

# The Object Complement in Arabic and Its Equivalent in French: A Contrastive Study

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## Abstract

This study examines the object complement in Arabic and compares it with its equivalent structures in French from a contrastive grammatical perspective. The research focuses on the definition, types, syntactic behavior, and grammatical functions of object complements in both languages. A descriptive-comparative approach is adopted, based on classical and modern Arabic grammatical sources alongside contemporary French grammatical references. Illustrative examples are used to explain the various linguistic phenomena discussed in the study. The findings reveal that Arabic relies extensively on inflectional markers and demonstrates significant flexibility in sentence structure, particularly regarding word order variation. In contrast, French depends primarily on fixed syntactic order, prepositions, and clitic pronouns to express grammatical relations. The study further highlights important differences between the two languages in terms of transitivity, object placement, and syntactic functions. It concludes that contrastive analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the grammatical systems of Arabic and French and provides practical applications in language teaching, translation studies, and learner error analysis.

## Keywords

Object Complement, Arabic Grammar, French Grammar, Transitivity, Contrastive Linguistics, Syntactic Structure

## 1. Introduction

Arabic grammar is one of the major linguistic disciplines concerned with regulating sentence structure and clarifying grammatical relations among sentence ele-

ments. Among the essential components of the Arabic verbal sentence is the object complement, which receives the action performed by the subject and contributes to completing and clarifying sentence meaning.

The object complement has attracted considerable attention from both classical and modern grammarians because of its diverse forms and grammatical functions. It may appear as an explicit noun, an attached or detached pronoun, an interpreted infinitive clause, or other syntactic constructions. Its grammatical behavior also varies according to context, sentence structure, and verb type.

Interest in object complements is not limited to Arabic grammar. In French, similar grammatical functions are expressed through the direct object (Complément d'objet direct—COD) and the indirect object (Complément d'objet indirect—COI). This correspondence provides a suitable basis for a contrastive study aimed at identifying similarities and differences between the two languages, particularly regarding transitivity, syntactic order, and grammatical markers.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the object complement in Arabic and compare it with its equivalent structures in French through a contrastive grammatical approach (Abbas, 1997).

The study seeks to answer the following research question:

How do Arabic and French differ in the grammatical representation and syntactic behavior of object complements?

The importance of this study lies in its contribution to contrastive linguistics, Arabic and French grammatical studies, translation studies, and foreign language teaching.

## 2. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-comparative approach grounded in classical and modern Arabic grammatical traditions as well as contemporary French grammatical studies. The analysis focuses on the syntactic, morphological, and semantic behavior of object complements in both languages.

The examples used throughout the study are primarily constructed sentences based on established grammatical norms commonly found in Arabic and French linguistic literature. Some examples are adapted from traditional grammar books and pedagogical references in order to illustrate specific grammatical phenomena clearly and systematically. The study does not rely on a large-scale linguistic corpus or quantitative statistical analysis (Al-Azhari, 2000).

However, to strengthen the descriptive validity of the study, a limited number of naturally occurring examples inspired by authentic linguistic usage are incorporated where relevant. The primary objective remains theoretical and contrastive rather than corpus-based (Al-Ghalayini, 1994).

The comparison between Arabic and French is conducted on three complementary levels.

### 2.1. Syntactic Level

This level examines sentence structure, constituent order, object placement, and

fronting possibilities in both languages.

## 2.2. Morphological Level

This section analyzes grammatical markers, pronoun systems, inflectional patterns, and cliticization processes associated with object complements.

## 2.3. Semantic Level

This level investigates transitivity relations, semantic roles, and the relationship between verbs and their complements (Atiq, 1987).

From a theoretical perspective, the study draws upon principles of contrastive linguistics and linguistic typology. Particular attention is given to:

- the distinction between inflectional and analytic languages;
- typology-based word order parameters;
- and the distinction between structural equivalence and semantic equivalence in cross-linguistic comparison.

Arabic is generally characterized as a highly inflectional language with flexible word order, whereas French is considered more analytic and syntactically constrained (Bescherelle, 2012).

## 3. The Object Complement in Arabic

### 3.1. Definition of the Object Complement

In Arabic grammar, the object complement is an accusative noun upon which the action of the subject falls in a verbal sentence, provided that the verb is transitive (Ibn Aqil, 1980).

Example

كتبَ الطالبُ الدرسَ.

The student wrote the lesson.

The word الدرسَ (the lesson) functions as the object complement because it receives the action of the verb كتبَ (wrote).

The object complement is generally identified by asking the questions “what?” or “whom?” after the verb.

### 3.2. Types of the Object Complement in Arabic

#### 3.2.1. Explicit Noun

أكرمَ المعلمُ الطالبَ.

The teacher honored the student.

#### 3.2.2. Attached Pronoun

أكرمني المعلمُ.

The teacher honored me.

#### 3.2.3. Detached Pronoun

إيايَ أكرمَ المعلمُ.

It is me whom the teacher honored.

### 3.2.4. Interpreted Infinitive Clause

أريد أن أتعلم.

I want to learn.

### 3.2.5. Relative Pronouns and Demonstratives

أكرمته الذي استضافنا أمس.

I honored the one who hosted us yesterday.

## 3.3. Word Order of the Object Complement in Arabic

The basic order of the Arabic verbal sentence is:

Verb + Subject + Object

However, Arabic demonstrates considerable syntactic flexibility for rhetorical and semantic purposes.

Example

إياك أكرم المعلم.

It is you whom the teacher honored.

Arabic also permits object fronting in interrogative structures.

Example

من قابلت اليوم؟

Whom did you meet today?

This flexibility reflects the inflectional nature of Arabic, where grammatical relations are primarily determined through case endings rather than rigid word order (Charaudeau, 1992).

## 4. The Object Complement in French

### 4.1. Definition of the Object Complement

In French, the direct object (Complément d'objet direct—COD) is defined as the element that completes the meaning of a transitive verb without the mediation of a preposition (Ibn Jinni, 1952).

Example

Il lit un livre.

He reads a book.

French also distinguishes between the direct object and the indirect object (Complément d'objet indirect—COI), which is introduced by a preposition such as à or de.

Example

Il parle à son frère.

He speaks to his brother.

### 4.2. Types of the Object Complement in French

#### 4.2.1. Explicit Noun

Il lit un livre.

He reads a book.

#### 4.2.2. Pronoun

Je le vois.

I see him.

#### 4.2.3. Infinitive

Il aime étudier.

He likes studying.

#### 4.2.4. Subordinate Clause

Je pense qu'il viendra.

I think that he will come.

### 5. Contrastive Analysis between Arabic and French

The comparison between Arabic and French reveals several important grammatical and typological differences concerning object complements (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The comparison between Arabic and French.

Aspect	Arabic	French
Basic sentence order	Verb + Subject + Object	Subject + Verb + Object
Word order flexibility	Highly flexible	Relatively fixed
Grammatical marking	Case endings and inflection	Word order and prepositions
Object fronting	Common and productive	Limited and stylistically restricted
Pronoun placement	Frequently attached to the verb	Usually placed before the verb
Transitivity patterns	Many verbs directly transitive	Some verbs require prepositions
Dependence on prepositions	Less frequent	More frequent
Typological nature	Inflectional language	Analytic language

These differences can largely be explained through linguistic typology. Arabic relies extensively on inflectional morphology, allowing greater syntactic flexibility and freer constituent order. French, by contrast, depends more heavily on linear word order and grammatical markers such as prepositions and clitic pronouns (Dubois & Lagane, 2005).

The contrastive analysis also demonstrates that equivalence between Arabic and French is not always structural. In many cases, semantic equivalence is maintained despite important grammatical differences between the two languages (Grevisse & Goosse, 2011).

Example

Arabic: أطاع الطالبُ أباهُ.

The student obeyed his father.

French: L'étudiant obéit à son père.

This example demonstrates that transitivity relations do not always correspond between the two languages (Riegel et al., 2009).

### 6. Limitations of the Study

This study is primarily theoretical and descriptive in nature. The analysis relies

mainly on introspective examples, pedagogical constructions, and grammatical references rather than large-scale linguistic corpora or quantitative data.

Consequently, the findings should not be interpreted as statistically representative of all contemporary Arabic and French language usage. Certain grammatical structures may vary according to genre, register, dialectal variation, or contextual usage.

Another limitation concerns the restricted scope of the comparison, which focuses mainly on standard Arabic and standard French grammatical systems without extensive consideration of spoken varieties.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a useful framework for understanding the principal syntactic and typological differences between Arabic and French object complements.

Future research may benefit from:

- corpus-based comparative analysis;
- statistical investigation of object complement usage;
- inclusion of spoken language data;
- and broader cross-linguistic comparisons.

## 7. Conclusion

The object complement constitutes an essential component of sentence structure in both Arabic and French. Although the two languages share certain functional similarities, they differ significantly in syntactic organization and grammatical mechanisms.

The study has demonstrated that Arabic relies heavily on inflectional markers and exhibits considerable flexibility in word order, whereas French depends more on fixed syntactic structure, prepositions, and preverbal pronouns (Wagner & Pinchon, 1991).

The research also highlights important differences in transitivity patterns and object placement, reflecting broader typological distinctions between inflectional and analytic languages.

This study confirms the importance of contrastive linguistic research in deepening the understanding of grammatical systems, facilitating language learning, and supporting translation studies and grammatical analysis.

Future studies may further strengthen these findings through corpus-based approaches and broader multilingual comparisons.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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