

Nominal Infinitive in English and Arabic: A Contrastive Study

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Abstract:

This paper studies the nominal uses of the infinitive in English and Arabic. The aim of the study is to highlight the similarities and differences between the two languages in this respect. The procedure which is followed in this paper is that for each nominal function, the infinitives in English and Arabic are put in contrast for finding the points of similarity and difference. The study has shown that the nominal infinitive in both languages can be subject of verb, direct object, retained object, appositive, and adjective complement. However, only the English infinitive can be objective complement, and only the Arabic infinitive can be object of preposition.

Key Words: Nominal infinitive, Contrastive linguistics, Contrastive grammar,

Introduction

"Infinitive" is a grammatical term referring to the form that "expresses the notion of the verb in its general sense, not as it applies to any particular subject" (Eckersley & Eckersley, 1960: 230). The Infinitive, in its simple form, does not indicate a particular time in itself; its time reference is determined by the predicate governing it, or by the context. Thus, it may refer to the present, future, or past. (Schibsbye, 1973: 23).

The infinitive is in origin a neuter abstract noun. It has been commonly classified as a "mood" in accordance with the usage of Latin grammarians who called it "modus infinitivus" (= the indefinite mood); but its function is not to express the "manner" of an action or to denote the aspect under which it is considered, but to express the action itself in the most indefinite manner. In modern English it possesses two forms: the bare infinitive which is without *to* and the to-infinitive which is the base form of the verb preceded by *to*, e.g.

1. a. I will write soon.

b. I began to write.

The infinitive, like other non-finite verb forms, used to be classified as "verbal"; for it combines the characteristics of a verb with those of a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. (OEDHP, s.v. infinitive)

The infinitive is a non-finite verb form consisting of the base form of the verb preceded by *to* as in *I want to go*. The particle *to* was originally a preposition of direction as in *I moved to ask a*

question. Yet, in the course of time the prepositional status of this *to* has been lost and it is now treated as a particle of the infinitive (Curme, 1953: 267; Jespersen, 1977: 320).

The term infinitive - "maṣdar mu'awal" - is used here to roughly refer to the Arabic structure which consists of the imperfect verb preceded by the particle '*an*', such as '*an yaktuba*' ((for him) to write), '*an yadrusa*' ((for him) to study), etc.

Arabic has two types of infinitive which are *maṣdar masbuk bi'dati sabk* (marked infinitive) and *maṣdar masbuk min ġeyri 'dati sabk* (unmarked infinitive).

(Hassan, 1966: 407)

The marked infinitive has six particles which are: '*alladhi*, *law*, '*an*, '*in*, *kay*, *maa*, ('al-'Andulusī, 1984: 518). The first particle '*an*' can be associated with a past, present, future, or imperative verb. Consider the following examples respectively:

2. Watilka na'matun tamunuhā 'aleyya 'an 'abbadta banī isrā'īl. ('al-šu'arā': 22)

("And this is the favour with which thou dost reproach me,- that thou hast enslaved the Children of Israel!")

3. Qāla rabbi innī 'ahāfu 'an yukadhibun. ('al-šu'arā': 12)

(He said: "O my Lord! I do fear that they will charge me with falsehood)

4. 'alima 'an seyakūnu minkum marḍā. ('al-Muzzammil: 20)

(He knoweth that there may be [some] among you in ill-health;)

5. 'innā 'arsalnā Nūhan 'ilā qawmihi 'an 'andhir qawmaka ... (Nūh: 1)

(We sent Noah to his People [with the Command]: "Do thou warn thy People before there comes to them a grievous Penalty.")

However, in this paper, only '*an*' which is associated with the verb in the present form, is discussed. In other words, the other particles '*alladhi*, *law*, '*in*, *kay*, *maa*, and the particle '*an*', which is associated with a verb in the past, or the future are excluded from the present study.

The unmarked Arabic infinitive occurs in the following example:

6. Tasma'u bilmu'aydī ḥayrun min 'an tarāh ('Sībaweyh, 1975: 44)

((to) hear of the gypsy is better that to see him)

Infinitives, in both English and Arabic, have nominal, adjectival and adverbial functions. However, the present study will compare the infinitive in English and Arabic only as nominal.

Methodology

There are two methods for doing contrastive studies: either the structure of each language under study is presented independently, and then a comparison is made between the structures to show the similarities and differences between the languages in question. Or the comparison is carried out directly item by item. The present paper follows the second method as it saves space. That is, the structures of the infinitive in English and Arabic will be put in contrast from the very beginning of the paper to highlight the similarities and differences between the nominal uses of the infinitives in these languages.

The majority of the Arabic Examples are taken from the Holy Quran and the books of Prophetic Hadith since these are considered authentic resources of Arabic language. As for the examples of Prophetic Hadiths, the researcher relied on *'al-Ma'jam a'al-Mufahras li-'Alfāz 'al-Ḥadīth 'al-Nabawī* by A. E. Wincing. Most of the translations of the Qur'anic examples are taken from *The Holy Quran: Translation and Commentary*. 2nd Edition (1977) by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

Comparison between Nominal Infinitive in English and Arabic

i. Subject of a Sentence

As subject of a sentence, the English and Arabic infinitives occur with “emotive” verbs .e.g.

7. To see a fine play exhilarates me. (Frank, 1972: 331)

8. Qāla 'nni layahzununī 'an tadhhabū bih... (Yūsuf: 13)

([Jacob] said: "Really it saddens me that ye should take him away)

The infinitive in Arabic may occur as subject of verbs other than those of “emotion”. Consider the following example:

9. 'Alam ya'ni liladhīna 'āmanū 'an taḥṣā'a qulūbuhum lidhikri llāh ... ('al-Ḥaddīd: 16)

(Has not the Time arrived for the Believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the Truth which has been revealed [to them])

Yet, the English and Arabic infinitives functioning as subject of a sentence differ in the following respects:

A. The English infinitive is used as subject of the verb *be* in the present form

10. a. To steal money is wrong.

b. It is wrong to steal money.

a. To succeed in the exam is a blessing.

b. It is a blessing to succeed in the exam.

(Roberts, 1968: 343, 344; Wood, 1979: 112),

Whereas the Arabic infinitive is used as a subject of a nominal sentence (Mubtada'), i.e. a sentence free from verb *be* (kāna) .e.g.

11. Wa'an taṣūmū ḥayrun lakum. ('al-Baqara: 184)

(And it is better for you that ye fast....)

Notice that there is another difference between the English and Arabic previous examples. The subject of the infinitive in the English example is "generic" or "indefinite"; otherwise, it should be preceded by "for". The subject of the infinitive in the Arabic example, on the other hand, is always "definite".

Moreover, the Arabic infinitive can be introduced by the emphatic particle '*anna*' which is usually translated "verily", subsequently the infinitive functions as its subject.

12. Qāla fadhhab fa'inna laka fī alhayāti 'an taqūla lā misās. (Tāha: 97)

[Moses] said: "Get thee gone! but thy [punishment] in this life will be that thou wilt say, 'touch me not;'

B. The Arabic infinitive performs the function of subject of a sentence with the verbs *kāna*, *laysa* and '*asā*', e.g.

13. Mā kāna lilmuṣrikīna 'an ya'murū masājīd allah... ('al-Tawba: 17)

(It is not for polytheists to attend mosques)

14. Mā kāna li'ahli almadīnati wa man ḥawlahum mina al-'a'rābi 'an yataḥallafū 'an rasūli llah... ('al-Tawba: 120)

(It was not fitting for the people of Medina and the Bedouin Arabs of the neighbourhood, to refuse to follow Allah's Messenger,...)

15. Laysa al-birra 'an tūwallū wujūhakum qibala almašriqi wal mağrib... ('al-Baqara: 177)

(It is not righteousness to turn your faces towards East or West)

16. 'Asā 'an lā 'akūna bidu'ā'I rabbi šaqiyyā (Maryam: 48)

(I hope not to be among those who suffer)

The Arabic verbs *laysa*, '*asā*', and *kāna* (in the negative only, i.e. *mā kāna*) can be rendered in English into the structure "it is not", the verb "hope" and the structure "it is not (fitting) for " respectively . The English infinitive is used freely with all these structures. e.g.

17. a. It is not righteousness to turn your faces towards East or West.

b. He is studying hard. He hopes to pass the exam.

c. It is not fitting for you to disobey your parents.

Nonetheless, these English infinitival structures do not constantly correspond to the Arabic infinitive with '*asā* and *mā kāna* for these Arabic verbs have different meanings in different contexts. Consider the following examples.

18. *Mā kāna linafsin 'an tamūta* 'illā bi'idhn illāh. ('āli 'umrān: 145)

(Nor can a soul die except by God's leave)

19. *Wamā kāna linabyin 'an yaġul*. ('āli 'umrān: 161)

(No Prophet could (ever) be false to his trust)

20. *Wa 'asā 'an takrahū šay'an wahwa ḥayrun lakum*. ...('al-Baqara: 216)

(It is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you)

With the verb '*asā*, the infinitive stands simultaneously for the subject and predicate, i.e. it performs the functions subject and predicate at the same time. e.g.

21. '*Asā 'an taqūm*

In This example, '*an taqūm* stands for the subject and predicate of '*asā*.

('al-Siyūfī, 1961: 192)

ii. *Subject Complement:*

The infinitive in both English and Arabic is used as complement of the subject. However, in English, it is called "subjective complement", whereas, in Arabic, it is called "predicate" (*ḥabar*).

22. His advice is to forgive my neighbour.

23. *Qāla 'āyatuka 'an lā tukalīma* alnāsa thalāthata 'ayyāmin 'illā ramzā. ('āli 'umrān: 41)

("Thy Sign," was the answer, "Shall be that thou shalt speak to no man for three days but with signals)

The slots of both the subject and the complement can be filled by the infinitive in Arabic as well as in English. Compare the following examples:

24. To respect your parents is to respect yourself. (Roberts, 1968: 346)

25. '*An takūna karīman* huwa '*an ta'fuwa 'inda al-maqdira*.

(To be noble is to forgive while powerful.)

The Arabic infinitive can be a predicate of the emphatic particle '*inna*, as in:

26. 'Inna 'āyata mulkihi 'an ya'tīyakum altābūtu fīhi ... ('al-Baqara: 248)
(A Sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the covenant...")

The English infinitive, by contrast, does not have an equivalent for this structure.

Like the subject of *laysa*, *'asā*, and *kāna*, the Arabic infinitive functioning as predicate of these verbs (*laysa*, *'asā*, and *kāna*) also does not constantly correspond to an infinitival structure in English for the same reason that these verbs vary in meaning according to context. Consider the following examples:

27. Wamā kāna hādha alqur'āna 'an yuftarā min dūni llāh. (Yūnis: 37)
(This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah)

28. Wa laysa albirru bi'an ta'tū albutūta min zuhūriha. ('al-Baqara: 189)
(It is no virtue if ye enter your houses from the back)

29. Fa'asā allāhu 'an ta'tiya bil fathi 'aw 'amrin min 'indih. ('al-Mā'ida: 52)
(Ah! perhaps Allah will give (thee) victory, or a decision according to His will).

The Arabic infinitive, in addition, occurs as predicate of the verbs *'awšaka* and *kāda*, whereas the English infinitive occurs as predicate of "*be about*" which is equivalent to the preceding Arabic verbs (*'awšaka* and *kāda*).

30. 'Awšaka 'an yaqa'a fil nahr.
(He was about to fall into the river.)

31. Kādat alšamsu 'an taḡrub.
(The sun was about to set.)

The Arabic verb *kāda* does not always correspond to the English phrase "*be about*", e.g.

32. Mā kidtu 'an 'uṣalliya al'ašra hattā kādat alšamsu 'an taḡrub.
(I hardly finished 'Asr prayer when the sun was about to set)
('ibin 'aqīl, 1964: 293)

iii. Direct Object

The infinitive performs the function of direct object in English and Arabic alike. Compare the following examples:

33. He wants to study Arabic.

34. Yuridu 'an yadrusa al-'arabiya.

35. Yuriduna 'an yutfi'ū nūra llāhi bi'fwāhihim. ('al-Tawba: 32)

(they want to extinguish the light of Allah by their mouths)

Verbs that take the infinitive in English and Arabic as direct object are divided into two main classes. One class includes monotonitive verbs, i.e. verbs taking the infinitive as the only object, as in the three preceding examples (33-35). The other class includes ditransitive verbs, i.e. verbs taking the infinitive as one of two objects .e.g.

36. I advised him to study Arabic.

37. Naṣaḥtuhu 'an yadrusa al-'arabiya.

38. Wamā mana'a al-nāsa 'an yu'minū 'idh jā'ahum alhudā 'illa 'an qālu 'aba'atha Allāhu baṣaran rasūlā. ('al-'isrā': 94)

(What kept men back from belief when Guidance came to them, was nothing but this: they said, "Has Allah sent a man [like us] to be [His] Messenger?")

In English, the first class (monotonitive verbs) is divided into three groups:-

A. Verbs followed by an infinitive whose subject is always coreferential with the subject of the main verb include: *begin, cease, commence, continue, start, forget, remember, regret, choose, hope, need, plan, propose, wish, deign, disdain, scorn, venture, ask, decline, demand, offer, row, promise, refuse, swear, affect, undertake, claim, profess, afford, attempt, contrive, fail, endeavour, learn, manage, neglect, omit, try, agree, arrange, consent, decide, long, deserve, determine, hesitate, prepare, presume, pretend, proceed, seek, (can't) stand, stop, strive, tend, struggle, trouble, volunteer, vow, condescend, etc.*

39. a. He began to study for the final exam.

b. He ceased to cry when they took him to the nursery.

c. They attempted to climb Mount Everest.

d. I can't afford to buy a new car this year.

(Palmer, 1968: 160; Scheurweghs, 1969: 205-207; Graver, 1971: 157-158; Frank, 1972: 334; Close, 1978: 198; Quirk et al., 1985: 1187)

Quirk et al. (1985: 1188) treat the underlined verbs in this subgroup as prepositional verbs, but the prepositions are omitted when these verbs are followed by the to-infinitive, e.g.

40. a. Marlin longed to leave home.

- b. I would hesitate to interfere.
- c. We've decided to move to a new house.

B. Verbs followed by an infinitive whose subject can be both coreferential with the subject of the main verb, or grammatically expressed. *dread, hate, like, love, loathe, prefer, intend, want, mean, (can't) help, (can't) bear, beg, desire, expect, choose, request, ask, wish.*

(Graver, 1971: 163; Archer & Nolan-Woods, 1979: 101)

41. a. I want (him) to attend the meeting.
 b. I wish (you) to see the film.
 c. They like (her) to print the letter.

The intervening (NP), here, is analysed as the subject of the infinitive, not the object of the main verb.

(Quirk et al. 1985: 1187; 1193).

C. Verbs followed by an infinitive introduced by wh-words include: *ask, consider, decide, discover, explain, find out, guess, forget, inquire, know⁽⁶⁾, learn, observe, perceive, remember, see, settle, tell (= explain), think (= consider), understand, wonder, arrange, ascertain, calculate, check, choose, demonstrate, discuss, establish, imagine, indicate, enquire, judge, note, notice, say, show, etc.*

Examples:

42. a. I'm wondering why to go at all.
 b. He learned how to sail a boat as a small boy.
 c. You must not forget when to return the book to the library.
 d. He doesn't know what to say.

(Hornby, 1966: 44; Scheurweghs, 1969: 309; Spankie, 1976: 116; Quirk et al., 1985: 1184)

In Arabic, on the other hand, this class is divided into two groups only:-

A. Verbs followed by an infinitive whose subject is always coreferential with the subject of the main verb which include: *ragāba* (to desire), *nasiya* (to forget), *'aqsama* (to swear), *nadhara* (to vow), *'istaṭā'a* (can), *'iltamasa* (to beg), *'ajma'a* (to agree), *hasiba* (to think), *sa'ima* (to disdain), *ta'alama* (to learn), *tadhakara* (to remember), *hāwala* (to try, attempt), *'ahfaqa* (to fail), *'istahaqqa* (to deserve).

Examples:

43. Watargabūna 'an tankiḥuhūna... ('al-Nisā': 127)

(... and yet whom ye desire to marry ...)

44. Wa *nasiya* ṣāhibu Mūsā *'an yuḥbirahu*. (Muslim/Virtues: 170)

(Moses' colleague forgot to tell him)

45. 'Aqsamtu 'an lā 'adhūla 'aleyhi thalāthan. ('Ahmad bin Ḥanbal, 3/166)
(I swore not to come in to him for three days)
46. 'Inni nadhartu 'an 'aṣūma yewman. (Muslim/Fast: 141)
(I vowed to fast a day ...)
47. Hal yastaṭī'u rabbuka 'an yunazzila 'aleyha mā'idatan mina alsamā'... ('al-Mā'ida: 112)
(... Is thy Lord able to send down to us a table set (with viands) from heaven).
48. Kuluhum yaltamisu 'an ya'tamma bi rasūli Allāh ('al-Nisā'i/manāsik: 51)
(All of them beg to follow God's Messenger (in prayer))
49. Wa 'ajma'u 'an yaj'alūhu fī geyābati l jub... (Yūsuf: 150)
(... They all agreed to throw him down into the bottom of the well)
50. 'Aḥasiba alnāsu 'an yutrakū 'an yaqūlū 'āmannā wa hum lā yuftanūn. ('al-'ankabūt: 2)
(Do men think that they will be left alone on saying,
"We believe", and that they will not be tested?)

B. Verbs followed by an infinitive whose subject can be both coreferential with the subject of the main verb, or grammatically expressed include: *wadda* (to wish), *'aḥabba* (to love), *'arāda* (to intend, to wish), *tamannā* (to wish), *ẓanna* (to think), *faḍḍala* (to prefer), *'aḥtāra* (to choose).

51. 'Ayawadu 'aḥadakum 'an takūna lahu jannatun... ('al-Baqara: 266)
(Does any of you wish that he should have a garden...?)
52. Mā yawaddu alladhīna kafarū min 'ahli alkitābi 'an yunazzala 'aleykum min ḥeyrin min rabbikum... ('al-Baqara: 105)
(It is never the wish of those without Faith among the People of the Book, nor of the Pagans, that anything good should come down to you from your Lord.)
53. ...Fīhi rijālun yuḥibbuna 'an yatataharū... ('al -Tawba: 108)
(...In it are men who love to be purified;)
54. 'Inna alladhīna yuḥibbuna 'an taṣī'a al-fāḥiṣatu fī alladhīna 'āmanū... ('al-Nūr: 19)
(Those who love (to see) scandal published broadcast among the Believers,...)

55. Wallāhu yurīdu 'an yatūba 'aleykum wayurīdu alladhīna yatabi'ūna alšahawāti 'an tamīlū meylan 'azīmā. ('al-Nisā': 27)
(Allah doth wish to Turn to you, but the wish of those who follow their lusts is that ye should turn away)from Him),- far, far away).
56. Ḥattā tamaneytu 'an 'akūna ma'ahum 'aw mihum. ('al-Dārmī / Rifāq: 118)
(That I wished to be with them or one of them)
57. Fatamaneytu 'an yaqūla ṣallū fī riḥālikum. ('Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, 4/220)
(I wished he would say play in your place.)
58. Wa'annā ḡanannā 'an lan nu'jiza Allāha fil 'arḡa walan nu'jizahu harabā. ('al-Jinn: 12)
(But we think that we can by no means frustrate Allah throughout the earth, nor can we frustrate Him by flight.0)
59. Wa'annā ḡanannā 'an lan taqūla al'insu waljinnu 'alā Allāhi kadhibā. ('al-Jinn: 5)
(But we do think that no man or spirit should say aught that untrue against Allah)

The second class (ditransitive verbs) is divided into two groups in English.

A. Verbs that are followed by the infinitive without grammatical subject, like:

advise, command, entreat, instruct, remind, teach, ask, counsel, exhort, invite, request, tell, beg, forbid⁺, order, recommend⁺, urge, beseech, direct, implore, persuade, challenge, enjoin, incite, pray, promise, etc., e.g.

60. a. I told / advised / persuaded Mark to see a doctor.
b. I promised her to tell her the secret.

With this category of verbs, the intervening (NP) is analysed as the indirect object of the main verb, and the subject of the infinitive is implied in this indirect object, except with the verb *promise* where the subject of the infinitive is implied in the subject of the main verb.

B. Verbs that are followed by the infinitive introduced by wh-words, like: *advise, ask, instruct, remind, show, teach, tell, warn, suggest to, recommend, and know*.

(Quirk et al. 1985: 1215)

61. a. The barrister advised him what to say in the court.
b. Please remind me where to change the train.

In Arabic, this class consists of two groups:

A. Verbs followed by infinitive whose subject is always coreferential with the object of the main verb, such as: *waṣṣā* (to enjoin), *'amara* (to command), *'allama* (to teach), *sa'ala* (to ask), *ṭalaba* (to seek, to request), *nāšada* (to implore), *mana'a* (to keep back, to prevent), *naṣaḥa* (to advise), *taḍara'a* (to entreat), *'aqna'a* (to persuade), *qāla* (to tell).

Examples:

62. 'Awṣāni rasūlu Allāhi "ṣallā Allāhu 'aleyhi wasallam" 'an 'udahya 'anhu.
('Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, 1/150)
(The Apostle of God "peace be upon him" enjoined me to sacrifice instead of him)
63. 'Inna Allāha ya'murakum 'an tu'addū al'amānāti 'ilā 'hlihā. ('al-Nisā': 58)
(God doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due)
64. 'Allamanā rasūlu Allāh "ṣallā Allāhu 'aleyhi wasallam" 'an naqula ...
('al-Tirmidhī / Mawaqīt: 9)
(The Apostle of God "peace be upon him" taught us to say ...)
65. Yas'aluka 'ahlu alkitābi 'an tunazila 'aleyhim kitāban mina alsamā' ... ('al-Nisā': 153)
(The people of the book ask thee to cause a book to descend to them from heaven ...)
66. Faṭalaba 'ileyhi alnabīyu 'an yabī'ah. ('abu Dawūd / 'aqḍīyah: 31)
(The prophet requested him to sell him)
67. Wahuwa yunāšidahum Allāha 'an lā yadhhabū bihi 'ilā alrūm.
('al-Tirmidhī / Manāqib: 3)
(And he implores them not to take him to the Roman Empire)
68. Wamā mana'a alnāsa 'an yu'minū 'idh jā'ahumu lhudā 'illā 'an qālū 'aba'atha
Allūhu bašaran rasūlā. ('al-'Isrā': 94)
(What kept men back to believe when Guidance came to them, was nothing but this:
they said, "Has God sent a man (like us) to be (His) Apostle?")
69. Qāla mā mana'aka 'an lā tasjuda 'idh 'amartuk ... ('al-'A'rāf: 12)
(What prevented thee to bow down when I commanded thee?)
70. Qulū lahu 'an ya'ḥudha ġeyrī. ('Alif leyla wa Leyla: 3/7)
(Tell him to take other than me.)

B. Verbs followed by infinitive whose subject is either coreferential with the subject of the main verb or with both the subject and object of the main verb, i.e. it cannot be coreferential with the object alone. This group consists of one verb only which is the verb *wa'ada* (to promise).

71. Wa 'adanī rasūlu Allāhi “ṣallā Allāhu 'aleyhi wasallam” 'an yu'tīyanī hākadhā wa hākadhā. (‘al-Buḥārī / ṣahādāt: 28)

(The prophet of God “peace be upon him” promised (me) to give me so and so)

72. Wa'adtu 'aḥī 'an nadhhaba fi nuzhatin 'alusbū'a alqādim

(I promised my brother to go on a picnic together next week)

iv. Retained Object:

English and Arabic infinitives may function as retained objects of passive finite verbs. Compare the following examples:

73. The student was asked to write the lesson.

74. Qul 'inamā 'umirtu 'an 'a'buda Allāha wa lā'uṣrika bih. (‘al-Ra'd: 36)

(Say: "I am commanded to worship Allah, and not to join partners with Him.)

v. Appositive

Both English and Arabic infinitives are used as appositives, i.e. noun modifiers. e.g.

75. Your ambition, to become a farmer, requires the energy and perseverance that you so obviously have. (Quirk et al., 1985: 1061)

76. Qul 'inamā'a 'izukum bi waḥidatin 'an taqūmū lillāhi mathnā wa furādā thumma tatafakarū... (Saba': 46)

(Say: "I do admonish you on one point: to stand up before Allah, - (It may be) in pairs, or (it may be) singly, - and reflect (within yourselves))

vi. Adjective Complement .

The English and Arabic infinitives can both be complements of adjectives: e.g.

77. John is easy to please.

78. Hādhā mawḍū'un jadīrun 'an yudras.

(This topic is worthy to be studied.)

vii. Objective Complement :

Only the English infinitive occurs as complement of the object of the sentence. e.g.

79. The police reported the traffic to be heavy.

viii. Object of Preposition

Only the Arabic infinitive can occur governed by a preposition, i.e. functioning as object of preposition, e.g.

80. Wa'in jāhadāka 'alā 'an tušrika bī mā leysa laka bihi 'ilmun falā tuṭi'humā (Luqmān: 15)
("But if they strive (on) to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not;)

81. Raḍū bi 'an yakunū ma'a alḥawālif... ('al-Tawba: 87)
(They prefer to be with (the women), who remain behind (at home))

82. Faqul hal laka 'ilā 'an tazakkā (s'al-Nāzi'āt: 18)
(And say to him, 'Wouldst thou that thou shouldst be purified (from sin)?-)

Findings

In both English and Arabic, the infinitive in a nominal position is used as:

- Subject of verb.
- Direct object.
- Retained object.
- Appositive.
- Adjective complement.

However, the nominal infinitives in English and Arabic differ in the following aspects:

- Whereas the English infinitive is used as subject of the verb "be" in the present, the Arabic infinitive is used as subject of a nominal sentence, i.e. a sentence free from verb "be" (*kāna*).
- Only the English infinitive is used with wh-words.
- The Arabic infinitive is introduced by the emphatic particle '*inna*' which is usually translated "verily"; the infinitive then functions as its subject.
- The Arabic infinitive is used as subject of the verbs *kāna*, *leysa* and '*asā*'. This use of the infinitive is rendered in English into various structures according to the context in which the Arabic infinitive is used with these verbs.
- The Arabic infinitive functioning as predicate of the verbs *kāna*, *leysa* and '*asā*' is not necessarily rendered in English into infinitive functioning as predicate of the English counterparts of these verbs.
- The infinitive in English is used as subjective complement after the verb "be" whereas the Arabic infinitive is used as predicate of a nominal sentence.
- The Arabic infinitive occurs as predicate of the verbs '*awšaka*' and *kāda*' which does not always have a corresponding infinitival construction in English.
- Only the English infinitive occurs as objective complement.

- Only the Arabic infinitive occurs as object of preposition.
- In Arabic, the infinitive occurs as direct object of the verb *'istaṭā'a*, whereas it does not occur with English equivalent.
- The English verb "go on" (=continue) which takes the infinitive as direct object has no Arabic equivalent taking the infinitive as direct object, too.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that although the infinitives in English and Arabic have almost similar nominal functions, they have idiosyncratic features. There is not one-to-one correspondence between the structures of the infinitive in English and Arabic. Therefore, one should be cautious when translating between the two languages.

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Appendix

Arabic Phonemic Symbols

IPA: Arabic Consonants			
IPA	Letter(s)	Nearest English Equivalent	Transliteration
b	ب (Bā')	but	b
t	ت (Tā')	stay	t
t ^ʕ	ط (Ṭā')	No equivalent	ṭ
d	د (Dāl)	do	d
d ^ʕ	ض (Ḍād)	No equivalent	ḍ
dʒ	ج (Ġīm)	joy	j
k	ك (Kāf)	sky	k
f	ف (Fā')	feel	f
θ	ث (THā')	thing	th
ð	ذ (Dhāl)	this	dh
ð ^ʕ	ظ (Ẓā')	No equivalent	ẓ
s	س (Sīn)	see	s
s ^ʕ	ص (Ṣād)	No equivalent	ṣ
z	ز (Zāy)	zoo	z
ʃ	ش (Shīn)	she	š
h	هـ (Hā')	him	h
m	م (Mīm)	me	m
n	ن (Nūn)	now	n
l	ل (Lām)	leaf	l

ḥ	ح (Ḥā')	hall	ll (in Allāh only)
r	ر (Rā')	<u>trilled</u> run	r
w	و (Wāw)	we	w
j	ي (Yā')	yes	y
x	خ (Ḥā')	loch	ḥ
ȝ	غ (Ġeyn)	No equivalent	ġ
ħ	ح (Ḥā')	No equivalent	ḥ
ʔ	ع ('eyn)	No equivalent	‘
ʔ	أ ('Alif)	<u>glotalised</u> / t/: beʔə	’ ā

IPA: Arabic Vowels			
IPA	Letter(s)	Nearest English Equivalent	Transliteration
i:	ي	see	ī
i	ِ	sit	i
ɑ:	ا	fan, hard	ā
a	َ	set	a
u:	و	soon	ū
u	ُ	look	u
aɪ	آي	light	āy
eɪ	أي	day	ey
aʊ	أو	now	āw