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DISTRIBUTIONAL PROPERTIES AND SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY OF ADJECTIVES IN MODERN STANDARD ARABIC: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF NEWS-BASED USAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the morphological and syntactic properties of adjectives in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), addressing a gap in systematic analyses of their functional distribution and contrasts with nouns. The primary objectives are to (1) classify the syntactic roles of adjectives (attributive, subject, predicate, object, adverbial), (2) analyze their morphosyntactic features in each role, and (3) identify how their behavior diverges from nouns, particularly in agreement and definiteness. Employing distributional analysis and immediate constituent analysis (a method for parsing hierarchical sentence structure), we demonstrate that Arabic adjectives exhibit distinct patterns across these functions. Attributive adjectives fully agree with head nouns in gender, number, case, and definiteness. Adjectives functioning as subjects show syntactic flexibility: definite forms can independently serve as subjects, while indefinite forms require referential contexts. Predicative adjectives are invariably indefinite and shift from nominative to accusative under copular verbs (e.g., *kāna*). Object adjectives display definiteness and accusative/genitive case marking. Adverbial adjectives, by contrast, are obligatorily indefinite and marked with the accusative case, reflecting their role in modifying events rather than entities. Key findings reveal two contrasts with nouns: (1) adjectives enforce stricter agreement rules, and (2) their definiteness alternations (definite for objects vs. indefinite for predicates and adverbials) correlate predictably with syntactic function. The study contributes to Arabic linguistics by systematizing adjective syntax and to broader typology by illustrating how Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) encodes non-referentiality morphologically. These insights are relevant for theoretical linguistics, Arabic pedagogy, and comparative Semitic studies.



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INTRODUCTION

Adjectives represent a fundamental grammatical category that modifies nouns and conveys descriptive or evaluative meanings across languages (Ding et al., 2022). These modifiers demonstrate remarkable syntactic adaptability in their capacity to qualify nominal elements (D'Ambrosio & Hedden, 2024). However, within Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the classification of adjectives presents unique challenges due to theoretical inconsistencies in Arabic grammatical tradition. Classical Arabic linguistic works, including authoritative texts like those by Al-Ghalayaini, traditionally categorized adjectives as a subset of nouns rather than recognizing them as a distinct grammatical class (Al-Ghalayaini, 2018). This historical perspective continues to influence contemporary linguistic analysis, creating practical difficulties in areas such as natural language processing (Abumalloh et al., 2016; Elnagar et al., 2019).

The complexity of Arabic adjectives is further compounded by terminological variation in grammatical studies. Scholars have employed multiple Arabic terms, including *aṣ-ṣifa*, *al-naṣf*, and *an-naʿt*, often without clear differentiation, despite their distinct conceptual implications in linguistic analysis (Ma'sy, 2008). Recent research has made significant strides in examining various aspects of Arabic adjectives, from their syntactic ordering (Hayyany, 2021; Kachakeche & Scontras, 2020) to their dialectal variations (Alotaibi, 2022; Prochazka, 2022). Nevertheless, several critical areas require further investigation, particularly concerning the complete range of syntactic functions adjectives can assume, their position within linguistic typology frameworks, and their morphological behavior across different grammatical contexts (Zulfi & Larhizer, 2022).

This study aims to address these research gaps through a comprehensive analysis of adjectives in MSA, employing *aṣ-ṣifa* as the primary term of reference, based on Dibasy's conceptual framework, as cited in Ma'sy (2008). Our investigation focuses on two key questions: First, how do morphological and syntactic features such as definiteness, case marking, and agreement patterns correspond to the various grammatical roles of adjectives in MSA? Second, what do these distributional patterns indicate about the typological classification of Arabic adjectives with other Semitic languages and broader linguistic theory? By analyzing contemporary MSA corpora (Alqadasi et al., 2023) using established linguistic methodologies (Sudaryanto, 2015), we demonstrate that Arabic adjectives display exceptional functional diversity, operating not only as noun modifiers but also functioning effectively as subjects, predicates, objects, and adverbial elements.

The current research makes significant contributions to Arabic linguistics in three key ways. First, it develops an integrated analytical framework that reconciles traditional Arabic grammatical concepts with modern syntactic theory, particularly addressing the longstanding debate over noun-adjective classification (Nofal, 2011). Second, it provides empirical evidence supporting the recognition of adjectives as a distinct grammatical category in MSA while acknowledging their polymorphic nature (Gonzalez & Simeunovic, 2017), with definiteness marking serving as a crucial indicator of syntactic function. Third, it enhances typological understanding by situating Arabic adjectives within both Semitic language patterns and universal linguistic discussions about property encoding (Bardi, 2024; Silk, 2021). The study's utilization of contemporary MSA newspaper corpora ensures relevance to current language usage while maintaining rigorous grammatical analysis standards (Al-

Wahy, 2021), establishing a valuable model for future research in both theoretical and applied Arabic linguistics.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, as outlined by Djajasudarma, systematically examining linguistic phenomena through detailed description and comprehensive analysis. This dual approach enables the presentation of structured, empirically grounded findings while interpreting patterns within broader theoretical frameworks, thereby maintaining the method's rigor as originally conceptualized (Djajasudarma, 2010).

For data collection, we employ Sudaryanto's observational method through a structured analysis of Arabic-language online newspapers, explicitly focusing on the usage of Modern Standard Arabic in Alriyadh, Alyaum, and Almasry Alyoum (2002-2017). The note-taking technique is applied with modifications for digital texts: (1) electronic highlighting of adjective occurrences, (2) systematic recording of contextual features, and (3) morphological tagging following Al-Ghulayayni's classical framework. This adaptation preserves Sudaryanto's principle of minimal interference while accommodating digital media analysis (Sudaryanto, 2015).

The analytical framework combines distributional analysis with traditional Arabic grammatical methods (*i'rab*). We applied immediate constituent analysis to examine adjective-noun relationships, systematically testing structural patterns through deletion and insertion techniques. For instance, in attributive constructions like "السياسة الجديدة" ("the new policy"), we verified agreement rules by (1) removing the adjective to test head noun independence and (2) inserting additional modifiers to examine agreement patterns. All analyses were cross-validated through consultation with three native Arabic linguists and compared with classical Arabic grammatical references, ensuring both contemporary relevance and traditional accuracy.

To enhance reliability, we implemented multiple verification measures: (1) random re-checking of 20% of annotated examples by a second researcher, (2) grammaticality judgments from native speakers for borderline cases, and (3) systematic documentation of exceptions and ungrammatical patterns. This approach allowed us to maintain the naturalness of newspaper language while applying rigorous linguistic analysis, bridging the gap between authentic language use and theoretical grammatical frameworks. The methodology's strength lies in its balanced combination of modern analytical techniques with deep respect for Arabic grammatical tradition, providing both systematic data and nuanced interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Arabic, adjectives exhibit a broader functional range and distributional versatility compared to nouns (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). While both nouns and adjectives can occupy specific syntactic roles, others are uniquely reserved for adjectives (Samir Fekry, 2023). Ma'asy (2008) outlines a range of syntactic functions that adjectives can fulfill, including *wazīfat al-Musnad ilayh* (subject), *wazīfat al-Musnad* (predicate), *wazīfat al-ḥāl* (adverbial modifier), *wazīfat al-mutamimm al-fi'li* (verbal complement), and *an-na'at* (epithet or attributive



modifier). Complementing this, Ryding classifies Arabic adjectives into three primary syntactic functions: attributive, predicative, and substantive (Ma'suq et al., 2024; Ryding, 2005). The attributive function involves adjectives modifying nouns within noun phrases, requiring complete agreement in gender, number, case, and definiteness (Alkohani, 2016). In contrast, predicative adjectives function as sentence predicates and align with their subjects in gender and number only (Al Mahmoud, 2014). Lastly, the substantive use of adjectives refers to cases where adjectives independently replace or represent nouns (Al-Rawi, 2016; Idrissi et al., 2021).

This study explores the syntactic tendencies of Arabic adjectives by analyzing their functional roles within sentence structures and contrasting their distributional behavior with that of nouns. This contrastive syntactic analysis enables a more precise identification of the structural roles that adjectives play in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), highlighting their adaptive interaction with other sentence constituents. The findings suggest that beyond their expected roles as attributive and predicative elements, Arabic adjectives also assume less frequently discussed functions such as subject, object, and adverbial roles. This functional multiplicity underscores the need to reassess the syntactic classification of adjectives in Arabic, highlighting their dynamic role in sentence construction.

Arabic Adjectives as Attributes

In Modern Standard Arabic, adjectives functioning attributively (*ṣifāh*) are required to follow the noun they modify (*maṣṣif*) and must agree with it entirely in four morphosyntactic features: definiteness, gender, number, and case (Idrissi et al., 2021; Ryding, 2005). This agreement is not optional; it is a grammatical requirement that maintains syntactic coherence within noun phrases. The structure of such phrases reveals that while the adjective is syntactically subordinate, it is morphologically bound to mirror the features of the noun. This pattern reflects the morphologically rich nature of Arabic syntax, where harmony between constituents ensures grammaticality.

This principle is illustrated in several noun-adjective phrases taken from Modern Standard Arabic. For instance, in words *badafan ra'isan* ('a primary target'), both the noun *badafan* and the adjective *ra'isan* are indefinite, masculine, singular, and in the accusative case. Similarly, in *tuḥūlatan muḥtaribatan* ('a troubled childhood'), the noun and adjective align in being indefinite, feminine, singular, and accusative. The same pattern is observed in definite phrases, such as *al-fardi al-basīṭi* ('the simple individual'), where both elements are definite, masculine, singular, and genitive, and *al-āyat al-karīmatu* ('the noble verse'), where the agreement occurs in definiteness, feminine gender, singular number, and nominative case. These examples are representative of Arabic's syntactic regularity in attributive constructions. The alignment is summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Morphosyntactic Agreement in Attributive Constructions (Grammatical Examples)

Phrase	Noun Features	Adjective Features	Status
هدفاً رئيساً <i>badafan ra'isan</i>	Indefinite, Masc., Sing., Acc.	Indefinite, Masc., Sing., Acc.	Grammatical
طفولة مضطربة <i>tuḥūlatan muḥtaribatan</i>	Indefinite, Fem., Sing., Acc.	Indefinite, Fem., Sing., Acc.	Grammatical

Phrase	Noun Features	Adjective Features	Status
<i>ṭufūlatan muḍṭaribatan</i> الفردى البسيط <i>al-fardī al-basīṭi</i>	Definite, Masc., Sing., Gen.	Definite, Masc., Sing., Gen.	Grammatical
الآية الكريمة <i>al-āyatu al-kaṛīmatu</i>	Definite, Fem., Sing., Nom.	Definite, Fem., Sing., Nom.	Grammatical

Ism that shifts adjectives from purely descriptive modifiers into referential nouns. Removing *al-* reverses this process, rendering the adjective non-referential and unable to serve as a syntactic subject. This contrast is illustrated in the ungrammaticality of sentences (8a) and (9a) when the Prefix is omitted, as opposed to the grammaticality of sentences (10a) and (11a), where definiteness and referentiality are preserved through alternative syntactic constructions, such as the *idlāfa* (إضافة) genitive construction or qualification by prepositional phrases.

The accuracy of these structures is further clarified through tables that highlight the morphosyntactic alignment in each pair. In the case of *badāfan ra'isan*, the table shows exact correspondence in all features, reinforcing the idea that even a single feature mismatch would render the phrase ungrammatical. Likewise, the agreement in *ṭufūlatan muḍṭaribatan* exemplifies the critical role of gender congruence, especially when dealing with feminine nouns. The phrase *al-fardī al-basīṭi* demonstrates the importance of definiteness and case marking in prepositional or genitive contexts. At the same time, *al-āyatu al-kaṛīmatu* illustrates this harmony in nominative, feminine constructions. These structures confirm the obligatory nature of agreement between nouns and attributive adjectives in Arabic noun phrases.

To highlight the syntactic constraints more explicitly, several ungrammatical variants are presented. The phrase *badāfan ra'is* becomes ungrammatical because the adjective fails to match the accusative case of the noun. In *ṭufūlatan muḍṭariban*, the error lies in gender mismatch: the noun is feminine, but the adjective is masculine. The phrase *al-fardī al-basīṭati* is erroneous due to a mismatch in both gender and case, as the adjective appears in the feminine genitive while the noun is in the masculine genitive. Finally, *al-āyatu al-kaṛīmatāni* is ungrammatical because the adjective is in the dual form, while the noun is singular. These contrasts between well-formed and ill-formed structures highlight the non-negotiable role each morphosyntactic feature plays in maintaining grammaticality.

Table 2. Morphosyntactic Violations in Attributive Constructions (Ungrammatical Examples)

Phrase	Noun Features	Adjective Features	Status
هَدْفاً رَئِيسِي <i>badāfan ra'isī</i>	Indefinite, Masc., Sing., Acc.	Indefinite, Masc., Sing., Nom.	Case mismatch
طُفُولَةً مُضْطَرِبَةً <i>ṭufūlatan muḍṭaribatan</i>	Indefinite, Fem., Sing., Acc.	Indefinite, Masc., Sing., Acc.	Gender mismatch
الفردى البسيطة <i>al-fardī al-basīṭati</i>	Definite, Masc., Sing., Gen.	Definite, Fem., Sing., Gen.	Gender and case mismatch

Phrase	Noun Features	Adjective Features	Status
الآية الكرمتان <i>al-āyatu al-karimatāni</i>	Definite, Fem., Sing., Nom.	Definite, Fem., Dual, Nom.	Number mismatch

These ungrammatical phrases serve to demonstrate the syntactic rigidity of attributive agreement—any deviation—whether in number, case, gender, or definiteness—results in syntactic failure.

Taken together, the analysis of these attributive constructions confirms that adjectives in Arabic must fully agree with their head nouns in all relevant grammatical features. This full agreement applies to both definite and indefinite constructions and is central to syntactic well-formedness. The phenomenon reflects Arabic's dependence on morphosyntactic alignment in noun phrase constructions. Deviations in any single feature result in clear syntactic violations, indicating that attributive agreement is among the most rigidly enforced structures in Arabic grammar. This section, therefore, establishes a consistent syntactic pattern in attributive adjective usage, forming a basis for comparison with other syntactic functions in subsequent sections.

Arabic Adjective as Subject

Several specialized terms denote the subject in Arabic syntax depending on the sentence type. These include *mubtada* (the subject of nominal sentences), *fā'il* (the subject of verbal sentences), *ism kāna* (the subject of the copula *kāna*), and *ism inna* (the subject of the particle *Inna*). Although these terms all refer to the core grammatical concept of "subject," each arises under specific syntactic conditions and environments. For example, the *mubtada* generally appears at the beginning of a nominal sentence and carries distinct case markings. At the same time, the *fā'il* serves as the subject in verbal sentences, agreeing with the verb in case and gender. Moreover, *ism kāna* and *ism inna* operate within copular constructions, which influence their syntactic properties, such as case marking and definiteness. Consequently, a subject in Arabic can occupy different syntactic positions and exhibit varied morphological features.

When adjectives function as subjects, they conform to these syntactic rules, showing flexibility in definiteness, case, and predicate agreement depending on the syntactic context, whether nominal, verbal, or copular. The following data illustrate how adjectives behave syntactically when serving as subjects, highlighting their distinctive properties across different sentence types.

(8) الناجح ناجح بطبيعته

<i>/an-nājiḥu</i>	<i>nājiḥun</i>	<i>biṭabi'atibi/</i>
adj/def/nom	adj/indef/nom	prep/n/indef/gen/pron
successful person	successful person	because of his nature
(S)	(P)	(Adv.)

'A successful person (can be a success because of his nature.'

(9) كتب الكثير عن هذا الحي

<i>/Kataba</i>	<i>'l-katsīru</i>	<i>'an</i>	<i>hādza</i>	<i>'l-hayyi/</i>
v/perf	adj/def/nom	prep	dem	n/def/gen
write	Many	about	this	neighborhood

(P)	(S)	(O)
'Many people write about this neighborhood.'		

(10) **صدق الصادق المصدوق**

/Ṣadaqa	'sh-shādiq	'l-mashdīqu/
konj/v/perf	adj/def/nom	adj/def/nom
spoke the truth	honest man	the trustworthy

(P)	(S)
'The trustworthy, honest man (Prophet Muhammad) always spoke the truth.'	

(11) **إن الكثير من الأشخاص دفنوا تحت مباني منهارة**

/inna	'l-katsīra	mina 'l-asykhaṣi	dufīnū	tahta	mabānin	munbāratin/
part	adj/def/a	prep/n/def/ge	v-perf	prep	n/indef/g	adj/indef/ge
kus	n	n			en	n
how	'many	people	buried	under	buildings	collapsed

(S)	(P)	(Adv.)
'Many people are buried under collapsed buildings.'		

In sentences with a subject-predicate-adverbial (SVA) structure, the adjective *an-nājibu* ('the successful') in example (8) functions as the subject and carries the nominative suffix -u, marking its grammatical role. Unlike typical adjectives that modify nouns, *an-nājibu* stands alone, demonstrating nominalization. Similarly, *al-katsiru* ('the many') in example (9) acts as an independent subject, also marked nominative, but appearing in a verb-subject-object (VSO) structure. In contrast, the adjective phrase in example (10), *ash-shādiq l-mashdīqu* ('the honest, trustworthy one'), shows two adjectives functioning together as the subject, each retaining the nominative suffix. Data (11) features *al-katsiru* preceded by the emphasizing particle *inna* (إن), which changes the nominative *u* to the accusative-a and is qualified by the prepositional phrase *mina l-asykhaṣi* ('from the people'), reflecting additional syntactic complexity.

Beyond these syntactic patterns, adjectives used as subjects exhibit distinctive semantic and morphological traits. They are invariably definite, as indicated by the prefix *al-* (ال), which acts as a definite article. However, *al-* serves a dual function: besides marking definiteness, it nominalizes the adjective, imparting referential meaning and enabling it to fulfill the subject role. For instance, the adjectives *an-nājibu* ('the successful'), *al-katsiru* ('the many'), and *ash-shādiq* ('the honest') all carry the prefix *al-*, which transforms them from descriptive adjectives into nominalized entities capable of standing independently as subjects.

This nominalizing function of *al-* can be seen as a derivational mechanism that shifts adjectives from purely descriptive modifiers into referential nouns. Removing *al-* reverses this process, rendering the adjective non-referential and unable to serve as a syntactic subject. This contrast is illustrated in the ungrammaticality of sentences (8a) and (9a) when the Prefix is omitted, as opposed to the grammaticality of sentences (10a) and (11a), where definiteness and referentiality are preserved through alternative syntactic constructions, such as the *idāfa* (إضافة) genitive construction or qualification by prepositional phrases.

Table 3. The role of the prefix *al-* (ال) in adjectival subject nominalization and definiteness

Data	Adjective Form	Definite Prefix (<i>al-</i>)	Referentiality	Subject Functionality	Notes
8)	الناجح <i>an-nājiḥu</i>	Present	Referential	Yes	A nominalized adjective with <i>al-</i> , functions independently as a subject
8a)	ناجح <i>nājiḥun</i>	Absent	Non-referential	No	Ungrammatical without <i>al-</i> , fails to serve as a subject
9)	الكثير <i>al-kaṭsīru</i>	Present	Referential	Yes	A definite adjective serving as an independent subject in the VSO structure
9a)	كثير <i>kaṭsīrun</i>	Absent	Non-referential	No	Ungrammatical without <i>al-</i> loses subject functionality
10)	الصادق المصدق <i>aṣḥ- ṣbādiqu l- masbūdiqu</i>	Present	Referential	Yes	Idlāfa construction: definiteness and case controlled by the second adjective
10a)	صادق المصدق <i>ṣbādiqu l- masbūdiqu</i>	Partial (only 2nd adjective)	Referential	Yes	Definite noun phrase formed via idlāfa despite the indefinite first adjective
11)	الأشخاص الكثير من <i>al-kaṭsīru mina l- asykḥāṣi</i>	Present	Referential	Yes	Definite adjective qualified by prepositional phrase
11a)	كثير من الأشخاص <i>kaṭsīran mina l- asykḥāṣi</i>	Absent	Referential	Yes	Referentiality is preserved through qualification, allowing indefinite adjectives to serve as subjects.

Additionally, data (12) demonstrates that indefinite adjectives may serve as subjects when embedded in referential contexts, such as quantification. The phrase *Kullu jamīlūn* ('every beautiful one') combines the quantifier *kullu* ('every') with the indefinite adjective *jamīlūn* ('beautiful'), allowing it to function as a subject. This shows that indefiniteness does

not automatically exclude adjectives from subjecthood, provided that the adjective appears in a syntactic frame conferring referentiality, whether via quantifiers or qualification by phrases.

(12) وكل جميل للنصر ليس منه

/wa kullu/	<i>jamilin</i>	linnaʃri	laysa	minbu/
konj/num	adj/indef/gen	prep/n/def	vb/perf	prep/pron
every	beautiful thing	for Nasr	no longer	part of him
(S)		(Adv.)		(P)

'For Nasr, every beautiful thing is no longer part of him.'

In summary, adjectives functioning as subjects in Arabic exhibit considerable syntactic versatility. Definite adjectives with the prefix *al-* can independently fulfill subject roles, whereas indefinite adjectives require syntactic environments that establish referentiality through genitive constructions (*idlāfa*), prepositional qualification, or quantification. This duality highlights a core syntactic principle: definiteness, often marked by *al-*, is central to the nominalization and subject function of adjectives in Arabic. Indefinite adjectives achieve subject status only within referential syntactic frames, ensuring clarity and grammatical coherence.

Arabic Adjective as Predicate

Predicate adjectives in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) exhibit distinct morphosyntactic behavior, especially in nominal sentences without an overt copula. In such constructions, the adjective functions as a predicate and must agree with the subject in gender and number while remaining indefinite. The definiteness distinction here is critical: unlike attributive adjectives, which follow and agree with definite nouns in definiteness, predicate adjectives in copula-less constructions are obligatorily indefinite (Al Qorin et al., 2022). This section examines predicate adjectives across different syntactic environments: copula-less clauses, constructions with overt copulas (*kāna*, *inna*, and *takūn*), and constructions where the predicate adjective follows subject–predicate inversion.

(13) المباراة صعبة

/al-mubāratu/	<i>sha'batun/</i>
n/def/nom	adj/indef/nom
The match	difficult
(S)	(P)

'The match was difficult'

In nominal sentences without an overt copula, the predicate adjective typically follows the subject, agrees with it morphologically, and appears in the nominative indefinite form. For example, data (13) *al-mubāratu sha'batun* ('The match is difficult') illustrates this construction: *al-mubāratu* (the match) is a definite feminine singular noun, and the adjective *sha'batun* agrees in gender and number while remaining indefinite. However, replacing the predicate with its definite counterpart *al-sha'bah* renders the construction ungrammatical or shifts the reading from a clause to a noun phrase (*al-mubāratu al-sha'bah* = "the difficult match"), as shown in (13a). The grammaticality contrast between (13) and (13a) underlines

the rule that a predicate adjective in copula-less sentences must remain indefinite to preserve its predicative function.

(13a) المباراة الصعبة

/ al-mubārātu	'sb-sba'batu/
(S)	(Atr.)

This indefiniteness requirement is consistent even with plural or abstract subjects. In (14), *wa bādhibi al-umūru wādliḥatun li-l-jamī'i* ('These matters are clear to everyone'), the plural inanimate subject *al-umūru* triggers feminine singular agreement on the predicate *wādliḥatun*, reflecting the well-documented rule that broken plurals denoting inanimates often take singular feminine agreement. Likewise, (15) *at-ta'āwun bayna al-mamlakati wa miṣr 'amiqun wa wathiḡun* ('The cooperation between the Kingdom and Egypt is deep and strong') demonstrates that compound subjects may still take multiple coordinated adjectives, each of which remains indefinite and agrees with the singular masculine subject. In sentence (16), *fa-ṣalāḥi mujtahidun wa tumūḥun* ('Ṣalāḥ is hardworking and ambitious'), both adjectives *mujtahidun* and *tumūḥun* conform to this rule. Collectively, these examples underscore that the defining features of predicate adjectives in such contexts are nominative case, morphological agreement with the subject, and strict indefiniteness.

(14) وهذه الأمور واضحة للجميع

/ wa bādhibi	'l-umūru	<i>wādliḥatun</i>	li 'l-jamī'i/
konj/dem	n/def/nom/jmk	adj/indef/nom	prep/n/def/gen
These	things	clear	to everyone
(S)	(P)	(Comp.)	

'These things are clear to everyone.'

(15) التعاون بين المملكة ومصر عميق وثيق

/ at-ta'āwuna	bayna	'l-mamlakata	wa miṣra	<i>'amiqun</i>	wa <i>wathiḡun/</i>
n/def/nom	prep	n/def/gen	kon/n/def	adj/indef/n	konj/adj/indef
			/gen	om	/nom
partnership	between	Kingdom	and Egypt	deep	and strong'
(S)				(P)	

'The partnership between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt is deep and strong.'

(16) فصلاح مجتهد وطموح

/ faṣḥolāḥu	<i>mujtahidun</i>	wa <i>tumūḥun/</i>
part/n/def/nom	adj/indef/nom	konj/adj/indef/nom
Salah	persistent	and ambitious'
(S)	(P)	

'Salah was persistent and ambitious'

The summary of these patterns is captured in the following table:

Data	Subject	Gender/Number	Predicate Adjective(s)	Agreement Features	Grammaticality
(13)	المباراة <i>al-mubārātu</i>	Feminine Singular	صعبة <i>sha'batun</i>	FEM.SG, Indefinite	✓
(13a)	المباراة <i>al-mubārātu</i>	Feminine Singular	الصعبة <i>al-sha'bab</i>	FEM.SG, Definite	X (not a full sentence)
(14)	هذه الأمور <i>bādhībi al-umūru</i>	Inanimate, FEM.SG (gramm.)	واضحة <i>wāḍiḥatun</i>	FEM.SG, Indefinite	✓
(15)	التعاون <i>at-ta'āwunū</i>	Masculine Singular	عميق، وثيق <i>'amīqun, wathīqun</i>	MASC.SG, Indefinite	✓
(16)	صلاح <i>Ṣalāḥ</i>	Masculine Singular	مجتهد، طموح <i>mujtabidun, ṭamūḥun</i>	MASC.SG, Indefinite	✓

However, when a copular verb such as *takūn* or *kāna* is introduced, the syntactic behavior of predicate adjectives changes. They now occur in the accusative case and can be either definite or indefinite, depending on focus and discourse structure. In data (17) *fī bādhībi al-marrati lam takūn al-ṣūrat jamīlatan* ('At this time the picture was not beautiful'), the subject *al-ṣūrat* is definite feminine singular, and the adjective *jamīlatan* agrees in gender and number but appears in the accusative due to the presence of *takūn*. This is a typical verbal copula construction, where the adjective is treated as the complement and must be accusative.

(17) في هذه المرة لم تكن الصورة جميلة

/fī	Hādhībi	'l-marrati	lam takun	'sh-ṣūratu	jamīlatan/
prep	dem	n/def/gen	neg/vb	n/def/nom	adj/indef/akus
'at	this	time	is not	picture	beautiful'
	(Adv.)		(Copula)	(S)	(P)

'At this time, the picture is not (so) beautiful.'

In contrast, (17a) *fī bādhībi al-marrati lam takūn al-ṣūrat al-jamīlatu* replaces the indefinite adjective with a definite attributive adjective *al-jamīlatu*. In this form, the sentence is no longer interpreted as a predicate structure but instead as a marked NP "the beautiful picture," rendering it pragmatically awkward or ungrammatical as a standalone clause. This reinforces that definiteness continues to restrict predicative function, even when a copula is present.

(17a) في هذه المرة لم تكن الصورة الجميلة

/fī/	bādʒībī	ʿl-marraṭi	lam takūn	ʿsh-shūratu	ʿl-jamīlatu/
(Adv.)		(Copula)	(S)	(Atr.)	

Further evidence is seen in (18) *wa kāna mudarrību yūnāyīd mutakhawwifan* ('And the United coach was scared'), where the subject is a definite construct phrase *mudarrību yūnāyīd*, and the predicate adjective *mutakhawwifan* appears in the masculine singular accusative, as expected. Again, the adjective is indefinite, conforming to the expected predicative usage.

(18) وكان مدرب يونايتد متخوفا

/wa kāna/	mudarrību	yūnāyīd	mutakhawwifan/
konj/vb	adj/indef/nom	n/def/gen	adj/indef/akus
	The coach	United	scared'
(Copula)	(S)	(P)	

'(At that time) the United coach was scared.'

The particle *inna* introduces another variation. In (19) *inna dawrat ḥayāt al-insān ʿajībatun* ('Indeed, the phase of human life is amazing'), the subject (ism inna) *dawrat ḥayāt al-insān* appears in the accusative as required by *inna*. At the same time, the predicate *ʿajībatun* remains in the nominative indefinite, functioning predicatively. Data (19a) *inna dawrat ḥayāt al-insān al-ʿajībatu* replaces the predicate with a definite adjective, *al-ʿajībatu*, transforming the construction into an NP interpretation and losing its predicative status.

(19) إن دورة حياة الإنسان عجيبة

/inna/	dawrata	ḥayāti	ʿl-insāni	ʿajībatun/
part	n/indef/akus	n/indef/gen	n/def/gen	adj/indef/nom
Truly	phase	life	human	amazing'
	(S)	(P)		

'The phase of human life is truly outstanding.'

The following table summarizes the morphosyntactic behaviors of predicate adjectives in copula and particle constructions:

Table 5. Predicate Adjectives with *takūn*, *kāna*, and *inna*

Data	Copular Element	Subject	Subject Case	Predicate Adjective(s)	Predicate Case	Definite?	Grammaticality
(17)	لم تكن <i>lam takūn</i>	الصورة <i>al-ṣūrat</i>	Nominative	جميلة <i>jamīlatan</i>	Accusative	Indefinite	✓
(17a)	لم تكن <i>lam takūn</i>	الصورة <i>al-ṣūrat</i>	Nominative	الجميلة <i>al-jamīlatu</i>	Accusative	Definite	✗ (marked, NP reading)
(18)	كان <i>kāna</i>	مدرب يونايتد <i>mudarrību yūnāyīd</i>	Nominative	متخوفا <i>mutakhawwifan</i>	Accusative	Indefinite	✓
(19)	إن <i>inna</i>	دورة حياة الإنسان <i>dawrat ḥayāt al-insān</i>	Accusative	عجيبة <i>ʿajībatun</i>	Nominative	Indefinite	✓

Data	Copular Element	Subject	Subject Case	Predicate Adjective(s)	Predicate Case	Definite?	Grammaticality
(19a)	إن <i>inna</i>	<i>dawrat</i> <i>ḥayāt al-</i> <i>insān</i> دورة حياة الإنسان <i>dawrat</i> <i>ḥayāt al-</i> <i>insān</i>	Accusative	العجيبة <i>al-ʿajībatu</i>	Nominative	Definite	X (NP reading)

These patterns confirm that predicate adjectives in MSA require careful attention to case, definiteness, and agreement depending on the syntactic context. In copula-less nominal sentences, adjectives must remain indefinite and nominative, functioning syntactically as predicates. In contrast, when a copula verb is introduced (*takūn*, *kāna*), the adjective becomes accusative, though still preferably indefinite in predicative uses. The particle *inna* shifts the subject to accusative (*ism inna*) while maintaining the predicate adjective in the nominative indefinite form. Across all contexts, replacing the predicate adjective with a definite form typically shifts the structure from a clause to a noun phrase, disrupting its predicative function and grammaticality.

Arabic Adjective as Object

In Arabic grammar, the concept of *mafʿūl bih* broadly corresponds to what modern linguistics terms the "object," the syntactic argument receiving the action of the verb initiated by the subject. However, Arabic imposes strict grammatical conditions on adjectives occupying this object position, particularly regarding case marking and definiteness (Ghazali, 2022). Typically, adjectives such as *mafʿūl bih* occur in the accusative case and are definite, marked by the prefix *al-*. This is evident in data (20) to (23), where adjectives such as *al-qalīla* ('the little'), *al-katsīra* ('the many'), *al-madhblūma* ('the wronged'), and *al-aḥḍal* ('the best') all bear the accusative marker *-a(n)* along with the definite article *al-*, signaling their role as direct objects. Additionally, when governed by prepositions, these object adjectives adopt genitive case (*-i(n)*) as in (24), e.g., *ʿalā al-kathīri*, highlighting how prepositional heads override voice-driven case assignment.

(20) أخذت القليل منهم

<i>/akbadztu</i>	<i>ʾl-qalīla</i>	<i>minhum</i>
v/perf/pron	adj/def/akus	prep/pron
'I took	little	of them'
(P-S)	(O)	(Adv.)

'I took a little piece of them.'

(21) إهمال النظافة يحمل الكثير من الأسئلة

<i>/Ihmālu</i>	<i>ʾn-nadhāfati</i>	<i>yabmilu</i>	<i>ʾl-katsīra</i>	<i>mina</i>	<i>ʾl-asʾilati</i>
n/indef/nom	n/indef/gen	v/imperf	adj/def/akus	prep	n/def/gen
The omission	cleanliness	brings up	a lot	of	questions'
	(S)	(P)		(O)	

'The omission of cleanliness brings up a lot of questions.'



(22) ولكنه ينصر المظلوم

/Walakinnahu	yansburu	<i>'l-madhlūma/</i>
kon/pron	v/imperf	adj/def/akus
'But he	help	the wronged'
(Conj.)	(S-P)	(O)

'But he will help the wronged.'

(23) لأنه يختار دائماً الأفضل والأكثر جاهزية

/liannahu	yakbtāru	dāiman	<i>'l-afḍlola</i>	nu 'l-aktsara	jābiziyyatan/
prep/part/pron	v/imperf	adv	adj/def/akus	konj/adj/def/akus	n/indef/akus
'Because he	chooses	always	the best	the most	preparation'
		s			
	(S-P)		(O)		(Adv.)

'Because he always chooses the best and the most preparation.'

(24) في رحلة عملي مررت على الكثير من الموظفين

/fi	riblati	'amalī	marartu	'alā	<i>'l-katīsi</i>	min	'l-
						a	muwadhqī
						na	
prep	n/indef/ge	n/	v/perf/pr	pre	adj/def/g	pre	adj/def/g
	n	n/indef/gen/p	on	p	en	p	en
		ron					
'On	trip	my business	I passed	to	many	fro	employee
						m	s
	(Adv.)		(S-P)				(O)

On my business trip, I passed many employees.

The following table (Table 6) presents a detailed overview of adjectives functioning as objects (*maf'ūl bih*) in Arabic sentences. It categorizes these adjectives according to their case marking, definiteness status, and grammaticality within the syntactic structure. This classification aims to illustrate how adjectives, when serving as objects, conform to specific morphosyntactic patterns, particularly in terms of accusative and genitive case assignment and definiteness marking. The data provide insight into the distributional properties and syntactic behavior of adjectives in object positions, contributing to a deeper understanding of adjective integration in Arabic sentence structure.

Table 6. Case, Definiteness, and Grammaticality of Adjectives Used as Objects
(*Maf'ūl Bih*) in Arabic Sentences

Data	Form	Case	Definiteness	Grammaticality	Interpretation
(20)	أخذت القليل <i>akbadtu al-qalīla</i>	Accusative	Definite	Grammatical	<i>al-qalīla</i> is the definite object of verb <i>akbadtu</i>
(21)	يحمل الكثير <i>yahmilu al-katīra</i>	Accusative	Definite	Grammatical	Definite object adjective modifying noun phrase
(22)	ينصر المظلوم <i>yansburu al-madhlūma</i>	Accusative	Definite	Grammatical	Adjective functioning nominally as the object

Data	Form	Case	Definiteness	Grammaticality	Interpretation
(23)	يختار الأفضل <i>yakhtāru al-afḍalu</i>	Accusative	Definite	Grammatical	Definite accusative adjective as the object
(24)	على الكثير <i>‘alā al-kathīr</i>	Genitive	Definite	Grammatical	Prepositional object adjective, definite, genitive case

Importantly, when these adjectives occur in passive voice constructions, the original object elevates to the subject position and accordingly shifts to nominative case, as shown in (20a)–(23a), e.g., *ukhibḍha al-qalīlu minhum* (the 'a little piece was taken from them), where the suffix changes from accusative -a(n) to nominative -u(n). This morphological shift highlights the close relationship between syntactic roles and case morphology in Arabic.

Table 7. Case Shift of Definite Adjectival Objects under Passivization

Data	Active Sentence	Passive Sentence	Grammaticality	Case Shift
20a	أخذت القليل منهم <i>akhaḍtu al-qalīla minhum</i>	أُخذ القليل منهم <i>ukhibḍha al-qalīlu minhum</i>	✓	Acc → Nom
21a	يحمل الكثير من الأسئلة <i>yahmilu al-kathīra mina al-asʿilab</i>	يحمل الكثير من الأسئلة <i>yuhmalu al-kathīru mina al-asʿilab</i>	✓	Acc → Nom
22a	ينصر المظلوم <i>yansuru al-maḍhlūma</i>	ينصر المظلوم <i>yunsaru al-maḍhlūmu</i>	✓	Acc → Nom
23a	يختار الأفضل <i>yakhtāru al-afḍala</i>	يختار الأفضل <i>yukhtāru al-afḍalu</i>	✓	Acc → Nom

Moreover, the definiteness marker *al-* plays a pivotal role in preserving the adjective's syntactic function as a core verbal argument, specifically as a direct object (*maʿūl bil*). This is clearly illustrated in example (20b), where the omission of *al-* from *al-qalīla* to yield the indefinite form *qalīlan* renders the sentence ungrammatical if the adjective is intended as the object of the verb. Instead of functioning as a direct object, the bare adjective *qalīlan* shifts to an adverbial role, indicating quantity or manner rather than participating in argument structure.

(20b) أخذت قليلا منهم

/akhaḍztu	qalīlan	minhum /
v/perf/pron	adj/def/akus	prep/pron
'I took	slightly	of them'
(P-S)	(Adv.)	(Adv.)

'I slightly took from them.'

This morphosyntactic shift highlights a phenomenon that can be described as the Determinacy Effect, whereby definiteness—marked morphologically through the Prefix *al-*—serves as a crucial licensing condition for the syntactic realization of adjectives as verbal arguments. In contrast, indefinite adjectives typically occupy peripheral positions as adjuncts, contributing semantic but not syntactic weight to the clause. Table 8 below illustrates representative data supporting this Determinacy Effect and underscores the syntactic dependency of adjectival argumenthood on morphological definiteness in Arabic.

Table 8. The Determinacy Effect: Impact of Definiteness on Adjectival Argumenthood

Form	Syntactic Function	Grammaticality	Notes
القليل <i>al-qalīla</i>	Object (Direct)	Grammatical	Definite adjective as a verbal object
قليلًا <i>qalīlan</i>	Adverbial Modifier	Ungrammatical as an object	Indefinite form loses argument status

The study further identifies a distinctive pattern with secondary objects (O_2) in ditransitive constructions, which obligatorily appear in the indefinite accusative form, unlike primary objects (O_1) that require definiteness. For example, in (25), the secondary object *dla'ifatan* ('weak') appears in indefinite form despite its syntactic object role, reflecting its underlying predicative function within an embedded clause.

(25) وهذا يجعل هذه النقطة ضعيفة

/Wa hādḡā	yaj'alu	hādḡibi	'n-nuḡṡata	dla'ifatan/
konj/dem	v/imperf	dem	n/def/akus	adj/indef/akus
'This	makes	this	topic	weak'
(S)	(P)	(O1)		(O2)

'This is what makes the topic weak.'

This dual nature stems from Arabic's clause-combining strategy, preserving the predicative morphology in O_2 while syntactically functioning as an object in the matrix clause. Thus, the indefinite form signals its non-referential, measure-like role rather than an entirely referential argument.

In conclusion, Arabic adjectives functioning as objects exhibit systematic morphosyntactic patterns: they must be definite and accusative when serving as primary objects (O_1), shift to the nominative in the passive voice, and take the genitive case under prepositional governance. Secondary objects (O_2) diverge by remaining indefinite, reflecting their embedded predicative origin. These patterns confirm a robust morphological encoding of syntactic hierarchy, where definiteness marks argument-hood and case morphology signals grammatical relations, providing a clear and nuanced insight into the distribution of Arabic adjectives in clause structure (Medjedoub, 2022).

Arabic Adjectives as Adverbs

The adverbial role in Arabic grammar is not delineated as explicitly as it is in many other languages. Nonetheless, various syntactic categories in traditional Arabic grammar correspond functionally to adverbials, including *al-maf'ūl al-muṭlaq* (absolute object), *al-maf'ūl li-ajlibi* (causal object), *al-maf'ūl fīh* (locative/temporal adjunct), *al-maf'ūl ma'abu* (comitative),

ḥāl (circumstantial adjunct), *tamyīz* (specification), *istithnā'* (exception), and prepositional phrases (*jar wa-majrūr*). Among these categories, the circumstantial expression (*ḥāl*) represents the most typical adverbial function assumed by adjectives. In this capacity, the adjective encodes the state or condition of the referent, typically a subject or direct complement, at the time of the action. Arabic adjectives functioning in this role are often indefinite and accusative, and their distribution reflects their integration within the clause as adjuncts that modify verbal predication. The examples below illustrate the deployment of adjectives in adverbial positions within Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

(26) **فَعَادَ مِنْ حَلَبٍ مُسْرِعًا**

/Fa'āda	min	ḥalab	musri'an/
part/v/perf/pron	prep	n/def/gen	adj/indef/akus
'He returned	from	Allepo	quickly'
(P+S)	(Adv.)		(Adv.)

'He returned from Aleppo quickly.'

(27) **الْأَفْيَالُ تَنَامُ سَاعَتَيْنِ وَاقِفَةً**

/al-afyālu	tanāmu	sā'atayni	wāqifatan/
n/def/nom/jmk	v/imperf	adv	adj/indef/akus
'Elephants	sleep	two hours	standing up
(S)	(P)	(Adv.)	(Adv.)

'Elephants sleep for two hours on their feet'

(28) **وَيَعُودُ إِلَيْهِمْ سَالِمًا مُنْتَصِرًا**

/Wa'ya'ūdu	ilayhim	sālīman	muntaṣhiran/
konj/pron/v/imperf	prep/pron	adj/indef/akus	adj/ttakus
He returns	to them	safe	triumphant
(P+S)	(Comp.)	(Adv.)	

He returns to them safe and triumphant.

(29) **يَأْتِي إِلَى الْعَمَلِ كُلِّ صَبَاحٍ حَامِلًا حَقِيقَتَهُ الْكَبِيرَةَ**

/Ya'ti	ilā	l-'amali	kulla	ṣabāhin	hāmīlan	baqībatabu	l-kabīrata
v/imperf	prep	n/def/gen	num	adv	adj/inde	n/	adj/def/ak
/pron					f/akus	n/indef/a	us
						kus/pron	
He comes	to	work	every	morning	carrying	bag'	big
(S+P)	(Comp.)		(Adv.)			(Adv.)	

'He comes to work every morning carrying his big bag.'

The findings demonstrate that Arabic adjectives functioning as *ḥāl* (circumstantial modifiers) exhibit systematic morphosyntactic behavior. As evidenced in examples (26)–(29), *ḥāl* adjectives such as *musri'an* 'quickly' and *wāqifatan* 'upright' consistently appear in the accusative case (marked by -a(n)) while depicting the subject's state during an action. These modifiers display two syntactic configurations: either standing independently (26–28) or governing an object (29). The following table presents the data that exemplifies the grammatical uses of such adjectives in adverbial functions:

Table 9. Grammatical Use of Indefinite Adverbial Adjectives in MSA

Data	Sentence (Arabic)	Gloss (English)	Adjective (Form)	Function	Adverbial?
26	فعاد من حلب مسرّعاً <i>fa'āda min Ḥalab</i> <i>musri'an</i>	He returned from Aleppo quickly	مسرّعاً (<i>musri'an</i>) – indef. Acc.	Describes manner of motion	Yes
27	الأفيال تنام ساعتين واقفةً <i>al-aḥyāl tanāmu</i> <i>sā'atayni wāqifatan</i>	Elephants sleep two hours standing	واقفةً (<i>wāqifatan</i>) – indef. Acc.	Describes posture during action	Yes
28	ويعود إليهم سالمًا منتصرًا <i>wa-ya'īdu ilayhim</i> <i>salīman muntasiran</i>	He returns to them safe and triumphant	سالمًا، منتصرًا (<i>salīman, muntasiran</i>) – indef. Acc.	Indicates subject's condition during action	Yes
29	يأتي إلى العمل كل صباح حاملاً حقيبته الكبيرة <i>ya'ti ilā al-'amali</i> <i>kuḷla ṣabāḥin</i> <i>ḥāmīlan ḥaqībatahu</i> <i>al-kabīrah</i>	He comes to work every morning carrying his big bag	حاملاً (<i>hāmīlan</i>) – indef. Acc.	Describes the manner and accompanying object	Yes

A critical pattern emerges regarding definiteness: when the modified noun shifts to indefinite status (as in 30 and 30a), the adjective transitions from a circumstantial (*ḥāl*) to an attributive function. This definiteness-governed alternation reflects the dual nature of Arabic adjectives, which can function either as event-modifying predicates or entity-describing attributes. Crucially, the adverbial function depends not only on word order or syntactic slot but on morphological cues—especially indefiniteness and case marking.

(30) سألت أمي متعجبا

/Sa'alat/	ummi	muta'ajjiban/
asked	my mother	surprisingly
(P)	(S)	(Adv.)

(30a) سألت أم متعجب

/Sa'alat/	ummun	muta'ajjibun/
asked	mother	astonished
(P)	N	Atr
		(S)

Arabic adverbial adjectives thus exhibit two defining characteristics: they obligatorily appear in indefinite form and take accusative case marking. This indefiniteness reflects their non-referential semantic function, as they modify events rather than denote entities. Any attempt to prefix *al-* to an adverbial adjective renders the construction ungrammatical. This grammatical constraint is exemplified in the following contrastive data, where definite adjectives fail to perform an adverbial function:

Table 10. Ungrammatical Use of Definite Adjectives as Adverbials in MSA

Data	Sentence (Arabic)	Gloss (English)	Adjective (Form)	Intended Function	Adverbial?
26a	فَعَادَ مِنْ حَلَبَ الْمُسْرَعًا <i>fa'āda min Ḥalab al-musri'an</i>	He returned from Aleppo the quickly	الْمُسْرَعًا <i>(al-musri'an)</i> – def. acc.	Intended as manner adjunct	✗ (Ungrammatical)
27a	الْأَفْيَالُ تَنَامُ سَاعَتَيْنِ الْوَاقِفَةِ <i>al-afyālū tanāmu sā'atayni al- waqifab</i>	Elephants sleep two hours the standing	الْوَاقِفَةِ <i>(al-wāqifab)</i> – def. acc.	Intended as state descriptor	✗ (Ungrammatical)
28a	وَيَعُودُ إِلَيْهِمُ السَّالِمُ الْمُنْتَصِرُ <i>wa-ya'ūdu ilayhim al-sālim al- muntaṣir</i>	He returns to them the safe, the triumphant	السَّالِمُ، الْمُنْتَصِرُ <i>(al-sālim, al- muntaṣir)</i> – def. acc.	Intended as circumstantial	✗ (Ungrammatical)
29a	يَأْتِي إِلَى الْعَمَلِ كُلِّ صَبَاحٍ الْحَامِلِ حَقِيبَتِهِ الْكَبِيرَةِ <i>ya'ti ilā al-'amali kulla ṣabāḥin al- ḥāmil ḥaqībatabu al-kabirah</i>	He comes to work every morning the carrying his bag	الْحَامِلِ <i>(al-ḥāmil)</i> – def. acc.	Intended as a manner adjunct	✗ (Ungrammatical)

This study establishes that Arabic adjectives functioning adverbially exhibit three defining characteristics: (1) obligatory accusative case marking (via the suffix -a (n)), (2) indefiniteness as a grammatical requirement, and (3) flexible distribution, occurring either independently or with governed objects. These features collectively distinguish adverbial adjectives from their attributive and predicative counterparts. Indefiniteness serves as the primary diagnostic for their non-referential, event-modifying function. The consistent -a(n) marking further confirms their status as verb-phrase adjuncts rather than nominal modifiers, aligning with cross-linguistic patterns of adverbial morphology. The ungrammaticality of definite forms in this context (al- + adjective + -a (n)) robustly demonstrates Arabic's systematic morphosyntactic encoding of adverbial function through case-definiteness interactions. Thus, the adverbial adjective in Arabic is a demarcated grammatical entity, and its identification is best achieved through a combined morphosyntactic and functional approach.



CONCLUSION

Arabic adjectives exhibit a high degree of syntactic versatility, functioning across diverse grammatical environments with remarkable structural adaptability. This study has demonstrated that their roles can be systematically grouped according to their syntactic relationships within the clause: as components of noun phrases, as predicates, as verbal complements, and as adverbials. Within nominal phrases, adjectives operate as attributive modifiers, consistently agreeing with their head nouns in gender, number, case, and definiteness, revealing a tightly governed system of concord. When functioning predicatively, adjectives show complete agreement with the subject and typically appear in the nominative case unless governed by verbal copulas such as *kāna*, which trigger a shift to the accusative. In such environments, the use of the indefinite form marks their non-referential or descriptive status. As verbal complements, adjectives appear in the accusative or genitive case, influenced by the verb's valency or prepositional governance. These complements tend to be definite when functioning as primary arguments but may shift to the indefinite form in secondary syntactic positions. As adverbial elements, adjectives appear predominantly in the accusative and indefinite, modifying entire predicates or clauses, either independently or accompanied by nominal dependents. The findings highlight the structural distinctiveness of adjectives in Modern Standard Arabic and their ability to span multiple syntactic domains. Unlike nouns, adjectives exhibit specific distributional constraints tied to referentiality and agreement, reflecting a complex interaction between morphosyntactic form and syntactic function. By illuminating the nuanced roles that adjectives play in clause architecture, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of syntactic categorization in Arabic. It highlights the functional plasticity of lexical classes in Semitic grammar. These insights not only refine theoretical models of Arabic syntax but also open pathways for comparative typological studies on adjective behavior across languages.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

The principal author (ZAM) was responsible for the conceptualization, theoretical framework, data collection, and primary drafting of the manuscript. (FL) contributed to the refinement of the syntactic annotation criteria and provided critical insights into the cross-dialectal relevance of adjective distribution in Arabic. (TN) Supervised the research process, offering academic guidance and feedback throughout the data analysis and writing stages. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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