English Translation Department
Comparative Linguistics
Fourth Year
Ms. Rana Dakhel

1. Syntax: The Sentence

This section focuses on the simple sentence under two headings: sentence elements and word order.

1.1 Sentence Elements and Patterns

1.1.1 English

The simple declarative sentence can be described in terms of the following five elements: **Subject** (S), **Verb** (V), **Object** (Oi, Od)), **Complement** (C) and **Adverbial** (A). (Oi stands for indirect object, and Od for direct object).

(a) Subject

In a declarative sentence, the subject is typically noun phrase (noun or pronoun) that determines the person and number of the verb. It usually refers to the doer of the action expressed by the verb. The NPs in bold are subjects:

- **John** arrived late.
- **Some students** should take summer courses.
- **Nobody** attended the meeting.
- **We** thought that the teacher would be absent.
- **It is** snowing. (empty subject)

We should note here that every sentence must have an explicit subject, except for the imperative and sentences with the infinitive form of the verb.

- Go out!
In this sentence the 2nd person pronoun 'you' is the understood subject. In questions, the order of the subject and the first auxiliary is reversed according to the subject-auxiliary inversion rule.

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- Has John left?
In the following sentence, the subject of the infinitive 'to type' has been omitted but can be understood as 'we'.

- We learned to type.
In the following sentence the subject of the infinitive 'to fix' has been omitted but can be understood as 'someone'.

- It is easy to fix this car.

The subject of a passive sentence corresponds to the object of a corresponding active sentence

- Active: John wrote two **letters**.
- Passive: **Two letters** were written by John.

Besides NPs, nominal clauses can function as subjects.

- That-clause: **That he retired at this age**, astonished us all.
- Wh-clause: **Why he resigned** is not clear to me.
- To-V clause**: To travel by train** costs $ 50.
- V-ing clause: **Typing all these reports** costs a lot of money.

(b) Verb

English has three types of main verbs: transitive, intransitive and copular. Transitive verbs require a grammatical object. They are of three types: mono-transitive (SVO), ditransitive (SVOO), and complex-transitive (SVOC and SVOA). Intransitive verbs, in contrast, do not require an object. Copular verbs are followed by a subject complement or an adverbial, e.g., SVC: SOUND, and SVA: BE).

(c) Object

An object is either direct or indirect. The direct object is usually a noun phrase that expresses the 'recipient' or 'patient' of the action.

- The boy read **a story**.

- She visited **Jerusalem** last summer.

- I forgive **you**.

- Pronoun: This car is **ours**.

- Prepositional phrase: The players are in **good shape**.

Besides noun phrases, subordinate clauses can function as direct objects.

- Peter said **that he wanted to buy a new car.**

The indirect object, on the other hand, is typically a noun phrase that refers to the person who receives something. It precedes the direct object.

- The teacher gave **the students (Oi) the exam papers (Od),**

The indirect object can be represented as a prepositional object.

- The teacher gave the exam papers **to the students**.

Among verbs that take two objects are: **teach, give, show, ask, wish, offer, promise, take, read, owe, get, lend, make.**

If the two objects happen to be pronouns, direct object must precede the prepositional object.

- He gave it to me.

(d)Complement

A complement tells us something about the subject or object. It is required for verb complementation. They usually follow the subject and verb (subject complement) or the subject, verb and object (object complement).

Complements can be realized by noun phrases or adjective phrases.
Copular/linking verbs are followed by complements:
- Most of the participants were **doctors. (SVC)**
- They looked **tired. (SVC)**

Copular verbs join a noun phrase or adjective to the subject. Examples of copular verbs are: <u>be</u>, <u>look</u>, <u>seem</u>, <u>feel</u>, <u>become</u>, <u>taste</u>, <u>appear</u>, <u>get</u>, <u>prove</u>, <u>remain</u>, <u>keep</u>.

Subject complements can be:

- NPs: My brother is **an engineer**.
- Adjective phrase: John is (very) **famous**

Object complements, on the other hand, follow the direct object of the sentence (SVOC). Among verbs that are followed by objects and complements are: <u>elect</u>, <u>prefer</u>, <u>name</u>, <u>select</u>, <u>make</u>, <u>leaves</u>.

- His silly joke made me **angry**.
- They call her **Pam**.
- I prefer my coffee **black**.
- They left the house **empty**.
- They elected John **president**.

The five elements may combine to form the following eight basic sentence patterns:

1) SV   John left

2) SVO   Mary bought a car..

3) SVOiOd   She gave me a book.

4) SVA   John is here.

5) SVC   The teacher became impatient.

6) SVOC   They have elected John president.

7) SVOA   She put the vase on the table.

8) SVSA   There is a man at the door

1.1.2 Arabic

The majority of medieval Arab grammarians classified the Arabic sentence into two major types on the basis of the element that occupies initial position in the sentence: **fiʿliyya-a 'Verbal'** and **'ismiyya-a 'Nominal'**. A **Verbal** sentence begins with a verb; whereas a **Nominal** one begins with a noun in the nominative case. A Verbal sentence has a basic **VSO** word order, while a Nominal one has a Topic (T)- Comment (C) word order **mubtada'** and **khabar**, respectively.

(a) Elements of the verbal sentence

The Arabic simple verbal sentence may be described in terms of four elements**: Verb (V), Subject (S), Object (O), Adverbial (A).**

(i) Verb and Object
Since verbs govern the use of objects, these two elements are discussed under one section.

The verb is either intransitive laazim لازمor transitive mutaʿaddii متعدي
The latter governs the noun in the accusative.

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- Intransitive: **naama ṭ-ṭiflu** نام الطفل 'The child slept.'

Transitive verbs are either monotransitive (VSO), ditransitive (VSOO) or tritransitive (VSOOO).

- Monotransitive: **istaqbala ʿaliyyun ḍ-ḍayfa** استقبل عليُّ الضيفَ
'Ali received the guest.'

- Ditransitive: **ʾaʿṭaytu l-walada hadiyyatan** أعطيت الولدَ هديةً
'I gave the boy a present.'

In the above sentence, the indirect and direct objects are unrelated semantically. In the following sentence, in contrast,

<div align="center">

وجدت عليًّا كريمًا **wajadtu ʿaliyyan kariiman**
'I found Ali (to be) generous.'

</div>

The two objects are originally Topic **mubtadaʾ** مبتدأ and Comment **khabar** خبر
ʿ**aliyyun kariimun** عليٌّ كريمُ 'Ali is generous.' In other words, the second grammatical object **kariiman** functions as an object complement as it describes the first object ʿ**aliyyun** عليَّ.

-Tritransitive: **ʾakhbartu l-muʿallima ʿaliyyan qaadiman**

أخبرت المعلم عليًّا قادمًا

'I informed the teacher that Ali was coming.'

In this sentence, since the third grammatical object **qaadiman** قادمًا modifies the second object **'aliyyan** عليًّا , its function can be better described as complement of this object.

(ii) Subject al-faaʿil الفاعل

The agent is either. **ismun ṣariih** اسم صريح 'explicit noun' or
ḍamiirun mustatir ضمير مستتر 'implicit/implied pronoun

ismun ṣariih: **ḥaḍara r-raʾiisu** حضر الرئيسُ

The President came.

ḍammirun mustatir   **jaa'a muta'akhiran**جاء متأخرًا
He came late.

In this sentence, the subject is the implicit third person masculine singular pronoun 'huwa' 'he'.

The subject is realized by either a nominal element in the nominative (noun or enclitic pronoun) or the infinitive verbal noun **maşdar mu'awwal**مصدر مؤول .

Noun: **barada**   **l-jawwu**برد الجو
'The weather became cold.'

- Enclitic pronoun: **qara'tu**   **l-jariidat-a**قرأت الجريدة
'I read the newspaper.'

- Infinitive: **yuʿjibunii 'annaka muthaabirun** يعجبني أنك مثابر -
'I admire your being hard-working.'

Five enclitic pronouns which function as agents are attached to the verb.
- **'alifu l-'ithnayn** ألف الاثنين **(M and F) 'alif** of the dual)
   qaam-aa قاما
   qaamat-aa قامتا

- yaa'u l-mukhaataba-a ياء المخاطبة (yaa' of 2nd person feminine):
quum-ii قومي

-**nuunu n-niswa**-a نون النسوة (nuunu of the feminine plural):
qum-na قمنَ

- **waawu l-jamaaʿa**-a واو الجماعة (**waaw**, of the masculine plural):
qaam-uu قاموا

(iii) Deputy-agent naaʾibu l-faaʿil **نائب الفاعل**

In a sentence with a passive verb, the object of the corresponding active sentence becomes a deputy agent **naaʾib l-faaʿil** marked for the nominative.

ʾuʿtiya   **l-faaʾizu**   **jaaʾizatan أُعطي الفائزُ جائزةً**

The winner was given a prize.

(iv) Adverbial al-ẓarf الظرف

An adverbial can be realized by adverbs, prepositional phrases, and the circumstantial accusative, **al-ḥaal.الحال**

- Adverb: **jaaʾa ʾamsi جاءَ أمس**

  He came yesterday.

- Prepositional phrase **dhahaba ʾila l-madrasati ذهب إلى المدرسةِ**

  He went to school.

- Circumstantial accusative: **raʾaytuhu naaʾiman رأيته نائمًا**

  I saw him sleeping.

These elements may be combined to form the following basic sentence patterns:

(1) VS   naama l-waladu **نامَ الولدُ**

      The boy slept.

(2) VSO   shariba   ṭ-ṭiflu l-ḥaliiba **شربَ الطفلُ الحليبَ**

      The child drank the milk.

(3) VSOO   ʾaʿṭa l-muʿallimu ṭ-ṭaaliba qalaman **أعطى المعلم الطالب قلمًا**

      The teacher gave the student a pen.

(4) VSOOO ʾaʿlama l-muʾallimu ṭ-ṭullaaba l-ʾimtiḥaana sahlan **أعلمَ المعلمُ الطلابَ**

      الامتحانَ سهلًا

      The teacher informed the students that the test was easy.

(5) VSOC   intakhabuu ʿaliyyan raʾiisan **انتخبوا عليًّا رئيسًا**

      They elected Ali President.

(6) VSA   dhahaba l-waladu ʾila l-madrasati **ذهب الولدُ إلى المدرسةِ**

      The boy went to school.

(7) VSOA   waḍaʿu l-lḥma ʿala n-naari **وضعوا اللحمَ على النارِ**

      They put the meat on the fire.

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(b) Elements of the nominal sentence

A nominal sentence consists of a Topic (subject) mubtada' مبتـدأ and a Comment
(predicate) khabar خـبــر. The Topic must be a nominal element. The
Comment, in contrast, may be sentential or non-sentential.

(i) Topic al-mubtada' المبتدأ

The Topic, which is typically definite, is realized by either a noun in the nominative,
an expressed pronoun or an infinitive (verbal noun) **maṣdar mu'awwal** مصدر مؤول.

- Noun: **ar-riyaaḍatu mufiidatun li-l-jismi الرياضة مفيدة للجسم**

Sports are good for the body.

- Pronoun: **huwa ghaa'ibun هو غائبٌ**

He is absent.

- Verbal noun:

'an taquula l-ḥaqiiqata khayrun laka أن تقول الحقيقةَ خيرٌ لك

It's-good for you to tell the truth.

The Topic is 'an taquula l-ḥaqiqata أن تقول الحقيقة

(ii) Comment al-khabar الخبر

The Comment **al-khabar** الخبر which typically follows the Topic, is realized by a noun,
an adjective in the nominative, a phrase **shibh jumla-a** شبه جملة consisting of a
prepositional phrase or a temporal or locative adverb, a nominal sentence, or a
verbal sentence.

- Noun:

'al-ʿilmu   nuurun العلم نورٌ

Erudition is light.

- Adjective:

al-'asʿaaru   murtafiʿatunّ الأسعار مرتفعةٌ

The prices are high.

- Prepositional phrase:

al-ḥamdu   li-llahi الحمدُ لله

Praise be to Allah.

- Locative adverb:

an-nahru **taḥta** **l-jisri** النهر تحت الجسر

The river is under the bridge.

- Temporal adverb:

ali-jtimaaʿu **ghadan** الاجتماع غدًا

The meeting is tomorrow.

- Nominal (equational) sentence **jumlatun ʾismiyyatun:** جملة اسمية

muhammadun **ʾabuuhu mariiḍun** محمدٌ أبوهُ مريضٌ

Mohammad, his father is sick.

In the above sentence, **muhammadun** محمدٌ is the first Topic and the equational sentence **ʾabuuhu mariiḍun** أبوهُ مريضٌ is the Comment. This sentential comment itself consists of a Topic **ʾabuuhu** أبوه and a Comment **mariiḍun** مريضٌ. We notice that the second topic contains a pronominal suffix ---**hu** that is anaphoric with the first Topic **muhammadun** محمدٌ.

- Verbal sentence **jumlatun fiʿliyya-a** جملة فعلية:

aṭ-ṭabiib-u **ḥaḍara mubakiran** الطبيب حضر مبكرًا

As for the doctor, he came early.

al-bintu **ḥaḍara ʾabuuhaa** البنتُ حضر أبوها

As for the girl, her father came.

We notice that the agent of the sentential Comment **ʾabuuhaa** أبوها contains a pronominal suffix that anaphoric with the Topic **al-bintu** البنت.

CONTRAST

The following differences hold between sentence elements and patterns in English and Arabic. First, in English, the syntactic functions of sentence elements are determined by word order, but in Arabic, these functions are marked by case endings that are retained by the elements regardless of their

position in the sentence. This explains why Arabic thematizes sentence elements more freely than English. An exception to this would be sentences with indeclinable nouns, as in

- **ḥaddatha muusaa ʿiisaa**   حدّث موسى عيسى
    Mousa talked to Issa.

- **ḥaddatha ʿiisaa muusaa**   حدّث عيسى موسى
    Issa talked to Mousa.

Second, unlike English, Arabic has two types of sentences, namely, verbal and nominal. The latter is further subdivided into nominal (+ verbal Predicate) and equational (verbless).

Third, unlike English, Arabic may have a complete (VSO) sentence realized by one word, e.g.

- **saaʿadaahaa ساعداها**
    Both helped her.

Fourth, unlike Arabic, English allows an indefinite noun to occur initially in a copulative sentence
    - **English**: A man is in the house.
    - **Arabic: fi d-daari rajulun**   في الدار رجلٌ

We notice that the English sentence is rendered in Arabic by a verbless sentence with the prepositional phrase adverbial obligatorily occupying initial position.

Fifth, English allows the compounding of nominal phrase modifiers, whereas

Arabic generally doesn't.

English: I like the colour and size of the toy.

Arabic: ’uḥibbu lawna d-dumyati wa ḥajmahaa أحب لون الدمية وحجمها

        I like the colour of the toy and its size.

Sixth, some Arabic verbs are tritransitive, that is, they are followed by three direct objects (VS000).

Finally, in English simple declarative sentences, the subject is an obligatorily realized element, whereas in Arabic, it may be overt or covert:

English: Ali entered the house.

Arabic: dakhala ʿaliyyun l-bayta   دخل عليّ البيت

      (The subject is overt.)

English: He entered the house.

Arabic: dakhala l-bayta

      (The subject is covert.)

This is made possible in Arabic since it has a rich inflectional system which marks the person and number of the subject.

2.1 Word Order Variation

2.2.1 English

English is generally described as having a relatively "fixed" word order. The basic unmarked word order in a declarative sentence is: **S(ubject) V(erb) O(bject).**

- The **dog** chased the **cat**.

- The **cat** chased the **dog**.

     In the above sentence, the syntactic functions of sentence elements are determined by word order. However, English allows "thematic reordering", defined by Huddleston (1984, p. 454) in terms of a "transformation "...that moves an element from an unmarked position to a marked position." Thematic reordering is achieved by thematic fronting and thematic postponement. A

theme, which is given information, is defined as the point of departure of a clause. It is the first constituent in the clause. A theme, which expresses new/newsworthy information, is the focus of attention in a message.

Variation in word order is utilized for encoding pragmatic information such as focus and saliency and marking information structure. Besides the use of prosodic devices such as stress and intonation, English employs several syntactic strategies for realizing fronting and postponement, among which are: **thematization, it-clefts, wh-clefts, passives, there-constructions** and **extraposition**.

Thematization

Thematization (thematic fronting) is defined by Quirk et al (1985, p.1377) as"... the achievement of marked theme by moving into initial position an item which is otherwise unusual there." Fronted elements can be subjects, objects, adverbials, complements and nominal clauses.

 -**JOHN** his name is.

- **Your letter** I haven't yet received. (fronting)

- **Never** have I read such a boring story.

- **Only then** did I realize how silly it was.

- **Here** comes the bus.

- **Home** went John.

- **And very** clever he is too.

- **What he wanted from me** I don't know.

Fronting gives more immediate importance to these elements.

-It-clefts

It-clefts, which are a type of fronting, involve cleaving a sentence into two, with New information preceding Given information. They enable the speaker/writer to give prominence to different elements, i.e., marking an element as New, focused, foregrounded information.

- It was A **HORSE** that the truck hit yesterday.

In this sentence, the writer/speaker focuses on the appropriate identity of the object. The addressee knows that the truck hit something, but does not know

what it hit. The clefted element is the object.

Other possible variants are:

- It was **A TRUCK** that hit the horse.

The clefted element is the subject.

It was **YESTERDAY** when the truck hit a horse.

The clefted element is the time adverbial.

- It is **THE STUDENTS** that I am worried about. (not the teachers)

The above sentence illustrates a second function for it-clefts, namely setting
things right. The addressee is worried about the teachers. The writer/speaker
holds a different view and tries to correct the addressee's mistaken view

- Wh-clefts (pseudoclefts)

Like it-clefts, wh-clefts cleave a sentence into two. However, the latter
highlight New information by placing it at the end of the clause and achieve a
contrastive effect.

- What John wants is **MONEY**. (not food)

-Passive

The passive creates thematic postponement, which involves moving a
constituent to the right of its basic position. Among other discoursal functions,
it allows the writer/speaker to give greater prominence to the agent farther
than the verb.

- The letter was given to me by **JOHN**.

In this sentence **JOHN**, the focused agent, is New information.

-There-constructions

One of the functions of existential there-constructions is to allow the
writer/speaker to highlight New information

- There was **PLENTY OF FOOD** on the table.

- Extraposition

Extraposition, a postposing device, involves introducing preparatory "it" and pushing an element to the right to make it more salient.

- It's good to see you. (infinitive subject)

- It doesn't matter what he says. (clause subject)

2.2.2 Arabic

Since Arabic has two major types of sentences, Verbal and Nominal, word order in each type is discussed separately.

(a) Verbal Sentence al-jumlatu l-fiʿliyya-a الجملة الفعلية

The basic word order in a verbal sentence is: V(erb) S(ubject) O(bject).

Although Arabic allows flexibility in word order, there are examples where word order is fixed:

- VSO: qaatalnaaka قاتلناكَ

　　　We fought you.

　　nuqaatiluka نقاتلكَ

　　　We fight you.

- VOS: raḥimahu Ilaahu رحمه اللهُ

　　　May God have mercy on him!

　　Variation in the ordering of sentence elements is dependent on syntactic, stylistic, rhetorical and contextual factors such as focus, interest and importance. It has been discussed by both grammarians (e.g., Siibawayhi) and rhetoricians/semanticians (e.g., Al-Jurjaani). They call it at-taqdiim 'الـتـقـديـم fronting' and at-ta'khiir الـتـأخـيـر 'postponement'. They maintain that important/emphasized elements are brought into focus by being fronted or postponed for the purpose of al-ihtimaam wa l-ghaaya-a الاهتمام والغاية

　　Reordering of sentence elements typically involves the fronting of the object, which is either obligatory wujuuban وجوبًا or optional jawaazan جوازًا. The former is typically syntactically motivated, while the latter is most often

rhetorically/pragmatically motivated. The following two sections discuss obligatory and optional fronting of the object.

(i) Obligatory Fronting of the Object
taqdiimu l-mafʿuuli wujuuban تقديم المفعول وجوبًا
The obligatory fronting of the object entails the postponement of the agent al-faaʿil الفاعل. This occurs in the following cases:
(1) If the object is an enclitic pronoun (ḍammirun muttaṣil) ضميّر متصل and the subject is a noun.
ʿallamanii muhammadun il-ḥisaaba علمني محمدٌ الحسابَ
 Mohammad taught me mathematics.
(2) If the subject is restricted by the restrictive particle ʾillaa إلا'except'.
maa kataba d-darsa ʾillaa ʿaliyyun ما كتب الدرسَ إلا عليٌّ
The one who wrote the lesson is Ali./Ali is the only one who wrote the lesson.
(3) If the subject has a possessive suffix that is anaphoric with the object.
waqqaʿ al-kitaaba muʾallifuhu وقَّع الكتابَ مؤلفُه
The book was signed by its author.
(4) If the object is an interrogative particle.

  man zaara r-rajulu? من زار الرجلُ؟
   Whom did the man visit?

If the object is preceded by ʾammaa أما as for
ʾammaa ʿaliyyan fa-laa tasʾal أما عليًّا فلا تسأل
As for Ali, don't ask him.
(5) If the object is an independent pronoun (ḍamiir naṣb munfaṣil) ضمير نصب منفصل
ʾiyyaaka naʿbudu إياك نعبدُ
Only Thee do we worship.

(ii) Optional Fronting of the Object
taqdiimu l-mafʿuuli jawaazan تقديم المفعول جوازًا

Besides the above syntactic conditions for the obligatory fronting of the object, Arabic allows optional fronting of the object as one of a number of syntactic

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strategies employed for focusing on a certain element. These strategies can be used for encoding pragmatic information and marking information structure.

Al-Jurjaani, unlike grammarians, went further to say that reordering of sentence elements serves a discoursal function and depends on the context of situation. He adopted the principle "important elements first". To illustrate his point, he contrasted the following pairs of utterances:

(a) qatala   l-khaarijiyya   zaydun (VOS) قتلَ الخارجيَّ زيدٌ
        It's al-Khaarijiy that Zayd killed.

(b) qatala zaydun l-khaarijiyya (VSO) قتلَ زيدٌ الخارجيَّ
        It's Zayd who killed al-Khaarijiy.

In (a) the focus is on what the object al-**khaarijiyya الخارجيَّ** and not on the one who killed him. In other words, the highlighted object, which carries primary stress, represents New information, while the subject represents Given information. The sentence can serve as an answer to the following question:

- **man qatala Zaydun? من قتل زيدٌ**
Who did Zayd kill?

In (b), in contrast, the, focus is on the subject **Zayd زيد**, the one who killed **al-Khaarijiy الخارجي**. In other words, the highlighted subject **Zayd زيد** carries primary stress and represents New information, while the object represents Given information. The sentence can serve as an answer to the following question:
- **man qatala l-Khaarijiyya? من قتل الخارجيَّ**
  Who killed al-Khaarijiy?'
   A second example is:

Al-Jurjaani concluded that the choice between nominal and verbal sentences depends on the context of discourse, the structure of the utterance and the intended meaning.

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In the following sentence, the object appears in sentence-initial position (OVS).

qaṣiidatan kataba l-muʿallimu قصيدةً كتب المعلمُ
 It's a poem that the teacher wrote.

The fronting of the object allows the speaker/writer to assign greater prominence to it. The fronted object, which retains its accusative case ending, represents NEW information.

In the following sentence, the object is fronted, that is, it appears before the agent.

kataba qasiidatan ʿaliyyun (laa qiṣatan) كتب قصيدةً عليٌّ (لا قصة)
 It's a poem that Ali wrote. (not a story)

The fronted, focused object represents new information and can be produced in response to a previous statement that includes another piece of information with regard to the thing that Ali wrote. In other words, fronting of the object achieves a contrastive effect.

In the following sentence, the object precedes the subject because the latter is heavy and long. The principle of end-weight applies here.

- naẓama l-qaṣiidata shaaʿirun min shuʿaraa'i l-yamani نظم القصيدةَ شاعرٌ من شعراء اليمن
The poem was written by one of the poets of Yemen.

In this sentence the fronted object is Given information, while the heavy subject is New information.

We notice that Arabic exploits word order to encode pragmatic information and mark information structure. Besides its use of word order, Arabic also employs the particles **'inna** إنand **'ammaa** أما... fa ف... as topic markers that signal "givenness" or "contrast".
-'inna ʿaliyyan huwa l-laadhi naẓama l-qaṣiidata إن عليًّا هو الذي نظم القصيدة

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It's **Ali** who wrote the poem.

- ʿaliyyun huwa l-ladhii naẓama l-qṣiidata عليٌّ هو الذي نظم القصيدة

  Ali is the one who wrote the poem.

- alladhii naẓama l-qaṣiidata (huwa) ʿaliyyun الذي نظم القصيدة هو عليٌّ

  The one who wrote the poem is **Ali**.

The above variants could be used in response to the following statement produced by another speaker.

naẓama muhammadun l-qaṣiidata نظم محمّد القصيدة

  Mohammad wrote the poem.

The function of the variants is to correct the information conveyed by the other speaker.

(b) Nominal Sentence al-jumlatu il-'ismiyya-a الجملة الاسمية

The basic word order in a nominal sentence is: Topic -Comment. A Comment may be sentential or non- sentential. A sentential Comment may be either nominal or verbal.

- Topic + Nominal Sentence:

  al-waladu ʾabuuhu mudarrisun الولدُ أبوه مدرسّ

    As for the boy, his father is a teacher.

In the above sentence, the Comment is itself a sentence that consists of a Topic and a Comment. We notice that the Topic of the sentential Comment contains a pronominal enclitic that is anaphoric with the first Topic.

- Topic + Verbal Sentence:

  al-kittabu ʾallafathu zaynabu الكتابُ ألفته زينبُ

 As for the book, it was written by Zaynab.

Like verbal sentences, word order reversal in nominal sentences involves fronting of the Comment, which may be either obligatory (syntactically

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motivated) or optional (rhetorically and pragmatically motivated). The following two sections discuss these two types of comment fronting.

(i) Obligatory Fronting of the Comment

taqdiimu l-khabari wujuuban تقديم الخبر وجوبًا

The Comment is obligatorily fronted in the following instances.

(1) If the Comment is an adverbial or a prepositional phrase and the Topic is indefinite.

- ʿ**indii** **kitaabun** عندي كتابٌ (adverbial Comment + Topic)
    I have a book.
  fi d-daari **rajulun** في الدار رجلٌ (PP Comment + Topic)
    There is a man in the house.

(2) If the Comment is an interrogative particle.

- **maa haadhaa?** ماهذا؟
    What is this?

(3) If the Topic has a possessive suffix that is anaphoric with the Comment.

- **fi d-daari ṣaaḥibuhaa** في الدار صاحبها
    The owner of the house is in the house.

We should note here that fronting must be used to avoid cataphora because if the Topic ṣaaḥibuhaa صــاحبها occupied in the initial position, it would be difficult to identify the referent of the enclitic -**haa** ها

(4) If the topic is restricted by the restrictive particle **ʾillaa** إلا:

- **ma dhakiyyun ʾillaa** ʿ**aliyyun** ما ذكيّ إلا عليٌّ
The one who is clever is Ali./Ali is the clever one./Ali is the only one who is clever.

(ii) Optional Fronting of the Comment

taqdiimu l-khabari jawaazan تقديم الخبر جوازًا

The optional fronting of the Comment is one of the syntactic strategies

employed by speakers/writers to mark information structure in a sentence or to mark contrast or focus. For example, in the following sentence:

fi	l-ḥadiiqati	l-bintu	ـفي الحديقة البنتُ

    In the garden is the girl.

The Comment, which is a place adverbial, is fronted to signal contrast. If someone says that the girl is in the house, and the speaker decides to correct him/her, he/she produces the above sentence to assert that the girl is in the garden, not in the house.

(iii) The grammatical functions of the Topic and Comment change (**an-naskh** النسخ) when the following defective verbs and particles are added to the nominal sentence.

(1) kaana. كان 'was' and its sisters: **ʾaṣbaḥa** أصبح , **ʾaḍḥa** أضحى, **ʾamsaa** أمسى, **baata** بات, **ṣaara** صار, **ẓalla** ظل, **laysa** ليس, **maa bariḥa** ما برح, **maa fatiʾa** مافتئ **maa daama** ما دام , **maa zaala** ما زال , **maa bariʾa** ما برئ , **maa nfakka** ما انفك ,

When these defective verbs appear in a nominal sentence, they change the Topic into ʾism (noun) in the nominative and the Comment into **khabar** (predicate) in the accusative.

- ʿaliyyun ghaaʾibun عليٌّ غائبٌ
    Ali is absent.
- kaana ʿaliyyun ghaaʾiban كان عليٌّ غائبًا
    Ali was absent.

(2) Verbs of **al-muqaaraba-a** المقاربة 'propinquity' (e.g., **ʾawshaka** أوشك), ash-sh**uruu**ʿ الشروع 'beginning' (e.g., sharaʿa شرع) and **ar-rajaa** الرجاء 'expectation' (e.g., ʿasaa عسى)

- sharaʿa 1-ʾawlaadu yaktubuuna d-darsa شرع الأولاد يكتبون الدرس
  The boys started to write the lesson.

We notice that the predicate of these verbs is a verbal sentence.

(3) Negative **maa** ماand its sisters: **laa** لا , **'inn** إنْ, **laata** لات
- **maa ʿaliyyun dhakiyyan** ما عليٌّ ذكيًّا
   Ali is not clever.
These negative particles are followed by a noun in the nominative and a predicate in the accusative. Their function is like that of the negative particle **laysa** ليس .

(4) **'inna** إنand its sisters: **'anna** أنَّ , **laakinna** لكنَّ, **ka'anna** كأنَّ, **layta** ليت, **laʿalla** لعل.
'inna l-ʿilma mufiidun إن العلمَ مفيدٌ

   Science is beneficial.

(5) Verbs of **a-ẓann** الظن 'doubt' (e.g., ẓanna ظنّ) and **al- yaqiin** اليقين ، ' certainty' (e.g., **ʿalima** علم)

- **ẓanantu zaydan ḥaaḍiran** ظننت زيدًا حاضرًا
   I thought Zayd was present.
We notice that the verb in the above sentence is followed by object **zaydan** زيدًا) and object complement **ḥaaḍiran** حاضرًا

CONTRAST
The following differences hold between English and Arabic word order. First, English word order is relatively more fixed than Arabic word order. Second, Unlike English, Arabic employs both obligatory and optional word order reversals. Third, in Arabic pragmatic information is encoded mainly by word order, while in English it is encoded mainly by various syntactic constructions, such as thematization, clefting, passives, there-constructions and extraposition.

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