



*Grammatical And Semantic
Study Of Subject In Arabic
With Reference To English*

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Abstract.

Subject is regarded as the most significant component of a sentence, yet the other components are important too . This fact is not limited to just Arabic . But it may include different languages . The way of doing research into 'subject' is quite different from a language to another (Hassan , 1953 : 113) . There must be certain limitations on how the study is carried out , otherwise the study will never come to any conclusion . So there are only five points to be the centre of attention in the study as follows : a.clarity of subject. b.subject's position in a sentence. c.subject as a single or multiple – word. d.subject to correspond with a verb in gender and e.subject is compulsory to be omitted. The study is going to be investigated based on grammatical and semantic way so as to see how Arabic and English are different in this respect. It is hypothesized that a subject is present in both Arabic and English but its traits are conceived differently based on different ways. The chief characteristics of subject in the two languages are chosen to be investigated based on the following points: (1) It is preferable to choose specific rules and semantic ways to make the fundamental qualities of subject known to the readers , (2)There must be a condition that puts a limit on the subject ; referring to only fixed rules concern the subject and to explain the intended meaning and (3) The way of understanding the characters of subject in Arabic is different from that of English . In conclusion , a comparison Arabic with English in this respect shows that the English readers may face a multitude of difficulties to realize this topic well ; unlike the Arab readers who can conceive the study easily .

1. Introduction.

The problem refers to the state of some readers of not being able to think clearly about the study ; Considering subject in Arabic is similar to subject in English . This problem must be solved by thinking about five characters of subject in Arabic and English. These characteristics concern subject must be explained throughout specific rules and clarity of meaning. Translating the chief traits of subject from Arabic into English may add something to the problem. The form of subject is regarded as a special point to focus on grammatical and semantic points of view. Tantawi (1954 : 119) defined a subject out of two ways : it is significant to understand subject either to see it as a doer of action or it does the work of a certain verb (i.e. To act for something which is not clear and definite. Consider the following sentences

١-ضَرَبَ الولدُ الكرةَ .

٢-مات الرجل .

In the first sentence , the verb is coming before something else because of greater importance , for the subject is really does the action . As for the second sentence , the verb seems to take precedence over everything else . The subject is the 'man'. But he does not do the action since he is not responsible for death . He does not cause something for himself to be died . So the subject is acting for something which is not clear and tangible . Rosenaum (1967 : 14) says that subject can have one case in a sentence by having a share or an effect on it . Look at the following sentences :

- a. He sends a letters .
- b. They eat biscuits .
- c. Cow gives milk .

2. Clarity of Subject .

It is very interesting to treat the way of explaining subject in Arabic differently from that of English . It is also significant to talk in some detail ,



giving examples in order to consolidate what is being researched (i.e. to make the ideas firmer or stronger) .

2.1 Clarity of Subject in Arabic.

Dheif (1988 : 85) confirms that it is difficult to understand subject when it comes alone like ball , chair , book and these words are considered to be inanimate things . The case will be the same with the following words : Ali , Zaid , Husein , etc . But these words are human's names . The clarity of subject has come to be understood out of the other components when used in sentences like:

١- ذهب علي .

٢- نام زيد.

٣- نجح حسينٌ .

In all of these sentences above , a verb is going to receive a lot of attention and it always likes to be the centre of sentence. Here, there is a rule which says that it is possible for a verb to come first whereas nothing comes before it. The clarity of subject is connected with the meaning. The sentences which mentioned before can have clear meaning. The clarity of subject is to see and identify its position in a sentence and to think of meaning. Abed-alhameed (2009: 55) illustrates that subject does not come in a sentence unless a verb is coming before it. If something else happens , it will be the contrary idea (i.e. The subject is coming in a sentence provided that a verb must come before it , otherwise there is not a subject at all. The subject must be connected with(الجملة الفعلية). The inanimate subject makes no difference to the clarity of the subject as in the following sentences :

١- فاصَّ البحرُ

٢- زحف الشجرُ

٣- اشرق القمر .

He (ibid : 56) added that if a certain disorder can be happened between subject and verb , this can not affect the meaning . The pattern of sentences will be different and the position of the subject is different too. Consider the two sentences :

١- البحرُ فاضٌ .

٢- علي ذهبٌ .

2.2 Clarity of Subject in English.

Aziz (1989 : 57) confirms that the clarity of subject is connected with a prominent role to play in a sentence . Thus , subject seems to take precedence over everything else . If there is no attention to a subject , there will be no quality of being clear , then the meaning will be ambiguous . So clarity of subject is connected strongly with semantics as in following sentence : John writes a poem . If a verb comes first like write John a poem , there will be ambiguity because of no subject comes first . Givon (1993 : 22) views that there is no clarity of inanimate subject unless a subject must be followed by has / had + p.p , present and past simple tense as in the following examples :

- a. The studies have shown that all animals may have cancer except galalizard .
- b. The newspapers have told you the detail of accident .
- c. Ammunition had run out .
- d. A ministry organization has forgiven political crimes .
- e. The whole story rests on a very simple idea .
- f. The sign gave advice about wisdom .
- g. The tablets reduced the pain .
- h. The newspaper gave the problem great prominence .

Akal (2009 : 200) asserts that some inanimate subjects in Arabic do not give meaning when translated from Arabic into English as in the following examples :

١- الموت يحصد الارواح في الصومال .

٢-التعليقات صارمة .

٣- الدستور الجديد يخرج من غرفة الإنعاش بولادة قيصرية .

It is hard to deal with the subject in the sentences above as they are when translating from Arabic into English . In this case , subject must be construed so that the listeners can understand the meaning of a sentence because the subject is vague . The subject in the sentences above will be taking another forms as in the following sentences :

1. Terrorists kill the innocent people in Somalia .
2. a. The instructions which issued by the education ministry are restrictive .
b. The officials of the university issued restrictive instruction .
3. The new constitution is born after a long incubation .

3. Subject's Position in Arabic Sentence .

Haroon (1966 : 32) says that there are multi – view about the position of subject in a sentence since there are no fixed patterns of a sentence like English and other languages . The Arab grammarians had pointed out that there is a rule which says that subject comes after a verb because a verb needs a subject. Therefore ; the subject does not come first before everything else. The subject doesn't have the right to come before a verb because of greater importance. Therefore ; subject is always coming after a verb . This is its position in a sentence . The verb never comes alone without subject (ibid : 33). Shalabi (1970 : 445) ascertains that the property which made a subject come after a verb is concerned with Arabic in its nature and subject is still having greater importance . Consider the following sentence :

١- قام علي .

The verb (قام) has to be the first before any other components. This does not mean the state of being more important than the subject but this is the language in its nature too . Izgheir (2011 : 33) confirms that there is the only

rule concerns the subject is that it is impossible for a subject to be first in a sentence . There must be a verb coming before it . The clarity of subject is concerned with the past and present time as in the following sentences :

١- كتب الطالب الدرس .

٢- يقرأ التلميذ القصيدة .

Any little change with the subject and verb in the two sentences can cause the two sentences to have another pattern , yet the meaning will not be changed. The two sentences will be like the following sentences after change :

١- الطالب يكتبُ الدرس .

٢- التلميذ يقرأُ القصيدة .

In conclusion, the position of a subject is not to be at the beginning of the sentence. This rule can be applied for the other positions of subject when it comes to stick to a verb like :

١- نجحنا في الامتحان .

The subject seems to be at the end of the verb . So it does not come first whereas nothing comes before (ibid : 34).

4.Subject's position in English Sentence.

Stageberg (1965 : 198) points out that every sentence you see and read must be under one of the following patterns :

1. Ali is clever .
2. Layla is here .
3. Zaki is a goldsmith .
4. The boys seem tired .
5. My daughter remained a validictrian student .
6. a. He finished .
b. He finished early .
c. They were finishing when we passed through .



- d. She finished late .
- e. It finished the game .
- 7. a. He is reading stories in his room .
- b. Yousif is a teacher .
- c. Mustafa is playing volley ball .
- d. Saba gave Majid a present .
- 8. a. Jawan wrote Salma a poem .
- b. They sold a visa to their brother .
- c. Muna asked them a question .
- 9. a. Ali considered Ansam brilliant .
- b. Ahmed thought the caller you .
- c. Hassan imagines Amjad reading .
- d. We considered the food in the way .
- e. They thought Maha to be a good student .
- f. They supposed Muntaha down stairs .
- g. Muna believed them seated .
- h. The students selected Ali representative .

He (ibid : 199) added that it is important to look at and think about subject before anything else because it is connected strongly with the meaning . If a subject is contradictory and confusing , the meaning will be ambiguous . It is very important to see and analyse a subject before everything even if the components of sentence have incomplete disorder and this happened at the beginning of grammars or rules . Quirk and Green baum (1973 : 12) illustrates that the following structures can give the subject great prominence and occur in the first as follows :

- 1. SV : Time flies .
- 2. SVO : Nada did the exam .
- 3.SVA : Ali is here .
- 4. SVOO : Jamal asked him a question .

5. SVOA : I put the fruits in the basket .
6. SVC : Hassan is a teacher .
7. SVOC : The students selected Najat a captain .

5. In Arabic , Subject to be one word and not multi – word.

Asamarraie (1971 : 370) asserts that only one word can be expressed for a subject whether it is single or plural as well as (المتنى). The following sentences can consolidate what this rules says by focusing on them carefully .

١- فرح الطالبُ .

٢- فرح الطالبان .

٣- فرح الطلابُ .

In Arabic , there are three terms : single means only one, Muthana is concerned with just two persons or things and plural which refers to more than two persons or things . The rule above says that only one word and no more acts as a subject in a sentence. So subject in the three sentences above refer to one word like:

الطالبُ ، الطالبان ، الطلاب .

Shalabi (1970 : 450) remarks that a subject is consisting of one word even if its meaning refers to be much more than two persons or things as in the following sentences :

١- درس محمودٌ .

٢- درس المحمودان .

٣- درس المحمودون .

The underlined words are said to be subject and regarded as one word .

6. Subject in English to be Multi – word .

Flanagan (1972 : 58) affirms that sometimes subject comes in a sentence as one word and sometimes it comes to be multi-word In a sentence. Consider the following sentences :

- a. The man I saw yesterday , was Mustafa .
- b. The cats with tall tail , are living in jungles .
- c. Fat white dogs are seldom the butt of other children's joke .
- d. The machine that makes photographs is very old .
- e. The people who suffer in hell are not regarded to be pious .

Chierchia (1990 : 78) claims that a set of words can be expressed for a subject . It does not matter whether a subject is an inanimate thing or human beings . The inanimate things cannot make difference to the subject since the meaning remains unchangeable. Look at the following sentences :

- a. The articles I bought two days ago are on science .
- b. The deers lying on the grass belong to Hamid .

7. In Arabic , Subject to Correspond with Verb in Gender.

Al.asmer (1999 : 46) states that there is a rule which says there is a correspondence between the subject and the verb concerning the following points : a. single is going to refer to only one , Muthana can refer to only two persons or things and plural which refers to more than two persons or things. This rule is saying the opposite of other rules in different languages . The verb which refers to single can come with the subject if it is Single , Muthana or Plural . This is concerned with the subject if it is masculine. But if the subject refers to feminine (female) , the rule will remain the same except one letter to be added and this is a sign of feminine. Think about the following sentences :

The subject is feminine

١ - كتبت الطالبة القصيدة

The subject is masculine

١ - كتب الولد القصيدة

٢- كتبت الطالبتان القصيدة

٢- كتب الولدان القصيدة

٣- كتبت الطالبات القصيدة .

٣- كتب الاولاد القصيدة

If you look at the sentences in the right column , you will find out three types of subject : Single , Muthana , and Plural like (الولد ، الولدان ،) (الاولاد) . These subjects are dealing with one verb which refers just to the case of single. As for the sentences in the left column , they are the same comparing with the right column except one letter to be added to the subject. This is the meaning of correspondence (ibid : 47).

8. In English , No Correspondence between Subject and Verb in Gender.

Khlusi (1982 : 146) says there is a striking difference between the two languages Arabic and English in this respect. There are many ideas and complicated issues concern the verb in English. These cases are not concerned just with the present simple tense , the past simple tense and future. But there are multi-division of the verb like the present continuous tense , the past continuous tense , the future continues tense , the present perfect continues tense , the past perfect continues tense and the future perfect continues tense . All these kinds of verb are different in the use of the subject either masculine or feminine. In addition , there is no (صيغة المثنى) in English and each kinds of verb may take different forms. He(ibid : 147) mentions that there is a little difference when using subject which refers to human being whether it is a masculine or feminine. If the subject refers to inanimate things , the verb will take different forms as in the following sentences :

1. Concrete makes walls strong .
2. Concrete has made walls strong .
3. This topic has given you pleasure .
4. The agenda explained something different .
5. A comparison shows that the economy is improving .

9. In Arabic , Subject is Compulsory to be Omitted.

Al-Hadethi (1966 : 348) mentions that al –kufa school had the same opinion as al-Basrah school about omitting the subject in very specific conditions. It is important to mention these conditions as follows :

1. The subject is compulsory to be omitted just with the verbs of orders like write , read , explain , silence , etc .

اكتب ، اقرأ ، وضّح ، أسكت .

The subject will be appreciated according to the situation. Sometimes the verbs mentioned above come alone and sometimes they come with the object like :

اقرأ القصيدة ، اكتب الدرس .

2. The subject must be omitted when it is used with some verbs like agree , fold , call , understand , study .

اوافق ، أطوي ، أدعو ، أدرس ، الخ .

3. The subject also must be omitted in order to keep the subject secret so that other people do not know about the doer of action like " the window is broken " .

١- كُسر الشباك .

Sometimes , the subject is omitted because of the lack of information or knowledge about the doer of action so that the innocent people will not be accused of breaking the window .

10. In English , Subject is not Compulsory to be Omitted.

Khlusi (1982 : 158) asserts that the grammarians 's views about subject in both Arabic and English are very different in many essential points. The position of subject in English according to all the patterns of sentence gave it great prominence. If a subject is omitted , the sentence becomes incomplete and there will never be a clear meaning . In this case , none can appreciate the subject in



order to find out the meaning. English in its nature could make a subject take precedence over everything else. Aziz (1990 : 74) it is impossible to give too little or no attention or care to the relationship between subject and meaning. Therefore ; it is impossible to drop the subject because of no appreciation of understanding the meaning . In addition , what happens with subject in Arabic concerning the processes of omitting is completely different from that of English because of the big differences between the two languages.

11. A Comparison of Arabic with English out of the Study.

The meaning of comparison is to look at people or things in a very careful way so as to find out specific ways to show similarity and difference between them. Though each writer can have his own opinion , the difference or disagreement is a rare condition unlike similarity which is regarded as the prominent case and it does not call for argument. The difference is concerned strongly with argument. Similarity is referring to the issue of agreement. So the difference is indisputable and that cannot be proved wrong . People do not differ with each other on similarity , and they do not talk or mention about it seriously. Now , Arabic is originally different from English in every respect. Thus , the notion of subject in Arabic does differ with the same in English on many aspects. It is enough information to mention only the diverse points depending on the following table :

Subject in Arabic	It is clear just in specific cases. .	It comes at the end of sentence.	Subject to correspond with verb.	One word.	Subject is omitted.
Subject in English	Subject is clear to understand.	It comes at the beginning of sentence.	No correspondence with verb.	Multi – word.	Subject is not omitted.

This table is to show how Arabic and English are different in using subject as adapted by Rosenbaum (1967 : 14) and Dheif (1988 : 86) .



12. Conclusion and Suggestions .

It is significant to focus on the following points which refer to the conclusion of the study :

a. grammatical rules are regarded as a descriptive tool to explain the components of sentence and they make the meaning clear to be understood easily . So the study of the subject in the two languages is concerned with amazing results. The first important point is to see one word like (إنهض ، إجلس) as a whole sentence. This is proved according different views of different writers .

b. There are diverse points in Arabic and English concerning the inanimate subject .In Arabic , it does not matter whether the subject is human or inanimate things since meaning remains clear like :

١- الراية تتأرجح .

٢- الكرة تندرج .

٣- الارض تبكي .

As for the subject in English , sometime it must be construed if it is an inanimate thing. If there is no clarity of subject , there will be no clear meaning.

c. Arabic is the most difficult language since there are no fixed patterns like English that the subject can be very clear for eye and mind. Thus , Arabic is completely different from that of English.

d. In English , the following verbs are coming with the inanimate subject :

1-S+present simple tense .

2- S+ past simple tense .

3- S+ have (has) + p.p .

4- S + can + C .

The best way is to use present simple tense with the inanimate subject and the rest of verbs above are also used with the subject in different degrees.

e. It is very important for the non – native speaker of English and the people who are interested in English to look at and think about the inanimate subject. If there is no clarity of subject , there will be no clear meaning whatever the order of sentence components is correct. This could benefit the non –native speaker of English who tries to communicate in different situations .

F. In Arabic , if there is no verb preceding the subject , there is no subject at all , sometimes subject is coming at the end of a sentence and this needs to make a special effort to know its position and understand the meaning of the subject like :

١- اكرمت العلماء النيرة عقولهم .

g. In Arabic , the subject has come at the end of the sentence and it is difficult for the native – speaker of Arabic to understand the subject very well. In English, it is impossible to see the proper noun be plural at all like John = Johns , Sam = Sams , Mike = Mikes . In Arabic , it is possible to make a proper noun as a plural as in the following sentences :

١- جاء الباسمون .

٢- جاء الزيدون .

This study can have the door open for further studies for the following reasons :
(1) there are other features of the subject which can be studied in Arabic with their realization in English, (2) clarity and ambiguity of subject may be a good topic to be researched in both Arabic and English, and (3) the other topics in the other levels of language concern subject in Arabic and English may be contrastively studied.



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