

Adjectives in English French and Berber Kabyle: A Contrastive Study

Abstract:

The aim of the present article is to compare and contrast the syntactic category of adjectives in three different languages: English, French and Berber Kabyle in order to delimit whether the members of the word class adjective are the same in the three languages, whether they share the same characteristics, whether they are formed through the same syntactic functions.

Our study comprises a section where the three languages under discussion will be introduced as well as the status of the word class adjective in the three languages. We will devote a section to discuss the syntactic category of nouns since the latter have a direct syntactic relationship with adjectives and they form an imposing part in our work. We will also devote a section to the definition of adjectives, their origins and formation processes, their characteristics and their syntactic functions. A last section will be devoted to the comparison system in the three languages.

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحليل المقارن وتدرس الصفة في الإنجليزية والفرنسية والأمازيغية، خاصة القبائلية، من خلال طرح الأسئلة التالية: هل يتم تكوين الصفة عن طريق نفس سبل التكوين في اللغات الثلاث؟ هل هي من نفس الأصناف؟ هل تتميز بنفس المميزات والوظائف النحوية؟ بعد تحليل نحوي للصفة في الإنجليزية والفرنسية والقبائلية توصلنا إلى النتائج الآتية:
إن الصفات في اللغات الثلاث رغم اشتراكها في بعض النقاط فإنها تختلف في عدة نقاط أخرى.

Historical Background:

English, French and Berber Kabyle are three distinct languages. They even differ genetically as they belong to two different families. English and French belong to the germanic family and they are classified among the indo-european language, whereas Berber belongs to the chamito-semitic family. Each language has many dialects that form a constellation around the standard language.

It is worth mentioning that Berber is spoken in many regions of the north African area from the lybean areas till the Atlantic shores including some isles. The greater Berber speaking population

is concentrated in Algeria. and Morocco. Berber Kabyle is spoken in the central areas of north Algeria.

The following study will not comprise all the dialects of Berber but only Kabyle. Thus, the object of study will be confined to the adjectives in English, French and Kabyle. Moreover, all along this work we will use Berber instead of Kabyle for more standardization of the Berber language.

The Status of Adjectives:

Adjectives in English and French have reached their full status as an independent word class category and the members of this word class have their own characteristics that distinguish them from the other classes as they follow specific mechanisms and have their own functional properties. In Berber however, adjectives do not seem to have reached their status as a word class. The existence of a word class called adjective is questioned by F.Bentolila who stated:

« Pour ma part, je n'ai rien trouvé dans leurs compatibilités ou dans leur comportement syntactique qui puisse les distinguer des autres noms. Tout ce qu'on peut dire, c'est que certains noms (pseudo-adjectifs de type ameqran) de fait de leur contenu sémantique sont utilisés pour qualifier un autre nom. »
(Bentolila, 1986, p44)

He assumes that in the word class noun are some members that are used to qualify other nouns, and these pseudo- adjectives due to their semantic characteristics become qualifiers of the other members of the word class noun.

It is worth noting that if the adjective does not exist in Berber as a word class, how can we explain the fact that the faculty of qualifying and modifying the noun can be specific to a restricted number of nouns and general to all the members of the word class noun? and how can we explain the fact that the noun 'ukrif' (handicapped) according to F.Bentolila changes from a modifier, hence an adjective, to a nominal substantive when it changes its place of occurrence as illustrated in the following examples:

argaz ukrif (adj)
man handicapped
" a handicapped man"

ukrif yecca (N.subs)
handicapped he ate
"the handicapped ate"

We consider that the adjective in Berber exist as an independent word class because it is differentiated and distinguished from the other word classes by specific characteristics. Among these characteristics is its compatibility of co-occurrence. A noun is not compatible to occur with an adverbial intensifier such as: 'mlih' (very) , while an adjective is as in :

* argaz mlih
man good

d- ameqran mlih
an old good

This is also evident in English and French as in :

*very man

very good

* très homme

trés bien

Nouns in English French and Berber:

The necessity of discussing the syntactic category of nouns can be explained by the fact that adjectives have an adnominal function and thus are directly related to nouns and that English, French and Berber adjectives agree in gender and number with nouns. Moreover, the formation of adjectives in the three languages is sometimes related to nouns.

On the Characteristics of Nouns:

The members of the word class noun have the following characteristics: gender-number and state.

Gender:

In general, nouns are divided into three categories of gender:

Masculine:

A noun is said to be masculine when it generates the idea of the male gender. This is true in Berber and French but it is not entirely comprehensive in English where this definition is applied only upon human males as in :

boy (mas)	man (mas)	husband (mas)
aqcic (mas)	argaz (mas)	isli (mas)
garçon (mas)	homme (mas)	mari (mas)

English, however, possesses a third gender which is the neuter as in :

a book (n.neut.)

Feminine:

A noun is said to be feminine when it generates the idea of the female gender more specifically in English, French and Berber as in:

girl (fem)	woman (fem)
taqciçt (fem)	tametut (fem)
filie (fem)	femme (fem)

The three languages under discussion possess the masculine and the feminine gender. English however, possesses a third gender which is the neuter as in:

cat (neut)	tree (neut)
amcic (mas)	ttejra (fem)
book (neut)	chaise (fem)
livre (mas)	chair (neut)

Note that all neuter nouns in English are masculine or feminine nouns in French and Berber.

Number:

The three languages have the singular and the plural which denote a form of the noun that expresses the idea that only one person or animal

or thing is involved in the action , but when the number extends more than one it is the plural form.

It is important to note that most of the members of one word-class noun enter into some constructions of inflection to mark the plural form. In English and French for instance, they generally take the ‘ s’ at the end as a suffix as in :

boy (mas –sing)	boys (mas)
garçon (mas-sing)	garçons (mas-pl)

However, this morphological construction does not exist in Berber as in :

aqcic (mas-sing)	iqcicen (mas- pl)
boy	boys

It is worth noting that in the three languages there are some irregular plurals as illustrated in the following example:

foot (neut-sing)	feet (neut)
oiseau (mas-sing)	oiseaux (mas-pl)
argaz (mas-sing)	irgazen (mas- pl)

Syntactic functions of nouns:

Members of the word –class noun can function as subjects or objects in English and French as in :

Marie mange	Mary eats
(subj)	(subj)
Marie mange une pomme	Mary eats an apple
(obj)	(obj)

While in English and French the noun is the direct subject of the action, in Berber it is not so because in Berber, the direct subject is a grammatical moneme which can be a prefix or a suffix adjunct to the verb as in :

aqcic	y ecca
the boy	(pref) ate (he ate)
taqcict	t ecca
the girl	(pref) ate (she ate)

nkni	n	ecca
we	(pref)	ate (we ate)

A noun functions as object in English, French and Berber as in :

John eats a pear
Jean mange une poire

argaz yebnu axxam
the man builds the house

A Descriptive study of adjectives in English, French and Berber:

A dictionary definition of an adjective would be:

"A word that indicates a quality of a person or a thing referred to by a noun" (oxford dictionary,1981).

The adjective is a word –class that modifies the noun. It is an independent word –class category because it has its own base derivation, its own characteristics and its functional properties that distinguish it from other word –classes.

Formation of Adjectives:

Adjectives are either simple lexical items or derived from other word class categories. In English and French, there exist a set of adjectives that are morphologically constituted of simple lexical items that do not accept any kind of segmentation. These adjectives exist by convention and have no base derivation as in:

hot	chaud
good	bon
little	petit
big	grand

However such adjectives do not exist in Berber because in Berber all adjectives are derived from verbs as in:

verb	Adjective
"imlul" to be white	"amlal" white
"ismid" to be cold	"asmad" cold
"uzur" to be thick / fat	"azuran" thick / fat

Types of Adjectives:

Adjectives qualify nouns, and the type of adjective used depends on the type of noun being qualified. Adjectives may be classified into two categories: the qualitative and the non-qualitative adjectives. Qualitative adjectives are used to express a state or a quality of a being or a thing named by the noun which the adjective is joined to as in the following examples from English and French:

petit	heureux
small	happy

Adjectives in Berber are all derived from verbs of state or quality. It is worth mentioning that in Berber, there exist two categories of verbs: verbs of quality and ordinary verbs. While the former category of verbs describes the quality or the state, the latter describes the action as illustrated in the following examples:

verb	adjective
"azay" to be heavy	"azayan" heavy
"imlul" to be white	"amlal" white
"ismid" to be cold	"asmad" cold

Features of Adjectives:

The main features of adjectives are gender, number and state. As far as gender is concerned, English and French adjectives have only one form for the masculine and the feminine gender as in:

A kind boy (mas)

A kind girl (fem)

Note that the adjective 'kind' in the above examples is invariable for both 'boy' which is masculine and 'girl' which is feminine.

In French, however, adjectives change their form from masculine to feminine and this generally occurs by adding an 'e' as shown in the following examples:

Un petit garçon (mas)
A small boy

Une petite fille (fem)
A small girl

It is worth noting that adjectives in Berber enter into some morphological constructions following the modified noun in its gender. So when the noun is masculine the adjective will be masculine and it is the same thing for the feminine as shown in:

axxam (mas)
house
"The big house"

ameqran (mas)
big

taxxamt (fem)
room
"The large room"

tameqrant (fem)
large

Number:

As regards number, English adjectives are invariable whether the nouns they qualify are singular or plural as in:

A clever girl (sing)
Clever girls (pl)

In French, however, adjectives change their form from singular to plural and the general rule for the formation of plural adjectives consists of adding an (s) as in:

Un livre utile (sing)
a book useful
"A useful book"

Des livres utiles
 some books useful
 "Useful books"

In Berber, the adjective has a singular and a plural which are governed by their respective gender. Thus members of the word-class adjective follow almost the same process of pluralization which are the vocalic alternance and the suffixation as shown in the following examples:

axxam	ameqran (mas/sing)	ixxamin	imeqranen (mas/pl)
house	big	houses	big
"The big house"		"The big houses"	
acqcic	ucbih (mas/ sing)	icqcicen	ucbihen (mas/pl)
boy	nice	boys	nice
"The nice boy"		"The nice boys"	
taxxamt	tameqrant (fem/sing)	taxxamin	tameqranin (fem/pl)
room	large	rooms	large
"The large room"		"The large rooms"	
tacqcict	tucbiht (fem/sing)	ticqcicin	tucbihin (fem/pl)
girl	nice	girls	nice
"The nice girl"		"The nice girls"	

The Syntactic Functions of Adjectives:

The place of occurrence of an adjective in the sentence is the means by which its syntactic functions may be determined. Adjectives in English and French have two main functions: they can be used attributively or predicatively.

Adjectives are said to have an attributive use when they premodify nouns as in:

"A beautiful skirt"
 "Une jolie robe "

Adjectives are used predicatively when they postmodify nouns and function as object or subject complements as in :

"Mary is intelligent" (subj)
"Marie est intelligente"
"She found his offer interesting" (obj)
"Elle a trouvé son offre intéressante" (obj)

In Berber however , adjectives never function attributively because they enter into some gender and number constructs with the noun they premodify as in :

acqci	aweE ran	taxamt	yecebhen
boy	difficult	ring	nice
"The difficult boy"		"Her ring is nice"	

As for the predicative use, adjectives in Berber do not function as subject complements .Instead; a verb of quality involving an action done and undergone by the verbal affix is used. There exist no subject complement because there is no auxiliary corresponding to the English (to be)

As for object complements they function as accusative in Berber as in:

yerra	tametut	is	tefrac
he made	wife	his	happy
"He made his wife happy"			

We should note that the object complement is generally expressed into the factitive model. In the above sentence, there are two verbs. A verb standing as the principal verb of all the sentence,(yerra) and a verb standing for the secondary verb (tefrac).The latter plays the same role as the English adjective happy.

Points of Contrast and Related Aspects:

The comparison between adjectives in English, French and Berber, shows many differences as well as some similarities. The differences are mainly due to the fact that the word-class adjective belongs to three different languages having three different structures. Moreover, the three

languages differ genetically that is they belong to two distinct families. English and French are derived from the Germanic family, and Berber takes its origins from the chamito-semitic family.

In what follows we shall account analytically for the differences that exist between the adjectives in English, French and Berber and relate the cases where similarities occur.

The commonly shared characteristic of adjectives in all the languages that contain this word-class is that they modify a noun. Thus, a paramount importance is given to the relationship that exist between the adjective and the noun it modifies.

Adjectives in English, French and Berber differ in many instances. They differ in their formation processes, in their types, their features and their syntactic functions

Formation of Adjectives:

Both English and French adjectives are formed by derivation. The derivation in English and French is three fold because adjectives can be derived from other adjectives, from nouns or from verbs as in :

joie (n) happiness	joyeux (adj) happy
jaune (adj) yellow	jaunatre (adj) yellowish
fleurir (v) flower	fleuri (adj) flowery

However, members of the word-class adjective in Berber take their origin from verbs. In their formation process, adjectives in Berber, follow very specific mechanisms of derivation and these mechanisms are based upon the schema of the verb as in:

imlul (v) "to be white"	amlal (adj) "white"
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The members of the word-class adjective in the three languages differ in their origins and formation processes. Yet they seem to be

compatible to the derivation from verbs. This is not in fact a real similarity for two reasons: the derivations follow different processes and adjectives in English and French can be derived from both stative and dynamic verbs, whereas the derivation in Berber is confined to be done from verbs of quality.

Types of Adjectives:

English and French share almost the same types of adjectives : qualitative and non-qualitative adjectives. It is worth mentioning that quantitatives which belong to the non-qualitative category of adjectives exist only in English. Hence English expresses quantity through adjectives such as much, enough, little... French uses adverbial phrases such as ‘beaucoup de’ , ‘assez de’ , ‘un peu de’ , or partitives such as : ‘du’ , ‘de la’ , to denote the notion of quantity.

As for Berber, the case is different as adjectives are derived from verbs of state or quality as in :

ismid	asmad
to be cold (v)	cold (adj)

Features of Adjectives:

As far as features of adjectives are concerned, some divergences and convergences can be found in gender and number. The point of difference lies in the fact that English adjectives do not undergo inflection in gender and in number . Hence they are invariable while French adjectives undergo inflection in both gender and number. French adjectives are variable as in:

Un beau film	→	Une belle histoire
A nice film	→	A nice story
Des beaux films	→	Des belles histoires
Nice films	→	Nice stories

As for Berber, adjectives usually occur in an opposition that is they directly postmodify the noun. Adjectives in Berber always occur after the noun because they enter into some gender, number and state

constructs. Thus adjectives enter into an accordance of characteristics with the noun as in :

axxam	ameqran
n. (mas/sing)	adj.(mas/sing)
house	big

Syntactic Functions of Adjectives:

It is the place of occurrence which determines and indicates the syntactic function of the adjective .When it premodifies the noun it is attributively used. When it postmodifies the noun it is predicatively used.

In English and French, adjectives can be used attributively or predicatively as in:

Un grand jardin
A big garden
Jean est intelligent
John is clever

Attribution does not exist in Berber because the adjective comes always after the noun as in:

argaz	ameqran
man	old
"An old man"	

An adjective is predicatively used when it is a predicative complement functioning as a subject complement following directly the verb or as an object complement following the direct object. When the adjective functions as a subject complement the verb is always an auxiliary (to be) as in :

you	are	nice
tu	es	belle
kec	d-	ucbih

In Berber there is no auxiliary functioning as (to be), hence the adjective does not function as a subject complement. Yet the above example provides a structure quite similar to the English and French structures. This does not mean that it is a verb nor that it plays the role of the verb. It is actually a preposition that introduces the adjective. Thus ,‘d – ucbih’ is the corresponding structure of ‘are nice’. This phrase plays the role of the verb.

When the adjective functions as an object complement two categories of adjectives appear: the stative adjectives and the dynamic adjectives. In Berber, all adjectives are dynamic. Moreover, there is no adjective functioning as an object in Berber because there is no stative adjective as in :

"He made her awful"

However, when the adjective is dynamic as in :

"He made it thicker"
yerrat d- azuran

The use of the preposition ‘d’ – which introduces the adjective object complement- is compulsory. Thus adjectives in Berber function as object complements when the conveyed quality occurs at the dynamic level.

Concluding Remarks:

Throughout this investigation and analytical considerations of the status and the existing divergences and convergences of adjectives in English, French and Berber, it is certain that the adjective exists as a word-class. Moreover, the contrastive analysis reveals that even if the three languages belong to different language families they share some similarities but each language has its idiosyncrasies because the adjectives – as shown in this study- have their characteristics, syntactic properties and are constructed through very specific models which are particular to this word-class. The question worth to be asked is to what extent this word-class can be independent? It seems that adjectives in English and French are more independent than adjectives in Berber. Adjectives in English and French take their origins from verbs, nouns,

and other adjectives. However, in Berber, adjectives take their origin from verbs of quality to which they are bound.

Adjectives in English have independent gender and number features of nouns and they are free no matter the gender and the number of the nouns they modify. Yet, in French and Berber, adjectives have the same characteristics of gender and number as the nouns they modify.

Adjectives in English and French have two positions before and after the noun. Thus, they can function attributively or predicatively. In Berber, adjectives hold only one position after the noun; hence they are used only in apposition.

Conclusion:

The contrastive study conducted all along this paper between adjectives in English, French and Berber, shows some differences and some rare similarities as well. This study is neither an exhaustive analysis nor is it definitive. It is an attempt to contribute to the task of the classification of the structures and word-classes categories in the three languages in order to show that three totally different languages are likely to share some common similarities and language universals.

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