College of Arts / Department of English

PhD. Course in Contrastive Linguistics

Ahmed. A. Aziz/ PhD Candidate Oct. 2025

Supervised by Asst. Prof. Dr. Wafa'a Mudhaffar Ali

Syntactic Contrast

English and Arabic Nominal Group

Introduction

1. The Nominal Group

1. 1 Nominal Group in English

1. 2 Nominal Group in Arabic

1. 3 The Similarity and Differences Between English and Arabic Nominal Group

Introduction

Any contrastive study of nominal groups aims to explore and compare how different languages use and structure these groups. Nominal groups, which consist of a head noun and its modifiers, play a crucial role in sentence structure and meaning across languages. This presentation examines the similarities and differences in how nominal groups are constructed and used in English and Arabic. By identifying these linguistic patterns, the presentation highlights both the shared principles and unique characteristics of each language. Such an analysis is essential for understanding how languages convey meaning through noun phrases and can offer insights into language teaching, translation, and cross-linguistic communication.

1. The Nominal Group

1.1. Nominal Group in English

The nominal group is defined briefly as a group of words or one word as in proper noun . It can act as the subject of a sentence or as complement and as an object. The nominal group in Modern English contains the noun is the central element which may have pre-modifiers and post-modifiers, Its include four elements: determiner, modifier, head and qualifier. The head is that part of the group upon which all the other elements depend on and is the only obligatory element. The modifier and qualifier are those elements which precede and follow the head respectively and are defined formally by their position in relation to the head. Nominal groups are important because they typically provide the content in a text (what something is about), and in academic writing this content can be very sophisticated and complex. (Lise , Fontaine. 2013) . e.g

(1) A man is an adult human male
(2) The house is beautiful

Pre-modifiers is a word, phrase or clause which function as an adjectives or an adverb to describe a word or make its meaning more specific .It placed after determiners, but before the head of noun or noun phrase .There are many types of pre-modifiers.

A- Adjectives as pre-modifier

B- Participles as pre-modifier

C- Nouns as pre-modifier

D- Compounds as pre-modifier.

Nominal groups operate at S, and C in clause structure; verbal groups operate at (p) in clause structure; adverbial groups operate at (a) in clause structure. Nominal group we have choose between singular and plural number.

 In the clause,(**the big dog will bite the little man in the arm**).

 I deeply there are four elements of structure:

    1   2   3   4
(the big dog) (will bite) (the little man) (in the arm/deeply)

These elements of structure we can give the well-established names subject (s), predicator (p), complement (c), adjunct (a). It is evident that in clause structure the patterns at the elements 1 and 3 above (i.e. s and c) are alike. Thus, though there are four elements of structure, we require only three classes of group defined syntactically, since one class of group operates at two places in clause structure.

It is evident from these examples that an element of structure may precede the head element: this is called the **modifier;** and an element of structure may follow the head element: this is called the **qualifier**. Thus: **The big boy with red hair**

boy is a nominal group with one element of structure, an h element, giving the simple structure: **/h/ big boy** is a nominal group with two elements of structure, an
 /**m** /element **/ big/** and an /**h/** element /**boy**/giving the structure: /**mh /**
The big boy with red hair is a nominal group with three elements of structure, an m element /**the big/,** an **h** element **/boy**/ and a q element /**with red hair/** giving the structure /**m h q/.**

So, The elements **m, h, q**, are the elements of structure whose particular configuration (**h; mh ; hq ; mhq**) will form the structure of any given nominal group. Since **h** is an **obligatory** element, but **m** and **q** are **optional** and dependent, we may list the primary elements of structure of the nominal group as: **/ mhq /**

There is theoretically no limit to the number of modifiers and qualifiers each head can carry. The **determiner i**n Modern English precedes the modifier and consists of a small group of words like the (**articles , possessive ,demonstrative pronouns which are mutually exclusive; there can be only one determiner per head in each nominal group**). One cannot say in Modern English *the his book*.*
 Hence the nominal group:
The beautiful, young girl with the black hair sitting in the corner.
 consists of from the determiner / *the /*, two modifiers *beautiful* **and** *young***, the head** *girl***,** and two qualifiers *with the black hair* **and** *sitting in the corner, this called* **complex phrase** .

There are two types of noun phrases (1) **the basic** NG (2) **the complex** NG :

a. The basic noun group consists of the head such as proper noun (Ali, Sarah)and the complex noun group includes the head and its modifier(s); which may precede or follow the head, In English they normally pre-modify the head;. This means that In English, all post-modifiers belong to an open class and therefore fall outside the structure of the basic noun phrase.

b. The complex noun phrase consists of both *closed system and open system Items.* The Complex NG in English it consist of:

(a) The head (b) pre-modification (c) post-modification

e.g. the big boy In the car

e.g : The big black car parked in the middle of the street.

__ **English nominal Determiners**

The **determiner** in English, many noun phrases begin with article s **(a, an, the)** or demonstratives are the most common types of determiner. English quantifiers (**some, all, few**, ect.) also function as **determiners** though in some other languages determiners and quantifiers belong to distinct categories. Determiners typically provide information about **definiteness** , number (singular vs. plural) and in the case of **demonstratives distance** from the speaker. In some languages they also indicate other grammatical information such as (case) and (genre) ,three types of determiners which are classified as follow:

__**Pre-determiners**: they include all the constructions which can take place before any central determiner in an NP, ex. (all, both, zero article, ect for example

Both those engineers attend the meeting.

-**Central determiners**: they include the articles (this, some, etc) for example:

All the teachers know the rules.

-**Post determiners**: they include the determiners which follow the central determiners and precede the pre-modifies, e.g. **numerals many, few**, etc

The few old teachers are coming to the school. See the figure below

NG

| Determiners | Pre-modifiers | Noun | Post-modifiers |
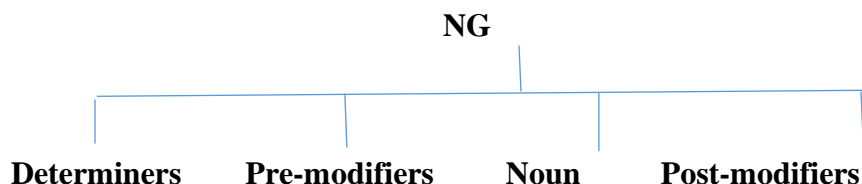
Predeterminer	Determiner	Postdeterminer	Head
all, half	the, his	three, third	box (es)

1.2.   Nominal Group in Arabic

In Arabic language which includes two types of sentences **A *nominal sentence*** الجملة الاسِميَّة **and the verbal sentence** الجملة الفعلية. A *nominal sentence* الجملة الاسِميَّة mostly starts with a ***noun*** إسم , a ***pronoun*** ضَمير , or a **demonstrative** إشارة اسم and is formulated with both a ***subject*** مبتَدأ and **a *predicate*** خبر . When the **subject is a noun**, it must be ***definite*** مَعرفَة ; and when **the predicate is a noun,** it must be ***indefinite*** نَكِرَة . Note that the subject and the predicate always take the مرفوع case ending. In Arabic, however, closed system items may precede, e.g. the article (ال) or follow, e.g. the possessive pronoun. (ي)

هذا رجل سعيد/   هو سعيد / الرجل سعيد

The *predicate* الخبر in nominal sentences can be a single word, a prepositional phrase

. صفة , شبه جملة , جار وجرور

As for a **prepositional phrase** as a predicate:

في البيت رجل / هو في البيت / هذا في البيت

The structure of the following sentence includes two parts **h** the noun (الطالب) **as a head** followed by post modifier (مجتهد) the nominal in Arabic as in English the proper noun considered as a group according to Halliday e.g : الطالب مجتهد

In addition nominal in Arabic precede by demonstrative such as (this , those .that ,) and with definite article ال التعريف

In the other hand ,nominal in Arabic consists of a noun which can be the head of a clause with non-verbal element. This noun is followed by another constituent which completes or describes the noun head the symbols which are used to refer to the nominal group in Arabic the same in English except the one things the structure is differ i.e **(h m q)** / فتاة جميلة . And ال the determiner is presided the noun الفتاة جميلة . The constitute is one of the part of speech that reports the initial or the noun head. Some linguists analyze the nominal construction structurally either in term of subject or a topic of the sentence. Modern standard Arabic is morphologically rich. From phonology point of view a derived noun is formed through fixed root with morphology rules which can be known as the process of 'morphophonemic'. Moreover, this process can be applied like rules to various kinds of construction nouns .

__The formation of nouns in Arabic

Different types could be found in Arabic Language

- **Gerund** (اسم المصدر) names the action denoted by its corresponding verb.

e.g. mansoor منصور 'the helped'.

- **Active participle** (اسم الفاعل) entity that enacts the base meaning i.e. the general actor. e.g. Katib كاتب'writer'

- **Passive participle** (اسم المفعول) The meaning of this kind of nouns based on the object. e.g.: mawood محمود : 'Promised'

- **Resembling participle** (الصفة المشبهة) This theoretically takes the meaning of Active and Passive Participles. e.g.: جميل الصوره 'Nice look'.

- **Tool noun** (اسم الالة) A structure that refers the base meaning i.e. instrument used to set the action. e.g.: qalam قلم 'pen'.

- **Location noun** (ظرف المكان) any noun that refers or performs through place or time reference. e.g.: منبع 'source'.

- **Comparative and superlative** (اسم التفضيل)- an element that overhead the nature of the meaning. e.g.: اكبر 'greater'.

__ Complex nominal group in Arabic

Like English , Arabic language has also **Complex nominal group** , it is mainly based on **post-modification**. Most of the Items (not all) occurring before the head, and they are not many, belong to **closed systems** and are part of the-basic noun clause (كتابي)

Post modification in Arabic

Post modification of the complex nominal group is realized by:

1. adjectives ,2. Participles, 3. relative clauses ,4. prepositional phrases,5. genitives

6. noun clauses.

__ Arabic Determiners

The structure of the NG in Arabic, is   mainly determiners some of which premodifier and others post modify the head.   The structure of the basic NG in Arabic is both thus pre-modification and post-modification. For example, the articles premodify the head: البيت   whereas the possessive pronouns follow the head: بيتي The status of the demonstrators is ambivalent, they may precede or follow the head: هذا البيت/ البيت هذا (This house/ The house), where هذا is therefore not a determiner, but a pronoun in apposition to the nounphrase.

The main items of Arabic determiners with which this section is concerned are the articles, possessive and demonstrative pronouns, numbers (fractions and multipliers) and such words as، اي   كل . **These   Determiners will be classified according to their occurrence as premodifier   or post modifiers since the distribution between count and mass is not functional except for numbers** .There are two articles in Arabic, the definite ال prefixed to the noun head and **zero article** (often plus nutation , التنوين) The definite article is a premodifier used with all types of common nouns. Zero article, on the other hand, indicates indifiniteness.

Possessive pronouns are realized as suffixes attached to the noun head, they are therefore post modifiers-اخي), اختها her sister).Demonstrative pronouns, as stated before, are not properly speaking determiners.   They may precede or follow the definite noun head.

When preceding the noun head, **هذا الكتاب** they are predetermines because they are followed by a definite article, with it. This the mosque (**هذا الجامع**). In this same construction the demonstrative may follow with a slight change in its meaning: الجامع هذا. **When following the head**, the demonstrative seems to have mainly **anaphoric reference** it refers to some thing which has been mentioned before).

 Nouns in genitive state or (الإضافة) are realized by (the process of position)the two nouns are placed together and the second is governed in the genitive case حالة اَلجر
كتاب زَيد (Zayd's book)

-**Semantic relations** are expressed by genitives

(1) It may mean possession: كتاب اَلولد (the boy's book)

(2) material : خاتم ذَهبَ (a gold ring)

(3) subjective relation: هروب اَلسجينَ the pensioner's escape

 (4) objective relation:مَقتل اَلفيلَ (the killing of the elephant)ْ

(5) description: كَلية اَلبنات (a woman's college)

(6) partitive sense: بَعض اَلرجالَ (some men)

-**The noun phrase is Indefinite** (unspecified) If both Items In the الاضافةَ are indefinite فستان حَرير) a silk dress)

-**If such phrases are to be made by definite article ال,** the second noun only takes the definite article, the first remains as it Is although its status becomes definite: كتاب التلميذ (the students book).

-Thus the second noun governs the first concerning definiteness.

__ Categories of Nominal Constructions in Arabic

The equivalents of Arabic nominals is broader than in other languages. Some Arabic adjectives and adverbs, are transacted as nominals. Furthermore, nominals in .Arabic can be constructed from other verbs or nouns. A nominal that is derived from the verb is the basic construction one. Arabic nouns can be categorized based several dimensions. A name is categorized for a human, thing, and place, product, normally used to distinguish one from another. Nouns can show species a class or groups or even one thing, either individually, or in a context. Also , NG can be preceded by *kāna* and *inna* and their sisters. *Kāna* and its sisters make the predicate accusative. Conversely, *inna* and its sisters make the subject accusative doers and objects can be expressed as nouns or pronouns.

- A person: Ahmed, Fatima = (انسان) human

- An animal: (عصفور) = bird

- A thing: كتاب=book

The Arabic noun is characterized by:

(1) - The acceptance of "the" (al) (البيت --بيت) House – the house.

(2) - The acceptance of the short vowel, assigned by the presence (before the name) of one of ' *alwaladu'* prepositions or a complement of name: (فوق البيت)' above the house'.

(3) - The acceptance of التنوين nominal accent. e.g : طويل 'tall'

(4) - The acceptance of diminution (be diminutive) نهير (small river).

__ The number in Arabic

A peculiar feature of the Arabic language is that its nouns, verbs and adjectives have three numbers: **singularالمفرد** , **dual المثنى** and **plural الجمع** .

Nouns come in five basic forms: 1- **singular** 2. **broken plural**, 2- **dual,** 4- **masculine plural**, 5- **feminine plural**, each of the five nouns has its own tripartite identity as regards the case endings for the **three cases**: **nominative, accusative,** and **genitive**. The purpose of the three case endings is to identify the syntactic function of the noun in each sentence.

-altulabu ijtazu al-imtihnat- a lamaa الطلاب اجتازوا الامتحانات العامة

-The students passed the general exams.

-al-fatayat-u yaakulna al- tufah الفتيات يأكلن التفاح

The girls eat apples. (Bakir 1980).

Another kinds of **plural** in Arabic, **'sound plural' جمع المذكر السالم** confined at least in the masculine) to participle and the nouns indicating the profession or habitual actions, The sound plural is of two kinds: sound masculine plural(

جمع المذكر السالم and the **sound feminine plural جمع المؤنث السالم**. **The sound masculine of nouns** and a**djectives** is formed by adding the suffix **/-u:na/** for the **nominative**, e.g.,/مدرسون/ **male teachers**, /معلمون/ **teachers** .

The sound feminine plural is formed by changing the suffix /-**atun**/, of the singular into/-**a:tun**/ for the **nominative**, e.g., /مدرسات/ **'female teachers'**, /مسلمات/ **'muslima:tin** women' and **/-a:tin/** ,and there is the so called **'broken plural' جمع التكسير** which is made according to a pattern by altering the vowel within or outside the framework of the radical consonant" keys مفاتيح , طرق، عالم ،

__ Gender in Arabic

Each noun in Arabic is either **masculine or feminine** as there is no neuter gender. Gender is a grammatical category in Arabic. Generally, the feminine gender is formed from the masculine (participle or noun indicating profession) by adding the suffix /-**atu**/ , e.g , /كاتب/ male writer, كاتبة/ female writer /ابن / son, /بنت/ 'a daughter', etc.

 (a) Nouns denoting a feminine by meaning, e.g., /bintun/ 'a girl', /'ummun/ 'a mother'.

(b) Parts of body which occur in pairs, e.g., /yadun/ a hand, /rijlun/ a foot, /?aynun/ an eye.c) Proper names of lands, countries and cities, e.g., /al-Hindu/ India/

, / ?ammanu / Amman , /?ira:qu/ Iraq /moon / , /na:run/ fire /.

1.8. Case in Arabic

Arabic has three cases:(a) Nominative رفع ,(b) Accusative نصب ,(c) Genitive جر . These cases are expressed by the suffixes /-un, - an, -in/, e.g., /sa:riqun /, / sa:riqan / , /sa:riqin/ . / a thief'/.

The nominative case is used for the subject in a verbal sentence **فاعل :** الجريدة **وصلت** اليوم صباحا/ The newspapers arrived this morning , and that of a nominal sentence مبتدأ:/**الولد مجروح** / the boy is wounded

It is also used as a predicate of the nominal sentence : الولد نائم / the boy is sleeping.

The accusative case is used for the subject of the verb : دربت زينب /   I struck Zaid.

 And it is also used for the **absolute object** المفعول المطلق as in / قلقت قلقا/ I was upset.

The genitive case is used for a noun which is connected with another by annexation اضافة : بيت محمد / The house of Mohamad.

The relation of a word and its following genitive is called مضاف and governing word is called مضاف and the genitive. مضاف إليه

__ Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are of two types, which are as follows:

(1) **Independent** (free or unattached) Subject Pronouns الضمائر المنفصلة (أَنَا/ نحن). The independent personal pronouns are هِيَ/هَمَا /هُمْ /هُنَّ/ /أَنْتَ/أَنتِ/ أنت /ما/ انتمْ /انتما /هوَ. used in nominative case they are as follows:

Singular: / *ana:*/ (**I**) (masculine and feminine), e.g : /*ana:* rajulun/ Iam a man , /*anta*/ 'You' (masculine), e.g: *'anta* waladun/ 'You are a boy', /*'anti* / 'You' (feminine) e.g., /'anti bintun/ You are a girl, /*huwa*/ 'He' , e.g :/ huwa rajulun/ He is a man, /*hiya*/ She /, e.g., /hiya bintun/ She is a girl .

Dual: /*antum:* You two (feminine and masculine), e.g., / antuma: binta:ni/ Youe two girls , /*huma*: / e.g. :/ huma; rajula:ni / They are two men /

Plural: /*nahnu*/ We (masculine and feminine), e.g., /nahnu awla:dun/ We are boys /nahnu bana:tun / نحن بنات, 'We are girls. / *antum* / You/ (masculine), e.g., / antum rija:lun/ You are men / antunna/ You (feminine), e.g., / antunna / nisa:'un/ You are women/ /*hum*/ 'They (masculine), e.g : / hum awla:dun / They are boys , /hunna/ /they/ (feminine), / *hunna* bana:tun / They are girls .

(2) Dependent (bound) ضمير متصل , i.e., suffixed to nouns , has a possessive suffix كتابكَ. (هُنَّ /كنَّ / هم / كم / كمَا /كِ /كَ / هما /هَا /ه / نَا /ي) . e.g. ; The dependent (or attached) pronouns, on the other hand, are bound morphemes. /-i, -ni, -ka,-ki,-hu,-ha/ (for singular), /*kuma:, huma, hima*/ (for dual) and /*na:, kum, hum, hunna*/ (for plural).

__ Demonstrative Pronouns أسماء الإشارة

Relative Pronouns الأسماء الموصولة (اولئك أ تِلكَ، /ذَلِكَ هؤلاءِ، ، هاتانِ/هذان هَذِهِ،/هَذَا): Such as (اللواتِي/ الذِينَ ، اللتَانِ/اللذَانِ التِي،/الَذِي)

1.3. The differences and similarities between English and Arabic NG

1- Both English and Arabic NG consist of the head and certain items functioning as modifiers, (head + modifiers) .

2. the structure of NG in English **mhq** while in Arabic **hmq** .

3- In English, all items of post modification belong to open classes, they are therefore a characteristic of complex noun phrases**,** while in Arabic, most of the post modifying elements belong to an open class, but not all. Some of these elements belong to **closed** systems , e.g., the possessive suffix in كتابي . Nevertheless, it is true to say that in Arabic most of the elements of a basic noun phrase (closed- system elements) occur in a pre modifying position, **the definite article, the demonstrative.**

4- Few adjectives in Arabic occur in pre modifying positions: the relative form is one of them. The normal position of an open class adjective is after the head. In English, these adjectives normally precede the head only few adjectives follow the head. Thus if a comparison is drawn between multiple modification in English and Arabic, such comparison will involve pre modification (in English) and post modification (in Arabic), as in: **The brave Iraqi soldier :** الجندي العراقي الشجاع

5- The number and high frequency of **post-modifiers** in Arabic, the generation of the structure of a NG in Arabic seems to be from left to right or right-hand branching (i.e., the modifier + follows the head). In English, the reverse tendency is more usual, and the complex noun phrase seems often to be a left hand branching (i.e., the modifying element tends to **precede** the head).i.e both English and Arabic the structure simple NG and complex NG.

6- Both English and Arabic includes pronouns ,but in Arabic it has an dependent pronouns such as (ي/ أنَا / ه/ هَا/ هما / هُما / كَ/ كِ/ كُما / كم / هم / كُنَّ/ هُنَّ.

7.Arabic has three cases:(a) Nominative رفع ,(b) Accusative نصب ,(c) Genitive جر These cases are expressed by the suffixes /-un, - an, -in/, e.g., /sa:riqun, sa:riqan ,

sa:riqin/ 'a thief', while in '-s' genitive in English is a case of pre- modification as in :e.g / Ali's book while in English function as subject ,object and complement .

8. **Gender in Arabic** each noun in Arabic is either masculine or feminine as there is no neuter gender. Generally, the feminine gender is formed from the masculine (participle or noun indicating profession) by adding the suffix /-atu/ , e.g., /كاتب/ 'male writer', كاتبة/ 'female writer', / ابن / 'son', /بنت/ 'a daughter', etc, while in English

9.Case in Arabic has three cases:(a) Nominative رفع ,(b) Accusative نصب ,(c) Genitive جر . These cases are expressed by the suffixes /-un, - an, -in/, e.g. Genitive cave only genitive case

Reference

-Aziz , yowell . Y . (1989) . *A C ontrastive Grammar of E nglish and Arabic.* Mosul : The University of Higher Education .

2- Chalker , Sylvia . (1984) . *Current English Grammar* . London . Macmillan Publishers .

. Halliday M.A.K .(2004) .<u>Introduction to Functional Grammar</u>.University of Sydney, Australia

-H.Wekker,&Haegeman, *A modern course in English syntax* (Abingdon:Routledge, 1985).

-Schmidt,(2002).*Longman dictionary of language teaching &applied linguistics* Third edition, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

- Greenbaum, &G. Nelson,(2002) *An introduction to English grammar* .

-Enas Abdul Razzaq Hobi (2011). A Contrastive Study Of Attributive Adjectives In English And Arabic. Al-Ma'moon University College

James, M. (1972) .A Modern Approach to English Grammar: An Introduction to Systemic Grammar . Al- Ma'moon University College.

  Lise , Fontaine.(2013). Analyzing English Grammar. Cardiff University. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town