

Nominals in English and Arabic'

A Contrastive Study

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INTRODUCTION

This piece of work is a trial to present a contrastive study and analysis of nominals in English with their counterparts in Arabic.

Nominals refer to all the constructions that can function as a noun in a sentence. In English, these constructions can be phrases , e.g. (infinitive phrase, prepositional phrase, participle phrase) , separate words , e.g. (adjectives, pronouns), or clauses, e.g. (relative clauses and nominal clauses). In Arabic, these constructions can be adjectives in form, e.g. (اسم الفاعل، اسم المفعول، صيغة المبالغة، اسم التفضيل، الصفة المشبهة), separate words, e.g. (pronouns الضمائر, demonstratives الإشارة) or nominal clauses الجمل الاسمية and prepositional phrases الجار والمجرور.

The current study consists of two parts, the first related to the English nominals whereas the second part is specified for their equivalent in Arabic. As a result, a contrastive analysis would be carried out to get the points of similarities and differences between nominals in the two languages.

In addition, there is a questionnaire about nominals in English that would be applied to students of English language to see if they face difficulty in distinguishing the noun substitutes in general. The outcome conclusion would be of high benefit to all who have interest in such studies.

1. Importance Of The Study

This study is of a high importance to the students of English language as it deals with one of the basics of English grammar. Any student of English language should be taught what are the parts of the sentence (subject + verb + object or complement) and their substitutes. It supplies the students with beneficial information about nouns substitutes in general, specifically when they occur as a subject or an object of a sentence.

In addition, it is a hard task to any instructor to explain the nominals to the students without giving them a comprehensive idea about the relationship between the form and function to each part of the speech. As a result, the idea of the study emerged through the explanation and exercises of nominals to the students as they face difficulty in distinguishing all types of nominals in different positions.

Moreover, this study can be an informative supplement to any course in English grammar as it has the Arabic counterpart of nominals. In this way, it gives a full idea about noun substitutes in both sides - the English and Arabic - to any learner of English language.

2. Aims Of The Study:

This research paper is a trial to shed lights on the difficulties that most of the students suffer from. Also it aims at supplying the students with diverse solutions to their problems considering the nominals when they occur as a subject or an object of a sentence.

3. Limits Of The Study:

This research is limited to third year students of English language. As it contains one of the main subjects in English grammar, i.e., the nominals. It is of a high benefit to any learner of English language too.

In addition, this paper has two methods of studying the nominals in details, the first is the contrastive study and the second is a questionnaire which was applied to third year students of the department of English in college of Arts in Iraqi university for the year 2012-2013.

4. Nouns and nominals

This part of the study is concerned with presenting the nominals as a whole in English language with its counterpart in Arabic. Besides a contrastive analysis to the nominals in both sides which results in showing several points of similarities and differences of noun substitutes between the two languages the English and the Arabic.

4.1 Preliminary:

English is a nominalizing language. There are several ways by which words and groups of words transform into noun phrases.

These ways enable us to create an indefinite number of noun phrases.

Each of these is a transformation that alters or rearranges a word or group of words so that they can to perform the function of a noun phrase in a sentence.

4.2 What is a nominal?

In English there are diverse structures whether a separate word or a group of words that can take the position of the noun in the sentence. These structures are called noun substitutes. All of these constructions are different in structure but similar in function which is a noun. They may be either subject of a predicate, or an object of a verb.(Good,2002:24)

Thomas (1967:106) emphasized that there are several words or group of words that transform to be nominals and he classified them as follows:

1. Factive nominal
2. Action nominal

3. Agentive nominal
4. Gerundive nominal
5. Infinitival nominal

By Factive nominal Thomas means the combination of that + sentence constructions which can serve as subjects and objects in certain kinds of sentences. For example:

That she is kind seems obvious.

John believed that she would marry him.

Not all verbs can be preceded by factive nominals, as intransitive verbs can rarely take such nominals for subjects, like:

That she is kind may have arrived.

What Thomas calls action nominals are those forms that function as abstract nouns, and may be preceded by any adjective and must be preceded by either a genitive form or a determiner. For example:

John's wonderful playing delighted us all.

The delightful singing of May was the high point of the evening.

The gerundive nominals differ from both the regular gerunds and action nominals. They cannot be preceded by the adjective form of manner adverbials. Also, they can be modified by any adverb that modifies the verb in the constituent sentence. All verbs can form gerundive nominals. E.g.:

Having a good voice is a gift bestowed on few.

Staying up late at night is harmful for kids.

There are three types of infinitival nominals as Thomas stated. The first type are those occur as subject of copulative sentence. The second one are those occur as object of a restricted class of verbs. The last kind are those that occur in adverbials of purpose following the words *for*. Like:

My counselor pleaded for me to study hard.

I bought this car for you to drive.

To arrive early at the office is so confusable.

By agentive nominals Thomas meant those nouns that are formed from verbs. All transitive and intransitive verbs that take animate subjects can be transformed into agentive nominals.

The singer is tired tonight.

Frank is our speaker for today. (Thomas,1967:106-12)

Stage Berg (1966:196-98) states that certain sentence positions are the habitation of nouns, but occupancy of these positions does not identify nouns because words of other forms classes can occupy them as well.

These positions are the following:

Subject of verb

Subjective complement

Object of verb

Indirect object

Object complement

Object of preposition

4.3 Types of Nominals

This section contains the different types of noun substitutes .i.e. nominals. It shows them with their functions inside the text they occur in.

4.3.1 Nominal Adjectives

Limited number of adjectives in English can occur as noun substitutes in sentences. They are called nominal adjectives and take the position of the subject only. Nominal adjectives can be classified as follows:

1. adjectives are used to denote a class by describing one of the attributes:

the *old* complain a lot.

the *sick* went to the clinic.

the *wealthy* always proud of themselves.

the *blind* played piano in a better way.

2. Nominal adjectives that refer to nationalities:

The *French* are good perfume makers.

The *British* are so traditionalists.

the *Japanese* are always in the lead.

3. Those that denote the plural, proper nouns:

The *Germans* attend the lecture first .

The *Russians* were the strongest.

the *Americans* attacked us last year.

4. some of them do not denote classes at all:

The *opposite* is what he means.

the *good* defeats the evil.

5. Comparative and superlative forms can also be nominal adjectives:

the *best* is yet to come

the *elder* of the two

the *greatest* of these

the most *important* among them . (Biber, 1999: 519-22)

4.3.2 Infinitive Verb Phrases

An infinitive phrase is any verb preceded by the word 'to', and often used as noun substitutes in sentences. This phrase always occurs as a subject of a predicate, e.g. ***To plan an overseas trip*** is something Lisa enjoys doing .

The verb phrase '**to plan an overseas trip**' works like a noun and acts as the subject of the sentence.

To arrive early is what they want.

To keep on touch was their desire. (Roberts, 1962: 89)

4.3.3 Gerund Phrases

A gerund is a verb that ends in *-ing* and works as a noun. A gerund phrase is simply a gerund plus other words attached to it. This type of phrases used as subjects of predicates to work as a noun substitute.

e.g. ***Planning an overseas trip*** is what Lisa loves doing every year.

The gerund phrase '**planning an overseas trip**' is the subject of the sentence. For example:

***moving from the small house* is our new plan.**

***Keeping an eye on her baby* was her require.**

(Shoup & Loberger, 2009: 99)

4.3.4 Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases can also work as subjects, i.e. noun substitutes in sentences. Most prepositions are direction or relationship words such as *at*, *behind*, *inside*, and *toward*. A prepositional phrase plus the noun or pronoun that follows it would act as noun substitutes.

e.g. *Before breakfast* is a good time for a walk.

The prepositional phrase '**before breakfast**' is the subject of the sentence. Other examples:

Inside the flat was the babysitter waiting.

Behind the hill stands our team. (Croft, 1991:195)

4.3.5 Clauses

Other types of noun substitutes are the clauses. A whole *clause* can act as a subject within a larger clause, e.g.

What really amazes me is that George has made billions of dollars.

The noun clause '**what really amazes me**' is the subject of the sentence.

That he ignored me in the party was a great shock.

When will be the next meeting is the main question.

The clause can act as an object of a verb e.g.

He told me *that he won the prize*.

Michel asked his coach *where will the next championship be held*.

(Quirk, 1985: 443)

4.3.6 Nominal Relative Clauses

Relative clauses can also occur in noun positions. These relative clauses are introduced by **who, whose, whom, and which** but not by **that**. They may be introduced by **what, whatever, whoever, whichever**. These clauses take the position of the subject or the object in the sentence, as in:

What I like best is football

The prize will go to whoever submits the best design.

My son is teaching me how to use email

This is where Shakespeare was born. (Leech, 1975: 386-87)

4.3.7 Pronouns

Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns .i.e. substitute nouns. Since they take the place of nouns, they have the grammatical properties of nouns and do the work of nouns. Pronouns have number, gender and case, and person. (Stage berg, 1966: 146)

A pronoun can be the following:

- the subject of a verb, as in -
He helped the poor man.
- the object of a finite verb -
The boys saw **him**.
- the object of a non-finite verb -
The boys wanted to help **him**.
- the object of a preposition -
Give this money to **him**. (zandyvoort: 145-46, 1962)

- indirect object of a verb -
The boys gave **him** the money.
- or show possession -
The blue shirt is **his**.
- or be a complement after a linking verb -
It is **he**.(Biber, etal, 1999:231)

5. Nominals in Arabic:

In Arabic language we find several constructions that can replace the noun in the sentence. The majority of these constructions are adjectives in structure but function or behave as nouns according to the text they occur in.

5.1 The constructions that take the position of nouns in the sentence would be separate words and can be classified as the following:

- 1.Active participle "اسم الفاعل" like "ناصر" is active participle in:
"محمد ناصر الضعفاء", and "الحافظين" and "صادق" are active participles in:
(الحافظ, 2010:101). "والحافظين فروجهم والحافظات", سُرْتُ برجلٍ صادق
- 2.Passive participle "اسم المفعول", like "صبور" in "امرأة صبور", and "شكور" in "رجل شكور", and "رب غفور" in "غفور" (عبدالغني, 2008:128).
- 3.Intensive mood "صيغة المبالغة" as "قتال" in: "جارك قتال العدو", and
(ibid: 200). "ما أعظم الصديق إذا كان غير قوال سوءاً ولا فعال منكراً" in "قوال وفعال"

4. Noun of preeminence "اسم التفضيل" as the word "أحرُّ" in "عملك خيرُ من قولك" and "أكثر" in "الصيفُ أحرُّ من الشتاء" (الحملاني, 2007: 62-3). "أنا أكثرُ منك مالاً"
5. Nomen adjectivum "الصفة المشبهة" as "كريم" in: "كريم الأصل", and "طاهر" in "حصان سريع" and "سريع" in "محمد طاهر القلب" (السامرائي, 1980: 74)
6. The pronoun "الضمير" it can be un separate like "هه" in "زرتَه اليومَ:" as object and "تاء" as a subject. "or separate like: "إياك نعبد" here "إياك" is an object, "أنت ولدُ مؤدب" here "أنت" is a subject. (شلاش: 15)
7. The relative pronouns "الأسماء الموصولة" as in: "جاء الذي فاز" the pronoun "الذي" here is an object, "إن الذين آمنوا" the pronoun "الذين" here is the noun of "إن" (شلاش, 2010: 34)
8. The demonstratives "أسماء الإشارة" as in: "هذه بنتٌ صالحة" here "هذه" is a subject, "تلك أمةٌ قد خلت" here "تلك" is a subject. (ibid: 18)

5.2. The noun substitute constructions can be phrases and clauses, as follows:

1. A clause "الجملة" as in, "الحديقة مساحتها واسعة" here the clause "مساحتها" which a predicate too. (الهاشمي, 2009: 107)
2. A prepositional phrase as in : "النجاة في الصدق" here "في الصدق" is a predicate. (ibid : 212)

6. The contrastive analysis:

Generally speaking, nominals differ in their form function. In English, the nominals are either separate words like adjectives and pronouns or clauses and phrases, like nominal and relative clauses besides prepositional, verbal phrases.

The nominal adjectives in English are those that function as subjects of sentences and refer to nationality e.g. "the French" in "The French resign from work easily" or to a specific group of people e.g. "the poor" in "the poor are the majority of our people". Also those that denote plurals like "the Germans" in "The Germans talk fast" and the comparative and superlative adjectives like "The good always win" and "The most important item is number seven". In form they are adjectives but act as nouns.

In Arabic the adjectives without specification act as nominals. One of them is the nomen adjectivum "الصفة المشبهة" as "كريم" in "محمد كريم الأصل" is an adjective in form but a predicate in function.

In Arabic there are constructions are being used as nominals, like the intensive mood in "فتاك" in "سلاح فتاك" which is an adjective in form but functions as a predicate. The other is the noun of preeminence like "أحر" in "الصيف أحر من الشتاء" which is an adjective in form but a predicate in function. In English we cannot find adjectives of such types behave as nominals.

Pronouns in English can be subject of a sentence, object of a verb or object of prepositions, e.g. "they" in "*they* attended the meeting", "him" in "I told *him* the truth" and "her" in "He brought a toy to *her*". All of these pronouns that can act as nominals are the personal only "the subject and object pronouns".

On the other hand, in Arabic all types of the pronouns do the same, whether separate, as in "انت " in "أنت ولد شجاع", and "إياك نعبد ", or in separate as "الهاء" in "مررت به". They are in form pronouns but in function nominals.

Moreover, we have the demonstratives in Arabic act as nominals as "هذه" in "هذه فتاة صالحة" which is a demonstrative pronoun in form but functions as a subject. In English we cannot find a demonstrative functions as a noun.

The clause in English can be subject or object of a sentence as "what attracts me" in "what attracts me in the party is *her aggressive behaviour*" and "how to swim" in "my father taught me *how to swim*". The clause in Arabic can act as predicate like "مساحتها واسعة" in "الحديقة مساحتها واسعة".

There are the relative clauses that act as nominals in being subjects and objects of sentences e.g. "who comes early" in "*who comes early* rings the bell of the class" and "that I saw in the party" in "I met the pretty girl *that I saw in the party*". In Arabic not the whole clause acts as nominal but only the pronoun behaves as an object e.g. "التي" in "الله ما في السموات والأرض" in "ما" or subject "أنت الطالبة التي نجحت".

In English there are verbal phrases "the participles". In form they are verbal phrase like *preparing* in " preparing the meal is my duty" functioning as subjects, whereas in Arabic they are adjectives in form and active or passive participle in function, as the active participle "صابر" in "محمد رجلٌ صابرٌ", or the passive participle "شكور" in "ربُّ شكورٌ".

Another type of verbal phrases is the infinitive which functions as nominals in English e.g. "to arrive on time" in " *to arrive on time* is our aim", it is an infinitive phrase in form but a subject in function. This type of nominals cannot be found in Arabic.

In addition, the prepositional phrases in English act as nominals, i.e. they occur as subjects of sentences e.g. "behind the hill" in " *Behind the hill* sat my football team". The Arabic equivalent of prepositional phrase behaves in the same way, it acts as a predicate e.g. "في الصدق" in "النجاة في الصدق".

7. The Conclusion:

According to what have been mentioned in the last section about the nominals in both languages, we can state the following points of similarities and differences between them.

7.1 points of similarities:

1. The form of Nominals differs from their function in the two languages.
2. The adjectives in the two languages function as nominals.
3. In both languages the nominals occur in the indicative and accusative.
4. Pronouns in the two languages function as nominals.
5. Prepositional phrases and nominal clauses can be nominals in both.

7.2 points of differences:

1. Most of the nominals in Arabic are in form adjectives.
2. English participles in form are verbs function as nominals but the Arabic ones are adjectives in form function as nominals.
3. English relative clauses as a whole function as nominals whereas in Arabic only the relative pronouns function as nominals.
4. Nominal infinitives can be found in English only.
5. Demonstratives act as nominals in Arabic only.
6. Pure adjectives can be nominals only in Arabic.
7. Both the noun of prominence and intensive mood function as nominals in Arabic without an equivalent in English.
8. Only the personal pronouns in English can act as subjects while all types of pronouns act as nominals in Arabic.

8. The questionnaire

This part of the study is concerned with application of a questionnaire on nominals in English. This questionnaire is designed for third year students in department of English in the college of Arts in Iraqi University. It was applied to forty student, randomly selected, of both sex.

The first step the researcher began with an open question to the sample of students. This question is "**what are the difficulties that you face in distinguishing the noun substitutes, i.e. nominals when they occur as a subject or an object in any sentence?**".

The questionnaire consists of several questions on diverse types of the nominals in English. These questions were set upon the students' answers to the open question.

The questions were addressed to the students to see whether they can distinguish the nominals occurring as a subject/object of a sentence, cannot distinguish them at all, or they can distinguish them easily.

The following questionnaire was designed according to the rules and what it contains have been submitted to a committee of specialized instructors in methodology*.

*The committee members are :

1. Prof. Shatha Kadhim Alsadi.
2. Assit. Prof. Haseeba Muhammad, Ph.D
3. Assit. Prof. Haqi Isma'eel, Ph.D

8.1 The questionnaire is as follows:

Questions	I can distinguish	I cannot distinguish	It is always easy to distinguish
When the subject is a pronoun			
If the object is a pronoun			
If the subject is an infinitive			
If the object is a gerund			
If the subject is a gerund			
If the subject is that clause			
If the object is that clause			
If the subject is an adjective			
When the object is an adjective			
If the subject is a relative clause			
If the object is a relative clause			
When a prepositional phrase occurs as subject			
When a prepositional phrase occurs as an object			

9. The Results:

This section of the study includes the results that the researcher has got from the students' answers to the open question and the questionnaire.

Besides, the long experience in teaching the students of English language, led to know in which area they face difficulty and which is the easy for them. Below are the results with proportions to each item in the questionnaire:

1. Those who said that they can distinguish easily the pronoun when it occurs as subject are 95% and 5% said that they can distinguish it. Also, 50% of them said that they can distinguish the pronoun when it occurs as an object and the other 50% said it is easily to distinguish.
2. 40% of the answers said that it is difficult to distinguish the infinitive if it occurs as a subject of a sentence. Whereas 45% of them said that they can distinguish it, and 15% of them said it is easy to distinguish.
3. 70% of the answers said that they can distinguish the gerund if it occurs as a subject or an object, while 10% of them assured that they can easily distinguish it. The rest 20% answered that it is difficult to distinguish.
4. The answers that have said they can distinguish that clause if it occurs as a subject or an object are 60%. There were 20% of them said that it is difficult to distinguish whereas 20% said it is easy to distinguish.
5. Those who said that they can distinguish the adjective if it occurs as a subject or an object are 8%. 10% of them said that it is difficult to distinguish and the other 10% said it is easy to distinguish.

6. Those who said that they can distinguish the relative clause when it occurs as a subject or an object are 70% and 25% said that it is difficult to distinguish if it occurs as an object but 5% answered that it is easy to distinguish.
7. 50% of the answers said that they can distinguish the prepositional phrase if it occurs as a subject or an object, but 45% of them said that it is difficult to distinguish and 5% of them said that they can distinguish it easily.

Accordingly, the results of the questionnaire refer to that students of English language face difficulty in distinguishing the nominals in general, specifically, if the nominals occupy the position of an object in the sentence. This indicates that the students need more exercises about nominals as object of a main verb. In this way the instructors need to present several sentences with different types of objects to show the students the noun substitutes as an object.

Also, the students need more explanation on the relationship between form and function of all the parts of the speech besides extra exercises on each part. The instructors can give their students exercises on reordering sentences, in this way the students can practice and point the positions of nominals in any sentence.

Besides, the results assured that the students can somehow easily distinguish the subject however it be, as it is the beginning of the statement or being separated by a comma.

In addition, Instructors of English Grammar who want to explain the nominals to their students should consult *University English Grammar* by Quirk, et al, as it has a detailed explanation and exercises on the subject. Moreover, they can see *Longman Grammar Of Spoken And Written English*, by a group of scholars for extra information about nominals.

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