

# A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

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### Abstract

This study aims at clarifying the construction of Arabic cognate Accusative and its realization in English in order to be clearer for the learners who try to understand the structure of Arabic clause. The study attempts to investigate the verbs that take cognate accusative. It is hypothesized that Arabic learners are not aware of this phenomenon, thus they face difficulties in translating them into English because of the complexity forms of cognate accusative. To investigate the hypothesis of this research, different Arabic examples were taken from the authentic books and compare these data with their counterpart in English in order to show the differences and similarities between the two different languages and analyse these data from syntactic point of view which adopts Langacker's (1991) framework of cognitive grammar. The study is to be empirical, analytical, and comparative. The researchers use Arabic data from different books and look for the equivalent structures of English so that they give a clear idea about this syntactic phenomenon. The results of the study show that Arabic construction has more uses of cognitive Accusative than English.

**Key words:** Transitive Verb, Cognitive Object, Cognitive Accusative, Intransitive Verb

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## Introduction

As stated before, the two languages namely, Arabic and English are related to two different families, so it is absolutely expected to have different points in grammar, word orders, types of sentences, forms of verbs, objects, terms, articles, adverbs, adjectives, etc. from all this, problems in translation will arise. What is previously mentioned is not enough or final. Cognate Accusative (CA, for short) is an object that is derived etymologically from the root of the verb. It is also called Cognate Object (CO, for short). Particularly, the verb with cognate accusative is generally intransitive verb, and the cognate accusative is basically the verb's noun form. Abd Al-Mouain (2004) cited in Ya'aqbah, (2016: 2062) points out that the CA is an accusative gerund that comes after a verb to confirm the action, or to show its kind or number. A similar construction, termed "maf'uul mutlaq", exists in Arabic. (Bloomington, 2001:301). Kamil and Hazem, (2019:340) in their study conclude that the structures Arabic and English languages are different completely from syntax and semantics interference. Semantically speaking, Arabic distincts in aspect of noun morphology from that of English especially in the derivation and inflection processes. (Hazem and Meteab: 2019:97). Traditionally, the term cognate accusative is called 'absolute object' /maf'uul mutlaq/ among Arab grammarians, is actually a verbal noun. (Mohammad: 188). Consider the following examples:

1. Sahama musahamat-an fa'ala  
Participated 3<sup>rd</sup> sing. Participation- Acc. Effectively  
"He participated effectively".

2. She cooks a delicious cook.

*Cook* is the cognate accusative of the verb *cooks*. A cognate object comes after a verb to confirm the action, or to show its type or number. (ibid).

It is worth mentioning that CA is the original noun of the verb, it means that it agrees with the verb (Ibid). Moreover, certain fixed expressions are in the subject verb order, (Hazem, 2017: 368). Let us now closely examine the following sentence:

## A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>

3. hala almuthouo halan jathriyan  
“He solved the issue fundamentally”

It is therefore important to notice that this relationship between verbs and object occurs frequently. Thus, it would be possible to be replaced by other expressions. Therefore, it would be illuminating to find out whether this postulation applies to English-Arabic translations. In English, however, one would not usually say something like:

His greatest pleasure is working a great deal of work.

One would probably say instead:

His greatest pleasure is working a great deal.

This is because English style frowns on a repetition of a verb and a noun of the same derivation too close together. It is thought to be redundant. However, in Arabic this kind of repetition is considered a mark of good style as verbs and /masdars/ ‘bases’ are not easily confused. Semantically, repeating the verbal noun after the verb makes the sentence more emphatic. Let us have a look at the following Arabic sentence:

4. Daqat-u al sa’at-a daqatain-i  
Knock-Nom the clock-ACC two knocks- GEN  
“The clock sounded two times.”

(Ibn Malik; 1990: 178 cited in Mohammad: 2019: 188), a traditional Arab grammarian, defined the verbal noun as: “a noun that originally refers to an event. “At the same time, it may be pointed out that such constructions do sometimes occur in English but not as part of regular or ordinary discourse. Ibn Aquil (1995) defines the CA as the accusative verbal noun that is intended to emphasize the meaning of the verb or to clarify its type or number. (Mohammad, 2019: 188).

### Model of the study

The current study adopts Langacker’s (1991) framework of cognitive grammar. Langacker (1991:363) notes that the cognate object assigns “a single episode of the process type in question-in fact, that episode is identified with the specific process instance profiled by the verb” (ibid).

### The Value of the study

It is widely observed that a contrastive study plays a remarkable role in enriching the target language culture with new kinds of knowledge and information. Accordingly, this makes communication among different cultures more productive and more fruitful. This fact makes it necessary to evaluate the translated works and show their merits and demerits. Consequently, it would be possible to provide the Arab students with the

# A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>

opportunity of choosing the high-quality productions. Also, no less important is that for the sake of this research, such studies represent a resource of worthy academic guidance for the students of translation and for those interested in literary translation as well.

## Limitations of the study

The current study limits to the one of the most important syntactic phenomenon ‘Cognate accusative’ between different languages viz, Arabic and English. Yet, the present study proposes to investigate the verbs that take cognate accusative.

## Problems of the Study

This study deals with the existing problems and challenges in the translation of the cognate accusative into English. It has been recognized that in Arabic is not difficult to realize the cognate accusative, but the problem lies in the English one.

## Cognate object constructions in Arabic

An accusative case is one of the most important features that Arabic cognitive objects have. They have always bearing the accusative case. One important point to be mentioned here is that a cognate object is used to intensify the verb as in (5a), to show the kind and emphasis of the verb in (5b) and to show how many the doer of the action does in (5c).

5. a. Fahimt-u al dars-a fahm-an

Understood- Nom 1<sup>st</sup> sing. The lesson- Acc understanding- ACC

“I understood the lesson very well.”

b. Qara-a al risalat-a qiraat-a al khatib-i

Read-Nom 1<sup>st</sup> past the message- Acc. Reading the spokesman-Gen

“He read the message like a spokesman”.

c. Daqat-u al saat-a daqatain-i

Knock-Nom the clock two knocks

“The clock sounded two times.”

The above examples clarify the three types of cognate objects in Arabic. Let us now closely examine the following Arabic instances:

6. hafith-tu al dars-a hifh-an

Memorize. 1<sup>st</sup> past the lesson

“I memorize the lesson very well.”

7. Yartaʿish-u al walad-u irtifaʿh-an

Tremble.3<sup>rd</sup> sing. The boy trembling- ACC

## A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>

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“The child trembles trembling.”

8. Safart-u safar-an tawil-an

Traveled. 1<sup>ST</sup> Sing past journey- Acc long- ACC

“I traveled a long journey”.

However, the words: fahm-an, qiraat-a, daqatain-i, hifh-an, irtiaash-an and safar-an are called cognate objects. Consequently, they are derived from the forms of the verbs in their sentences.

The Arabic Cognate object can be either an adjunct or a complement (argument). In addition to, the CA can occur in a phrase as:

a. indefinite follows by an adjective, as in

9. ħatha al walad-u muġjab-un bi qamisihi iġjaban kathir-an

This boy likes his shirt a lot.

b. definite as a part of Idhafa where the first term (al-mudhaf) is usually a partitive noun like: /kul/ all ‘or’/baġth / ‘some’ which will be in the accusative case) or an elative. The following illustrates:

10. sharakna fi al ħadithi kul al musharaka

We participated fully in the speech.

### Cognate object constructions in English

According to Ahmed (2014:159), only the so-called unergative verbs can appear in cognate object constructions. One of the special features of cognate object constructions is that a normally intransitive verb takes an object whose head noun is a nominalized form of the verb stem or morphologically related. (Horita, 1996: 231). The semantic roles of the verbs’ subjects differences between unergative or unaccusative was first proposed by Perlmutter (1978: 161); within the framework that classifies verbs and other parts of speech of i.e. Relational Grammar (Ahmed, 2014: 159). Quirk et al (1973) classifies English verbs into: Lexical, Auxiliary, Modals, transitive (monotransitive, ditransitive, complex transitive) or intransitive, intensive or extensive. Some intransitive verbs such as “, jump, laugh, sneeze” take a cognate object. This study focuses on unergative verbs to see the cognate object constructions. Consider the following example:

She walked a silly walk.

### Cognate objects and passivization

There is a problem concerning the acceptability of passive of cognate object constructions. Massam’s (1990) analysis cannot handle the problem at all, because cognate objects are not differentiated from normal direct objects. On the other hand, Jones (1987) uses passivization as a crucial test in order to show whether an NP is an adjunct or not. For example, an uneventful life

## A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>

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in (1) cannot occur as the subject of a passive, although a merry dance in (2) can.

- (1) a. Sami laughed a loud laugh.  
b. \* Loud laugh was laughed by Sami.

- (2) a. Sue danced a finger dance.  
b. A finger dance was danced by Sue.

In this case, Jones (ibid) classes live in (1a) as an intransitive verb, which can take a cognate object, and dance in (2a) as a transitive verb. As shown in (1), (3) and (4), however, the acceptability of passivization varies according to which modifier is applied to the object.

- (3) a. Susan lived the life that she wanted.  
b. The life that she wanted was lived by Susan. (Rice (1987a: 210))

- (4) a. Susan lived a good life.  
b. A good life was lived by Susan. (ibid.)

Since (3a) and (4a) are both cognate object constructions, Jones (1987) claims that the passivization test decides whether a noun phrase is an adjunct or not (i.e. whether it is a cognate object or not) seems to be inappropriate. Thus, we have observed that cognate objects cannot be sufficiently accounted for by either the argument or the adjunct analysis. In order to describe them more precisely, we adopt the framework of cognitive grammar in this paper.

According to Horita, (1996:242) unergative verbs can take cognate objects. However, concerning the verb die, although the verb can take only a cognate object in the direct object position, many researchers, including Perlmutter and Postal (1984), classify it as unaccusative.

- (5) a. He died a natural death.  
b. Your friend died a soldier's death in the cause of democracy.

In analysis which treat the verbs as unaccusative, cognate object constructions such as (5a) and (5b) are regarded as a special or exceptional case. The reasons why the verb is treated as an unaccusative are at least that its subject is not an Agent and that cognate object constructions with this verb can never be passivized.

- (6) a. \*A natural death was died by him.  
b. \*A soldier's death was died by your friend.

## **A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English**

**Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>**

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Whether die is an unergative verb or unaccusative verb is controversial. Cognate Accusative constructions is supposed to be construed as a kind of an unergative verb. However, the subject of the verb is not an Agent in contrast with prototypical unergative verbs like smile or walk; hence, the verb die may be a peripheral unergative verb. Thus, cognate object constructions with the verb die will show less transitivity than other cognate object constructions with prototypical unergative verbs. Before trying to explain this fact, let us consider the transitivity of cognate object constructions with typical unergative verbs. The examples in (7) below show various cognate object constructions with the unergative verb smile. The grammatical expressions in all of which have such modifiers as an adjective or a relative clause. On the other hand, the cognate objects in (6a) is unacceptable for lack of sufficient modification. But some researchers, e.g. Larson (1988), regard it as unergative verb. (Horita: 1996:242)

- (7) a. \*Tom smiled a smile.  
b. Tom smiled a silly smile.  
c. \*Tom smiled the smile.  
d. All the contestants smiled Elen's smile.  
e. My father smiled the biggest smile I ever saw.

Cognate accusative object constructions with the verb sleep can't change to passive voice. (ibid: 244). The following illustrates in (8):

- (8) John slept the sleep of the child.

Cognate object constructions are considered to be not high in transitivity, because they deviate from the prototype of transitivity in regard to many factors. However, transitivity is a matter of degree, so the degree seems to vary among the cognate object constructions. Following Rice (1987a), let us use passivizability as a test in order to indicate the degree to which sentences deviate from some transitive prototype or approximate it. Let us compare the acceptable active sentences in (9) with their passive counterparts given in (9): (10)

- (9) a. \*A silly smile was smiled by Tom.  
b. Elen's smile was smiled perfectly by all the contestants.  
c. The biggest smile I ever saw was smiled by Tom.  
d. Several smiles were smiled for the professional photographer by the actress.

## A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>

The sentences (9b-d) are acceptable, and only (9a) is unacceptable. From the results in (9), we can say that the cognate object constructions (7d), (7e) and (7g) are higher in transitivity than (7b). The reason for the difference in transitivity between (7b) on one hand and (7d), (7e), (7g) on the other hand concerns their construal. The cognate accusative a silly smile in (9b) is construed as an event, but each cognate object in (7d), (7e) and (7g) is construed as a type of smile and a referential entity. Thus (7d), (7e) and (7g) engender a more transitive construal than (7b). In the case of predicates like dance or sing, the verbs can take cognate objects which designate more participant-like entities. Thus, even if the cognate objects lack enough modification, cognate object constructions containing them are acceptable and passivizable besides:

- (10) a. Ira danced a single dance.  
b. A single dance was danced by Ira.
- (11) a. John sang a song.  
b. A song was sung by John.

This shows that cognate object constructions with verbs such as dance and sing are higher in transitivity than those with the verb smile. On the other hand, cognate object constructions with die are never passivizable irrespective of their objects' modification, in contrast with verbs such as laugh and smile.

- (12) a. \*A natural death was died by my grandfather  
b. \*A soldier's death was died by your son.  
c. \*The death of a saint was  
died by Susan. (Rice, 1987a:  
214).

The infelicity of the corresponding passives is related to the fact that the subjects are not Agents. The lack of Agency implies that the verb *die* does not feature the kind of a transmission of energy that is portrayed. Cognate object constructions are not essentially high in transitivity, but those with *die* are quite low, because they further lack one crucial factor concerned with transitivity, i.e. the transmission of energy. This explanation can be applied to the unergative verb sleep. As shown in (13), cognate object constructions with sleep are not passivizable.

- (13) a. Tom slept the sleep of a baby.  
b. \*The sleep of a baby was slept by Tom.

## A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>

To sum up, the special status of the verb *die* is not sufficiently accounted for, but by showing at least that the infelicity of passivization is due to the lack of Agency, we provide some motivation for regarding the verb *die* in the cognate object construction not as an unaccusative verb but as a peripheral unergative. Moreover, concerning transitivity in cognate object constructions, it is shown that the degree of their transitivity varies according to the verb used and the modification added to the cognate object, although their transitivity is not high.

### Types of cognate accusative

There are two different types of Cognate accusative: Eventive cognate object functions as predicate and referential cognate object functions as an individual (Jong et al, 2012: 2). Look at the following examples:

- i. Sue smiled a loud smile. (Eventive)
- ii. When she saw her friend, Sue sang a happy song. (Referential)

### Verbs Occur with Cognate Objects

The issue of verbs which can take cognate objects. Cognate object constructions are not possible with all verbs. Unergative verbs are the typical verbs that are used with cognate accusative.

As the examples of (14) show, cognate objects are easily omissible, hence the verbs which can take cognate objects are regarded lexically as intransitive verbs.

- (14) a. John slept a deep sleep.  
b. Tom sneezed (a glorious sneeze).

It is commonly assumed that verbs which occur in cognate object constructions are unergative verbs. The unusual properties of the cognate object are treated by our cognitive approach. An object is 'Cognate' to the Verb. In the cognate object construction, a head noun of the object is usually a nominalization of the verb stem. This property has a close relation to the semantic structures of the verbs in cognate object constructions. It has been observed from (Horita, 1996, and Ahmed, 2014) that the cognate object construction is compatible with unergative verbs but not with unaccusative verbs, because a transmission of energy is involved in their semantic structures, whereas energy is usually transmitted from one participant to another, the transmission of energy is, in the case of unergative verbs, reflexive. As a result, reflexive energy is exerted only to engender a process or an activity. For example, the activity of smiling can produce an entity a smile, but it cannot produce other things, as shown in (15a). The produced

## A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>

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smile is the subject's, not any other people. Hence, a permissible possessive has to be coreferential to the subject, as shown in (15). (16)

(15) a. \*He smiled a silly laugh.

b. \*He died a {suicide/murder}. (Massam (1990:165))

(16) a. He smiled {his/\*her}  
little smile.

b. She slept {her/\*his}  
sound sleep.

c. Juliet lived {her/\*his} unhappy life.

The unergative verbs which appear in cognate object constructions can give rise to a nominalization derived by -ing, like laughing, walking, etc. They are morphologically related to the verbs, but derived nouns ending in -ing cannot occur in cognate object constructions:

(17) a. Susan sneezed {a glorious sneeze/\*glorious sneezing}.

b. She walked {a funny walk/\*funny walking}.

c. Tom laughed {many ridiculous laughs/\*a lot of ridiculous laughing}.

This tendency concerns the notion boundedness. As Langacker (1991) points out, episodic nouns like sneeze, walk, and laugh in (17) are conceived as bounded, because a process designated by a perfective verb is inherently bounded. Thus, the episodic nouns function as count nouns, so they take an indefinite or a definite article such as a and the, as in (17a, b), and tolerate pluralization, as in (17c). On the other hand, derived nouns ending in -ing have the characterization of mass nouns, because their profiled region lacks bounding within the scope of predication.<sup>9</sup> Thus, they require no article, as in (17a, b), take quantifiers like a lot. Concerning nominalizations derived with -ing, see Langacker (1991: 25-26) for more details, and do not tolerate pluralization, as shown in (17c). That is, they are conceived as unbounded, and there are no endpoints of the process within their relevant scope. In cognate object constructions, since the verbs which can appear there represent the bounded events, the event coded by the object noun also has to be construed as bounded. In the case of nouns derived by -ing, there is a discrepancy between the event described by the verbs and the event represented by the nouns, so that such derived nouns with -ing cannot be permitted. Horita, 1996: 234)

## **A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English**

**Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>**

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### **The modification of cognate objects**

The researchers observed that cognate objects usually require modification of some sort. Verbs such as laugh and smile in (18) always need modifiers for their cognate objects:

(18) a. \*He laughed a laugh.

b. \*She smiled a smile.

The modification is done via the addition not only of adjectives before the object's head noun, as in (19), but also by means of a relative clause or a prepositional phrase after it, as in (20).

(19) a. He laughed a happy laugh. ⇒ He laughed happily.

b. She smiled a sad smile. ⇒ She smiled sadly.

(20) a. He laughed a laugh that shook the timbers of even that solidly built old house.

b. She smiled a smile without humor.

In other words, modification usually renders noun phrases more concrete and objectified, it is useful in order to show the conceptual difference between a cognate object and a verb. That is, the accompanying modifiers with the object's head noun allow us to construe a cognate object not merely as the specific event profiled by the verb but as a special, replicable type. When nouns with -ing represent bounded events and function as count nouns, they can occur in cognate object constructions:

Then another question arises: why does this conceptual differentiation between a verb and a cognate object make the cognate object constructions acceptable? The verbs in the cognate object constructions are usually used as intransitive rather than transitive. At a glance, the semantic contrast between a cognate object construction and the possible paraphrastic intransitive expression in (20a) is not self-evident. In fact, (20a) denotes a durative, perhaps imperfective construal of the activity of fighting, but (20b) is more perfective and, hence, more transitive in construal. In fact, Tenny (1987) also suggests a difference in construal (or reading) between a cognate object construction and the corresponding intransitive expression by means of the following examples:

(21) a. laugh (non-delimited, delimited)

b. laugh a mirthless laugh (delimited) (Tenny (1987: 154))

c. He fought a brave fight in battle.

## **A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English**

**Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>**

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Moreover, the fact that (21c) is ungrammatical sentence that does not imply that the mere existence of the post-verbal noun engenders a transitive construal. Then, what imposes a transitive construal on (21b)? The cognate object's head noun, e.g. fight in (21b) or (21c), specifies a single episode of the process designated by the verb. The obligatoriness of modifiers, however, varies among verbs. In the following examples, cognate objects without modification are permissible, but they are not problematic; rather, they are compatible with our claims here:

(22) a. Elen danced a dance.

b. John sang a song.

Since dances and songs are usually precomposed entities, in (22) we can differentiate the conception of the verbs from that of the cognate objects without modification and conceive some distinction between an action of dancing or singing and a pre-existing entity such as a dance or a song. Thus, indefiniteness of the object NPs does not make the expressions unacceptable. Consequently, we can say that the existence of the conceived distinction motivates the transitive form of cognate object constructions and makes them acceptable.

It is obvious and can be observed in both the sentences (22a and b) that intransitive verbs (verbs that do not require direct object to convey their meanings, to be grammatical) take cognate object (CO) whose head nouns are morphologically related i.e. cognate. The study focuses on cognate object (CO), where in head noun is etymologically related to the verb.

### **Conclusions**

In this article, we have considered Arabic and English cognate object constructions by using the basic notions in cognitive grammar and the two cognitive models depicted. To make the results of this study more reliable, the researchers find it reasonable to conduct a study to find out which unit of translation imposes difficulty to learners of translation in general. We accounted for the problems which previous analyses cannot handle i.e. the parallelism of construction between Arabic and English cognate accusative, the empirical fact that some objects which are not 'cognate' to the verb are acceptable, and the difference in transitivity among cognate object constructions. Cognate object constructions are syntactically a transitive construction. Moreover, our cognitive analysis tried to capture the necessity of modification for cognate objects, transitive construal of cognate object constructions, and some complex issues surrounding cognate object constructions. In this paper, the authors did not deal with the construction of

## A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>

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cognate objects in Iraqi Arabic dialect and the relation to similar constructions. We look forward to extending the techniques employed in this analysis to these remaining issues.

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## **A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English**

**Waleed Younus Meteab<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fahmi Kamil<sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussein Hazem<sup>1, 2, \*</sup>**

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# A Syntactic Analysis of Cognate Accusative in Arabic with Reference to English

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## تحليل نحوي للمفعول المطلق في اللغة العربية بالإشارة إلى اللغة الانكليزية

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### الخلاصة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى توضيح تركيب المفعول المطلق في اللغة العربية وما يقابله في اللغة الانكليزية لتكون أكثر وضوحًا للذين يحاولون ادراك بنية اللغة العربية. تحاول الدراسة التحقيق في الأفعال التي تأخذ المفعول المطلق. وتفترض الدراسة بأن الأجانب ليسوا على دراية بهذه الظاهرة، وبالتالي فهم يواجهون صعوبات في ترجمتها إلى الإنكليزية بسبب الأشكال البنيوية المعقدة. وللتأكد من صحة الفرضية فقد تم أخذ أمثلة عربية مختلفة من الكتب المعتمدة ثم مقارنة هذه الأمثلة مع نظيرتها باللغة الإنكليزية لإظهار الاختلافات والتشابهات بين اللغتين المختلفتين وتحليل هذه البيانات من وجهة نظر تركيبية (Langacker 1991) ضمن إطار القواعد المعرفية. استخدم الباحثون البيانات العربية من كتب مختلفة لتقابل اللغة الإنكليزية ليقدموا فكرة واضحة عن هذه الظاهرة النحوية. تظهر نتائج الدراسة أن استخدام اللغة العربية له استخدامات معرفية أكثر من اللغة الإنكليزية.