Genitive Constructions in English and Arabic: 
A Contrastive Study

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0. Introduction:

This paper offers a contrastive analysis of the genitive constructions in English and Standard Arabic. It aims at showing the similarities and differences between the two languages in such constructions from the morphological, syntactic and semantic perspectives. It starts with a definition of the term genitive and the various parts in a genitive construction (section 1). Then, a brief discussion of the traditional classification of genitive constructions is provided in (section 2). After that, genitive constructions are dealt with from a morphological perspective (section 3). Furthermore, the syntactic structure of genitive phrases is contrasted in both languages (section 4). In addition, a semantic classification of genitive constructions in both languages is provided (section 5). Finally, a summary of the similarities and differences of genitive constructions in the two languages is given in the conclusion.
1. Definition of the Genitive:

Crystal (1985: 136) explains the genitive as:

One of the FORMS taken by a WORD, usually a NOUN or PRONOUN, in LANGUAGES which express GRAMMATICAL relationships by means of inflections. The genitive CASE typically expresses a possessive relationship (e.g. the boy’s book), or some other similarly ‘close’ connection (e.g. a summer’s day); but there is a great deal of variation between languages in the way this case is used. The term may also apply to CONSTRUCTIONS formally related to the case form, as in the ‘post-modifying’ genitive with of in English, e.g. the car of the general (the general’s car).

Trask (1993: 118) also defines the genitive as “a distinctive case form typically marking a noun phrase which serves a possessive role within a larger noun phrase”. Examples of the genitive in Arabic are /kitaab-u muhhammad-in/ ‘Muhammad’s book’ and /9adad-u s-sukkaan-i/ ‘the number of population’. In both examples, the genitive is expressed morphologically by the genitive morpheme [-i(n)], as will be shown in section (2).

The genitive is considered one of the noun cases in both English and Arabic. According to Quirk, et. al. (1972), English nouns have a two-case system: the unmarked COMMON CASE (boy) and the marked GENITIVE CASE (boy’s). But how far can we apply the term ‘case’ to the genitive construction in English? Lyons (1968: 297) answers,
In fact, even the English ‘genitive’ is at some remove from the traditional conception of a case, since the inflexional suffix -’s is not necessarily attached to the head-noun of the noun-phrase: cf. The queen of Sheba’s beauty…. With the exception of the ‘genitive’ (Bill’s) there are no case-inflexions in the English noun.” In addition, Quirk et. al. (1972: 194) assert that “the -s genitive must clearly be included in a discussion of ‘case’. However, it is not obvious that the of-phrase should be included here, since the of-genitive is not an inflection but a structure of post modification.

Arabic, on the other hand, has three cases: nominative, accusative and genitive. The genitive case is used for the second noun in a genitive construction and for the object of a preposition. Arab grammarians use the term */?iDaafah/ ‘annexation’ to describe the process of adding a noun to another in a genitive construction. Using the Turkish term /izafet/, Trask (1993: 149) defines it as “a term used in the grammars of certain languages to denote a construction in which a noun is possessed or modified by another noun or noun phrase, particularly when an overt marking of the relation occurs on the noun which is possessed or modified.”

Wehr (1994) uses different words to translate the term */?iDaafah/, among which are annexation, addition, subjunction and genitive construction. We will keep to the last translation. He also uses numerous names for */?al-muDaaf/: subjoined, construct
state, first member of a genitive construction, and for /?al-muDaaf ?ilayh/ he uses: the second, or governed, noun of a genitive construction. Wright (1967: 198) calls the former ‘the determined noun’ or ‘the annexed’ and the latter ‘the determining noun’ or ‘that to which annexation is made or to which another word is annexed’. We will keep to the English terms and call /?a1-muDaaf/ ‘the head noun’ and /?al-muDaaf ?ilayh/ ‘the modifying noun’.

Ibn Hisham (Sharh: 325) defines annexation as a restrictive relation between two nouns, or as an attribution of a noun to another where the relation between the second (modifying noun) and the first (head noun) is like that of explicit or implicit nunation. Gadalla (2000: 35) defines nunation as “a morphosyntactic phenomenon … related to the presence or absence of [-n] in the final position of nouns, usually after case endings. A final [-n] is attached to short vowels used as case markers in SA indefinite nouns. However, this [-n] is deleted when the nouns in question are defined.” According to Ibn Hisham explicit nunation is found in expressions like /kitaab-un jadiid-un/ ‘a new book’ and implicit nunation is found in structures like /daraahim-u ma9duudat-un/ ‘a few dirhams’. He says that the modifying noun in a genitive construction acts like the [-n] at the end of /kitaab-un/. That is why the [-n] should be dropped from the head noun in a genitive construction, as in
/kitaab-u 9aliyy-in/ ‘Ali’s book’. Also, the final [-n] of the dual and sound masculine plural should be dropped from the head noun because it resembles the [-n] of nunation in that it follows the case markers. For instance, /kitaab-aa muḥammad-in/ ‘the two books of Muhammad’ and /muhandis-uu miSr-a/ ‘the engineers of Egypt’.

2. Traditional Classification of Genitive Constructions:

In English, the genitive has two forms which were discussed in detail by Quirk et. al. (1972: 194) as follows:

(a) THE INFLECTED GENITIVE (‘the -S GENITIVE’) indicated in writing by apostrophe + s suffix or apostrophe only, after the modifying noun: modifying noun phrase + ’s + head noun-phrase:

(1) a. the girl’s dresses
   b. the men’s shirts
   c. the boys’ toys

(b) THE PERIPHRACTIC GENITIVE (the OF GENITIVE) consisting of the modifying noun phrase in a prepositional phrase after the head noun phrase: head noun phrase + of + modifying noun phrase:

(2) a. the dresses of the girl
   b. the shirts of the men
   c. the toys of the boys
Various names have been given in the linguistic literature for these two types. For instance, depending on the original language, the inflected genitive is sometimes called “the Saxon genitive” (Haegeman & Gueron 1999: 409) and the periphrastic genitive is named “the Norman genitive” (Al-Khuli 1982: 187). Depending on their position in the construction, Haegeman and Gueron (1990: 414) call the first the “pre-nominal” genitive and the second the “post-nominal”. They also assert that “at this stage no hard and fast rules can be formulated for choosing a pre-nominal or post-nominal genitive construction.”

Choice between the inflected genitive and the periphrastic genitive in English depends upon the modifying noun. According to Quirk et. al. (1972: 198),

The main factor governing the choice of one or the other genitive is the animate, or rather personal quality of the modifying noun. Nouns denoting persons, whether proper names (John’s car) or ordinary count nouns (the student’s car), can always take the inflected genitive. It can also be used with animals …. The dog’s life.

Therefore, Quirk et. al. (1972: 198-201) list the following four animate noun classes as normally taking the inflected genitive:

(a) Personal Names: Clinton’s scandal
Ghandi’s statue

(b) Personal Nouns: the girl’s new doll
my brother-in-law’s bicycle.
(c) Collective Nouns: the army’s maneuvers
    the government’s budget
(d) Higher Animals: the dog’s tail
    the horse’s jump

    They also list the following kinds of inanimate nouns as taking the inflected genitive:
(e) Geographical Names:
    Continents: Africa’s treasures
    Countries: Egypt’s monuments
    States: Pennsylvania’s governor
    Cities/towns: Cairo’s mosques
    Rivers: The Nile’s delta
    Universities: Oxford’s Linguistics Department
(f) Locative Nouns: They denote regions, heavenly bodies, institutions, etc. and can be very similar to geographical names
    the moon’s surface
    a country’s population
    the hotel’s entrance
(g) Temporal Nouns:
    the week’s events
    yesterday’s work
(h) Nouns of Special Interest to Human Activity: They denote parts of the body, cultural activities, means of transport, etc., as in:
the mind’s development.
the game’s history
the ship’s deck

In their explanation of periphrastic genitives, Thomson & Martinet (1986: 31) state that the “of + noun” is used for possession in the following situations:
i. when the possessor noun is followed by a phrase or clause, as in:

(3) a. the son of Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of Britain
   b. the house of the woman we met

ii. with inanimate ‘possessors’, except vehicles of transport, as in:

(4) a. the ceiling of the room
   b. the bridges of the city

Quirk et. al. (1972: 201) indicate that the periphrastic genitive is “chiefly used with nouns ... denoting lower animals and with [some] inanimate nouns.” Of course there are some inanimate nouns which take the inflected genitive as we explained above.

Bolinger & Sears (1981: 232) speak about a changing rule for the possessive:

Some older speakers still avoid expressions like the college’s president, the garden’s fertility, and few of any age should say *Spanish’s words or *Italian’s derivations. The old rule limited possessives to persons or to what could be easily personified; the
new rule admits them for purely relational purposes, where an *of* phrase would have been used before: *the president of the college, the fertility of the garden*. This change has been going on for a long time.

In Arabic, on the other hand, the genitive has only one form: the head noun followed by the modifying noun in its genitive form:

(5) a. fasaatiin-u bint-in
    dresses-Nom girl-Gen
    ‘some dresses of a girl’

b. qumSaan-u r-rijaal-i
    shirts-Nom the-men-Gen
    ‘the shirts of the men’

Prepositional phrases are not overtly used in Arabic possessive constructions, though prepositions are implicit in them as will be explained below. Only the inflected genitive is employed in Arabic.

Arab linguists (e. g. Al-Azhari, *Tasrih*: 25) divide genitive constructions into two classes: real annexation and verbal annexation. They declare that a noun is annexed to another on two levels: annexing a word and meaning and this is called ‘real annexation’ or annexing only a word and this is called ‘verbal annexation’.

Real annexation is also called pure annexation because of being pure of the intention of separation, as the meaning is
compatible with the word. So, it gathers in the noun both the real and verbal annexation. An implicitly annexed preposition relates what is before it to what comes after it, because annexation is a matter of meaning and meanings can be conveyed by prepositions. So, in Arabic there are prepositions of annexation which are the genitive prepositions, but in this case they are implicit.

Real annexation is achieved by an implicit preposition that connects the first noun to the second. This implicit preposition may be /li-/ ‘to, for’, /min/ ‘from, of’ or /fii/ ‘in’. Annexation can be interpreted by /min/ when the head noun is part of the modifying noun and when the latter can act as a predicate of the former, as in:

(6) a. xaatam-u ḏahab-in ‘a gold ring’

b. ṣawb-u ḥariir-in ‘a silk garment’

Here, the ring is part of the gold and the garment is part of the silk. So, we can say:

(7) a. xaatam-un min ḏahab-in ‘a ring (made of) gold’

b. ṣawb-un min ḥariir-in ‘a garment (made of) silk’

We can also inform about the ring and the garment by the gold and the silk, respectively, as in:

(8) a. haaḍa 1-xaatam-u ḏahab-un ‘This ring is gold.’

b. haaḍa ẓ-ṣawb-u ḥariir-un ‘This garment is silk.’
Annexation is resolved by /fii/ ‘in’ when the modifying noun acts as a temporal or locative adverb of the head noun. The temporal is exemplified by (9a) and the locative by (9b):

(9) a. Sawm-u ramaDaan-a ‘Ramadan fast’

b. 9arab-u filisTiin-a ‘the Arabs in Palestine’

In these examples, ‘Ramadan’ is the temporal adverb of the ‘fast’ and ‘Palestine’ is the locative adverb of the ‘Arabs’.

According to Hassan (1980: 1-3), if annexation cannot be interpreted by /min/ or /fii/, then the implicit preposition is /li-/ ‘to, for’ which is the most common. In this case, /li-/ denotes possession, as in (10) or specification, as in (11):

(10) a. qalam-u l-bint-i ‘the girl’s pen’

b. gulaam-u zayd-in ‘Zayd’s servant’

(11) a. ra?iis-u l-jaami9at-i ‘the university president’

b. miSbaah-u l-masjid-i ‘the lantern of the mosque’

In (10), the girl possesses the pen and Zayd the servant. In (11), the president is specified by the university and the lantern by the mosque. The first denotation is the most commonly used because each possession is a specification.

Real annexation denotes defining or specification. The first case is clear when the modifying noun is definite, as in (12a) where the book becomes definite because it is annexed to a definite noun defined by being a proper noun. But when the modifying noun is indefinite, annexation denotes specification.
That is, there is little sharing in indefinite nouns, as in (12b) where ‘book’ is identified by being annexed to the indefinite noun ‘man’, that is, it becomes distinguished from the book of a woman, for instance (Ibn Ya’ish, Sharh: 2/188):

(12) a. kitaab-u ḥasan-in ‘Hassan’s book’
    b. kitaab-u rajul-in ‘a man’s book’

In verbal annexation, the noun is annexed verbally to another noun but the meaning is different. That is, attribution and relation happen only from the verbal side. In this type, the head noun should be a derivative (such as an active or a passive participle) or an adjective which resembles the imperfective in its indication of both the present and the future. The head noun is related to this adjective or that derivative, as in:

(13) haaḍa Daarib-u muḥammad-in

‘This is the person who is hitting Muhammad.’

In this example, /Daarib-u/ ‘hitting’ is originally nunated and what follows it is in the accusative case because it is the object of ‘hitting’. Nunation is deleted for easy pronunciation and the following is in the genitive case for annexation.

So, this annexation does not have a pure relation because of the intention of separation between the head noun and the modifying noun by nunation. The example is originally, /*Daarib-un muḥammad-an/ ‘hitting Muhammad’ and it is called verbal annexation because it has a verbal function, i.e. easy

3. Morphological Comparison:

In this section, we will show how the genitive is considered a morphological feature of nouns. Then, we will discuss the formation of genitive constructions in English and Arabic. After that, we will compare the morphological changes which happen to the members of a genitive construction in both languages. Moreover, the definiteness of these members will be dealt with in the two languages. At the end of the section, the conditions imposed upon the members in a genitive construction will be tackled.

Burton-Roberts (1986: 52) considers the genitive one of the distinctive morphological properties of nouns: “a MORPHOLOGICAL identifying feature of all nouns is that they have a GENITIVE (or POSSESSIVE) form”. This is also confirmed by Haegeman & Gueron (1999: 54): “Another property of nouns is that they can often be associated with a genitive morpheme”. Arab grammarians also consider the genitive a distinctive property of nouns. Thus, Abdul-Ghani (*Al-Wakadaat*: 223) asserts that “the presence of a feature of annexation in a form is an indication of its being a noun.”
The inflected genitive in English is formed as follows (cf. Eckersley & Eckersley 1960: 45):

(i) For singular nouns, by adding -’s to the modifying noun. The usual ending for the Old English genitive singular was -es. When, later, the -e was omitted, its absence was shown by an apostrophe (’):
(14) a. the girl’s dress
    b. Jack’s garden
With some names, chiefly classical ones, ending in -s, we use only the apostrophe:
(15) a. Hercules’ battles
    b. Moses’ commandments

(ii) For plural nouns ending in -s, by adding apostrophe only:
(16) a. the teachers’ room
    b. the officers’ cars

(iii) For plural nouns not ending in -s, by adding ’s:
(17) a. the children’s room.
    b. the women’s cries

Phonologically, the ’s has three allomorphs according to the sound at the end of the preceding noun (Eckersely & Eckersely 1960: 45):
/s/ with nouns ending in voiceless consonants (except /s/, /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, e.g. Mark’s, elephant’s, Philip’s.
/z/ with nouns ending in vowel sounds or voiced consonants (except /z/, /ʒ/ and /dʒ/, e.g. China’s, Mary’s, bird’s).
/iz/ with nouns ending in /s/, /z/, /ʒ/, /ʃ/, /dʒ/ and /tʃ/, e.g. Marx’s, George’s, witch’s.
Bolinger & Sears (1981: 240) explain that it is a process of assimilation that is responsible for these choices:

Allomorphs too - those that are ‘phonologically conditioned’ - are mostly traceable to assimilation. The plural endings in English (and the possessives of nouns and third-person-singular endings of verbs) - /s/ in cats but /z/ in dogs and toys - retain these features because of assimilation to the preceding sound.

Although in an English genitive construction, the head noun does not undergo any morphological change, in an Arabic genitive construction, both the head noun and the modifying noun undergo morphological changes. The head noun is declined according to its position in the sentence and, when annexed to a definite noun, its declension should be that of definite, not indefinite, nouns because it becomes definite by what it is annexed to. On the other hand, the modifying noun is genitively declined by annexation, that is the genitive factor in it is the head
noun or the genitive preposition on which annexation is realized implicitly (Al-Azhari, *Tasrih*: 24).

The modifying noun is marked by the genitive morpheme which is the final vowel [-i] if it is a definite singular, broken plural or sound feminine plural noun, as in (18-20a) and [-in] is used for indefinite nouns, as in (18-20b), respectively. It is marked by [-ayni] if it is dual, as in (21a), [-iina] if it is sound masculine plural, as in (21b) and [-ii] if it is one of the six nouns, as in (21c). If the modifying noun is a diptote, it is marked by [-a] as in (22a) and if it is an undeclined noun, its end does not undergo any morphological change, but keeps one case, as in (22b):

(18) a. mudiir-u š- šarikat-i ‘the manager of the company’
    b. mudiir-u šarikat-in ‘a manager of a company’
(19) a. li9ab-u 1-?aTfaal-i ‘the toys of the children’
    b. li9ab-u ?aTfaal-in ‘(some) toys of children’
(20) a. ḥukkaam-u l-wilaayaat-i ‘the governors of the states’
    b. ḥukkaam-u wilaayaat-in ‘(some) governors of states’
(21) a. waalid-u l-bint-ayni fii ?al-bayt-i
    ‘The father of the two girls is at home.’
    b. kulliiyyat-u l-mu9allim-iina kabiirat-un
    ‘The college of teachers is big.’
    c. mazra9at-u ?ax-ii-ka ‘your brother’s farm’
Thus, although the English genitive morpheme has three allomorphs that are phonologically conditioned, the Arabic genitive morpheme has six allomorphs that are governed by morphosyntactic conditions related to the gender and number properties and the declension status of the modifying noun.

Nunation [-n] is deleted from the head noun if it is a singular noun, broken plural or sound feminine plural, as in:

(23) a. gulaam-u 9aliyy-in ‘Ali’s servant’
   b. kilaab-u l-haql-i ‘dogs of the field’
   c. Taalibaat-u l-madiinat-i ‘female students of the city’

Also, [-ni] is deleted from the head noun if it is dual, and [-na] is deleted if it is sound masculine plural, as in:

(24) a. haaðaani Taalibaa l-jaami9at-i
   ‘These are the two university students’
   b. haa?ulaa?i mujtahid-uu l-firqat-i 0-0aaniyat-i
   ‘These are the second year studious students’

The final [-n] (with its following vowel) in the dual and the sound masculine plural is deleted because it resembles nunation in the singular noun and what follows its declension.

The feminine [-t] may be deleted from the head noun to avoid ambiguity or vagueness, as in:

(22) a. 9adl-u 9umar-a ‘the justice of Omar’
   b. kitaab-u llaðii najah. ‘the book of the one who succeeded’
(25) a. wahum min ba9d-i galab-i-him sa-yaglibuun (Quran 30:3)
   ‘And they, after their defeat, will be victorious.’
   b. buniya l?-islaam-u 9ala xams … wa ?iqaam-i S-Salaah
      (A saying of the prophet)
   ‘Islam is based on five pillars … and keeping prayer.’

We usually say /?iqaamat/ and /galabat/, but the final /t/ is deleted for annexation. (Al-Sabban, Hashiyat: 2/237).

In English, the definiteness of the modifying noun or the head noun is not affected by being employed in a genitive construction. Thus, ‘a girl’s book’ and ‘the girl’s book’ are acceptable constructions. In Arabic, however, the definiteness of the head noun is influenced by being construed in a genitive construction. Thus, Haywood & Nahmad (1982: 35-6) indicate that:

A noun followed by another noun in the genitive automatically loses its nunation. Moreover, where - as in the majority of instances - the following genitive noun is definite, the first noun also is automatically definite. A NOUN FOLLOWED BY A GENITIVE MUST NOT TAKE THE ARTICLE.

(26) a. bayt-u r-rajul-i ‘the house of the man’.
b. gulaam-u muḥammad-in ‘Muhammad’s servant’

In the first example, if it is intended that ‘house’ should be indefinite, with the meaning a house of the man’s, and implying
that he has other houses also, then another idiom must be used, as /bayt-un li-r-rajul-i/, literally, ‘a house to or of the man’.

Al-Suyuti (Ham9: 2/50) explains why the head noun should be indefinite: “The head noun is identified by the modifying noun if the latter is definite and it is specified if the modifying noun is indefinite. Consequently, the head noun should be indefinite, i.e. it should not include the definite article /?al-/ ‘the’.” Also, a noun that is semantically definite, as when it is a proper noun, cannot be annexed to a following noun. Compare the grammaticality of (26) above with the ungrammaticalcy of (27):

(27) a. *?al-bayt-u r-rajul-i ‘the house of the man’
   b. *?al-gulaam-u muhammad-in ‘Muhammad’s servant’
   c. *zayd-u 9amr-in ‘Zayd of Amr’

The constructions in (27) are unacceptable because a noun cannot be identified twice (i.e. by the use of both the definite article and annexation).

Thackston (1984: 9) also discusses the definiteness of nouns in a genitive construction:

The first member of the construct, the thing possessed or limited, may never have the definite article; it is, however, definite by definition by virtue of its position in the construct: it is therefore ordinarily declined with the definite case endings. The second member of the construct, the possessor or limiter, is in the genitive case and may be definite or indefinite according to sense.
When the modifying noun is indefinite, the entire construction is said to be indefinite, as in:

(28) a. kitaab-u rasuul-in ‘a book of an apostle’
    b. madiin-at-u nabiyy-in ‘a city of a prophet’
When the modifying noun is definite, the entire construction is said to be definite, as in:

(29) a. kitaab-u r-rasuul-i ‘the book of the apostle’
    b. madiinat-u n-nabiyy-i ‘the city of the prophet.’

The definiteness of the genitive in constructions where the head noun is a superlative is discussed by Wright (1967: 226):

Nouns of the forms [?aF9aL] and [Fa9L], etc. used as superlatives are construed as substantives in the singular masculine with the genitive of the word denoting the objects among which the one spoken of is preeminent. The genitive is at times indefinite and explicative, at times definite and partitive.

Examples of the indefinite genitive are given in (30) and examples of the definite genitive in (31):

(30) a. ?al-9amal-u ?afDal-u jihaad-in
    ‘Work is the best militancy.’
    b. ?aS-Salaat-u ?a9Zam-u 9ibaadat-in
    ‘Prayer is the greatest worship.’
(31) a. haataani T-Taalibataani ?afDal-u T-Taalibaat-i
    ‘These two female students are the best of the female students.’
b. xayr-u l-?umuur-i ?awsaT-u-haa

‘The best of deeds are the moderate ones.’

Here must also be mentioned the indefinite genitive after /?awwal/ ‘first’ and /?aaxir/ ‘last’, these words being really substantives (Wright 1967: 227), as in:


bibakkat-a (Quran 3: 96)

‘The first house (temple) which was founded for mankind, was that in Mecca.’

b. ?inna mu?ammad-an ?aaxir-u nabiyy-in

‘Muhammad is surely the last prophet.’

The case of head noun is in no way affected by the genitivization in either Arabic or English. Compare (33a) and (33b) with their English translations:

(33) a. daxal-a madiinat-a n-nabiyy-i

‘He entered the prophet’s city.’

b. xaraj-a min madiinat-i n-nabiyy-i

‘He went out of the prophet’s city.’

A word-class condition is imposed upon the members in a genitive construction in both languages under study. In English, both members in a genitive construction must be nouns, as in examples (14-17) above. In Arabic, Wright (1967: 200-1) shows that the head noun can be only a substantive; for the numerals and prepositions are in reality substantive, and adjectives,
standing in the positions of defined nouns, have the force of substantives:

(34)  a. xamsat-u rijaal-in ‘five men’
       b. ba9d-a sanat-in ‘after the lapse of a year’
       c. jamiilat-u l-9aynayn-i ‘(the woman with) beautiful eyes’

The modifying noun, on the contrary, is always a substantive or a word regarded as such, a pronoun or an entire clause:

(35)  a. rasuul-u l-laah-i ‘the apostle of God’
       b. ma9naah-u ‘its meaning’
       c. haaða yawm-u yanfa9-u S-Saadiqiina Sidquhum

(Quran 5: 119)

‘This is the day (when) their truthfulness shall benefit the truthful.’

The head noun should differ from the modifying noun in both the lexeme (word) and the meaning. So, it is ungrammatical to annex two synonyms of a noun or a noun and its modifying adjective, as in (36a) and (36b), respectively:

(36)  a. *asad-u layθ-in ‘lion lion’
       b. *bint-u jamiilat-in ‘girl beautiful’

One of the constructions used to indicate the genitive is the use of a possessive adjective before the possessed noun in English. Calling possessive adjectives ‘pronouns’, Burton-Roberts (1986: 140) shows the similarity between them and
inflected genitives. Both are possessive determiners. He says, “a possessive determiner can consist either of a possessive pronoun (my, your, etc.) or a full NP + -s, e.g. John’s. This is called the possessive, or GENITIVE, -s”. Examples of possessive adjectives in English are:

(37) a. my pens  
   b. your father  
   c. his mother  
   d. her brother  
   e. our teacher  
   f. their house

In Arabic, nouns may receive possessive suffixes which are identical in form to the objectival suffixes attached to verbs (Gadalla 2000: 156). These suffixes replace the modifying noun, as in:

(38) a. baab-i‘i ‘my door’  
   b. qamiiS-u-ka ‘your (msg) shirt’  
   c. ša9r-u-ki ‘your (fsg) hair’  
   d. tafkiir-u-hu ‘his thinking’  
   e. Sadiiqaat-u-haa ‘her friends (f)’  
   f. ma9mal-u-naa ‘our laboratory’  
   g. maSna9-u-hum ‘their (m) factory’  
   h. madrasat-u-hunna ‘their (f) school’

It can be observed from the contrast of (37) and (38) that English uses isolating words as possessive adjectives, while Arabic uses bound morphemes as possessive suffixes.
4. Syntactic Comparison:

In this section, we are going to discuss the possibility of separating the two members of a genitive construction in both English and Arabic. Then, we will compare the mutual effect of the two members in both languages. After that, we will examine the word order in English and Arabic genitive constructions. Moreover, we will consider the possibility of deleting one or both members in a genitive construction in the two languages. At the end of the section, we will deal with the double and compound genitives in both languages.

In their discussion of the inflected genitive in English, Eckersley & Eckersley (1960: 46) indicate that “when the ‘possessor’ is represented by a number of words, the possessive ending is used with the last one only.” Quirk, et. al. (1972: 194) call this “the group genitive … where the inflection is added to the last word of the post modification instead of the head”. This means that the head noun can be separated from the modifying noun by some words, as in:

(39) a. the king of Morocco’s guards
   b. my daughter-in-law’s dress
   c. Bill and Hillary’s visits

Allerton & French (1987: 87) call the genitive marker’s \{Z_2\} and state that it is not a normal inflector. They explain that by indicating that normal inflectors are added to single words but
\{Z_2\} applies to a noun phrase rather than to a noun. They offer the example in (40a) where it is clear that \textit{intelligent} modifies \textit{(the) boy} not \textit{marks}, as is evidenced by the related structure in (40b):

(40) a. the intelligent boy’s marks

b. the marks of the intelligent boy

In Arabic, on the other hand, nothing can come between the head noun and its modifying noun in a genitive construction. An adjective agreeing with the first noun must come after the second. Thus, in (41a), the adjective /\texttt{\textipa{d\text-d\text-k\text-i\text-y-y}}-i/ ‘the intelligent’ modifies the second noun /\texttt{\textipa{l-walad}}-i/ ‘the boy’, whereas in (41b), the adjective /\texttt{\textipa{l-9aaliyat}}-u/ ‘the high’ describes the first noun /\texttt{\textipa{darajaat}}-u/ ‘marks’:

(41) a. darajaat-u l-walad-i \texttt{\textipa{d\text-d\text-k\text-i\text-y-y}}-i

‘the intelligent boy’s marks’

b. darajaat-u l-walad-i l-9aaliyat-u

‘the boy’s high marks’

Haywood & Nahmad (1982: 36) provide an explanation for that as follows: “It is a rule of \textit{?iDaafa} that nothing must interpose between the noun and its following genitive. Consequently, if the noun is to be qualified with an adjective, the latter must come AFTER the genitive.”

Thackston (1984: 10) also explains the status of adjectives in genitive constructions: “Since nothing can intervene between
the members of a construct, all attributive adjectives describing either member must follow the construct. Case and/or gender agreement usually makes clear which of the two members a given adjective is modifying.” For example, in (42a) the adjective /mutawaaDi9-un/ ‘humble’ modifies the noun /bayt-u/ ‘a house’ because both end in the nominative morpheme [-u(n)], but in (42b) the adjective /mutawaaDi9-in/ ‘humble’ describes the noun /rajul-in/ ‘a man’ as both end in the genitive morpheme [-i(n)]:

(42) a. bayt-u rajul-in mutawaaDi9-un
   ‘a man’s humble house’
   b. bayt-u rajul-in mutawaaDi9-in
   ‘a humble man’s house’

As annexation is one of the meanings, it is expressed in Arabic by the use of prepositions of the genitive, but the head noun replaces such prepositions. The genitive case applies to the modifying noun without preventing the existence of an implicit genitive preposition which does not appear orthographically. We do not say /kitaab-un li-muhammad/ ‘a book for Muhammad’ because here the preposition /li-/ ‘for’ performs this role and when this preposition appears, annexation of what follows it to what precedes it is blocked. But when the preposition is deleted, annexation is permitted and the presence of the preposition is implicit.
Some syntacticians claim that the separation between the head noun and the modifying is ungrammatical, except for poetic necessity, because the modifying noun acts like a part of the head noun (as it represents its nunation) and there should be no separation between the parts of a noun. Other syntacticians permit the separation between them in cases other than poetry. For example, it is possible to separate between the head noun and the modifying noun with an adverb if the head noun is a verbal noun annexed to its object, as in:

(43) tark-u yawm-an nafsak-a wa hawaa-haa sa9y-un lahaa fii radaa-haa

‘Leaving one day your self and its desires is seeking destruction for it.’

In this example, /tark-u/ ‘leaving’ is a verbal noun that acts as a head noun and /nafsak-a/ ‘your self’ is a modifying noun; they are separated by the adverb /yawman-an/ ‘one day’ (Ibn Aqiil 1980: 3/82).

Separation between the head noun and the modifying noun is also permitted if the head noun is a derivative adjective acting as a verb denoting the present or the future, the modifying noun is its first object and the separating word is its second object (Ibn Ya’ish, Sharh: 3/19), as in:

(44) mu9ammad-un maani9-un maal-a-hu ?abnaa?-i-hi

‘Muhammad is granting his money to his children.’
Here, the head noun is the active participle /maani-h-un/ ‘granting’ and the modifying noun is /?abna?-i-hi/ ‘his children’ which is the underlying first object of /maani-h-un/. The separating word is /maal-a-hu/ ‘his money’ which is the underlying second object of /maani-h-un/.

The separation can also be achieved by the use of the genitive preposition and the noun which is in the genitive case, as in the saying of Prophet Muhammad:

(45) hal ?antum taarik-uu lii Saahib-ii

‘Are you leaving my friend to me?’

The separation between the head noun /taarik-uu/ and the modifying noun /Saahib-ii/ is by the genitive preposition and the first person pronoun.

Separation is also permitted by the use of the oath (Ibn Aqil 1980: 3/82). For instance, in (46a) the head noun /kitaab-u/ ‘book’ and the modifying noun /muhammad-in/ ‘Muhammad’ are separated by the oath word /wallaah-i/ ‘by God’. In (46b), the head noun /gulaam-u/ ‘servant’ and the modifying noun /ibn-i ?axii-ka/ ‘your nephew’ are separated by the oath phrase /?in šaa?a llaah-u/ ‘by God will’:

(46) a. haaða kitaab-u wallaah-i muhammad-in

‘By God, this is the book of Muhammad.’

b. haaða gulaam-u ?in šaa?a llaah-u ibn-i ?axii-ka

‘By God will, this is the servant of your nephew.’
In English the two members in a genitive construction do not affect each other. However, in Arabic the two members can affect each other, particularly in relation to gender. Sometimes the masculine head noun acquires feminization by being annexed to a feminine modifying noun and vice versa, provided that in both cases the head noun can be replaced by the modifying noun without changing the meaning in the sentence as in:

(47) a. quTi9-at ba9D-u ?aSaabi9-i-hi

‘Some of his fingers were cut.’

b. quTi9-at ?aSaabi9-uh

‘His fingers were cut.’

In (47a), /ba9D/ ‘some’ is a passive subject of the verb /quTi9-at/ ‘were cut’ and the verb acquires feminization from the feminine modifying noun /?aSaabi9/ ‘fingers’ because the head noun can be replaced by the modifying noun, as in (47b), expressing the part by the whole implicitly.

Moreover, the head noun acquires the feature of feminization from the modifying noun if the head noun represents the whole for the modifying noun which is feminine, as in:

(48) a. yawm-a tajid-u kull-u nafs-in... (Quran 3: 30)

‘On the day when every person will be confronted…’

b. wa wuffiy-at kull-u nafs-in... (Quran 39: 70)

‘And every person will be paid in full…’
The invariable noun /kull-u/ ‘every’ becomes feminine because it is annexed to the feminine noun /nafs-in/ ‘person’.

On the other hand, the head noun sometimes acquires masculinity from the masculine modifying noun to which it is annexed, as in (49) where the feminine /raḥmat-a/ ‘mercy’ is described by the masculine /qariib-un/ ‘near’ because it acquired masculinity by being annexed to Allah (Al-Azhari, *Tasrih*: 32-3):

(49) ?inna raḥmat-a ɪlaahi qariib-un mina l-muḥsiniin

‘Surely, Allah’s mercy is (ever) near unto the good-doers’.

The major syntactic difference between English and Arabic genitive constructions is in word order. In the former the modifying noun precedes the head noun, whereas in the latter the head noun precedes the modifying noun. Although advancement and postposition are allowed in Arabic, this does not apply to genitive constructions. That is why (Al-Suyuti, *Ham9*: 2/49) assures, “the modifying noun is not permitted to pre-modify the head noun and neither is the agent of the modifying noun.”

The headword in an English genitive construction is omitted in what Quirk et. al. (1972: 202) call the “elliptic genitive” where “the head is not expressed but it is explicit or implicit in the context”. Eckersely & Eckersely (1960: 47) mention two situations in which the genitive is used elliptically, i.e. without a headword:
1. when referring to a business, building, etc. This is what Quirk et. al. (1972: 203) call “the local genitive” which is “restricted to certain institutionalized expressions where no head needs to be mentioned. It is used in the following three cases:

(a) For normal residence:
   - my uncle’s
   - the Robinsons’

(b) For institutions such as public buildings (where the genitive is usually a saint’s name):
   - St Paul’s (cathedral)
   - St James’s (Palace)

(c) For a place where business is conducted:
   - the butcher’s
   - the grocer’s

2. to avoid repetition:
   - My house is more beautiful than Jack’s.’
   - ‘Whose pen is this?’ ‘It’s Mary’s.’

   CDBUILD (1990: 104) offers an example situation to illustrate the elliptical use of the genitive to avoid repetition: “When you are talking about two things of the same type which belong to different people you can use the possessive form of a name or noun like a possessive pronoun so that you can omit repeating the thing itself.” For instance, in (50) David’s is used instead of David’s hand.

(50) Her hand felt different from David’s.
The use of the possessive pronouns (mine, his, hers, etc.) is in some way similar to the elliptical use of the genitive, as in: (51) This is my book, but that one is yours.

In English, the elliptical genitive represents the deletion of the head noun, but the modifying noun cannot be deleted in any context. In Arabic, on the other hand, the deletion of either one of the two members in a genitive construction is permitted. When the head noun is deleted, the modifying noun mostly replaces it in its declension (Ibn Ya’ish, Sharh: 3/23). For instance, it becomes a subject as in (52a) meaning (52b), an object as in (53a) meaning (53b), a subject noun as in (54a) meaning (54b), or a predicate noun as in (55a) meaning (55b):

(52) a. wa jaa?-a rabbuk-a (Quran 89: 22)
   ‘And your lord comes.’
   b. wa jaa?-a ?amr-u rabbi-ka
   ‘And the decree of your lord comes.’

(53) a. wa ?ušrib-uu fii quluubihimu l-9ijl-a (Quran 2: 93)
   ‘And they had to drink into their hearts of the calf.’
   b. wa ?ušrib-uu fii quluubihimu ḥubb-a l-9ijl-i
   ‘And they had to drink into their hearts the taint of the calf.’

(54) a. walaakinna l-birr-a man ?aaman-a bi-illaah-i
   (Quran 2: 177)
   ‘But the righteousness is to believe in God.’
b. wa laakinn-a l-birr-a birr-u man ?aaman-a bi-llaah-i
   ‘But the righteousness is that of the one who believes in God.’

(55) a. šarr-u l-maSaa?ib-i mayyit-un ba9iid-un 9an ?ahl-i-hi
   ‘The most ominous crisis is a dead person in a land away from his relatives’.

b. šarr-u l-maSaa?ib-i muSiibat-u mayyit-in ba9iid-in
   9an ?ahl-i-hi
   ‘The most ominous crisis is that of a dead person in a land away from his relatives’.

Sometimes the head noun is deleted without a reference to it, as in (56a) which means (56b) and at other times it is deleted with a reference to it as in (57a) which means (57b):

(56) a. wa s?al il-qaryat-a llati kunnaa fiihaa (Quran 12: 82)
   ‘And ask the town where we have been.’

b. wa s?al ?ahl-a l-qaryat-i …
   ‘And ask the inhabitants of the town…’

(57) a. ?aw kaZulumaat-in fii baahr-in lujjiyy-in
   yagšaa-hu mawj-un (Quran 24: 40)
   ‘Or [the state of a disbeliever] is like the darkness in a vast deep sea, overwhelmed with a great wave.’

b. ?aw kađii Zulumaat-in …
   ‘Or like one of darkness…’
In (57a) the head noun /ðiːi/ is deleted and the reference to it is the pronoun in /yagšaa-hu/ ‘overwhelm-it (m)’; if it were left without reference, the verb would be /yagšaa-haa/ ‘overwhelm-it (f)’ (Al-Azhari, *Tasrih*: 5).

Eliminating the modifying noun is less frequent than eliminating the head noun in Arabic because the purpose of the modifying noun is defining or specification and eliminating it would not achieve this purpose. However, there are some cases in which the modifying noun is deleted. First, it is deleted if it is a sentence and the head noun is an adverb. The deleted noun is compensated for by nunation (Ibn Ya’ish, *Sharh*: 3/29) as in (58a) whose implicit meaning is (58b):

(58) a.  wa ?antum ḥiīna?iðīn tanZuruun (Quran 5: 84)

‘And you at that moment are looking on.’


‘And you when the soul reaches the throat are looking on’.

Second, the modifying noun is deleted when used with /kull/ ‘all’ and /ba9D/ ‘some’, and is compensated for by nunation, (Ibn Ya’ish, *Sharh*: 3/29) as in:

(59) marar-tu bi-kull-in qaa?im-an wa bi-ba9D-in jaalis-an

‘I passed by all standing persons and some of the sitting’.
Both the head noun and the modifying noun may be eliminated if annexation is repeated, as in (60a) whose implicit meaning is (60b) (Al-Sabban, *Hashiyat*: 2/272):

(60) a. faqabaD-tu qabDat-an min ?aTar-i r-rasuul-i

(Quran 20: 96)

‘So, I took a handful from the trace of the messenger.’

b. faqabaD-tu qabDat-an min turaab-i ?aTar-i ḥaafir-i r-rasuul-i.

‘So, I took a handful of dust from the trace of the hoof print of the messenger’s horse’.

According to Eckersely & Eckersely (1960: 48), an idiomatic construction of English is the use of both inflected and periphrastic genitives together, as in:

(61) a. She is a friend of Mary’s.

b. I read a novel of Hardy’s.

This construction is very similar in meaning to ‘one of Mary’s friends’ and ‘one of Hardy’s novels’. A difference is that “*a friend of Mary’s*” could be said if Mary had only one friend. “*One of Mary’s friends*” could not be said if this were the case.

Quirk et. al. (1972: 203) call the construction in which both the inflected and the periphrastic genitives “the double genitive” and indicate that it is usually used with “a partitive meaning”. They also provide two conditions for such a construction (pp. 889-90):
i. the postmodifiers must be definite and human. Compare (62-63a) with (62-63b), respectively:

(62) a. a symphony of Beethoven’s
             b. *a symphony of a musician’s
(63) a. a book of my brother’s
             b. *a leg of the table’s

ii. the head must be essentially indefinite; that is, the head must be seen as one of an unspecified number of items attributed to the post modifier. Compare:

(64) a. A sister of the teacher’s has arrived.
             b. * The sister of the teacher’s has arrived.

The double genitive is not found in Arabic, simply because periphrastic genitives are not allowed in this language. However, Arabic has what might be termed “compound genitive” in which the head noun is annexed to one or more indefinite nouns defined by annexation, as in (65a) where /kalaam-u/ ‘speech’ is annexed to /rajul-i/ ‘man’ which, in turn, is annexed to /š-šaari9-i/ ‘the street’. We believe that the compound genitive is also found in English, as shown by (65b):

(65) a. haaða kalaam-u rajul-i š-šaari9-i

      ‘This is the speech of the street man.’
             b. This is Henry’s father’s car.

There may be more than one head noun annexed to one definite modifying noun. Thackston (1984: 9) even says that the
genitive chain may be extended indefinitely by making the modifying noun of one construction a head noun in a second, as in:

(66) haaða kalaam-u rajul-i šaari9-i ward-i n-niil-i

‘This is the speech of the man of the street of the Nile Flowers.’

In this case, the deletion of both the head noun and the modifying noun is frequent because of the recurrence of annexation, as we said in the example /faqabaD-tu qabDat-an min ?aθar-i r-rasuul/.

5. Semantic Comparison:

This section offers a semantic classification of genitive constructions in both English and Arabic. Quirk et. al. (1972: 193) declare that English has five classes of genitive: possessive, subjective, objective, descriptive and genitive of origin. On the following lines, an attempt will be made to explain these classes and see whether they are found in Arabic or not. Other types of genitive such as the genitive of measure, place, time, relation, substance and naming will be compared in the two languages.

(A) Possessive Genitive:

This is the most important of all genitive classes. Quirk et. al. (1972: 192) affirm that “the ‘central’ … use of the genitive is to express possession. The construction is indeed sometimes
called the ‘possessive’ case and the traditional name of the pronouns with genitive function is ‘possessive’ pronouns.”

(67) a. Prof. Noyer’s book  
b. my house  
c. the gravity of the earth

‘Possession’ has been defined by Trask (1993: 212) as “a general name for any relation between two noun phrases by which the second in some sense ‘belongs to’ the first.” That is why Eckersley & Eckersley (1960: 46) assert that:

The possessive, or genitive, case shows possession, using the word ‘possession’ in its widest sense. Thus, the possessive form ‘John’s father’ does not mean that John ‘possesses’ his father, nor does ‘Shakespeare’s death’ mean that Shakespeare ‘possessed’ death. The genitive form is used to indicate not only possession in the strict sense of the word but something signified by another noun, which appertains to the person.

In Arabic, according to Wright (1967: 199), the genitive construction indicates the thing possessed by a possessor, as in (68a) and the possessor of a thing possessed, as in (68b):

(68) a. xaziinat-u s-sulTaan-i  
‘the treasury of the sultan’  
b. sulTaan-u l-barr-i wa l-bahr-i  
‘the lord of the land and sea’
The possessive genitive in Arabic involves that type of annexation that can be implicitly explained by /laam-u l-mulk/ ‘possessive /li-’. It is the basic type of annexation as well as the most recurrent in use, e.g.

(69) a. maSna9-u 9u0maan-a

  ‘Osman’s factory’

b. 0awb-u zayd-in

  ‘Zayd’s garment’

As we stated in section (1), /li-/ is sometimes used for specification and because every position is specification, it is mostly used for specification, e.g.

(70) a. ra?iis-u d-dawlat-i

  ‘the president of the country’

b. waziir-u l-9adl-i

  ‘the minister of justice’

Each annexation that is not valid to be explained by /min/ ‘from’ or /fii/ ‘in’ only means /li-/.

(B) Subjective Genitive:

This is when the modifying noun acts as the subject of the head noun. Bolinger & Sears (1981: 67-8) explain this as follows: “Jill’s book uses the possessive morpheme ’s to describe ownership, a fact of the real world. Jill’s smoking does not use it to say that Jill owns smoking but shows that Jill is the
grammatical subject of the verb *smoke*. This is supported by COBUILD’s (1990: 104) statement that “the possessive form can sometimes be used with nouns which refer to an action in order to indicate who or what is performing the action.” Periphrastic genitives can also be used to show the subject. “Prepositional phrases beginning with ‘of’ can be used with nouns referring to an action to indicate who or what is performing the action” (Ibid: 130). Other examples are:

(71) a. the man’s arrival
    b. my agreement
    c. the fall of autumn leaves

What is noticeable about these examples is that the head noun is a verbal noun and the modifying noun acts as its subject.

What resembles the subjective genitive in Arabic is that type of genitive construction in which the head noun is a passive participle and the modifying noun is its patient.

(72) a. haaða mu9Ta d-diinaar-i

    ‘This is the one who is given the dinar.’

    b. ðaaka maDruub-u r-ra?s-i

    ‘That is the man with a hit head.’

As shown by these examples, the passive participle derived from the trilateral verb is similar to that derived from other verb forms (Ibn Hisham, *Shahr*: 326). The past participle cannot be used as a head noun in English.
(C) Objective Genitive:

This is when the modifying noun acts as the object of the head noun. COBUILD (1990: 104) reveals that “sometimes you can add apostrophe s (’s) to a noun referring to the thing affected by the performer of an action and put it in front of the noun referring to that performer. … Sometimes an apostrophe s (’s) structure can be used to indicate the thing affected by an action. “Prepositional phrases beginning with ‘of’ can also be employed to show who or what someone does something to” (Ibid: 130). Examples of objective genitives in English are:

(73)   a. the boy’s teacher/examiner
       b. the man’s killer/murderer
       c. the creator of the universe
       d. Mandela’s release
       e. Anan’s appointment as Secretary General of the U. N.
       f. the destruction of the town.

It can be observed that the head noun in (73a-c) is an agent but in (73d-f) it is a verbal noun.

What represents the objective genitive in Arabic is that type of genitive construction in which the head noun is an active participle that resembles the imperfective verb in its indication to the present and future and the modifying noun is its patient, as in:

(74)   a. haaḍa kaatib-u r-risaalat-i

   ‘This is the writer of the letter.’
b. haaḍa musaa9id-u-naa ṭila l-xayr-i

‘This is our helper to do good.’

In these examples, the head noun is originally nunated, marking
the modifying noun accusatively, but nunation is deleted for
easier pronunciation and the modifying noun is put in the
genitive case (Wahba & Al-Muhandis 1984: 47-8).

The objective genitive is also represented in Arabic by
constructions in which the head noun is a noun of exaggeration,
i.e. an intensive form, as in:

(75) a. šarraab-u l-9asal-i ‘the drinker of honey’
   b. saliiT-u l-lisaan-i ‘the sharp-tongued (man)’
   c. gafuur-u ḍ-ḍanb-i ‘the forgiver of sins’

Here, the intensive forms are annexed to their patient after the
deletion of nunation from the head noun for easier pronunciation.
Annexation of nouns of exaggeration is considered one type of
verbal annexation.

Both the subjective and objective functions of the genitive
can be achieved by a genitive construction in which the head
noun is a verbal noun as in (71) and (73d-f) in English. So, the
important question that may arise here is how to distinguish
between the subjective and objective functions of the genitive in
that case. Quirk et. al. (1972: 888) answer that question:

The objective relation can be expressed only with the
of-phrase, the subjective relation with either the of-
phrase or the -s genitive … there can be no difficulty in interpreting the of-phrase as subjective, but where it is a transitive or prepositional verb problems can arise.

To illustrate, (76a) is ambiguous because it can mean that ‘someone shoots the soldiers’ or ‘the soldiers shoot someone.’

(76) a. the shooting of the soldiers
    b. the fascination of the man
    c. the tenants’ scrutiny

“But in general it seems that where an of- post modifier can be interpreted as objective, it will be so interpreted unless there is a counter-indication” (Ibid). Thus, (76b-c) will tend mainly to mean that someone is fascinating the man or scrutinizing the tenants though the opposite would be perfectly correct.

Allerton & French (1987: 86) also relate the distinction between the subjective and objective functions of verbal-noun genitives to the transitivity of the verb: In the case of nouns derived from transitive verbs which require a human object, John is normally construed as the object, as in (77a). But where the verb is intransitive or transitive with the possibility on non-human object, then John is taken as the subject, as in (77b). However, if the subject and object are unambiguously marked by prepositions, these rules may be relaxed, as in (78):

(77) a. John’s defeat/arrest/education
    b. John’s arrival/death/discovery
(78)  a. John’s defeat of the champion  
       b. John’s discovery by the talent-spotter

In Arabic, also, the head noun may be a verbal noun that governs a genitive which may be either subject or object of the verbal idea; i.e. the modifying noun is originally in the nominative or in the accusative, as in (79a) and (79b), respectively:

(79)  a. 9ajib-tu min Darb-i zayd-in muḥammad-aa  
      ‘I was surprised by Zayd’s hitting Muhammad.’  
   b. 9ajib-tu min madh-i l-malik-i 9ala lisaan-i š-šaa9ir-i  
      ‘I was surprised by the praising of the king at the tongue  
       of the poet’.

In (79a), the modifying noun /zayd-in/ ‘Zayd’ is an underlying subject, whereas in (79b), the modifying noun /l-malik-i/ ‘the king’ is an underlying object. However, in some cases it is not clear whether the subjective or objective meaning is intended, as in:

(80) ra?ay-tu fii 9aynay muḥammad-in ḥubb-a zawjat-i-hi  
      ‘I saw in Muhammad’s eyes the love of his wife.’

The modifying noun /zawjat-i-hi/ ‘his wife’ here is possibly bearing the meaning of both the subject and the object. It is the context that determines whether the noun annexed to the verbal noun is subject or object and if it is not clear in the context, the two aspects are possible (Al-Suyuti, *Ham9*: 1/48).
(D) Descriptive Genitive:

This is when one of the nouns in a genitive construction shows a quality or a feature of the other. Allerton & French (1987: 86) reveal that “when the X element in a phrase John’s X is a de-adjectival abstract noun, we can generally reconstruct an underlying proposition John is/was/etc. A, where A is the adjectival stem of X. For instance, John’s happiness implies John is/was/etc. happy.”

Some linguists call the descriptive genitive the ‘classifying genitive’. For example, calling the genitive morpheme \{Z_2\}, Allerton & French (1987: 89) say:

In certain cases (referred to by Zandvoort as the ‘classifying genitive’) \{Z_2\} may function not with a noun phrase but with a simple count noun (even though this could not alone form a noun phrase). Thus, a doctor’s degree in the context He’s working for… can be regarded as an expansion of a degree, so that doctor’s is simply a modifier like doctoral.

In addition, COBUILD (1990: 104) shows that “possessive forms can be used to refer to things of a particular type which are usually associated with someone.

(81) a. a women dressed in a man’s raincoat
   b. a policeman’s uniform
   c. women’s magazines.”

We can also call the descriptive genitive the ‘qualitative genitive’. COBUILD (1990: 103) points out that “apostrophe s
(’s) is sometimes added to a noun referring to an object when specifying a part of it or a quality or feature it has.”
(82) a. I like the car’s design.
   b. You can predict a computer’s behavior.
COBUILD (1990: 129) also states that “prepositional phrases beginning with ‘of’ can be used to say that someone or something has a particular quality.”
(83) a. a man of sympathy and kindness.
   b. problems of varying complexity
   c. a meeting of hot debates

The descriptive genitive in Arabic is represented by various constructions. The first involves the annexation of an adjective to a noun. Haywood & Nahmad (1982: 66) explain that “the genitive occurs after an adjective to define or limit its application”. Examples are:
(84) a. qaliil-u l-9aql-i
   ‘little of understanding, stupid’
   b. ḥasan-u l-wajh-i
   ‘handsome of face, good-looking’

The second involves the annexation of an active or passive participle to its patient. Wright (1967: 221) assures that “participles may take after them a restrictive or limitative genitive”. In this construction, the head noun may be an active participle, as in (85a) or a passive participle, as in (85b). The
participle may be unaugmented, as in (85) or augmented, as in (86):

(85) a. Taahir-u l-qalb-i
    ‘pure of heart’
    b. ma9muur-u d-daar-i
    ‘(the man with)’ a house full of people’
(86) a. mustaqiim-u l-qaamat-i
    ‘(the man with) a straight stature’
    b. mu9tadil-u l-xuluq-i
    ‘(the man with) good manners’

The third includes the annexation of a noun without a definite article to a modifying adjective defined by the article. In this construction, the noun modified by this adjective is deleted (Ibn Ya’ish, Sharh: 3/9), as in (87a) which is originally (87b) and (88a) which is originally (88b):

(87) a. masjid-u l-jaami9-i
    ‘the congregational mosque’
    b. masjid-u l-makaan-i l-jaami9-i
    ‘the mosque of the congregational place’
(88) a. Salaat-u l-?uulaa
    ‘the first prayer’
    b. Salaat-u s-saa9at-i l-?uulaa
    ‘prayer of the first hour’
Wright (1967: 221) argues that in these examples, some grammarians see an annexation of the thing described to the descriptive epithet, i.e. of the substantive to the adjective. However, as such annexation is impossible, according to Wright, those grammarians are correct who regard the adjective as having been raised to the level of a substantive.

The fourth construction involves the annexation of an attribute to its described noun. That is the genitive indicates the person to whom [or the thing to which] the quality designated by the head word belongs (Wright 1967: 199), as in:

(89) a. šajaa9at-u l-baTel-i ‘the courage of the hero’
   b. Safaa?-u l-maa?-i ‘the limpidness of the water’

The fifth construction includes the annexation of a noun to an attribute. In this type, a noun is qualified by the genitive of another noun, when in other languages an adjective would be employed (Wright 1967: 202):

(90) a. rajul-u suu?-in ‘a bad man’
   b. Saahip-u Sidq-in ‘a good comrade’

The last construction representing the descriptive genitive is the annexation of a superlative adjective to a noun. Wright (1967: 218) declares that “with the genitive are also construed verbal adjectives expressing the superlative, whether of the common form [.?aF9aL] or of any other form, such as [Fa9L]”. A condition is imposed upon the use of [.?aF9aL] as a head word in
a genitive construction by Al-Mubarrid (1386 H.: 3/38). He says: “The superlative [?aF9aL] is not annexed to a thing except when it is part or some of that thing”. Examples are:

(91) a. ?a9lam-u l-falaasifat-i
   ‘the most learned of the philosophers’
   b. xayr-u l-bariyyat-i
   ‘the best of the created things’

The numerical adjectives /?awwal/ ‘first’ and /?aaxir/ ‘last’, being strictly superlatives are also construed with the genitive, as we mentioned in section (3), as in:

(92) a. ?awwal-u yawm-in ‘the first day’
   b. ?aaxir-u laylat-in ‘the last night’

(E) Genitive of Origin:

This is when the modifying noun represents the origin of the head noun. For instance, the former may be the author or writer of the latter, as in:

(93) a. Shakespeare’s plays
   c. my friend’s e-mail

The genitive of origin is also found in Arabic, as in:

(94) a. riwaayaat-u nagiib maḥfuuZ
   ‘the novels of Naguib Mahfouz’
   b. ḥikaayat-u jaddat-ii
   ‘my grand mother’s stories’
(F) Genitive of Measure:

This is when the modifying noun acts as a measure of the head noun (cf. Al-Khuli 1982: 105). The measurement can be of time, space, speed or quantity, as in the following constructions, respectively:

(95) a. a week’s work c. two hours’ drive
   b. an inch’s length d. a dollar’s worth

Allerton & French (1987: 86) discuss the measurement of time: “Time expressions are particularly amenable to ‘possessiv-  
ization’. Singular quantity time expressions appear in this form when the head word is a mass noun”, as in:

(96) a. (in) one/a week’s time
   b. one/a day’s travel

When the quantity is plural, of course, the possessive form is not marked in the spoken language but is traditionally written, as in:

(97) a. two hours’ sleep
   b. four weeks’ notice

Periphrastic genitives can also be used for measurement. COBUILD (1990: 103) confirms that “prepositional phrases beginning with ‘of’ and containing measurement are used to indicate how great an area, speed, distance or temperature is”.

Examples are:

(98) a. a speed of 60 miles per hour
   b. a temperature of 40° centigrade.
The periphrastic genitive can also be employed for the measurement of age. That is why COBUILD (1990: 129) points out that ‘of’ can be used in front of a number to indicate someone’s age, as in:

(99) a. a boy of seven
b. a young woman of nineteen.

In Arabic, the genitive of measure is represented by the annexation of numerals to countable nouns, as in:

(100) a. θalaθ-u layaal-in ‘three nights’
   b. ?arba9at-u ?ašhur-in ‘four months’

However, there is a controversy over the meaning of such a construction; some linguists say that annexation here can be explained by /li-/ ‘for, to’ and some say that it can be interpreted by /min/ ‘of’. But annexation of one numeral to another, as in (101) means /min/ according to most linguists and /li-/ ‘for’ according to a few of them (Al-Sarraj 1988: 2/5).

(101) a. θalaθumi?ah ‘three hundred’
   b. ?arba9umi?ah ‘four hundred’

(G) Genitive of Place:

This is when the modifying noun or the head noun refers to a place. As for English, COBUILD (1990: 104) indicates that
“Apostrophe s (’s) is used after nouns and names referring to places to specify something in that place”, as in:
(102) a. Egypt’s population is steadily growing.
   b. The city’s skyscrapers are high.

In Arabic, the genitive of place is represented by that type of annexation in which the modifying noun is a locative adverb for the head noun; it can be interpreted by the preposition /fii/ ‘in’, as in:
(103) a. yaa Saaḥibay is-sijn-i (Quran 12: 39)
   ‘O two companions in the prison.’
   b. ?al-husayn-u šahiid-u karbilaʔ?
   ‘Al-Husayn is a martyr in Karbila.’

The implicit meaning of (103a) is /yaa Saaḥibaaya fi-s-sijn-i/ and that of (103b) is /?al-husayn-u šahiid-un fii karbilaʔ?/, where /s-sijn/ and /karbilaʔ/ are two places (Al-Azhari, Tasrih: 25).

(H) Genitive of Time:

This is when the modifying noun or the head noun refers to a time. Concerning English, Allerton & French (1987: 86) propose that “expressions which name a specific time may be possessivized”, as in:
(104) a. today’s Guardian
   b. last week’s match.
The genitive of time in Arabic refers to that class of annexation which means /fii/ ‘in’ and the modifying noun is a temporal adverb for the head noun, as in:

(105) a. makr-u l-layl-i wa n-nahaar-i (Quran 34: 33)
   ‘plotting by night and day’
   b. tarabbuS-u ?arba9at-i ?ašhur-in (Quran 2: 226)
   ‘waiting for four months’
In (105a), /makr-u/ ‘plotting’ is annexed to /l-layl-i/ ‘the night’ because it is its time and the same applies to (105b) where /tarabbuS-u/ ‘waiting’ is annexed /?arba9at-i/ ‘four’ and their implicit meanings are /makr-un fi-l-layl-i/ and /tarabbuS-un fii ?arba9at-i ?ašhur-in/, respectively (Al-Suyuti, Ham9: 2/46).

(I) Genitive of Relation:
By this we mean the genitive that denotes a relation between the head noun and the modifying noun. GOBUILD (1990: 103) illustrates that apostrophe s (’s) can be used “to show that something belongs to or is associated with a group of people or an institution.”

(106) a. our country’s policy
   b. the department’s budget
Concerning periphrastic genitives, COBUILD (1990: 129) indicates that “prepositional phrases beginning with ‘of’ can be
used to say that something belongs to or is associated with someone or something.”

(107) a. He was the son of a millionaire.
   b. They painted the walls of the house.

Haegeman & Gueron (1999: 413) refer to the relational genitives: “nouns which are not derived from verbs are inherently relational; they take what we might call a relational argument”.

(108) a. the brother of the bridegroom
   b. the bridegroom’s brother
   c. the top of the tower
   d. the chicken’s wing

The genitive of relation is also found in Arabic, as in

(109). A thing may be annexed to another thing for the very least relationship between them (Al-Suyuti, Ham9: 2/46), as in (109d) where the way is annexed to myself just because of my passing on it:

(109) a. waalid-u l-9aruus-i ‘the father of the bride’
   b. qimmat-u l-jabal-i ‘the peak of the mountain’
   c. ðayl-u l-qITTat-i ‘the tail of the cat’
   d. ra?ayt-u ?a?mad-a fii Tariiq-ii
      ‘I saw Ahmad on my way.’
(J) Genitive of Substance or Subject Matter:

This refers to the material, content or subject matter of which something is made. COBUILD (1990: 129) hints at it: “Prepositional phrases beginning with ‘of’ can be used to indicate what something consists of … they can also be used to indicate what the subject matter of something is.”

(110) a. shirts of cotton and silk
    b. emotions of love and fear
    c. a photograph of a girl
    d. the concept of honesty

The genitive of substance is represented in Arabic by what might be termed ‘annexation of the genus’ in which the head noun is a class and the modifying noun is a genus of this class. According to Haywood & Nahmad (1982: 65), the Arabic genitive may be used to denote the material of which something is composed. Examples are:

(111) a. kursiyy-u xašab-in
    ‘a chair (made) of wood, a wooden chair’
    b. xaatam-u ḍahab-in
    ‘a ring (made) of gold, a golden ring’

According to Wright (1997:199), the genitive may indicate the material of the form and the form of the material, as in:

(112) a. ḥawsb-u ḥariir-in
    ‘a garment (made) of silk, a silk garment’
b. hariir-u l-fustaan-i
   ‘the silk of the dress’

(K) Genitive of Naming:

This is sometimes called the ‘appositive genitive’. It is represented in English by periphrastic genitives in which the modifying noun is a name of a geographical entity and the head noun is the word for that entity, as in:

(114) a. the city of Edinburgh
    b. the Tower of London
    c. the state of Oregon

According to Wright (1967: 232), the Arabic genitive construction applies to the names of towns, rivers, mountains, etc. when preceded by the words for the named thing like a town, river, etc., as in:

(115) a. madiinat-u bagdaad-a ‘the city of Baghdad’
    b. nahr-u l-furaat-i ‘the river Euphrates’
    c. Tuuri-i siiniin ‘mount Sinai’
    d. šahr-u ramaDaan-a ‘the month of Ramadan’

(L) Partitive Genitive:

In English, the head noun in a periphrastic genitive construction may represent a part of the modifying noun, as in:
(116) a. half of the company
    b. part of the room

As for Arabic, Wright (1967: 199) declares that the genitive may indicate the part of the whole and the whole as embracing the parts, as in:

(117) a. raʔs-a l-ḥikmat-i ‘the beginning of wisdom’
    b. kull-u l-maxluuqaat-i ‘the totality of the created things’

Haywood & Nahmad (1982: 65) also emphasize that the Arabic genitive can be used partitively:

(118) a. qiT9at-u laʔm-in ‘a piece of meat’
    b. finjaan-u šaay-in ‘a cup of tea’.

(M) Genitive of Confirmation:

This type is found in Arabic only and includes a genitive construction in which the head noun is a confirmed noun and the modifying noun is its confirming noun, as in (119a-b), where the modifying noun is /ʔið-in/. It also includes annexing a thing to itself as in (119c):

(119) a. yawma-ʔið-in ‘on that day’
    b. 9aama-ʔið-in ‘in that year’
    c. ḥaqq-u l-yaqiin-i (Quran 56: 95)
      ‘the very truth and certainty’
(M) Genitive of Similarity and Difference:

This type is also found in Arabic only and involves a verbal annexation in which a word of similarity or difference is annexed to a following noun. These words include /gayr/ ‘except’, /šibh/ ‘like’ /miθl/ ‘such as’, and its synonyms such as /xidn/, /naḥw/, /tirb/ and /nidd/. All these nouns are indefinite even when annexed to definite nouns, as in:

(120) a. jaa?anii Taalib-un gayr-u zayd-in
    ‘A student came to me, not Zayd.’

b. haaða T-Taalib-u miθl-u zayd-in
    ‘This student is like Zayd.’

(120a) implies every one except Zayd, i.e. annexation does not add definiteness, and (120b) implies everything that is similar to Zayd is also similar to this student (Sibawayh 1977: 2/210).

(O) Genitive of Intention:

This is also found in Arabic only. It includes the annexation of the intended to the eliminated, (Al-Sabban, Hashiyat: 2/237) as in (121) or vice versa, as in (122):

(121) a. ðahab-tu ?ila bagdaad-a l-9iraaq-i
    ‘I went to Baghdad, Iraq.’

b. saafar-tu ?ila qaahirat-i miSr-a
    ‘I traveled to Cairo, Egypt.’
(122) 9ism-u s-salaam-i 9alay-kum

‘The name of peace is upon you.’

In the (121) examples, the intended or the considered is annexed to the eliminated or the non-existent, whereas in (122) the eliminated is annexed to the intended.

6. Conclusion:

The genitive is one of the noun cases in English and Arabic. English traditionally has two forms for the genitive: inflected and periphrastic. Arabic, on the other hand, has one form, the inflected. Prepositional phrases cannot be utilized to express the genitive in Arabic. Arab grammarians have traditionally divided genitive constructions into two types: real annexation and verbal annexation.

The genitive is considered a morphological property of nouns in both English and Arabic. In English, a genitive construction is formed by attaching an ’s which has three allomorphs that are phonologically conditioned by the final sound of the modifying noun. The Arabic genitive has six allomorphs that are morpho-syntactically conditioned by the gender and number properties as well as the declension status of the modifying noun. Though the head noun in an English genitive construction does not undergo any morphological change, both members in an Arabic genitive construction
undergo morphological changes. The definiteness of the two members of a genitive construction in English is not affected by being construed in one construction, whereas in Arabic the definiteness of the head noun is affected by that process. In both languages under study, the two members in a genitive construction must be nouns or substantives. English uses isolating words as possessive adjectives, while Arabic uses bound morphemes as possessive suffixes.

Though in English the head noun can be separated from the modifying noun with some words, in Arabic nothing can be interpolated between the two members, except in very few cases. In English, the two members in a genitive construction do not influence each other, while in Arabic there is a mutual effect, particularly in terms of gender. The main syntactic difference between English and Arabic is that in the former the modifying noun comes before the head noun, but in the latter this order is reversed. In English, only the head noun can be deleted, whereas in Arabic either one of the two members can be deleted. The double genitive is found in English only, but the compound genitive is found in both languages.

Possessive, subjective, objective and descriptive genitives as well as the genitives of origin, measure, place, time, relation, substance and naming are found in both English and Arabic. The genitives of confirmation, similarity or difference, and intention
are found in Arabic only. In both languages, when the head noun is a verbal noun, both the subjective and the objective functions of the genitive can be achieved.

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Genitive Constructions in English and Arabic: A Contrastive Study *

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Abstract

This paper offers a contrastive analysis of the genitive constructions in English and Standard Arabic. It aims at showing the similarities and differences between the two languages in such constructions from the morphological, syntactic and semantic perspectives. It starts with a definition of the term genitive and the various parts in a genitive construction. Then, a brief discussion of the traditional classification of genitive constructions is provided. After that, genitive constructions are dealt with from a morphological perspective. Furthermore, the syntactic structure of genitive phrases is contrasted in both languages. In addition, a semantic classification of genitive constructions in both languages will be provided. Finally, a summary of the convergences and divergences of genitive constructions in the two languages is given in the conclusion.

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تراكيب الإضافة في الإنجليزية والعربية: دراسة تقابلية

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نبذة عن البحث

يقدم هذا البحث تحليلًا لتراكيب الإضافة في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية. ويهدف إلى توضيح أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين اللغتين في هذه التراكيب من النواحي الصرفية والنحوية والدلالية. حيث يبدأ بتعريف المصطلح الإضافية والأجزاء المكونة لتركيب الإضافية. ثم يتناول التصنيف التقليدي لتراكيب الإضافة. وبعد ذلك يدرس تراكيب الإضافة من الناحية الصرفية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك يقارن التركيب النحوي لعبارات الإضافة في اللغتين. ثم يقدم تصنيفًا دالياً لتراكيب الإضافة في اللغتين. وفي النهاية يعطى ملخصًا لأوجه التشابه والاختلاف في تراكيب الإضافة في اللغتين محل الدراسة.