

CHAPTER2

PARTS OF SPEECH IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC

Every word in a language has a grammatical category. English classifies its words into eight categories or **part of speech**: noun (N), pronoun (Pr), adjective (Adj), verb (V), adverb (Adv), preposition (Prep), conjunction (Con), and interjection (Int). On the other hand, Arabic classifies its words into three parts of speech only: noun, verb, and particle.

See Table (8).

Parts of Speech in English:

The English parts of speech may be grouped in a variety of ways:

1- Nouns and pronouns can make one group because they both may occupy the subject slot or the object slot and because pronouns may refer to or replace nouns.

Table (8): Parts of speech in E and A

No.	English	Arabic
1	Noun	Noun
2	Pronoun	Noun
3	Adjective	Noun
4	Adverb	Noun
5	Verb	Verb
6	Preposition	Particle
7	Conjunction	Particle
8	Interjection	Particle

2- Nouns, pronouns, and adjectives may form one group because nouns and pronouns are to be modified and adjectives are to modify them.

3- Nouns and verbs may form on group since they are essential components of the sentence, unlike the other parts of speech, which often function as either optional additions or grammatical connectors.

4- Verbs and adverbs may form on group because adverbs function as **modifiers** of verbs.

5- prepositions may be grouped with nouns and pronouns because prepositions govern nouns and pronouns.

6- prepositions and conjunctions may make one group as function words, unlike the other parts of speech, which basically function as content words. Although some parts of speech may be grouped into wider units, grammarians have chosen to divide them into eight parts, with obvious inter-relationships but certainly with distinct characteristics of each part.

Nouns are names of things, persons, or acts.

Pronouns replace or refer to nouns. Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns. Verbs report about actions made by nouns or pronouns. Adverbs modify verbs. Prepositions relate a verb, whether explicit or implicit, to a noun or pronoun.

Conjunctions conjoin two words of the same parts of speech or two units of the same syntactic function.

Interjections stand alone as sentence words, i.e., a word that may mean a whole exclamatory expression.

Parts of speech in Arabic :

Arabic grammar gives three parts of speech as Table (8) shows: nouns, verbs, and particles. This

tri-classification does not mean that Arabic does not have what English has. In most cases, it is a matter of difference in classification. In Arabic, the term **noun** covers what English labels as nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs. The Arabic **particle** covers three English parts: prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. The two languages have no disagreement in the *verb* label: the term *verb* in both languages covers as a very much similar content.

Language Differences:

Arabic can classify adjectives and adverbs as nouns, but English cannot do the same. In Arabic, adjectives and adverbs behave exactly like nouns. They can be singularized, dualized, and pluralized as nouns, e.g, ولدان ، أولاد، ذكي، ذكيان، أنكياء. They can be masculinized and feminized as nouns, e.g, ذكية. They can take the definite ال as a noun, e.g, الولد الذكي.

In contrast, English adjectives and adverbs do not behave like nouns. Nouns in English can be pluralized, but adjectives and adverbs cannot. Nouns in English can take determiners before them, but adjectives and adverbs cannot.

Further, one can see that the tri-classification in Arabic, if compared to the octa-classification in English, can be explained in terms of under-classification in some cases. For example, the Arabic particle is made to cover the three English labels of prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.

However, the English classification has nouns, adverbs, and adjectives, when the Arabic classification has nouns only. The reason here is not a matter of over-classification on the part of English or under-classification on the part of Arabic. In fact, it is a difference in how these parts behave in each language. In Arabic, adjectives and adverbs behave very much like nouns; that is why they come under the blanket term of a noun. In English each of adjectives, adverbs, and nouns behave in a unique way; that is why they cannot be combined as one part of speech.

Noun Test:

What makes a word a noun? What is the **nominality test** in E and A?

1. **Plurality test.** If a word takes the plural morpheme, it is a noun in both L's, e.g., doors, children, معلمون، أولاد، معلمات.
2. **Genitive test.** If a word in E takes 's , it is a N, e.g., boy' s. This test is not applicable to A.
3. **Determiner test.** If a word takes determiner (Det), it is a N in both L's, e.g., my book, the book, a book, كتابي، الكتاب. Notice that the Det in E comes before the N, but in A it may come before, like الكتاب، or after, like كتابي.
4. **Duality test.** If a word in A accepts the duality suffix, it is a N, e.g., كتابان، ولدان. This test does not apply to E.
5. **Pronoun test.** If a word in both L's can be replaced by a pronoun, it is a N, e.g., Ali (he), car (it), طالب (هو)، طالبات (هن).
6. **Demonstrative test.** If a demonstrative can replace a word or point to its referent, the word is a N in both L's, e.g., this man, that car, هذه الشجرة، هؤلاء الأولاد.

Adjective test :

What makes a word an adjective (Adj)? What are the Adj tests?

In E, as mentioned before, the Adj is a distinct part of speech because it behaves very differently from how the N behaves. Although A places Adj's under N's, the Adj and the N in A have a positional relationship: the Adj comes immediately after the N. Not all N's in A are typically Adj's, e.g., سيارة، رجل، ولد. Such N's are not typical modifiers in A. The Adj in A is normally a derived N, e.g., أخضر، نحيف، أمين، كاتب، مشتاق.

The adjective tests could be the following:

1. **Comparative test.** If a word in E accepts the comparative suffix / -er/ or more, it is an Adj e.g., larger, more complicated. In A, if a word accepts the comparative infix, it is an Adj, e.g., أحسن، أجمل، أكبر، أطول، أكرم.
2. **Superlative test.** In E, if the word accepts the superlative /-est / or most, it is an Adj, e.g., fastest, most wonderful. This test is a redundant one: if a word accepts /-er/, it automatically accepts /-est/. If it accepts more, it accepts most. In A,

the superlative is the comparative form itself with /ال/, e.g. الأكرم، الأحسن، الأجل.

3. **Intensifier test.** If a word accepts *very* in E or جداً in A, it may be an Adj, e.g., *very good, very beautiful*, أمين جداً، كريم جداً.
4. **Modification test.** If a word is typically used to modify a N, it is an Adj, e.g., useful book, historic event, حديقة جميلة، وردة حمراء.

Verb test:

What marks a verb in both L's?

1- **verb-morpheme test.** In E, a word is a verb (V) if it accepts one of these four morphemes: the present simple morpheme e.g., goes, comes, washes, the past morpheme e.g., learned, knelt, spoke, the past participle morpheme e.g., gone, spoken, or the present participle morpheme, e.g., speaking, coming.

In A, if a word can be change into the past form or the present form, it is a verb, e.g., يجلس، جلس.

2- Imperative test. If a word in both L's can be used to initiate a command, it is a verb, e.g., go, sit, come, اجلس،
تقدّم، اذهب

Pronoun Test:

How can a word be tested for pronominalization?

1- Noun test. If a word in both L's can replace a noun, it is a pronoun, e.g., he: John, she: Mary, they: boys, it: house, هما: الولدان، هو: اسماعيل

2- Reference test. If a word in both L's refers to a noun in the same context, it is a pronoun, e.g., *this boy is a hard-working pupil; he studies five hours daily.*

3- Negative test. If a word refers to a thing or person, but fails all or most of the noun tests, it is a pronoun. The pronoun in both L's does not usually take the plurality morpheme, genitive morpheme, a determiner, a demonstrative, nor a duality morpheme.

Adverb Test:

In E, if the word is an Adj accepting -ly, the output is an adverb, e.g.,

quickly, carefully, gracefully. In A, if

the word can modify a verb and take the suffix /-an/, it is an adverb, e.g.,

راجياً، مسرعاً، باسمأ