be /c/ (as in /cat/), /r/ (as in /rat/), /f/ (as in /fat/), /h/ (as in /hat/), /m/ (as in /mat/) etc. In this context the phonemes /c/, /r/, /f/, /h/ and /m/ are said to commute with one another.

Commutation in English grammar can be illustrated as follows:

- 10) a car
the car
your car
John's car
etc.

In these examples 'a', 'the', 'your', and 'John' commute with one another. They are interchangeable, and cannot cooccur; thus, it is not possible to say in English "a my car", meaning for instance the same as "a car of mine". It is also not possible to say 'the your car' or 'a the car'.

3- Recursivity

These English examples raise a second phenomenon of relevance to this paper; recursivity. This can be illustrated by extending the list of English examples with "car" as follows:

11-	a	car
	a relative's	car
	John's relative's	car
	a friend's relative's	car
	your friend's relative's	car
	John's friend's relative's	car

etc.

Here not only does 'a' in examples like these commute with a simple element such as 'the' or with somewhat less simple element like 'John's' (as is shown in example no.10 above); it also commutes with complex elements which themselves contain 'a', 'the', 'your' etc. Just as 'a' in "a car" is replaceable by "a relative's" to give "a relative's car", so 'a' in "a relative's car" is replaceable by "a friend's" to give "a friend's relative's car". This process *i.e.* the commutability of the first element 'a' with the second element "a relative's" which itself contains the first element the 'a' at the beginning of the phrase "a relative's" is termed recursivity.

It should be mentioned here that, in principle at least, in structures like ones involving 'car' given here, there is no limit to the length of such recursive structures, although in practice extremely long examples are quite implausible in real speech.

4- Heads and Modifiers

A third phenomenon to be discussed here is that of headship. It is always mentioned by linguists that linguistic structures are organized around a central element which characterizes the entire structure (*cf.* Mulder, 1989:283). This element is traditionally known as the *head*, while a non-head element of the structure is known as a *modifier* (*cf.* section 1). Mulder (1989:292) clarifies what is meant by saying that the head of a structure characterizes that structure. He points out (a) that the head of the structure is an obligatory element of that structure and (b) that the semantic correlates of the structure are such that the head element can reasonably be regarded as semantically central, or at least not semantically marginal.

The notion of headship can be illustrated from English by further consideration of the examples I gave above (examples no. 11). In all these examples, 'car' is to be regarded as the head. This correlates with the facts that (a) 'car' is an obligatory element in all possibilities, and (b) 'car' is semantically central to the structure. Thus it is possible to say for example: "a car" or "a relative's car", but it is not possible to say "a" only or "a relative's".

5- Sequencing of Heads and Modifiers

There is a general tendency in languages for heads to follow modifiers or modifiers to follow heads (cf. Greenberg et al. 1978; Comrie, 1983: Ch. 4). In English the word order within noun phrases is modifier-head which means modifier followed by head. So, as is shown in the examples given above, determiners 'a' or 'the' and their commutants such as possessives and genitive phrases precede the nouns in which they modify. Similarly, in English, adjectives precede nouns as in "the red car".

6- The Standard Arabic Noun Phrase

In the light of the preceding discussion consider the following examples from Arabic:

12-

منزل	A house
المنزل	The house
منزلك	Your house
منزل أحمد	Ahmad's house

Structurally, it looks as though there is a perfect match between the Arabic and the English. The indefinite article (tanween) seems to commute with the definite article (الـ) which seems to commute with the possessive pronoun suffix (كـ) which seems to commute with the genitive structure (أحمد).

Similarly, the same considerations which led us to identify the noun as the head in English and other elements (articles, possessives, genitives) as modifiers,

would lead us to identify the noun as the head in Arabic. The relationship from modifier to head in the above Arabic examples can be presented as follows:

13-

'	منزل	منزل
ال	منزل	المنزل
ك	منزل	منزلك
أحمد	منزل	منزل أحمد

I have mentioned earlier that heads consistently tend either to precede or follow modifiers in given languages. In Arabic, contrary to English, heads usually precede their modifiers. Thus, verbs precede objects, nouns precede adjectives, and prepositions in prepositional phrases precede nouns. Thus the noun منزل precedes the indefinite article (tanween), the possessive suffix (ك) and the genitive annex (أحمد).

Just like the English genitive so the Arabic genitive can occur recursively. Consider the following Arabic examples (cf. 11. for corresponding examples in English):

14-

أحمد	منزل	Ahmad's house
صديق أحمد	منزل	Ahmad's friend's house
والد صديق أحمد	منزل	Ahmad's friend's father's house

The notion of commutation can also be applied here. The word أحمد is replaceable by صديق to give صديق أحمد which is replaceable by والد to give والد صديق أحمد. In each case the more subordinate the modifier the further away it is from the head noun.

Similarly, with adjectives, which in Arabic as in English are modifiers this approach can be applied. Adjectives come after nouns plus any of the immediate modifiers. Consider the following examples:

15-

منزلٌ قديمٌ	An old house
منزلُكَ القديم	Your old house
منزلُ صديق قديمٌ	A friend's old house
منزلُ صديق أحمد قديمٌ	Ahmad's friend's old house

In some examples it is possible to have a genitive annex modified by an adjective as an internal modification. Thus, it is in principle possible to have forms such as:

16-

منزلُ الصديق القديم قديمٌ *an old friend's old house* (the old friend's house is old).

where the internal modifier القديم modifying الصديق occurs before the more external modifier منزلٌ قديمٌ modifying منزلُ .

All of this analysis seems to accord with the general findings of Greenberg and others.

7- Morphology and Syntax

Most linguists distinguish between morphology and syntax. Morphology is typically defined as "the study of word structure" while syntax as "the study of the way words are combined to form sentences in a language" (Crystal, 1985:300). In linguistic studies, however, there is a long debate regarding such definitions. A distinction between a phonological and a morphological word should be made here. The difference between a phonological and a morphological word can be illustrated by a form such as *road's* in "Have you seen the lady down our road's cat?" In this example *road's* is a phonological word since it functions a single unit in terms of the sound system, and is pronounced no differently from *roads*, i.e. the plural form of road. From a syntactic point of view, however, it will be seen that the element 's in *road's* relates to the entire sub-phrase *the lady down the road* the head of which is *lady* (Mulder, 1989:331). That is to say, in terms of grammar, *road's* is not a word,

and the analysis of 's element from this perspective falls within the domain of syntax rather than morphology.

Most approaches to syntax tend to be denotationally oriented. They concentrate on referential aspects of language, and ignore connotational aspects of meaning. They focus on structure more than meaning. There is no difference in syntactic structure between "You I miss" and "I miss you". From a syntactic point of view these two sentences are same since they consist of subject, verb and object. The reason behind this is that there is no difference in the real world correlates (the reference) of the two utterances; they both refer to the same state of affairs. However, the difference between them is purely one of connotation i.e. how the speaker chooses to present the information, which parts of his utterance he chooses to focus on, and so on (Mulder and Hervey, 1980:123). So it can be said here that most approaches to syntax tend to be denotationally oriented while most approaches to morphology are connotationally oriented.

8- Morphology and Syntax in the standard Arabic noun phrase

It is better to discuss this aspect in Arabic language starting with the genitive, going on to possessive pronouns, then the definite article, and finally the indefinite article.

8.1 The genitive

In English the syntactic status of the genitive 's and therefore of the entire phrase *John's* in 'John's car' can be easily demonstrated by a consideration of expansions like 'John and Rebecca's car'. In this example the 's clearly applies to the entire phrase 'John and Rebecca'. This analysis is obviously syntactic rather than morphological. However if an adjective as the word old is added to form an utterance like 'Old John and Rebecca's car", the analysis would be changed where old could go with either John only, or with both John and Rebecca.

Similarly consider the following Example in Arabic:

17-

منزل أحمد وخالد *Ahmad and Khalid's house*

Here أحمد as the annexed term in a genitive phrase has also a syntactic rather than morphological status. And just as with English examples of this general kind, Arabic examples can exhibit ambiguous meaning as in:

18-

هو رئيس المهندسين والأطباء المتميزين

This sentence can give two meanings in both English and Arabic. It means either:

He is the manager of the distinguished engineers and (the distinguished) doctors.

Or

He is the manager of the engineers and the distinguished doctors.

An interesting case is presented by examples like:

19-

سيارة نقل الطلاب

This example can be understood in the sense 'The students' transport car' (i.e. the transport car belonging to the students). In order to further consider this example, I will need to introduce another technical notion, the *immediate constituent*, a term 'used in grammatical analysis to refer to the major divisions that can be made within a syntactic construction at any level' (Crystal, 1985:153).

In the case of سيارة نقل الطلاب, it would seem that the immediate constituent structure should be regarded as follows:

20-

(سيارة نقل) الطلاب

That is to say, the two major constituents are الطلاب and سيارة نقل, corresponding to the fact that it is a transport car which is of the students i.e. a transport car belonging to the students. This structure

can be contrasted with سيارة نقل الطلاب in the sense 'car for transporting students'. This would have the following immediate constituent structure:

21-

سيارة (نقل الطلاب)

That is to say the two major constituents are سيارة and نقل الطلاب, corresponding to the fact that this is *a car for transporting students* i.e. (a car used to transport students) سيارة لنقل الطلاب .

8.2 Possessive pronoun suffixes

The situation with possessive suffixes is somewhat different than that with the articles in English and Arabic. In English it can easily be shown that the possessive, just as the genitive, are syntactic. Thus: 'your book and pen' represents your book and your pen, and 'your books and pens' represents two distinct syntactic possibilities, either (i) 'your books and your pens', or (ii) 'your books, and pens' (in general).

In Arabic, analogous examples to 'your book and pen' are clearly not possible; we can not say for example كتابٌ وقلمك . This might suggest that an analysis of ك suffixes are purely morphological is adequate. Consider, however, the following:

22-

محل إقامتك

your residency place (place-NOM registration-GEN-your)

This can be analyzed as either:

23-

(محل إقامة) ك

This of course the same structure as occurs in example 20. In this case this sentence would mean 'your residency place' (i.e. a residency place belonging to you).

Or:

24-

محلّ (إقامة لك)

This is the same structure as in example 21. In this case, this sentence which instantiates the more likely structure than the structure in 23, would mean 'a place for your residency' (محلّ لإقامتك).

8.3 The definite article

It can be shown that the definite article *the* in English is syntactic, by the possibility of utterances such as: 'the book and pen', to mean 'the book and the pen'. The plural form 'the books and pens' is not acceptable because of the ambiguity between 'the books and the pens' and 'the books, and pens (in general)'. .

In contrast, an analogous situation of the Arabic definite الـ clearly does not obtain. It is inaccurate to say الكتابُ وقلمٌ. In order to give the sense 'the book and (the) pen', it is necessary to repeat the definite article, الكتاب والقلم . This may indicate that the definite article الـ in Arabic is a morphological rather than a syntactic entity. There are however, structures in Arabic which apparently reveal الـ as syntactic. Consider the following example:

25-

الطلاب المتوقع تخرجهم

the students whose graduation is expected

This can be compared with:

26-

الطلاب الذين يتوقع تخرجهم

The obvious immediate constituent analysis of المتوقع تخرجهم in example 25 is:

27-

الـ (متوقع تخرجهم)

While the obvious immediate constituent analysis of الذين يُتوقع تخرجهم in example 26 is:

28-

الذين (يتوقع تخرجهم)

I believe that this analysis as in 27 is incorrect or at least less normal, while the analysis in 28 is correct. Cases like المتوقع تخرجهم look like they involve coherent syntax, with incoherent morphology or at least odd adjective endings. Here it can be said that the definite article الـ applies to the entire phrase متوقع تخرجهم. Given this, متوقع would be expected to be indefinite; and in this regard this sentence can be compared with the possible utterance الطلاب الذين تخرجهم متوقع, where there is a change in word order and الذي substitutes for the definite article الـ. Though this utterance is possible, it is stylistically awkward.

Consider in this light the following:

29-

الطلاب المتوقع والمحتمل تخرجهم

The students whose graduation is expected and probable

As I believe the correct immediate constituent analysis of the sub-phrase المتوقع والمحتمل تخرجهم is:

30-

(المتوقع والمحتمل) تخرجهم

Despite initial appearances and despite the obvious real-semantic (logical) correlates, structures of this type provide no reason to regard الـ as a syntactic entity.

The term 'real-semantic' is used opposed to the term 'natural-semantic'. Natural-semantic features are established in terms of natural classes, i.e. 'male', 'female', etc. These are based on analyses of the world which are in principle independent

of particular languages. What I mean by real-semantic features are those features established in terms of classes, which are dependent on particular languages of their existence. Examples from Arabic are masculine v. feminine, singular v. plural, case (nominative, accusative, genitive).

The semantic, i.e. referential, reality of real-semantic features is borne out by a consideration from Standard Arabic of examples like مطرق and مطرقة, which both mean 'hammer' and in line with the information supplied in Hans Wehr's Dictionary of Modern Arabic, consider the following:

Speaker A: أين هي ؟

Speaker B: تقصد المطرقة ؟

It is possible to speaker B in this context to reply تقصد المطرقة؟ It, however, would not be possible for him to reply تقصد المطرق؟ This because هي can only refer to objects designated as feminine by the Arabic language. As this is a referential feature of the pronoun هي, it is to be concluded that the gender is a referential matter in Standard Arabic, i.e. that it has a real-semantic status.

In section 8.2 I suggested that a phrase like محل إقامتك *your residency place* should be regarded as having the immediate constituent structure محل (إقامة ك) (cf. examples 22-24). This analysis seems reasonable or even unavoidable. It does, however, raise further problems, again in relation to the analysis of ال. Consider the following:

مكتب التسجيل (23)

The registration office

If محل إقامتك is to be analyzed as having the immediate structure محل (إقامة ك), analogy suggests that محل الإقامة should be analyzed as having the immediate constituent structure ال (محل إقامة). This would imply that ال just like ك is in fact a syntactic element, and that ال gives the entire structure its definiteness. This analysis, however, breaks down according to the proposed analysis of ال in section 8.2.

Compare the following to examples

32-

محل الإقامة والمذاكرة

the residency and study place

33-

محل إقامتك ومذاكرتك

the residency and study place

Example 32 which is acceptable in standard Arabic, directly parallels examples such as 30 الطلاب (المتوقع والمحتمل) تخرجهم 30, and correlates with an analysis of الـ as morphological rather than syntactic. An utterance of the type 33 محل إقامتك ومذاكرتك which is either odd or less acceptable in Arabic corroborates the immediate constituent analysis of محل إقامتك as (محل إقامة) لك. This indicates that the possessive suffix لك goes with the entire phrase, and not merely with the word إقامة which implies that it is unacceptable to say محل إقامتك ومذاكرتك since an utterance of this type could only reasonably be analyzed as having the relevant immediate constituent structure محل (إقامتك ومذاكرتك), and the possessive لك would have to be regarded as relating directly to both إقامة and مذاكرة

8.4 The indefinite article

In English, *a* is considered a syntactic element. This can be shown by the possibility of utterances such as:

34-

a boy and girl

which means 'a boy and a girl'. The immediate constituent structure of this example can be represented as follows:

35-

a (boy and girl)

In Arabic a parallel situation does not obtain. *Tamween* never displays such variability in scope. Rather, like الـ, it always attaches to single word of which it

is a part. Thus 'a boy and girl' must be translated into Arabic with the repetition of the *tamween* on both words as:

36-

ولَدٌ وَبِنْتٌ

In accordance with the principle outlined in section 5, therefore, *tamween* in Arabic is a morphological, rather than a syntactic, matter.

9. Definiteness and indefiniteness in genitive and possessive structures

Consider the following:

37-

نقطة ضوء

a spot of light (light spot)

38-

نقطة من الضوء

a spot of light

As is well known, generic forms in Arabic are normally expressed by the noun with the definite article *الـ*. So 'light' is translated into Arabic as *الضوء*, rather than simply *ضوء*, as illustrated in example 38. Compare, however, 37 *نقطة ضوء* with 38 *نقطة من الضوء*. Both mean 'a spot of light', but whereas 38 has *الضوء*, with the article *الـ*, as is normal for generics, 37 has simple *ضوء*, with the article anomalously not present.

Consider also the following which parallels 37 *نقطة ضوء*:

39-

محل إقامة

a residency place

It seems that in both محل إقامة and نقطة ضوء the bare noun (إقامة and ضوء) has an anomalous real-semantic generic correlate. In this light, however, consider the following:

40-

نقطة الضوء

The spot of light

Also consider example 31 محل الإقامة *the registration office*. If محل and نقطة ضوء have annexed nouns إقامة and ضوء with an anomalous generic real-semantic correlate, and if the normal correlate of genericness is الـ, it seems reasonable to conclude that in example 31 محل الإقامة and 40 نقطة الضوء the article الـ has its normal real-semantic correlate of genericness. That this case is quite clear from examples involving expansion such as 32 محل الإقامة والمذاكرة the residency and study place.

Before we end our discussion, one important question left here. If we provide a grammatical analysis of phrases such as محل الإقامة or الطلاب المتوقع والمحتمل نخرجهم, we are not providing an analysis of one particular utterance of these phrases. Rather, we are providing an abstract analysis of a type which will account for all such relevant utterances in the past, present, or future. At the same time the raw data which linguists have to deal with are utterances in the real world, whether these be real utterances, or examples constructed by linguists (as is the case with some examples in this paper) in order to illustrate, test and investigate analytical proposals.

In order to present a complete account, therefore, the linguist is required not only to provide abstract analyses, such as those produced in grammar, but also an account of the data about which these abstract analyses purport to provide valid generalizations.

What I am proposing here is that definiteness or indefiniteness, as such, are real-semantic features. i.e. aspects of the data, rather than grammatical features proper. They may, of course correspond to morphemes at the level of grammar. For example, the element the definite article الـ obviously has the meaning 'definite', while the element *tanween* has the meaning 'indefinite'.

Definiteness and indefiniteness may also, however, correspond to structural features of the grammar (syntactic structure for example). Thus, in the phrase محل الإقامة the feature of 'definiteness' is to be regarded properly as a feature of the real-semantic data, such that any standard genitive syntactic structure having the general form NOUN + (الـ + NOUN (in genitive case)) will have the real-semantic correlate of overall definiteness.

Similarly, a phrase like سيارتك 'your car' has a real-semantic correlate of definiteness. So if you say سيارتك الجديدة 'your new car' for example, the adjective الجديدة has to agree in definiteness with سيارة. Again this is simply a case of 'definiteness' as a real-semantic correlate of the presence of the possessive pronoun suffix. This is not to deny the strong connotational correlation between the presence of the الـ in a phrase such as محل الإقامة and the overall definiteness of the phrase, or the absence of the الـ in محل إقامة and its overall indefiniteness.

10. Summary of relevant relations within the noun phrase

In section 6, I proposed an analysis of the relations between various elements and the noun:

	منزل	منزل
الـ	منزل	المنزل
ك	منزل	منزلك
أحمد	منزل	منزل أحمد

In section 8 1-8.4 I have suggested that this analysis was in some respects too complex. It is necessary to regard منزل أحمد in أحمد منزل as syntactic modifier to منزل and it is also necessary to regard ك in منزلك as a syntactic modifier to منزل. In the case of *tanweean* as in منزل, and the definite article الـ as in المنزل, however, there seems to be no need to set up syntactic relations at all, both the *tanweean* and the seem to be dealt with as morphological entities, without thinking of syntactic considerations

This analysis can be represented as follows:

Entity	noun	Type of relation	
	منزل	morphological	منزل
الـ	منزل	morphological	المنزل
كـ	منزل	syntactic	منزلك
أحمد	منزل	syntactic	منزل أحمد

11. The definite article الـ and some other elements (Relative adjectives: الذي, من, ما)

In this section I shall suggest that while the ordering of الـ is anomalous when considered in the light of the ordering of the elements such as annexed genitives and pronominal suffixes, it is not anomalous when considered in the light of the ordering and structuring of certain other elements such as الذي and other members of الذي (i.e. التي, الذين, etc.).

Consider the following two examples:

41-

الطلاب المتوقع والمحتمل تخرجهم

the students whose graduation is expected and probable

42-

الطلاب الذين يُتوقع ويُحتمل تخرجهم

the students whose graduation is expected and probable

Example 42 demonstrates that الذين, unlike الـ, has to be regarded as a syntactic, rather than a morphological, entity, since it has to be regarded as entering into a relationship here with the entire phrase, which is itself a syntactic entity (cf. sections 7 and 8.3)

Under the approach I am using syntactic structures are defined as having 'identity element' or head. In this light consider the following:

43-

أنت يُتوقع تخرجه

you are the one whose graduation is expected

This sentence is stylistically unacceptable. Another formulation to express this is أنت يُتوقع تخرجك . The unacceptability of 43 can be contrasted with the acceptability of the following:

44-

أنت الذي يُتوقع تخرجه

you are the one whose graduation is expected

In this case the formulation أنت الذي يُتوقع تخرجك is also acceptable. In such example, there is clearly agreement in person between أنت and the possessive pronoun suffix ك. The presence of أنت determines the acceptability of this utterance, and therefore partially determines what can occur after الذي in this position (Al-Aqeel 1990:65-80).

In terms of its morphology (cf. section 7) الذي consists of the definite article الـ plus gender, number, and in some instances case (the dual only اللتان / اللذان and اللتين / اللذين). Given these features, given that it agrees with a preceding noun in all respects, including case in the dual, and given its headship of the الذي phrase, it is reasonable to call الذي a relative adjective as a translation of the Arabic الاسم الموصول (cf. Wright, vol. 1: 105 and Al-Aqeel 1990:75-80).

Similar to الذي, according to Wright (vol.2 : 270), are من 'one/some/the one/those who...', and ما 'one/some/the one/those which...'. من and ما differ from the members of the الذي in being neutral as to gender, number, case, and definiteness. The الذي and its members are indeterminate with regard to animacy. من and ما on the other hand refer exclusively to animate (typically human) and inanimate entities respectively. من and ما differ from the الذي and its members in that they cannot function as adjectives to a preceding noun. However, just as الذي and its members, من and ما can function as noun phrases. Consider in particular the following:

45-

أنت من يُتوقع ويُحتمل تخرجه

you are one/the one whose graduation is expected and probable

Examples such as 45 show that من and ما, just like الذي and its members, are heads of their phrases. This analysis corresponds closely to that of the traditional Arab grammarians (Wright, vol. 2: 319).

In the light of the preceding examples, consider the following:

46-

أنت المتوقع تخرجه

you are the one whose graduation is expected

The formulation أنت المتوقع تخرجه is also possible. The point however, is that the possibility of 46 echoes the possibility of examples like 44 أنت الذي يُتوقع تخرجه and 45 أنت من يُتوقع ويُحتمل تخرجه. Examples such as 46 demonstrate that if the definite article الـ were shown to be syntactic, rather than morphological, it would have to be regarded in an example like أنت المتوقع تخرجه at least as the head of the phrase in question, rather than a modifying element.

12. Conclusion

In this paper I have put forward a preliminary analysis of the aspects of the noun phrase in Arabic, in which the noun is the syntactic head not only of genitive annexes and possessive pronoun suffixes, but also of definite and indefinite articles. I have gone on to suggest that this analysis is not fully warranted, and that in the case of the articles there is no need to make appeal to syntax; the structures concerned never extend beyond the domain of the word, and therefore purely morphological. I have also suggested that the definite article الـ shares some similarities with الذي, من, and ما of some quasi-syntactic status. The same argument, however, does not hold true for the indefinite article (*tanween*). I think *tanween* should be considered as a marker of the indefiniteness of the individual adjectives like متوقع and محتمل. However, it may be possible to show that the indefinite article (*tanween*), no less than the definite article, has this kind of quasi-syntactic status. It should be noted, however, that I am not claiming

here that I have presented a new approach, or even a new analysis, except in the way that I tried to apply some new linguistic notions to Arabic noun phrase and I believe that some of these notions have proved their universality. I hope that this paper will draw the attention of the Arab linguists for further studies in the field of the modern linguistic studies trying to prove the universality of Arabic language by applying the modern linguistic approaches on different aspects of Arabic language.

References

- Al-Aqueel, Abdul Azeez. 1990. *Jumaltu Assilah fi Al Arabia wa AlEngleeziah: Comparative Study*. Riyadh. Dar Al- Uloom.
- Chomsky, N. 1988. *Language and Problems of Knowledge: The Nicaraguan Lectures*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press
- Crystal, D. 1983. *A Dictionary of Linguistics Phonetics*. Oxford. Basil Blackwell
- Greenberg, J.H, Ferguson C.A. & Moravcsik, E.A. eds 1978. *Universals of Human Language*, Vol. 4. Syntax Stanford, California Stanford University Press.
- Mulder, J.W.F. 1989. *Foundations of Axiomatic Linguistics*. Berlin- New York. Mouton de Gruyter
- Mulder, J.W.F. 1990. *Simplicity in Syntactic Description by Negativism*. In B.K. Halford & H. Plich (eds) *Syntax Gesprochener Sprachen* Gunter Narr. Tubingen. Pp. 119-128
- Mulder, J.W.F. & Hervey, S.G.J. 1972. *Theory of the Linguistics Sign*. Mouton. The Hague. Paris
- Mulder, J.W.F. & Hervey, S.G.J. 1980. *The Strategy of Linguistics*. Edinburgh. Scottish Academic Press
- Wright W. 1971. *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press

References

Al-Aqueel, Abdul Azeez. 1990. *Jumaltu Assilah fi Al Arabia wa AlEngleeziah: Comparative Study*. Riyadh. Dar Al- Uloom.

Chomsky, N. 1988. *Language and Problems of Knowledge: The Nicaraguan Lectures*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press

Crystal, D. 1983. *A Dictionary of Linguistics Phonetics*. Oxford. Basil Blackwell

Greenberg, J.H; Ferguson C.A. & Moravcsik, E.A. eds 1978 *Universals of Human Language*, Vol. 4. Syntax Stanford, California. Stanford University Press.

Mulder, J.W.F. 1989. *Foundations of Axiomatic Linguistics* Berlin- New York. Mouton de Gruyter

Mulder, J.W.F. 1990. *Simplicity in Syntactic Description by Negativism*. In B.K. Halford & H. Plich (eds) *Syntax Gesprochener Sprachen* Gunter Narr. Tubingen. Pp 119-128

Mulder, J.W.F & Hervey, S.G.J 1972. *Theory of the Linguistics Sign*. Mouton. The Hague. Paris

Mulder, J.W.F. & Hervey, S.G.J. 1980. *The Strategy of Linguistics*. Edinburgh. Scottish Academic Press

Wright W. 1971. *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*. Cambridg. Cambridge University Press

Abdullah Ben Sáad Ben Mohamed Al-Sahli
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Languages & Translation
King Saud University, Riyadh
K.S.A

Abstract

Some Linguistic Aspects of the Standard Arabic Noun Phrase

This paper deals with the structure of aspects of the Standard Arabic noun phrase. It looks in particular at the relationship between the noun and a) the indefinite article (tanween), b) the definite article الـ (al), c) possessive pronoun suffixes, and d) the annex, the genitive element in a genitive phrase, as well as the relationship between the noun and a defining adjective. I consider the structure of these relationships. I claim that the relationship between the main noun and its annex, and that between the noun and its possessive pronoun suffix are syntactic. Contrary to the traditional analysis, however, I claim that the relationship between the noun and the definite article, and that between the noun and indefinite article are morphological rather than syntactic, since the articles never enter into relations with elements which extend beyond the level of the word. I also consider the sequencing of elements within the noun phrase, and suggest that the apparently anomalous sequencing of the definite article الـ can be regarded as motivated in terms of the structure and sequencing of other elements with which it shares some common features, notably الذي, من and ما. Where relevant I draw comparisons between aspects of the Arabic structures, and their correspondents in English.

ملخص البحث

بعض الظواهر اللغوية للجملة الاسمية في اللغة العربية

تناقش هذه الورقة بعض الميزات اللغوية للجملة الاسمية في اللغة العربية. وتدرس بصورة خاصة العلاقة بين الاسم من جهة وبين كل من (١) التتويين (٢) أداة التعريف -ال- (٣) ضمائر الملكية، (٤) المضاف إليه في جملة الإضافة، (٥) الصفة المعرفة. كما تناقش الدراسة التراكييب اللغوية لهذه الأنماط. وترى الدراسة بأن العلاقة بين الاسم الرئيس وتابعه وتلك التي بين الاسم وضمير الملكية المتصل إنما هي علاقة نحوية، بينما العلاقة بين الاسم وأداة التعريف وبين الاسم والتتويين هي علاقة صرفية مما يعني أن مثل هذه الأدوات لا تتجاوز الكلمة المرتبطة بها إلى باقي عناصر الجملة، وذلك مخالف لتحليل النحويين التقليدي لمثل هذه التراكييب.

وتدرس الورقة تعاقب العناصر في الجملة الاسمية، وترى بأن التسلسل الغير قياسي لأداة التعريف يمكن أن يعتبر فعال فقط بالنظر إلى تراكييب وتسلسل العناصر الأخرى والتي تشترك معها في بعض الصفات، مثل (الذي، من، وما).

وتذكر الدراسة بعض المقارنات بين التراكييب العربية ونظيراتها الإنجليزية في بعض المواضيع من البحث.