A Comparative Study of Linguistic Units "Adverb" in Arabic, Persian and English

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Abstract

This article is based on a doctoral dissertation and compares syntactic characteristics of linguistic units that modify verb (adverbial) as well as adjective in Arabic on one hand and adverbial in Persian and English languages on the other. This comparison first tries to see if it is ever possible to find in Arabic what other languages regard as adverb; and then, seeks to develop an equivalent balance between Arabic on one hand and Persian and English on the other hand in terms of adverbial affinities and disparities between these languages that might be used to shed more light on Arabic adverbial rules.

In theory, we must first let go of traditional grammar which is mostly based on final word declension (suffix vocal inflection) and consider words as the basic linguistic unit. Instead, we should focus on syntactic function or parts of speech. Second, this study distinguishes the lexical category "adverb" and syntactical function "adverb" in order to demonstrate what constructs can qualify as the latter. The scope of the study includes grammar and particularly adverb and adverbial constructs without dwelling upon other areas of this science. Research population is also modern Arabic; therefore, does not include traditional usage or the dialects and colloquial Arabic. In addition, the Persian and Arabic items are derived from contemporary sources.

This article employs some useful tools from structural linguistics, namely, transformational-generative grammar (TGG) and applies syntactic analytical concepts like adjunction, substitution and movement. In this manner, an adverbial from English and Persian is presented along with examples; and we try to find if that form exists in Arabic.

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It was found that Persian, English and Arabic languages all contain constructs, other than category adverb, such as "prepositional phrase," "noun phrase," "adjective phrase" and "adverbial clause" which function as adverb. These constructs are as follow:

1- Lexical adverb: It is made of a word belonging to adverb category and appears in adverb function. Such as "never" in English example (1), "هرگز" in Persian (2), and "أبداً" in the Arabic example (3).

(1) I'll <u>never</u> forget you.

(2) <u>هرگز</u> تو را فراموش نخواهم کرد.

(3) لَن أنساكَ <u>أَبَداً</u>.

2- Adjectival phrase: A word that belongs to adjective category, with its modifiers, and may appear in adverb function. Such as "very well" in English example (4), "بسیار خوب" in Persian (5) and "جیداً جدّاً" in Arabic (6).

(4) She plays the piano <u>very well.</u>

(5) او <u>بسیار خوب</u> پیانو می‌نوازد.

(6) هيَ تَعزِفُ البيانو <u>جَیّداً جدّاً</u>.

3- Noun phrase as adverb: Sometimes, a noun head or a noun phrase can take on adverb role. For example, "last year" in (7), "سال گَذشته" in Persian (8) and "السّنة الماضية" in the Arabic (9).

(7) I saw him <u>last year</u>.

(8) <u>سال گَذشته</u> او را دیدم.

(9) <u>السنة الماضية</u> التَقَیتُ بِهِ.

In fact, this kind of adverb structure has a preposition in the deep structure which is reduced in the surface structure.

4- Prepositional phrase as adverb: A structure made of "preposition + noun phrase" can also take on adverb role in any of these three languages, such as "in a load angry voice" in the English example (10), "<u>با صدای خشم‌آگین</u> <u>بلندی</u>" in the Persian (11), and "<u>بصَوتٍ عالٍ غاضبٍ</u>" in the Arabic example (12).

(10) My mother called me <u>in a load angry voice</u>.

(11) مادرم مرا <u>با صدای خشم‌آگین بلندی</u> صدا زد.

(12) نادَتني أمّي <u>بصَوتٍ عالٍ غاضبٍ</u>.

5- Adverbial clause: It is a structure made of "adverbial particle + sentence" that can make an adverbial clause and take on adverb role in any of these three languages, such as "when I arrived" in English example (13), " <u>وقتی که</u> <u>من رسیدم</u>" in the Persian (14), and also "<u>حینَ وَصَلتُ</u>" in the Arabic one (15).

(13) <u>When I arrived</u>, she was waiting for me.

(14) <u>وقتی که من رسیدم</u>، او منتظر من بود.

(15) <u>حینَ وَصَلتُ</u> ، كانت بانتظاری.

6- Adverbial phrase: This construct was found only in Arabic while neither Persian nor English has a similar category. The core of this construct is

made of lexical items such as "… قُبالَةَ [5], اثناءَ[4],حينَ [3], قَبلَ [2], بَعدَ[1]" that, despite being nouns, function as preposition and appear before noun phrases to make new phrase which we call "adverbial phrase." Look at examples (16) to (18):

(16) بَعدَ وُصولی، بَدأت المُحاضَرَة[6]

(17) غرقت السَّفینة قُبالَةَ السواحل المِصریة[7]

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Finally, several results are obtained from this research and the most important ones are: Those constructs which are regarded as adverb are also available in Arabic. However, they are known by different names. By virtue of substitutional transformation,

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[1] After
[2] In front of
[3] When
[4] During
[5] Off, outside
[6] After I arrived, I began the discussion.
[7] The ship sank off the coast of Egypt.
[8] Fasten seat belt while seated.