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Qualification and Morphology in Hypotactic Syntagms in Modern Written Arabic

Abstract

Modern Written Arabic is a language rich in morphological indicators of qualification between words constituting hypotactic syntagms. However, the relationship between qualification and morphology seems not to have been studied properly in this language, partly due to the fact that the term qualification, also called determination or modification, has not been consistently employed by authors describing this language. While descriptions of morphological structures of syntagms are coherent and almost unanimous, various approaches to qualification in these syntagms, frequently lacking theoretical underpinning, are flawed by terminological chaos and lack of precision. In the present paper, the concept of qualification is introduced and employed for the purpose of describing some problematic hypotactic syntagms in Modern Written Arabic (i.e. indirect attribute, formal annexation, some specific cases of true annexation, and a syntagm involving a numeral and an adjective). It can be observed that Modern Written Arabic uses three basic configurations of morphological indicators and qualification. Among them is one in which morphological indicators, namely agreement between two words, do not indicate qualification between them.

1. Introduction

Hypotactic syntagms in Modern Written Arabic (henceforth MWA),¹ which are composite language signs constituted by words, may be characterised in many respects.

¹ In nominal morphology, Modern Written Arabic has three cases: nominative (NOM, e.g. *baytun* 'a house'), genitive (GEN, e.g. *baytin* 'of a house') and accusative (ACC, e.g. *baytan* 'a house'); three numbers: singular

Two are of interest to us in this paper. First, their morphological properties may be taken into consideration. In other words, syntagms are describable in terms of their *μορφή* ‘form’, which is “perceivable” by senses: audible when pronounced, readable when written. These morphological properties of syntagms may be described with the use of the concepts of rection (government) and concord (agreement). For instance, the following triconstituent syntagm (1) can be morphologically characterised as follows:

- (1) *li r-ra’ṭsi-i* *l-muntahiy-at-i* *wilāyat-u-hu*
 for DEF-president.(M).SG-GEN DEF-ending-F.SG-GEN term.of.office.(F).SG-NOM-his
 ‘for the president whose term of office is ending’
 (Al-Ḥayāt 02.08.2007, 8, *Turkiyā: taḥdīdu...*)

The word *li r-ra’ṭsi* is masculine singular. It is made definite by the article *r-*. Its case is genitive. The last word, *wilāyatuhu*, is feminine singular. It is made definite by the suffixed pronoun *-hu*. Its case is nominative. The word between them, *l-muntahiyati*, is feminine singular. It is made definite by the article *l-* and its case is genitive.

Some of the morphological properties of these words are inherent (e.g. the gender of *li r-ra’ṭsi* and that of *wilāyatuhu* are, but that of *l-muntahiyati* is not). Other properties depend on the communicative intent of the speaker (e.g. the singular number of *li r-ra’ṭsi* reflects the fact that in the text given in (1) only one president is meant, not more), yet other are of grammatical character (e.g. that *l-muntahiyati* is definite). These latter properties, or more specifically their causes, are of special interest to us. It is clear for those who know the grammar of MWA (including the general rules for constructing other similar syntagms of this kind) that *l-muntahiyati* is definite because *li r-ra’ṭsi* is definite. Put differently, it agrees with *li r-ra’ṭsi* with respect to the category of state. For much the same reason, it stands in the genitive: it agrees with *li r-ra’ṭsi* with respect to case. By contrast, *l-muntahiyati* is feminine singular because it agrees with respect to gender and number with *wilāyatuhu*. Thus, it can be said that in this syntagm *l-muntahiyati* shows double concord: with the preceding word (in terms of state and case) and with the following word (in terms of gender and number). Normally, the morphological description of hypotactic syntagms in well-studied languages, such as MWA, does not pose serious problems and, consequently, it could be ventured that morphology of a given kind of

(SG, e.g. *baytun*), dual (DU, e.g. *baytāni* ‘two houses’), plural (PL, e.g. *buyūtun* ‘houses’). As for gender, it seems justifiable to distinguish not only masculine (M, e.g. *riḡālun* ‘men’) and feminine (F, e.g. *nisā’un* ‘women’), but also non-human gender for plural nouns (substantives, adjectives, pronouns) and verbs referring to non-human objects (NH, e.g. *buyūtun* ‘houses’). Its forms coincide with the feminine singular (cf. the adjective *ṣaḡīratun* ‘little’ in *buyūtun ṣaḡīratun* ‘little houses’ and *imra’atun ṣaḡīratun* ‘a little woman’). In the present paper, adjectives treated as masculine in most standard grammars but in reality not inflecting for gender and number will be considered to have neutralised gender (NG) and neutralised number (NN), e.g. *’aṣaddu* ‘stronger, strongest’. Nouns, both adjectives and substantives, can be indefinite (INDF, e.g. *baytun ṣaḡīrun* ‘a little house’) or definite (DEF, e.g. *al-baytu ṣ-ṣaḡīru* ‘the little house’). For the sake of convenience, this semantic category will be referred to as ‘state’.

syntagm in MWA is rather unlikely to be described in two different ways by two different linguists.

The second important respect in which every hypotactic syntagm can be characterised is of more elusive nature. It concerns the way words and syntagms constituted by them are related to the fragments of the extralingual world they speak of. Generally, linguists and Arabists agree that a word in a hypotactic syntagm qualifies (determines, or modifies – these terms can be considered to be synonyms) another word. Without answering the question of what qualification is for the time being, let us present here how the qualificational relations in the syntagm presented in (1) are explained in two fairly recent grammars of MWA.

According to a grammar by Badawi, Carter and Gully, the adjective in this kind of construction, normally a participle – in the example (1) it is *l-muntahiyati* – “structurally qualifies the preceding noun [scil. *li r-raʿīsi*]² but logically qualifies a following noun [scil. *wilāyatuhu*]. The latter is invariably the agent of the preceding part[iciple] (...)”. These authors also write that the adjective “qualifies only indirectly” (Badawi et al. 2004: 114). However, they do not provide the reader with definitions of structural, logical, or indirect qualification.

In a study by El-Ayoubi, Fischer and Langer, this construction, called there “Satzadjektiv”, is characterised as follows: “Beim Satzadjektiv qualifiziert das Adjektiv primär sein Subjekt” (El-Ayoubi et al. 2001: 36), i.e. *l-muntahiyati* qualifies *wilāyatuhu*. These authors seem to assume that the adjective also qualifies the preceding noun [scil. *li r-raʿīsi*] because they write that “das Adjektiv meist auch ohne die jeweilige Ergänzung durch das eigene Subjekt [...] bereits eine zutreffende Qualifikation des Kernnomens [scil. *li r-raʿīsi*] darstellt” (2001: 36). It is not explicitly said what they mean by “Qualifikation”. It may, however, be inferred that they are using this term as a synonym of “Definition”, which they employ in the expressions “Applikation einer definierenden Aussage” (p. 6), and “Unter Applikation werden hier sprachliche Elemente verstanden, die durch Angliederung an andere Redeteile diese vervollständigen und sich mit ihnen zu neuen Einheiten zusammenschließen” (p. 7).

Let these two examples suffice for the time being to show that the concept of qualification (or similar) has not been used consistently in the descriptions of MWA. As it can be seen, qualification has not been properly kept apart from morphological phenomena (hence e.g. “structural qualification”). Descriptions in which morphology and qualification are not carefully distinguished are likely to obscure the picture of the grammar of any language, including MWA. In this paper it is assumed that since morphological relationships between words constituting syntagms (rection, concord) may indicate qualification,³ one can speak of morphological indicators of qualification. Put

² Square-bracket additions in quotations come from the author of the present paper.

³ Traditionally linguists use the term “morphosyntax” to refer to this aspect of morphology which serves the needs of syntax. However, this aspect of morphology would rather deserve to be called “syntactomorphology” (I owe this remark to Prof. J. Bańczewski, personal communication).

metaphorically, morphology is, in a way, “ancillary” to syntax. However, qualification cannot be said to be always indicated by morphology in one and the same manner. As will be shown in subsequent paragraphs, four basic configurations of qualification and morphological indicators can be distinguished. The fact that this has not always been recognised in linguistic descriptions of MWA in conjunction with the imprecise or simply unaware use of the term “qualification” does not contribute to the clarity of the description of hypotactic syntagms in MWA. This paper is an attempt to propose a more consistent treatment of the matter. To this aim, first, the concept of qualification will be introduced.

2. Words, Qualification and Syntagms

Before introducing the concept of qualification as it will be used in the present paper, let us first remark that the problem of the relationship between two words constituting a composite language sign has been viewed by linguists in various ways. Some of them used the term without elucidating its sense. For instance, Trubetzkoy distinguished three main types of syntagms, i.e. “syntagmes prédicatifs”, “syntagmes sociatifs”, and “syntagmes déterminatifs”, the latter involving “déterminé” and “déterminant” (concepts that can be treated as synonyms of “qualificatum” and “qualificator” to be introduced subsequently) (Trubetzkoy 1939). However, he did not explain what he understood under these terms. In Tesnière’s approach words, or “terms”, are analysed as subordinated to one another, the superior term being the *régissant*, which governs (*régit*) the subordinated one (Tesnière 1966 [1959]: 13). According to him, “Le sens du subordonné porte sur celui du régissant dont il dépend” (Tesnière 1966 [1959]: 42); “le subordonné” is “le déterminant” and “le régissant” is “le déterminé” (p. 43). As for what “porter sur” means, he explains that in the expression *les petits ruisseaux font les grandes rivières* “le sens de *petits* porte sur celui de *ruisseaux*, et je comprends ainsi que la petitesse est la qualité des ruisseaux et non celle des rivières” (p. 43). Thus, one can infer, Tesnière’s relationship between “déterminant” and “déterminé” consists in indicating that the former word designates a quality, or a property, of what is designated by the latter.

It was pointed out by Seiler that in all discussions on “determinant” and “determinatum” “Es gibt keine wirkliche Definition dieser Begriffe” (Seiler 1960: 9). Seiler remarks: “In den meisten Verwendungsweisen der beiden Termini spielt das rein Semantische die Hauptrolle: Das Determinatum wird in seiner Bedeutung durch das Determinans »näher bestimmt« oder »eingengt«” (Seiler 1960: 9). However, one might ask: when one says *a black cat*, does the “Determinans” *black* specify, or narrow down, the meaning (“Bedeutung”) of the “Determinatum” *a cat*? If so, this would mean that the resultant sign means less, i.e. conveys less information. But *a black cat* does not mean less than *a cat*. Quite to the contrary, it means more.

It should also be noted that sometimes “grammatical determination” is distinguished from “logical determination”, e.g. in Schmidt (1961). On the question of the

relationship between the subject and the predicate, Schmidt writes: “[...] erkennt man, daß die grammatische Determination des Verbs durch das Subjekt (nach Person und Numerus) mit der logischen Determination des Gegenstandes durch das Prädikat keineswegs zusammenfällt, vielmehr die eine umgekehrt wie die andere gerichtet ist: Das Subjekt determiniert das Prädikat grammatisch, und das Prädikat determiniert mit seiner inhaltlichen Bedeutung die vom Subjekt bezeichnete Bedeutung logisch” (Schmidt 1961: 20). This double meaning of “determination” was also registered in the dictionary by Gołąb et al. (1968: 124).

Let us now introduce the concept of qualification as it will be employed in the present study. It will be based on the theoretical framework developed by Bańczewski (*inter alia* 1980, 1997). As it was said at the beginning, hypotactic syntagms are composite language signs constituted by words, which are simplex signs. It is easy to imagine why languages cannot be limited to simplex signs, i.e. to words. In an extreme case, in a hypothetical world where words would be the maximal units of language, even meanings as complex as, for instance, that contained in the Quran, would be expressible in one word. The number, and of necessity the length, of such simplex signs requirable for any speaker to express any communicative intent would be simply too great a burden on his or her memory. Natural languages “chose” another option, namely composite signs. The question why simplex signs actually are not sufficient has a two-part answer. One reason is that the range of designation of some simplex signs is too narrow, i.e. they designate an insufficient number of objects in the extralingual reality (cf. Bańczewski et al. 1982: 238). For instance, MWA has no word which could designate a cat and a mouse at the same time (anaphora such as *humā* ‘the two of them’, hyperonyms such as *al-ḥayawanāni* ‘the two animals’, etc. do not interest us here). The sign *qittatun* ‘a cat’ designates only cats, the sign *fa’run* ‘a mouse’ designates only mice. Only a composite sign resulting from the combination of both, *qittatun wa fa’run* ‘a cat and a mouse’, is able to express the speaker’s intent. This type of combining simplex signs into composite ones is called PARATAXIS (or coordination). The resultant composite signs are paratactic syntagms.

On the other hand, it happens that a simplex sign has a range of designation which is too broad, i.e. it designates a fragment of extralingual reality which is too wide with respect to the speaker’s communicative intention. For instance, if a speaker means a cat that is black, he or she will not find one word in MWA which would have the suitable range of designation. The range of designation of a simplex sign has to be narrowed down, and this is made by means of creating a composite sign of a specific type. In MWA this is *qittatun sawdā’u* ‘a black cat’. This composite sign does not designate all possible cats but only the black ones. This type of combining simplex signs into composite ones is called HYPOTAXIS (or subordination). The resultant composite signs are hypotactic syntagms. The two words combined by means of hypotaxis are bound by the relation of qualification (Bańczewski 1997: 1162; cf. also 1980, esp. 65ff). The qualified word is referred to as the qualificatum; the qualifying word is referred to as the qualifier. Words constituting a syntagm are its constituents.

The relation of qualification has very important consequences for the meaning (signification) and for the range of designation of the words bound by this relation and of the resulting hypotactic syntagm. According to Bańczewski:

“the qualifier expands (broadens) the total meaning (significatum) of its qualificatum, whereby the total meaning of the resultant syntagma includes that of its constituent qualificatum” [...]

“the qualifier restricts (narrows down) the radius (range) of designation of its qualificatum, whereby the designation radius of the resultant syntagma is included in that of its constituent qualificatum” (Bańczewski 1997: 1162).

Biconstituent syntagms are not maximal composite signs of any language. There can be syntagms composed of more than two words. This is possible because a word which is a qualifier in one syntagm can be a qualificatum in another syntagm. Also, a word which is a qualificatum in one syntagm can be a qualifier in another syntagm. Put differently, a word can be *in statu qualificati* and *in statu qualificatoris* at the same time (Bańczewski 1997: 1163). For instance, in the triconstituent syntagm *intensely black eyes* one can distinguish two biconstituent syntagms: (*eyes, black*) and (*black, intensely*), with the qualificatum given first and the qualifier second. The word *black* is *in statu qualificatoris* in the former syntagm, while it is *in statu qualificati* in the latter.

3. Indirect Attribute

Let us now apply the concept of qualification as introduced above to the triconstituent syntagm (1), in which the last two words form a construction known in the Arab linguistic tradition as *na't sababī* and in the Western grammars frequently referred to as “indirect attribute”. First, however, some other descriptions of the relationships within the indirect attribute encountered in the writings of Arabists will be adduced in order to complete the picture outlined in the introduction on the example of approaches by Badawi et al. and El-Ayoubi et al.

Grande characterises the adjective occurring in it as agreeing with respect to case with the determinatum (viz. *li r-ra'īsi*) but “explaining”, or “specifying” the noun in the nominative (viz. *wilāyatuhu*) (“*prilagatel'noe [...] soglasovannoe v padeže s opredeljaemym, no objasnjajuščee imja [...] v imenitel'nom padeže*”, Grande 1963: 351). Thus, the adjective is interpreted here as determining one word while specifying another.

Die m (1998) distinguishes several types of constructions of this kind, which he terms “adjektivischer Satz”. Syntagm (1) corresponds to his type 1.1. (Die m 1998: 24–59). When investigating and describing what he calls “syntaktischer und semantischer Bezug

des *na't*⁴ in this type of construction (pp. 32–33), he uses terms denoting relationships of rather non-linguistic character, e.g. “sich beziehen” (“Semantisch bezieht sich das *na't* primär auf das ihm folgende *marfū'*”, p. 32); “gelten” (“Darüber hinaus gilt die vom *na't* vermittelte Eigenschaft gewöhnlich nicht nur für das *marfū'*, sondern auch für das *man'ūt*”, p. 33); and “zutreffen”, (“daß eine für das *marfū'* zutreffende Eigenschaft in mehr oder weniger hohem Maße auch für das *man'ūt* berechtigt ist”, p. 33). He also observes that in most cases studied by him (his corpus consisted of classical Arabic texts), the *marfū'* can be omitted (“Tilgt man nämlich das *marfū'*...”, p. 33) and the remaining *man'ūt* with its *na't* still constitute sensical (“sinnvol”, p. 33) or, at least, not completely non-sensical (“nicht ganz unsinnig”, p. 34) constructions. This is so because, as he argues, “das *man'ūt* gewöhnlich an der vom *na't* vermittelten Eigenschaft partizipiert” (p. 34)⁵. In this respect, Diem's approach is close to those of Bergsträsser (1975 [1928]: 145) and Blau (1999), who stress the *από κοινού* character of this construction, i.e. the adjective somehow referring to both substantives.

In her manual of Arabic syntax, Paradela Alonso says that the adjective in this construction is a complex adjective which “in reality describes a quality of/qualifies a subpart of its first or apparent qualificatum” (“en realidad está adjetivando a una subparte [...] de su calificado primero o aparente”, Paradela Alonso 2005 [1998]: 43). Put differently, this adjective “is the one which predicates a quality of a second substantive, which is linked⁶ to the other one and refers to it by means of a suffixed pronoun” (“es aquél que predica una cualidad de un segundo sustantivo que, a su vez, está vinculado con otro sustantivo anterior y al que se refiere por medio de un pronombre afijo”, p. 43). Accordingly, the word *li r-ra'tsi* would be the “first or apparent qualificatum”, while *wilāyatuhu* would be the one qualified “in reality”. Thus, one is faced with qualification which can be apparent or real. According to a description proposed by Jebali, “Cet adjectif ne porte pas sur le nom qu'il qualifie, mais sur un autre nom que a un certain rapport avec celui-là” (Jebali 2005: 9). It can be inferred that, strangely enough, “porter sur” and “qualifier” are not the same. Finally, let us adduce the characterisation of this construction provided by Fischer, who explains it by saying that “The adjectival clause has a two-fold reference: on the one hand it agrees in gender with its subject, on the other hand in case and definiteness/indefiniteness with its reference noun” (Fischer 2006: 20).

Let us now attempt to describe this syntagm in the light of the concept of qualification as introduced above. The adjective (*l-muntahiyati*) does not qualify the substantive preceding it (*li r-ra'tsi*), because the property of ‘being in the state of ending’ designated by the

⁴ Diem is using here terms taken from traditional Arab grammar. Thus, *na't* (‘attribute; description’) is the adjective; *marfū'* (lit. ‘the noun in the nominative’) is the substantive in the nominative following the adjective; *man'ūt* (lit. ‘the noun described’) is the substantive preceding the adjective.

⁵ Note that this does not hold true for many examples, including example (1) above. The expression with the *marfū'* omitted is non-sensical: **li r-ra'tsi l-muntahiyati*.

⁶ Cf. the discussion of “semantic link” between the two substantives in Carter (1985), where the term *na't sabab* is analysed as “semantically linked attribute” (examples from classical Arabic are discussed there).

adjective cannot be predicated of the president (it is not the president that is ending). Instead, it is predicated of the term of office (designated by *wilāyatuhu*). Therefore, the adjective will be said to qualify the substantive *wilāyatuhu*; this qualification is indicated by the concord of these two words with regard to gender and number. It should be stressed here that the concord with respect to state and case between the words *li r-ra'īsi* and *l-muntahiyati* does not indicate qualification between them: the word *li r-ra'īsi* is qualified by the entire phrase *l-muntahiyati wilāyatuhu*; the concord between *li r-ra'īsi* and *l-muntahiyati* indicates this phrasal qualification⁷. Consequently, one is dealing here with morphological indicators not pointing to qualification between words. This shows very clearly that morphology must not be automatically interpreted to indicate qualification, whether “apparent”, “structural”, “indirect”, or other.

3. Formal Annexation

Another kind of MWA syntagm which has been described in contrasting ways is the so-called “formal annexation” (also called “unreal annexation”; the terms are translations of Arabic *idāfa lafziyya* and *idāfa ġayr haqīqiyya*, respectively). In the example (2), the formal annexation is represented by the expression *šadīdata š-šafā'i*:

- (2) 'an takūna rudūd-u 'af'āl-i-hi [...] šadīd-at-a š-šafā'-i
 that they.be return.NH.PL-NOM action.NH.PL-GEN-his strong-NH.PL-ACC DEF-clarity.(M).SG-GEN
 ‘that his reactions be very clear’ lit. ‘strong of clarity’
 (At-Taqaḥī 09.11.2004, 5, *Al-'ibda'u bayna n-naqdi...*)

A formal annexation consists of an adjective (here: *šadīdata* ‘strong’) which is directly followed by its *rectum*, a definite substantive in the genitive case (here: *š-šafā'i* ‘of clarity’). Syntactically, such adjectives can function as attributes or predicates (as in the above example); they can also be substantivised.

The substantive in the genitive has been described as “a restrictive or limitative genitive” (Wright 1962 [1862], II: 221); the genitive of “Hinsicht, für die, oder des Bereichs, für den eine Eigenschaft gilt; dabei wird diese sehr oft von einer Sache, der sie gilt, auf deren Besitzer übertragen” (Brockelmann 1913, II: 252); “Genitiv der Spezialisierung” (Reckendorf 1921: 187–188); a substantive used with an adjective “for clarification” (“dlja pojasnenija”, Jušmanov 1928: 129). Langer speaks of “Modifikatoren” of the adjective “die seinen quantitativen oder qualitativen Aspekt spezifizieren” (Langer 1988: 79) and Badawi et al. say that “An adj.[ective] may have its scope specified by annexation” (Badawi et al. 2004: 111). All these terms

⁷ Note that in this double concord, the adjective agrees with respect to more inherent categories (gender and number) with its qualificatum. The categories with respect to which it agrees with *li r-raġūli* (state and case) depend on the syntactic context.

related to restricting, specifying, etc. are used without being elucidated; consequently, it is not clear what is “restricted” or “specified” – the range of designation of a word or its meaning.

The concept of qualification presented above enables this kind of syntagm to be characterised in the following way: the adjective is qualified by the substantive in the genitive. In example (2), the substantive *ṣ-ṣafā’i* ‘of clarity’ restricts the range of designation of the adjective *šadīdata* ‘strong’ so that the sign *šadīdata ṣ-ṣafā’i* does not designate objects that are ‘strong’ (although reactions can be strong) but only objects that are ‘strong in clarity’, i.e. ‘very clear’. One can guess that this is what the authors of the above descriptions probably had in mind, however, only Brockelmann’s “Bereich, für den eine Eigenschaft gilt” suggests that he might have thought of restricting the range of designation.

There have been also other approaches to formal annexations. Let us reiterate here Brockelmann’s observation that “wird diese [scil. Eigenschaft/property] sehr oft von einer Sache, der sie gilt [expressed by the substantive in the genitive], auf deren Besitzer [expressed by the qualificatum of the adjective] übertragen”. As far as example (2) is concerned, this means that ‘reactions’ (Besitzer/possessor) can be characterised by the property of strength because it can be “übertragen” to it from the object to which it refers (“von einer Sache, der sie gilt”), i.e. from “clarity”. Ideas related to this observation are visible in the words of Cantarino, who writes: “The adjective is [...] in agreement with its governing noun, although it logically refers to the genitive it governs” (Cantarino 1975: 109), and Paradela Alonso, according to whom “the adjective in such *idāfas* always refers to the preceding term” (“el adjetivo de estas *idāfas* se refiere siempre al término anterior”, Paradela Alonso 2005 [1998]: 37), although elsewhere she observes that the word following the adjective is its subject (p. 41).

A completely different view, breaking with the idea that the property of the entity expressed by the substantive in the genitive is somehow “transferred” to the qualificatum of the adjective, was proposed by Diem (1986). He rejected the traditional interpretation of the “restrictive or limitative genitive”, or “Genitiv des Geltungsbereichs”, for “semantic” reasons. He analysed the formal annexation *kaṭīru l-māli* lit. ‘much of wealth’, which can occur, for instance, in the sentence *Zaydun kaṭīru l-māli* ‘Zayd is wealthy’ lit. ‘Zayd is abundant in wealth’. This analysis induced him to argue that since one cannot say **Zaydun kaṭīru* ‘Zayd is abundant’, because the “Verbindung von Individuativum und Massenadjektiv” is “ungrammatikalisch”, the adjective *kaṭīru* cannot be interpreted as “in seinem Geltungsbereich eingeschränkt” (Diem 1986: 250). Semantically, he concludes, the formal annexation can only be understood as “exozentrisches Possessivsyntagma [...], dessen adjektivischer Teil eine Prädikation des Genitivs, also des Possessums, bildet”. According to Diem, the adjective is thus, semantically, the predicate of the substantive in the genitive. Predicates are usually said to qualify their subjects but, obviously, the question whether Diem would say that in formal annexation the adjective qualifies the substantive in the genitive cannot be answered.

It seems that the “problem” described by Diem can be solved in the following way: in some formal annexations, qualification of the adjective is obligatory, otherwise a non-grammatical expression results, cf. **Zaydun kaṭīru* ‘Zayd is much’. The adjective *kaṭīru* requires a qualifier, e.g. *l-māli* ‘of wealth’. Obligatory qualification is not unknown in other languages. For instance, in Polish one cannot say **te drzwi są trudne* ‘this door is difficult’. However, if the adjective is properly qualified, the expression is well-formed, cf. *te drzwi są trudne do otworzenia* ‘this door is difficult to open’.

4. Qualification in Some True Annexations

“True annexations”, in contrast to formal annexations, are genitival constructions in which the governing word (*regens*) is not an adjective but a substantive or a substantivised adjective. Some examples will be discussed here in which qualification has been established in controversial ways, chiefly, as it seems, on the grounds of their English translations. This concerns syntagms with words such as *ḡayr-* ‘other than, un-’ and *šibh-* ‘similar to, quasi-’, which can be exemplified as follows⁸:

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|------------------------|
| (3) <i>ʿasālīb-u</i> | <i>ḡayr-u</i> | <i>mašrūʿ-at-i-n</i> |
| way.NH.PL-NOM-INDF | reverse.(NH).SG-NOM | legal-NH.PL-GEN-INDF |
| ‘illegal ways’ lit. ‘ways the reverse of legal’ | | |
| (Al-Ġazīra 03.04.2004, 2, <i>Ġaymatu l-ʿamni...</i>) | | |
| | | |
| (4) <i>qunbulat-u-n</i> | <i>šibh-u</i> | <i>nawawiyy-at-i-n</i> |
| bomb.(F).SG-NOM-INDF | like.(NH).SG-NOM | nuclear-F.SG-GEN-INDF |
| ‘a quasi-nuclear bomb’ lit. ‘a bomb the like of nuclear’ | | |
| (Aš-Šarq 14.04.2004, 1, <i>Al-Fallūḡatu... wa mā ʿadrāka...</i>) | | |

The words *ḡayru* and *šibhu*, followed by their adjectival *recta* in the genitive, can function as attributes or predicates of other substantives. In the above examples, they are attributes of the substantives *ʿasālību* and *qunbulatun*. It seems justifiable to consider them to be qualified by their *recta* and to form with them expressions which, more or less literally, can be translated as “the reverse of legal” and “the like of nuclear”. This is how the meanings expressed by English prefixes *un-* and *quasi-* are expressed in MWA, which “codes” them in a way quite different from most European languages. However, in some Western grammars of MWA this fact fails to be reflected in the descriptions of the construction. For instance, El-Ayoubi et al. treat *ḡayr-* and *šibh-* as “Modifikatoren des Adjektivs” (El-Ayoubi et al. 2001: 146ff.) and Badawi et al. list them under

⁸ For the sake of clarity, the substantives *ʿasālību* and *qunbulatun* are given in the nominative case, i.e. differently from their original occurrence in the excerpted text.

“miscellaneous determiners” (B a d a w i et al. 2004: 232ff.). This may suggest that it is the adjectives that are “modified” or “determined” by these substantives⁹.

There are other kinds of true annexation which have been described from a European point of view. Let us consider, for example, syntagms like that in (5):

- (5) *raft’-u* *l-marākiz-i*
 elevated.NG.NN-NOM DEF-position.NH.PL-GEN
 ‘elevated positions’ lit. ‘the elevated of positions’
 (Al-Mīṭāq 30.12.2003, 7)

The characteristic feature of such syntagms, which convey the meaning of emphasis (“very high positions”), is that their qualificational structure is different from a “standard” adjectival syntagm (cf. *al-marākizu r-raft’atu* ‘elevated positions’). Here, the adjective is qualified by the substantive (cf. some syntagms conveying emphasis in European languages: English *a devil of a man* and French *un si drôle de nom*, Jespersen 1965 [1924]: 99). However, B a d a w i et al. say that adjectives in such constructions constitute annexation with “the noun they qualify” (B a d a w i et al. 2004: 110). One might ask: why should these adjectives be considered to qualify in such syntagms rather than to be qualified? Translations into English or any other language cannot be decisive here. Neither can the non-linguistic relationship between the property, expressed by the adjective, and its bearer, expressed by the substantive. For the same reasons, one cannot say that in the syntagm (6):

- (6) *rābi’-u* *ṭā’irat-i-n*
 fourth.NG.NN-NOM plane.(F).SG-GEN-INDF
 ‘the fourth plane’ lit. ‘the fourth of plane’
 (Al-’Ahrām 29.01.2003, 26, *Tahsīnu ḡūdātī...*)

the adjective *rābi’u* qualifies the substantive *ṭā’iratin* only because it does so in the English translation, viz. ‘the fourth plane’ or because the literal translation ‘the fourth of plane’ makes little sense in English. A similar example is the Latin expression *ab Urbe condita* ‘from the foundation of the City’, where *ab Urbe* ‘from the City’ is qualified by *condita* ‘founded’, thus, the entire phrase literally means ‘from the city having been founded’ – an expression which would hardly be used to indicate time in English.

Moreover, two more or less synonymous and in most contexts interchangeable expressions can have different qualificational structures (with hardly any difference in emphasis). For instance, syntagm (6), with the adjective qualified by the substantive, is synonymous and in most contexts interchangeable with syntagm (7), in which the qualification is exactly the opposite, i.e. the substantive is qualified by the adjective:

⁹ In B a d a w i et al. (2004), the determiner is explained in the glossary as “*noun* occurring with another noun to express such meanings as *quantity*, e.g., ‘some’” (2004: 773).

- (7) *aṭ-ṭā'irat-u* *r-rābi'-at-u*
 DEF-plane.(F).SG-NOM DEF-fourth-F.SG-NOM
 'the fourth plane'

Similar, though of course not identical, examples can be found in other languages as well. Consider, for instance, *that kind of book*, where *kind* is qualified by *of book*, and *the book of that kind*, where *book* is qualified by *of kind*.

5. Syntagms with numerals

The last problem to be discussed here concerns a non-classical kind of syntagm involving an adjective and a cardinal numeral as exemplified in (8):

- (8) *ḥilāla l-'arba'īna 'āman-a-ni l-māḍiy-at-i* (or *l-māḍiy-at-a*)
 during DEF-forty.GEN year.(M).SG-ACC-INDF DEF-past-NH.PL-GEN DEF-past-NH.PL-ACC
 'during the past forty years'
 (Al-'Arabī 05.2004, 93)

In this syntagm, the numeral substantive *l-'arba'īna* 'forty' is qualified by the word expressing a counted object, i.e. years. This word, *'āman*, is singular, indefinite, and stands in the accusative. More literally, the construction *al-'arba'īna 'āman* translates as 'the forty in terms of years' and is in perfect agreement with the rules of classical Arabic. However, when additional information is to be conveyed, e.g. that the years are past, an innovative construction is used which had not been dealt with by the classical Arab grammarians: the word *'āman* is followed by the adjective meaning 'past', which agrees with the numeral with regard to state (definiteness). Also its plural number should probably be interpreted as a result of concord with the inherently plural numeral. Its case, however, is difficult to determine.

Grammars of MWA provide contradictory data in this respect. Corriente gives two examples: *'arba'ūna raḡulan mu'minīna* 'forty believing men' and *ḥamsata 'ašara yawman kāmīlatan* 'fifteen full days' (Corriente 2002: 132), in which the adjectives agree with respect to case (the accusative) with the substantives designating counted objects. But Cantarino gives the example *fi l-'iṣrīna 'awi t-talāṭīna sanatani l-'aḥīrati* 'during the last twenty or thirty years' (Cantarino 1975, 2: 52), in which the adjective agrees with respect to case (the genitive) with the numeral; the same holds true for the example given by Badawi et al.: *ḥilāla l-15 'āmani l-'aḥīrati* 'during the last 15 years' (Badawi et al. 2004: 262). Thus, it is not clear which solution should be chosen. Classical grammars do not account for such cases. As for Arabic speakers, they tend not to pronounce these endings. It can be said that as far as case is concerned, morphology of the adjective is indeterminate. Moreover, it is difficult to establish beyond doubt what the qualificatum of the adjective is: the numeral (which, let us reiterate, is a substantive

numeral, therefore a syntagm ‘the past forty’ is conceivable) or the substantive designating a counted object (then, the syntagm is ‘the past years’). Consequently, this kind of syntagm may be characterised as involving a constituent, viz. the adjective, with indeterminate morphology and, perhaps, indeterminate qualification.

6. Conclusion

In the preceding paragraphs, some kinds of syntagms have been presented and discussed with respect to morphological indicators on their constituents and to the relation of qualification obtaining between these constituents. It has been shown that morphological indicators on words do not necessarily signal qualification between them. This is the case in the indirect attribute discussed in Section 3, in which the agreement with respect to state and case between *li r-ra’is-i* ‘for the president’ and *l-muntahiy-at-i* ‘ending’ does not indicate qualification between them.

However, one should bear in mind that two words may be bound by qualification without this being signalled by morphological indicators. In such cases, one can speak of lexical junction (cf. Bańczewski 1988: 54), which means that the constituents hold together on the strength of their lexical meaning. For instance, the hypotactic syntagm (9) is based on lexical junction:

- (9) *ğayyid-u-n* *ğiddan*
 good.M-NOM-INDF very
 ‘very good’

It should be remarked, however, that in hypotactic syntagms based on lexical junction the linear order may be considered to be indicative of qualification.

When qualification is signalled by morphological indicators, this can happen in two ways: (i) the qualificator is governed by, or agrees with, its qualificatum, or (ii) the qualificatum is governed by, or agrees with, its qualificator. It seems that the former is the case in all hypotactic syntagms in MWA in which qualification is signalled by morphological indicators. The latter situation does not occur in MWA, it can be found in other languages though, e.g. in Swahili. An example is given in (10):

- (10) *M-tu* *a-na-ki-soma* *ki-tabu*
 CLASS1-man CLASS1-PRES-CLASS7-read CLASS7-book
 ‘The man is reading the book’

In this Swahili sentence, the word *anakisoma* ‘is reading’ is qualified by *kitabu* ‘a book’ and agrees with it with respect to class (class 7). This concord is indicated by the affix *-ki-* in *anakisoma*.

To sum up, the following four basic configurations (without additional combinations) of morphological indicators and qualification can be distinguished:

- (i) morphological indicators without qualification,
- (ii) qualification without morphological indicators,
- (iii) qualification signalled by morphological indicators such that the qualificator is governed by, or agrees with, its qualificatum,
- (iv) qualification signalled by morphological indicators such that the qualificatum is governed by, or agrees with, its qualificator.

Among these four configurations, only (i), (ii) and (iii) are encountered in MWA (configuration (i) being the least frequent). Besides these observations, it should also be remarked that examples analysed above show that qualification in MWA hypotactic syntagms does not need to be parallel to qualification in their translations into English or other languages.

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