

The Adjectival Construct in Arabic
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We propose an LFG analysis of the adjectival construct (*?dāfa ġayr ḥaqīqiyya*) in Arabic.¹ The construction takes the form of an adjectival head modified by a definite noun. It has the external distribution of an AP, occurring both attributively and predicatively (in (2) the copula is omitted as the time reference is present).

- (1) *imra'-at-un jamīl-at-u -l-wajh-i* (2) *'anta ^caẓīm-u -l-ḥazz-i*
 woman-F-NOM beautiful-F-NOM the-face-GEN you great-NOM the-fortune-GEN
 a woman with a beautiful face You are very lucky.

The major characteristics of this construction are as follows. The post-adjectival nominal serves to delimit the respect in which the adjective denotes a property of the external nominal (the head noun in (1) and the SUBJ in (2)): the inner nominal *must* express such a property, but is not limited to inalienable properties of the external nominal. The inner nominal cannot be picked up for reference in the subsequent discourse. The adjectival construct bears some striking similarities to the Welsh in-respect-of construction for which an LFG analysis is presented in Mittendorf and Sadler (2008). The 'inner' N is obligatorily definite and is in GEN case in MSA (case marking is absent in the Arabic vernaculars). Attributively the Adj shows normal concord with the head noun in respect of CASE, NUM and GEN; DEF agreement is defective only in that word final nunation (indefiniteness marking/agreement) is impossible. The AP may co-occur with other AP modifiers (see (3)).

- (3) *al-lajnat-u l-barlamāniyyat-u l-wāsi^c-at-u l-nafūd-i*
 the-committee-NOM the-parliamentary.FSG-NOM the-wide.FSG-NOM the-influence-GEN
 the widely influential parliamentary committee
- (4) *qidr-un mutawassit-u l-ḥajm-i*
 pot-NOM.INDEF medium-NOM the-size-GEN
 a medium-sized pot

A key point is that the Adj head and the GEN complement are subject to a very strict adjacency requirement: even degree modifiers of the Adj cannot intervene (5). This fact motivates approaches such as Siloni (2002) which effectively treat the adjective and the inner N as formed in the morphology.

- (5) a. **imra'-at-un jamīl-at-u jiddan -l-wajh-i*
 woman-F-NOM beautiful-F-NOM very the-face-GEN
- b. *imra'-at-un jamīl-at-u -l-wajh-i jiddan*
 woman-F-NOM beautiful-F-NOM the-face-GEN very
 a woman with a very beautiful face

This however cannot be correct, at least for Arabic. Our evidence against includes the fact that the inner nominal can be a coordination (a syntactic process) and that it can be syntactically modified as shown in (6). The construction is thus syntactically not morphologically formed: Arabic phrase structure must permit an (optional) GEN complement immediately adjacent to the Adj head. Since the complement may be coordinated and modified, it is not a non-projecting word.²

- (6) *bayt-un kaṭīr-u -l-ābwāb-i -l-ḥdar-i*
 house-NOM many-NOM the-door.PL-GEN the-green-GEN
 a house with many green doors

¹Since all contemporary descriptions and analyses focus on Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) we also do so here: the presentation will also provide an analysis of the construction in the Kuwaiti vernacular.

²Given the close morphophonological relation between the head and the nominal complement in the Hebrew adjectival construction, we consider in the presentation whether there is any evidence that the heads are lexically shared (Wescoat, 2002).

The main question that this construction raises is that of the syntactic status of the post-adjectival NP. Consistent with its position immediately following the adjectival head we argue that it is a subcategorised (direct) argument of the adjective. This suggests that (in this construction) adjectives assign GEN case to their direct internal argument (adjectives may also take other types of complement in Arabic, including prepositional and verbal complements). GEN is assigned as a structural case elsewhere in Arabic: Prepositions assign it to their NP OBJ complements and the ‘possessor’ NP in the nominal construct state construction is also marked as GEN.³ Short of inventing additional functions, the analytic possibilities for the GF of the inner NP come down to OBJ (or possibly OBJ_θ) and SUBJ. Recall that the *idāfa ġayr ḥaqīqiyya* occurs predicatively, and when used attributively is predicated of the head noun. This suggests that the inner NP is an OBJ rather than a SUBJ. (7) shows the f-structure of a predicative example such as (2) and (8) the f-structure of (3). As noted above, this construction has very many similarities with the Welsh in-respect-of construction (shown in (9)) for which Mittendorf and Sadler (2008) propose an analysis taking the inner (in-respect-of) NP as an OBJ. If we are correct, the adjectival construct in Arabic may constitute a further (and very similar) case of Adjectives with OBJ complements.

$$(7) \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PRED} \quad \text{MAN} \\ \text{ADJ} \left\{ \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PRED} \quad \text{TALL} < \text{OB} > \\ \text{OBJ} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PRED} \quad \text{HEIGHT} \\ \text{DEF} \quad + \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \right\} \left[\text{PRED} \quad \text{CULTURED} < > \right] \end{array} \right]$$

$$(8) \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SUBJ} \quad 1: \left[\text{PRED} \quad \text{PRO} \right] \\ \text{PRED} \quad \text{GREAT} < \text{SUBJ}, \text{CS} > \\ \text{OBJ} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PRED} \quad \text{FORTUNE} \\ \text{DEF} \quad + \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

- (9) *merch fyr ei thymr*
 girl short POSS.3SG.F temper
 a short-tempered girl (Mittendorf and Sadler, 2008, 381)

The agreement facts follow from our general treatment of NP internal concord, the exclusion of indefinite (nunated) forms follows lexically (such forms lack the OBJ subcategorisation shown in (10)).

$$(10) \quad \begin{array}{ll} \textit{jamīl-at-u} & ((\text{ADJ} \in \uparrow) \text{DET}) = \text{INDEF} & ((\text{ADJ} \in \uparrow) \text{CASE}) = \text{NOM} \\ & ((\text{ADJ} \in \uparrow) \text{CONC GEND}) = \text{FEM} & ((\text{ADJ} \in \uparrow) \text{CONC NUM}) = \text{SG} \\ & (\uparrow \text{PRED}) = \text{'BEAUTIFUL (< OBJ >)} \end{array}$$

Finally, we agree with Kremers (2005) that the non-referentiality of the inner NP suggests that despite the (obligatory) appearance of definite marking, it is treated semantically as a property. Given the flexibility of the syntax semantics interface in LFG it is relatively straightforward to integrate this into our account and we will provide the relevant meaning constructors in the paper.

References

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³There are many parallels between the nominal and adjectival construct in Arabic: space precludes discussion in this abstract of the ramifications of our proposal for the nominal construction and existing analyses of it and/or its Semitic counterparts (eg Falk (2007)).