

A Contrastive Study Of Attributive Adjectives In English And Arabic

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Abstract:

This study is an attempt to point out the similarities and differences of attributive adjective , the most common type of adjectives in English and Arabic .

Section one studies the attributive adjective in English ; its position , form, semantic features and syntactic function .

Section two investigates the attributive adjective in Arabic; its position , form , and syntactic features .

Section three makes a comparison to show the similarities and differences of attributive adjectives in English Language and Arabic Language .

دراسة مقارنة للصفة المنسوبة في اللغة الانكليزية واللغة العربية

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المستخلص:

هذه الدراسة محاولة لتحديد التشابه والاختلافات في الصفة (المنسوبة)، وهو النوع الأكثر شيوعاً من الصفات في اللغة الانكليزية و اللغة العربية .

القسم الأول: يدرس الصفة المنسوبة في اللغة الانكليزية : موقعها ، شكلها ، خواصها الدلالية ووظيفتها النحوية .

القسم الثاني: يبحث في الصفة المنسوبة في اللغة العربية : موقعها ، شكلها و خواصها النحوية .

القسم الثالث: يعقد مقارنة لبيان التشابهات والاختلافات في الصفة المنسوبة في اللغة الانكليزية والعربية .

INTRODUCTION

The term "attributive" is used in grammatical description in contrast with the predicative function of adjectives .

Attributive adjective is one type of the general class of adjectives that constitutes the part of speech of both languages , English and Arabic . The word "attributive" may refer to position , (the position of the adjective) , or to function , in this case the adjective attributes a quality to the head noun .

This general idea is shared between the two languages ; English and Arabic .

Section One

Attributive Adjectives In English

Chalker (1984:162) ,states that : " A traditional definition of an adjective is that it says what somebody or something is like ."

This definition may be found in any traditional English grammar book, but Chalker has added that , modern grammar books prefer to define adjectives like other major word- class by " [a] position / function and [b] form / inflection. " In other words, they have a sort of descriptive meaning .

On the other hand , Crystal (1985: 26 - 27) , describes the term "attributive" as: "the term normally used to refer to the role of ADJECTIVES and NOUNS

when they occur as MODIFIERS of the HEAD of noun PHRASE ."

1.1 Position

Adjectives are usually called, according to their position, either attributive , predicative or post position .

Our concern , here in this paper , is attributive position , which is the most typical common position between a determiner and a noun . Thus adjectives in this position are called "attributive" because they attribute a quality or a characteristic to the noun .

(1.1) All those ----- houses .

We can put in this position such adjectives as old , attractive , charming , distinguished , etc....

We have to note here that attributive only adjectives mean that the adjective precedes the noun , and however that does not mean

that this noun phrase can not be positioned predicatively in a sentence :

(1.2) What you say is utter non – sense . (Chalker , 1984 : 162)

On the other hand , a great number of adjectives can not be attributive adjectives and predicative adjectives at the same time as is shown in the following examples :

(1.3) The man was awake / * The awake man

(1.4) * The failure seems utter / An utter failure

" Awake " can only be used as a predicative adjective not as attributive adjective , while , " utter " can only be used attributively and not predicatively . (Tallerman , 1998 : 43)

Now , sometimes , a change in the position of the adjective involves a change in meaning as is shown in the two examples below :

(1.5) involved style (complicated)

(1.6) people involved (taking part) . (Aziz , 1989 : 288)

1.2 Syntactic Function of Attributive Only Adjectives :

Generally speaking , adjectives that are restricted to attributive position or occur predominately in attributive position do not characterize the referent of the noun directly, for example:

(1.7) My old friend .

(1.8) My friend is old .

In example (1.7) , the adjective "old" means that (one who has been a friend for a long time) , here the adjective does not necessarily imply that my friend is old .

In this case, we can not relate example (1.7) to example (1.8) . Consequently (1.8) has a different meaning , because here "old" refers to the person while in the

previous one , it refers to the relationship . The adjective "old" with this meaning is positioned attributively. (Quirk , et al . , 1973 : 121)

We have to mention here an important note , that in English , adjectives do not agree with the noun in number and gender as in some languages :

(1.9) She is a clever girl – هي بنت ذكية

He is a clever boy – هو ولد ذكي

They are clever boys and clever girls – هم أولاد أذكيا وبنات ذكيات

1.3 Meaning and Position

Adjectives , that normally occupy the attributive position , define a noun by permanent quality , so according to meaning they are called inherent adjectives :

(1. 10) A kind person .

The attributive adjectives can be classified into classes according to meaning:

1. Relationships as in : former , latter , order , upper .
2. Intensifying as in : sole , chief , very .
3. Limiting as in : sole , many .
4. Non – related as in : chemical , solar .
5. Miscellaneous as in : indoor , outside , , up town .
6. Health adjectives , except (poorly) , can appear attributively and predicatively , but in British English , when they are attributive , they do not refer to health as in ;- A fine person , a better man .
7. Alternative past participle as in :- drunken , sunken .

It is interesting to note that verbs with two forms for the past participle which are regular and irregular , usually take the irregular form to make the attributive adjectives . (Chalker , 1984 : 166-168) , (see also Quirk , et al , 1985)

1.4 Semantic Features

Adjectives are an open class with numerous semantic features and sub - groups such as (color , terms of value , size , age , weight , etc) . They attribute qualities or properties , and below we are going to discuss the most two important qualities .

Stativity

Most adjectives except for a small part of them share with nouns the same quality of being stative according to meaning .

Stative adjectives mean that they describe permanent inherent qualities .

Stative meaning is a quality especially associated with attributive adjectives when they occur as part of a noun phrase , as in the example below :

(1. 11) My old blue jacket .

Usually stative adjectives must come with stative verbs , as is shown below

(1 . 12) My jacket is old .

(1 . 13) *My jacket is being old . (Chalker , 1984 : 163)

These properties and qualities which are described as stative , are not subject to willful control as in the following example :-

(1 . 14) This man is tall.

Either a person is tall or not , it is not possible to direct tall

(1 . 15) * She is being tall today .

Some other adjectives may be dynamic :-

(1 . 16) We are being very careful

It is chiefly dynamic adjectives that can be made into adverbs by adding ly

(Gramely and Patzold, 1992 : 132)

Gradability

Another semantic feature of adjectives including attributive adjectives , is gradability . This means that most adjectives can be put on a scale of intensity:

(1 . 17) old—older —oldest ,

or they attribute qualities or properties which are gradable in terms of less or more as in:

(1 . 18) more intelligent , less intelligent , (Chalker , 1984 : 163)

Adjectives that are not inflected can not be gradable , thus we call such adjectives ; un gradable adjectives .

Un gradable adjectives include such adjectives as :

1. Attributive only adjectives :former , outright , chemical , etc.....
2. Nationality adjectives : English , French , etc.....
3. Adjectives with absolute meaning : alternative , overage , equal , extra , etc....

(ibid)

1.5 Form

According to form , many adjectives have no characteristic form but some adjectives end in typical suffixes , such as :- able , ible , ish , full , less , or ous , which appear in words like desirable , contemptible , childish , helpful , helpless and dangerous respectively .

Adjectives including attributive adjectives ,could be attached to two inflectional morphemes – { er } , for comparative degree , and

{ est } for superlative degree , and the base is called the positive degree . (Chalker ,1984 : 163) .

Section Two Adjectives In Arabic

In Arabic, the class of adjectives has always been considered as a subclass of noun. Grammarians usually distinguish between the two by calling the noun , (a noun which is not an adjective) , and the adjective , (a noun which is adjective) .

There are four distinctions , we can recognize between the two classes in Arabic , but yet the similarities between the adjectives and nouns are greater than the differences . (Aziz , 1985 : 159)

If we take for an example the noun (Adil - عادل) , it may be a proper noun (Adil) or it may be an adjective (fair). This simple example shows the big similarity that exists between the two classes .

2.1 Similarities between the Adjective and Noun :

1.Both adjectives and nouns take the definite article :

عادل – العادل ، الرجل - رجل

Man – the man , Adil – the fair

2. Both show gender :-

مدرس ذكي – مدرسه ذكيه

An intelligent teacher (female)–an intelligent teacher (masculine)

2.Both show number :-

رجل ذكي – رجلان ذكيان

Two intelligent men – an intelligent man

3.Both show case contrast :-

رجل / رجال – ذكي / أذكيا

Man/men–intelligent(singular)/intelligent(plural) (160)

2.2 Differences between the Adjective and the Noun

Now the main difference between these two classes , is that those categories , mentioned previously : definiteness , number , gender and case are either selective, (definiteness and case) . Or inherent in nouns , (number and gender) .

In adjectives they are part of what is known as agreement or concord ,this means ,that they are subordinate to the nouns they modify and have to agree with them in number , gender , case ,and

definiteness , or we can call them dependent adjectives , here the word " dependent " means that the adjective agrees with the properties of the head noun such as those mentioned before . (Tallerman , 1998 : 108)

2.3 Position

Adjectives in Arabic are positioned either attributively or predicatively . Attributive adjectives normally in Arabic post modify the noun head:

(2.19) الولد الذكي - The intelligent boy

Attributive adjectives agree with nouns in definiteness , number , gender and case . (Aziz , 1985 : 165)

2.4 Syntactic Function

There are two basic functions which adjectives fulfill , known as the attributive and predicative functions .

Yazigi , (1985 : 95) , says that attributive adjective is a description for a noun and is supposed to specify some of the noun qualities. We can distinguish two types of the adjective , real and reasonal attributive adjectives .

Real Attributive Adjectives

Real adjectives follow the noun it modifies directly , and it has some conditions that control its uses , and those conditions are

1.The real adjective must agree with its noun in number , gender ,definiteness , or indefiniteness , and also parsed by the same way as its noun :

(2.20) الرجل العاقل ممدوح – The wise man is praiseworthy .

(2.21) الابناء البرره يكرمون الوالدين العطوفين - The devoted sons honor the compassionate parents .

The real adjective may be one word , sentence or , quasi-sentence .(ibid)

Reasonal Attributive Adjectives

They agree with the preceding noun in parsing , definiteness , indefiniteness , and qualify what follows and agree in gender with the preceding noun and sometimes agree in number

(2.22) هذا رجل كريم أبوه وفاضله أمه وحى أبواه - This is a man whose father is generous , his mother is virtuous and his parents are alive .

Sometimes , adjectives just as participles , might take after them a restrictive or limitative genitive as in :

- (2.1) Handsome of face . حسن الوجه
 (2.32) Pure of heart . طاهر القلب

2.6 Form

As mentioned before , Arabic adjectives are similar to nouns in almost every aspect. Arabic adjectives are mainly derived from verbs .

According to Aziz (1985 : 165 – 166) , the most common adjectives that are derived from verbs are :-

تابع – صابر – عادل	: فاعل
سعيد – كبير – حميد	: فعيل
كسول – حقود – عزوم	: فعول
خجلان – كسلان – غضبان	: فعلان
أخضر / خضراء – أحمر / حمراء	: أفعل / فعلاء

Adjectives that are derived from nouns are formed by adding the suffix (ي) to the noun , as in the following examples

- (2.33) رمز – رمزي
 عقل – عقلي
 نفس – نفسي

Section Three

A Comparison of Attributive Adjectives in English and Arabic

3.1 Similarities

1. Attributive adjectives in English and Arabic are considered to be subordinate to the head noun .

In Arabic this subordination is clear in that the adjective must agree with the noun head in number , gender , and definiteness.

In English this subordination is implicit and not explicit .

2. Both in Arabic and English , attributive adjectives modify the noun .
3. Semantically speaking , both in English and Arabic attributive adjectives can be inherent , so they relate to the head directly as in

(3 . 33) old house بيت قديم

or , indirectly , as in,

(3 . 34) old friend صديق قديم

4. Just like some Arabic adjectives which are derived from verbs , in English some adjectives are irregular forms of past participle verbs .

5. According to form , some English adjectives are formed by adding certain derivational suffixes to nouns and verbs , or they may be attached to certain inflectional suffixes .

In Arabic they are also derived from certain verbs or nouns by adding the suffix(ي) .

3.2 Differences .

1. In English , they pre modify the noun as in

(3.35) a clever boy

In Arabic , attributive adjectives post modify the noun as in

(3.36) ولد ذكي

or , they pre modify what follows and agree only in gender and sometimes with number with the preceding noun , as in reasonal adjectives .

(3. 37) لا أصادق رجلا مذموما خلقه

I do not accompany a man whose manner is dispraised.

2. In English, attributive adjectives are related directly to the head noun

(3.38) a tall man

while in Arabic , the attributive adjectives are related to the head in two ways : either directly as in

(3 . 39) رجل طويل

Or indirectly as in :

(3.40) رجل طويل القامة

3. In English , Adjectives are a separate class of parts of speech ; while in Arabic adjectives are usually considered to be only as a sub – class , because they are only a part of the class of nouns .

Conclusion

The present study reaches to the conclusion that attributive adjectives are more complicated in Arabic than in English , because in Arabic , they traditionally belong to the class of nouns and they are of different types . From a syntactic point of view , both in English

and Arabic they function as modifiers of the head noun either directly or indirectly .

According to position , in English , they are positioned before the noun , while in Arabic , they are positioned after the head noun .

Also , we have studied form , and we can conclude, that in English , adjectives have no special form , but some adjectives are characterized by certain suffixes , and some of them are considered to be irregular past participle forms of verbs .On the other hand , in Arabic , they are derived from certain verbs and nouns .

The study concludes that attributive adjectives in English and Arabic share more similarities than differences.

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