



Grammatical Evolution in English Versus Preservation of Syntactic Norms in Arabic: A Comparative Linguistic Analysis

التطور النحوي في اللغة الإنجليزية مقابل الحفاظ على القواعد النحوية في اللغة
العربية: دراسة لغوية مقارنة

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**Abstract**

This article explores the contrasting syntactic trajectories of Arabic and English, two linguistically and culturally significant languages. While Arabic syntax, deeply rooted in classical texts like the Quran and pre-Islamic poetry, has remained remarkably stable over centuries, English syntax has undergone continuous evolution, shaped by historical events and sociolinguistic influences. By examining the linguistic, cultural, and historical factors underlying these divergent paths, the study highlights the preservation of Arabic grammar through codification by early grammarians like Sibawayh, emphasizing linguistic purity and cultural continuity. In contrast, English grammar evolved organically, marked by key milestones such as the Norman Conquest and the Great Vowel Shift, adapting flexibly to diverse communicative needs and cultural influences. Through a qualitative methodology incorporating literature reviews and comparative analysis, the article delves into how these syntactic differences reflect broader cultural priorities, with Arabic prioritizing stability and tradition and English favoring adaptability and inclusivity. This comparative analysis sheds light on the interplay between historical dynamics and linguistic identity, offering insights into the universal mechanisms of syntactic preservation and evolution.

Keywords: Arabic syntax, English grammar, linguistic preservation, syntactic evolution, classical texts, linguistic authority, global English.

الملخص

تستكشف هذه المقالة المسارات التركيبية المتباينة بين اللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية، وهما لغتان ذات أهمية لغوية وثقافية كبيرة. بينما ظل النحو العربي، المستمد بعمق من النصوص الكلاسيكية مثل القرآن والشعر الجاهلي، مستقرًا بشكل ملحوظ على مدى قرون، شهد النحو الإنجليزي تطورًا مستمرًا متأثرًا بالأحداث التاريخية والعوامل الاجتماعية اللغوية. من خلال دراسة العوامل اللغوية والثقافية والتاريخية التي شكلت هذه المسارات المتباينة، تسلط الدراسة الضوء على الحفاظ على قواعد اللغة العربية من خلال تقنينها على يد النحاة الأوائل مثل سيبويه، مع التركيز على نقاء اللغة واستمراريتها الثقافية. في المقابل، تطورت قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل عضوي، وشهدت محطات رئيسية مثل الغزو النورماني وتحول الحروف الصوتية الكبرى، حيث تأقلمت بمرونة مع الاحتياجات التواصلية المختلفة والتأثيرات الثقافية. من خلال منهجية نوعية تتضمن مراجعات أدبية وتحليلًا مقارنًا، تتعمق المقالة في كيفية انعكاس هذه الفروقات التركيبية على أولويات ثقافية أوسع، حيث تركز اللغة العربية على الاستقرار والنحو التقليدي، بينما تميل اللغة الإنجليزية نحو التكيف والشمولية. تسلط هذه الدراسة التحليلية المقارنة الضوء على التفاعل بين الديناميكيات التاريخية والهوية اللغوية، مقدمةً رؤى حول الآليات العالمية للحفاظ على التراكيب اللغوية وتطورها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النحو العربي، القواعد الإنجليزية، الحفاظ اللغوي، تطور التراكيب، النصوص الكلاسيكية، السلطة اللغوية، الإنجليزية العالمية.

Introduction

Syntax, the study of the arrangement of words and phrases to form coherent sentences, is a fundamental component of linguistic identity. It plays a central role in how languages encode meaning and structure and is deeply influenced by the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which a language develops. Arabic and English, two globally significant languages, present a striking contrast in their syntactic histories. Arabic syntax has maintained remarkable stability, deeply rooted in its classical traditions, whereas English syntax has experienced ongoing evolution over the centuries. This contrast highlights the differing emphases on preservation in Arabic and adaptability in English. Hogg and Denison (2006) point out that languages anchored in classical texts, like Arabic, tend to resist significant change, while those influenced by social and cultural dynamics, such as English, undergo continuous syntactic transformation. The preservation of Arabic syntax acts as a unifying force among Arabic-speaking communities, strengthening their shared cultural and religious identity. Despite the variations in regional dialects, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) provides a consistent grammatical structure deeply rooted in classical texts. Versteegh (1997) emphasizes this continuity by explaining that Arabic grammar, especially its syntax, is closely linked to the classical tradition, with its rules primarily derived from the Quran and pre-Islamic poetry. This connection has maintained the structural integrity of the language over centuries, highlighting Arabic's role as a symbol of cultural unity that ties its speakers to a shared heritage across diverse contexts.

In contrast, the evolution of English syntax illustrates its adaptability to diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. As a global language, English has developed numerous regional varieties, such as Indian English and African American Vernacular English. Crystal (2004) explains that the history of English is characterized by continuous adaptation and simplification, particularly in its syntactic structures, which have transitioned from the complex inflections of Old English to the predominantly analytic nature of Modern English. This simplification and flexibility have enabled English to meet the communicative needs of a wide range of speakers. Jenkins (2007) also highlights the inclusivity of English as a lingua franca, noting that non-native speakers often adjust its syntax to fit their specific contexts. This adaptability underscores both the global reach of English and its capacity to evolve dynamically in response to modern communicative demands.

Review of literature

The evolution of English syntax and the preservation of Arabic syntactic norms represent two contrasting trajectories in linguistic development. While English grammar has undergone significant transformations influenced by cultural, social, and linguistic factors, Arabic grammar has remained steadfast, anchored in its classical traditions. This literature review synthesizes key scholarly insights to explore these divergent paths, examining the dynamic evolution of English syntax and the enduring preservation of Arabic syntactic norms.

English syntax has been marked by continuous change, characterized by shifts in word order, sentence structure, and grammatical norms. Ahmed (2024) highlights the transition from the flexible word order of Old English, governed by its rich inflectional system, to the fixed Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure of Modern English. This transformation is attributed to the decline of inflectional endings, necessitating reliance on word order to convey grammatical relationships. Tagliamonte and Smith (2018) delve into diachronic variation within English syntax, focusing on the evolution of negative quantifiers and polarity items. Their research underscores the interplay between linguistic structure and societal factors, demonstrating how syntactic changes reflect broader shifts in language norms and preferences. Similarly, Russom (2022) employs metrical analysis of Old English poetry to trace syntactic evolution, revealing how poetic constraints influenced structural arrangements. The codification and standardization of English grammar are examined by Tieken-Boon van Ostade and van der Wurff (2009), who document the influence of prescriptive grammarians over five centuries. Their work illustrates how societal attitudes and prescriptive efforts shaped modern English syntax, emphasizing the role of external forces in its development. Collectively, these studies present a dynamic picture of English syntax as a system shaped by historical, literary, and social influences.

In contrast to English, Arabic grammar has remained remarkably stable over centuries, rooted in the traditions of classical Arabic. Aoun, Benmamoun, and Choueiri (2010) emphasize the richness and immutability of Arabic syntax, a stability reinforced by its foundational role in interpreting sacred texts and classical literature. This preservation

has made Arabic grammar resistant to external influences and societal changes. Al-Khuli (1979) highlights the rigidity of Arabic grammatical rules, contrasting it with the adaptive nature of English syntax. Similarly, Muhammad et al. (2018) underscore the maintenance of Arabic's classical structure despite evolving societal contexts. While attempts to simplify Arabic syntax have been explored, as noted by Al-Omari (2015), these efforts remain anchored in traditional rules to safeguard its linguistic integrity.

The challenges of conveying Arabic's fixed grammatical structure in English are explored by Suleiman (2008), who observes difficulties in capturing its nuanced features in translated grammar texts. Isaksson (2004) suggests that a corpus-based approach may better reflect the authentic use of Arabic syntax, while Halim, Abu Bakar, and Sultan (2023) acknowledge gaps for further study within a framework that preserves the language's foundational principles.

The contrasting trajectories of English and Arabic syntax reflect broader linguistic and cultural dynamics. English grammar's evolution highlights its adaptability to changing societal needs, with transformations driven by historical shifts and external influences. In contrast, Arabic grammar's preservation underscores its role as a custodian of cultural and religious heritage, where adherence to classical norms ensures continuity and identity.

Ahmed's (2024) analysis of syntactic transformations in English parallels Al-Khuli's (1979) observations on Arabic's rigidity, offering a stark juxtaposition between change and stability. Similarly, while Tagliamonte and Smith (2018) highlight the fluidity of specific English syntactic elements, Aoun, Benmamoun, and Choueiri (2010) emphasize the fixed nature of Arabic syntax. Russom's (2022) exploration of metrical constraints in Old English syntax contrasts with the codified and unchanging syntactic norms documented by Muhammad et al. (2018) for Arabic.

Ultimately, the evolution of English syntax and the preservation of Arabic norms reflect the unique linguistic, cultural, and historical contexts of each language. English thrives on adaptability and innovation, while Arabic's steadfast adherence to classical principles ensures the perpetuation of its rich syntactic heritage.

Problem Statement

The preservation of Arabic grammar, particularly its syntactic norms, is attributed to its reliance on foundational classical texts such as the Quran (compiled in 632 CE) and pre-Islamic poetry (dating back to the 6th century CE). These texts are not only revered for their eloquence but also serve as authoritative sources for grammatical and syntactic rules. Early Arab grammarians like Sibawayh (ca. 760–796 CE) formalized these norms in foundational works such as *Al-Kitab* (Sibawayh, n.d.), a seminal text that remains a cornerstone of Arabic grammatical theory (Baalbaki, 2008). This codification ensured the continuity of syntactic structures across generations, upheld by the linguistic, religious, and cultural significance of classical Arabic.

In contrast, English grammar has evolved substantially over time, shaped by historical and sociocultural transformations. Key events such as the Norman Conquest of 1066 introduced Norman French vocabulary and influenced the grammatical structure of English, while the Great Vowel Shift (approximately 1400–1700) fundamentally altered its phonology and syntax (Crystal, 2004). Without a central religious or cultural text to anchor its grammar, English developed through a dynamic interplay of natural linguistic processes and external influences, reflecting its speakers' need for adaptability and flexibility.

Research Question

Language serves as both a tool for communication and a reflection of a society's history, culture, and values. The contrasting trajectories of Arabic and English syntax raise an intriguing question: Why has Arabic preserved its classical syntactic norms, while English grammar has continuously evolved? Arabic, deeply rooted in classical texts like the Quran and pre-Islamic poetry, has maintained remarkable stability through the contributions of early grammarians such as Sibawayh and a cultural emphasis on linguistic purity. In contrast, English, shaped by historical events such as the Norman Conquest and its global role as a *lingua franca*, has undergone significant syntactic transformation to meet the needs of diverse speakers.

This article examines the linguistic, cultural, and historical factors that contributed to these divergent paths. It explores the role of classical texts, the codification efforts of early scholars, and the sociocultural

forces that have influenced both languages. By comparing these trajectories, the study seeks to reveal the broader cultural priorities underpinning each language's approach to grammatical norms. The research hypothesizes that the preservation of Arabic syntax reflects cultural and religious priorities emphasizing stability and continuity, while the evolution of English grammar is driven by historical, social, and global dynamics that prioritize adaptability over preservation. By analyzing these contrasting developments, this study not only sheds light on the unique linguistic histories of Arabic and English but also explores universal mechanisms that determine why some languages resist change while others embrace it.

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative research methodology, grounded in a comprehensive literature review and comparative analysis, to explore the syntactic trajectories of Arabic and English. Key texts, including *The Arabic Language* by Versteegh (1997), *The Stories of English* by Crystal (2004), and *The Legacy of the Kitāb* by Baalbaki (2008), provide the foundation for understanding linguistic preservation and evolution.

A comparative approach was used to analyze linguistic features such as Arabic l'rab (case endings) and English word order, contextualized within historical events like the Islamic Golden Age and the Norman Conquest. Cultural and pedagogical practices were examined to explore how societal priorities influenced the stability of Arabic syntax and the adaptability of English grammar. Verified examples, such as Zayd-un darasa al-kitāba for Arabic and the subject-verb-object structure in English, were included to illustrate these differences. By integrating historical, linguistic, and cultural perspectives, this methodology provides a comprehensive yet focused analysis of syntactic preservation in Arabic and evolution in English.

Historical Development of Syntax in Arabic and English

Arabic Syntax

The Arabic language occupies a unique position among the world's languages, distinguished by the Qur'an's pivotal role in preserving its grammatical structure and linguistic purity while ensuring its ongoing contemporary relevance. Since its revelation, the Qur'an has functioned as the ultimate authority on Arabic grammar, providing a foundation for early grammarians like Sibawayh to codify the language's rules, thereby anchoring its structural stability. The practices of recitation, study, and



memorization of the Qur'an have safeguarded Classical Arabic as a linguistic framework, sustaining its use in education, religious practice, and formal discourse across the Islamic world. In contrast, languages such as Latin, Biblical Hebrew, Sanskrit, Ancient Greek, and Classical Chinese—while preserved through religious or literary texts—have largely become static or confined to specific contexts. Latin and Sanskrit, for instance, remain primarily liturgical or academic, while Biblical Hebrew and Classical Chinese have been supplanted by modern forms. Arabic, however, uniquely maintains its dual role as both a preserved and living language, thriving in a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity. This distinctive combination of grammatical stability and functional adaptability underscores the Qur'an's unparalleled influence in maintaining Arabic's linguistic integrity and highlights its exceptional status among the world's languages.

Arabic grammar's stability is closely tied to the intellectual endeavors of the Islamic Golden Age (8th–13th centuries CE). During this period, scholars like Sibawayh (ca. 760–796 CE) codified the rules of Arabic syntax in monumental works such as *Al-Kitab*. As Baalbaki (2008) emphasizes, "The emergence of grammatical activity is thus strongly linked in the sources with two interrelated basic needs: that of teaching 'proper usage' to avoid error, and that of serving the Qur'ānic text. In both cases, it is safe to conclude that grammar, as a *Hilfswissenschaft*, served a practical purpose since its inception." (p. 4) This comprehensive framework drew from the language of the Quran and pre-Islamic poetry, preserving the linguistic purity of Arabic and ensuring the accurate interpretation of religious texts.

A defining feature of classical Arabic is its reliance on *I'rab* (case endings) to mark grammatical relationships, a tradition that has remained foundational to Modern Standard Arabic. These inflectional endings serve to distinguish between grammatical roles such as subjects and objects. Versteegh (1997) highlights that "*In the syntactic part of linguistics, the grammarians' main preoccupation was the explanation of the case endings of the words in the sentence, called 'i'riib, a term that originally meant the correct use of Arabic according to the language of the Bedouin ('Arab) but came to mean the declension.*" (p. 75). Case endings were believed to result from the effect of a governing element within a sentence. This governing element, or "amil," influences another word, leading to variations in word endings. These variations, according to grammarians, arise due to differences in the

governing elements. For example, in the sentence *Zayd-un darasa al-kitāba* (Zayd studied the book), the nominative marker *-un* on *Zayd* identifies it as the subject, while the accusative marker *-a* on *al-kitāb* identifies it as the object. Such syntactic precision represented here by case endings underpins the stability of Arabic grammar.

The origins of Arabic syntax can be traced to pre-Islamic poetry, which played a pivotal role in establishing the foundation for linguistic norms. Owens (1988) observes that pre-Islamic poetry, particularly the *Mu'allaqat*, constitutes one of the earliest and most significant sources for comprehending classical Arabic. He elaborates that its intricate syntactic structures and extensive lexical repertoire provided essential material for early grammarians in their efforts to codify the rules of Arabic grammar. These poetic compositions not only set a benchmark for linguistic excellence but also profoundly influenced the approaches and methodologies of subsequent generations of grammarians.

The process of standardizing Arabic grammar was further solidified through the rigorous educational practices of the Islamic Golden Age. Classical texts, such as the Quran, pre-Islamic poetry, and foundational grammatical works like Sibawayh's *Al-Kitab*, became central components of madrasa curricula. Versteegh (1997) explains that the Arabic grammatical tradition emerged primarily to safeguard the linguistic integrity of the Quran, ensuring its precise transmission and accurate interpretation. Education typically commenced with foundational texts like Ibn Ajurrum's *Ajurrumiyyah* and advanced to more complex works, such as *Al-Kitab*. This structured approach to instruction established a durable framework for maintaining linguistic continuity and preserving the richness of the Arabic language.

Quranic recitation (*qira'at*) also played a vital role in the preservation of Arabic syntax. Students were required to memorize and recite the Quran with meticulous adherence to its grammatical and syntactic rules, thereby integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application. Owens (1988) emphasizes that the instruction of grammar and morphology (*nahw* and *sarf*) within the madrasa system was instrumental in maintaining the continuity and stability of Arabic syntax over the centuries. This tradition not only upheld grammatical precision but also safeguarded classical structures, firmly establishing Arabic as



one of the most stable and enduring grammatical systems among the world's major languages.

In stark contrast to the syntactic stability of Arabic, the English language has undergone extensive changes shaped by historical and cultural developments. Arabic grammar, deeply rooted in the Quran, holds the sacred text as its ultimate standard of correctness and primary reference point, a role unmatched by any singular source in English. Early Arabic grammarians, such as Sibawayh, focused on preserving the purity of the language, ensuring its proper use in both written and spoken forms as a reflection of religious and cultural priorities. In contrast, English has transitioned over centuries from a synthetic structure, characterized by a rich system of inflectional endings, to a more analytic structure relying on word order and auxiliary words to convey grammatical relationships. This evolution reflects a dynamic linguistic history influenced by external factors, such as invasions, cultural shifts, and the blending of languages, rather than a unified effort to preserve linguistic purity.

Historical events such as the Norman Conquest of 1066 profoundly influenced the development of the English language, particularly its vocabulary and syntax. The influx of French vocabulary during this period significantly expanded the lexicon and introduced structural changes that would shape English in subsequent centuries. One notable transformation was the gradual loss of inflectional endings, which had previously marked grammatical relationships. This shift necessitated a greater emphasis on word order and the use of prepositions to convey meaning, reflecting a transition toward a more analytic linguistic structure. These changes highlight the adaptability of English syntax in response to evolving social and linguistic contexts, underscoring its dynamic and fluid nature.

This comparison underscores the distinct priorities that have shaped the trajectories of Arabic and English. Arabic's preservation of classical syntax reflects a profound cultural and religious commitment to linguistic continuity, while English's dynamic adaptability illustrates the influence of historical upheavals and the need for global communicative flexibility. Together, these paths demonstrate how languages either resist or embrace change based on the cultural and societal forces that shape them.



English Syntax

English syntax has undergone significant evolution over time, influenced by historical events and linguistic interactions. Old English, emerging around the 5th century CE, was a Germanic language characterized by a highly inflected grammatical system, relying heavily on word endings to convey grammatical relationships. This inflectional system began to erode following the Norman Conquest of 1066, a pivotal event in English linguistic history. The influx of Norman French vocabulary and grammatical patterns introduced new linguistic elements, marking the beginning of Middle English. The period following the Norman Conquest saw the gradual reduction of inflectional endings and a shift toward more fixed word order, reflecting the growing reliance on syntax rather than morphology to convey meaning.

Another major turning point in the development of English was the Great Vowel Shift, occurring between 1400 and 1700. While primarily a phonological phenomenon, this shift had broader implications for syntax, as the loss of inflectional endings necessitated stricter word order to maintain clarity. This period saw the emergence of Early Modern English, characterized by syntactic norms evident in the works of Shakespeare and the King James Bible (1611). These texts showcase the language's growing reliance on consistent word order, marking a departure from the syntactic flexibility of Old English.

One of the most significant differences between English and Arabic lies in the absence of a central authority or unifying text to anchor English grammar. In Arabic, the Quran serves as both a grammatical and cultural touchstone, providing a stable foundation for the language's development and standardization. The Quran's role as both a religious and linguistic text led to the development of prescriptive grammatical rules by early grammarians such as Sibawayh. This codification process ensured a high degree of linguistic consistency in Arabic, particularly in syntax and morphology. By contrast, English grammar evolved organically, shaped by practical usage and historical influences rather than a single prescriptive framework.

Early efforts to codify English grammar emerged during the Renaissance, with William Bullokar's *Pamphlet for Grammar* (1586) marking one of the first systematic attempts. Bullokar modeled his work on Latin grammar, reflecting the influence of classical education on

linguistic thought at the time. However, these early grammars were more descriptive than prescriptive, reflecting existing usage rather than imposing rigid standards. This descriptive approach allowed English to adapt and evolve dynamically, accommodating diverse influences and usage patterns over the centuries.

The lack of a central linguistic authority contributed significantly to the fluidity and adaptability of English grammar. This flexibility enabled English to absorb elements from other languages and evolve to meet the communicative needs of its speakers, ultimately facilitating its role as a global lingua franca. However, this adaptability has also led to significant variability among English dialects and varieties, which continue to evolve in response to cultural and social changes. The adaptability of English has allowed it to thrive as a global language, but it has also resulted in a high degree of variability across its many regional and social varieties.

These historical and linguistic trajectories underscore English's distinctive evolution, contrasting sharply with Arabic's stability. While Arabic's grammatical tradition is anchored in cultural and religious priorities, English's dynamic development reflects its ability to adapt to diverse sociolinguistic contexts.

Cultural and Religious Influences on Syntax

Arabic

The cultural and religious foundations of Arabic syntax are inseparably linked to the Quran, which has played a central role in maintaining the language's linguistic purity. Compiled in the 7th century CE, the Quran is widely regarded as the highest linguistic and literary authority in the Arabic-speaking world. Its grammatical and syntactic structures set a standard against which all other forms of Arabic have been evaluated. The Quran's dual function as a spiritual guide and a linguistic model prompted early efforts to codify Arabic grammar, ensuring the accurate preservation and interpretation of its sacred text. This unique combination of spiritual and linguistic significance underscores the Quran's unparalleled impact on the development and standardization of Arabic syntax.

The Quran's association with Arabic elevated the language to a status of divine perfection, fostering a deep commitment to its preservation as



both a religious duty and a marker of cultural identity. This intrinsic link between linguistic purity and religious devotion is a defining feature of Arabic culture. Over the centuries, Muslim scholars and grammarians dedicated themselves to refining and standardizing grammatical rules to safeguard the linguistic integrity of the Quran. These efforts reached their pinnacle with the work of foundational grammarians such as Sibawayh, whose *Al-Kitab* (circa 760–796 CE) established a comprehensive grammatical framework for Arabic. This seminal work not only codified the rules of the language but also ensured its preservation as a linguistic and cultural heritage for future generations.

Educational practices were instrumental in preserving and standardizing Arabic syntax. Throughout the Islamic world, classical Arabic formed the cornerstone of educational curricula, facilitating the transmission of linguistic norms derived from the Quran and pre-Islamic poetry. These revered texts, valued for their religious and literary significance, served as exemplary models for understanding the complexities of Arabic grammar and syntax. The study of *nahw* (grammar) and *sarf* (morphology) emerged as essential disciplines within Islamic education, designed to equip students with the skills to use the language with accuracy and precision. This emphasis on linguistic mastery also served a deeper purpose, fostering a connection to the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the Islamic world and ensuring its continuity for future generations.

Islamic educational institutions, such as madrasas, institutionalized the teaching of grammar and morphology, embedding them into their curricula. Students typically began with foundational texts like Ibn Ajurrum's *Ajurrumiyyah*, a concise introduction to Arabic syntax. Advanced studies followed, including in-depth analysis of Sibawayh's *Al-Kitab*, enabling students to gain a comprehensive understanding of syntactic structures. The rigorous memorization and explanation of these texts fostered a culture of linguistic excellence that upheld Arabic's syntactic stability over centuries.

The tradition of *tajwid* (rules of Quranic recitation) played a vital role in reinforcing the grammatical and phonological precision of classical Arabic. By requiring students to recite the Quran with strict adherence to its syntactic and morphological rules, *tajwid* ensured the practical application of classical linguistic structures. This rigorous approach



integrated theoretical study with practical mastery, making Arabic grammar a cornerstone of Islamic education and an enduring element of its intellectual tradition.

The widespread teaching of classical Arabic further contributed to its remarkable linguistic stability. While many languages underwent significant syntactic changes over time, Arabic preserved its classical structures, maintaining an exceptional level of grammatical consistency. This stability can be attributed to systematic instruction and the cultural and religious reverence accorded to the language, which collectively ensured its preservation and continuity, setting it apart from the evolutionary trajectories of other major world languages.

English

Unlike Arabic, English lacks a central religious or cultural text to serve as a definitive grammatical authority. Although works like the King James Bible (1611) influenced the stylistic features of English, their impact was more literary than prescriptive. The King James Bible shaped English prose style but did not establish grammatical norms akin to the Quran's role in Arabic. Instead, English grammar developed organically, shaped by the cultural and social diversity of its speakers, reflecting a more fluid and adaptive evolution.

This adaptability became particularly evident after the Norman Conquest of 1066, which introduced Norman French vocabulary and grammatical features. These influences merged with Old English, creating a dynamic linguistic system. Over time, English absorbed elements from Latin, Norse, and other languages, mirroring the multicultural environments in which it thrived. The gradual loss of inflectional endings and the adoption of a fixed word order emerged as responses to these diverse linguistic inputs, further shaping the language's analytic structure.

English's adaptability is intrinsically tied to its role as a global lingua franca. Unlike Arabic, which is deeply rooted in a specific cultural and religious heritage, English transcends these boundaries to accommodate diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. This flexibility has fostered the development of numerous regional varieties, such as American English, Indian English, and Nigerian English. These varieties integrate local syntactic and lexical elements, reflecting the cultural and linguistic environments in which they are used. For instance, Indian English incorporates influences from Hindi and Tamil, while Nigerian



English reflects tonal and grammatical features of African languages. Such adaptations demonstrate the inclusivity of English syntax, maintaining mutual intelligibility while accommodating regional variation.

English's global role has also influenced its syntax through widespread use by non-native speakers. As a second or third language for many, English is frequently adapted to enhance efficiency and clarity in specific contexts. This phenomenon, often described as "English as a Lingua Franca" (ELF), simplifies syntactic structures and minimizes idiomatic expressions to prioritize effective communication. These adaptations enhance the language's accessibility and reinforce its global relevance.

However, the flexibility of English syntax comes at the cost of uniformity. Unlike Arabic, which unifies diverse dialects under the framework of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), English lacks a single standardized form governing all its varieties. Instead, its strength lies in its capacity to evolve and adapt, prioritizing communicative inclusivity over rigid adherence to classical forms. This flexibility has been a cornerstone of English's success as a global language, enabling it to bridge cultural and linguistic divides effectively.

Role of Early Grammarians and Linguistic Authorities. Arabic Grammarians.

Arabic grammar owes its remarkable stability and precision to the foundational contributions of early grammarians and its deep ties to classical texts. The teaching of *nahw* (syntax) and *sarf* (morphology) has long been rooted in the Quran and pre-Islamic poetry, which not only serve as linguistic exemplars but also reinforce the cultural and religious importance of classical Arabic. This approach emphasizes preserving the linguistic norms of these canonical texts, which underpin the cultural and spiritual identity of the Islamic world. A pivotal figure in this tradition is Sibawayh (ca. 760–796 CE), whose *Al-Kitab* stands as a cornerstone of Arabic grammar. In this seminal work, Sibawayh systematically codified Arabic syntax and morphology, creating a prescriptive framework that relied heavily on the Quran and pre-Islamic poetry. His meticulous analysis, including the detailed study of inflectional case endings (*l'rab*), established the foundation upon which later grammarians would build. This prescriptive approach ensured the preservation of Arabic grammatical norms across generations.

Other influential grammarians also contributed to the refinement of Arabic grammar. Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi (718–791 CE) authored *Kitab al-Ayn*, the first Arabic lexicon, which standardized word forms and meanings, thereby supporting syntactic consistency. Similarly, Ibn Jinni (932–1002 CE) advanced the theoretical understanding of the relationship between morphology and syntax in his work *Al-Khasa'is*. These scholars not only codified linguistic rules but also linked them to practical applications through their integration into educational systems. The prescriptive nature of Arabic grammar is closely tied to its reliance on authoritative texts, particularly the Quran. The Quran's linguistic precision served as a model for grammarians, who analyzed its structures to establish grammatical rules that could preserve the language's integrity across different regions and periods. This reliance on a fixed corpus of canonical texts has contributed to Arabic's remarkable resistance to significant syntactic changes, making it one of the most stable linguistic systems globally.

Educational institutions, such as madrasas, played a critical role in maintaining this tradition. Across the Islamic world, the study of grammar and morphology was embedded in curricula, with foundational texts like Ibn Ajurrum's *Ajurrumiyyah* and Sibawayh's *Al-Kitab* serving as central teaching materials. Students were trained to analyze and replicate the syntax of these classical works, ensuring that their structures became deeply ingrained in the linguistic consciousness of Arabic-speaking societies. This rigorous study of classical texts reinforced the continuity of Arabic syntax and preserved its classical framework over centuries.

B. Lack of Central Authority in English

English grammar developed without the guidance of a central religious or cultural authority, in contrast to Arabic. While texts such as the King James Bible (1611) influenced stylistic conventions, their impact was primarily literary rather than prescriptive. English grammar evolved organically, shaped by the diverse cultural and social contexts of its speakers rather than through adherence to a unifying canonical text. The descriptive nature of English grammar reflects its adaptability and gradual evolution. Early literary figures such as Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1340–1400) and William Shakespeare (1564–1616) played pivotal roles in reflecting and shaping the syntactic norms of their respective eras. Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* showcases Middle English's



transitional stage, where older Germanic syntactic patterns began merging with Norman French influences. Shakespeare's works highlight the flexibility of Early Modern English, incorporating innovative syntactic constructions and word orders that mirrored the language's evolving dynamics.

Formal attempts to codify English grammar, such as William Bullokar's *Pamphlet for Grammar* (1586), sought to impose structure on the language, often modeling it after Latin. However, these early grammars were descriptive rather than prescriptive, documenting existing usage rather than enforcing rigid standards. This approach allowed English grammar to remain fluid and adaptable to the changing needs of its speakers.

The historical development of English further illustrates its adaptability. The Norman Conquest of 1066 introduced significant Norman French vocabulary and syntactic influences, contributing to the simplification of English syntax. During this period, the decline of inflectional endings was accompanied by the adoption of a more fixed word order, reflecting broader linguistic and social transformations. Additional phonological shifts, such as the Great Vowel Shift (1400–1700), highlight English's capacity to evolve in response to external and internal pressures.

This absence of a central grammatical authority enabled English to flourish as a global language, accommodating diverse linguistic influences and sociocultural contexts. This adaptability is particularly evident in the concept of "English as a Lingua Franca" (ELF), where non-native speakers modify English syntax to suit their communicative needs. Such flexibility has reinforced English's role as a global medium while contributing to its syntactic diversity.

In contrast to Arabic's prescriptive tradition, which preserves classical syntax through canonical texts, English has developed as a descriptive system that adapts to the cultural and linguistic needs of its speakers. This adaptability has enabled English to become one of the most widely spoken and versatile languages in the world, although it has come at the expense of consistent syntactic norms.

Implications for Modern Usage

Arabic

The enduring influence of classical Arabic has shaped Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which remains the primary medium for education, media, and formal communication across the Arabic-speaking world. MSA retains many syntactic features of classical Arabic, such as the use of inflectional endings (*I'rab*) to indicate grammatical relationships and a complex system of derivational morphology. These features maintain a linguistic continuity rooted in classical traditions.

However, the coexistence of MSA with regional dialects (*'ammiyyah*) introduces significant challenges. Spoken dialects have diverged considerably from classical norms, particularly in syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation. This diglossic situation creates a linguistic duality where MSA is used in formal settings, while dialects dominate everyday communication. The contrast between MSA's syntactic rigidity and the fluidity of spoken dialects underscores the complexity of reconciling these two linguistic codes in practice.

One of the most pressing challenges in Arabic education is the divide between MSA and dialects. Students often face difficulties mastering MSA's complex syntax, which is markedly different from the simpler structures of their native dialects. This linguistic disparity effectively requires students to learn two distinct systems: MSA for formal and academic purposes and their dialect for daily interactions. This duality not only complicates language learning but can also make MSA feel disconnected from learners' everyday linguistic realities, limiting fluency and ease of use.

The role of MSA in modern society has sparked ongoing debates. Some scholars argue for adapting its classical syntax to better align with contemporary needs, suggesting that such changes could make MSA more accessible and practical. Others emphasize the cultural and historical importance of preserving MSA's traditional structures, viewing them as a cornerstone of Arabic linguistic heritage. This debate reflects broader concerns about balancing the preservation of linguistic tradition with the functional demands of modern communication.

Efforts to address the challenges of Arabic's diglossic nature require careful consideration of the cultural significance of MSA and the practical needs of learners. Educational reforms could play a critical role in



bridging the gap between MSA and dialects by focusing on functional fluency, ensuring learners gain the skills needed for effective communication while preserving the linguistic richness of classical Arabic.

B. English

In contrast to Arabic, the evolution of English syntax has been characterized by its remarkable flexibility and adaptability, enabling it to establish itself as a global language. The transition from Old English, which featured a complex system of inflections, to Modern English, with simplified grammar and a reliance on fixed word order, exemplifies the language's capacity to adapt to the communicative needs of its speakers. This syntactic simplification played a crucial role in facilitating English's spread as a *lingua franca*, allowing it to be easily learned and used across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts.

One significant outcome of English's adaptability is the emergence of numerous regional variants, including American English, British English, Indian English, and Nigerian English. These variants reflect the cultural and linguistic influences of their respective communities, contributing to the richness and diversity of the language. The global spread of English has created a linguistic landscape where no single variety dominates, making flexibility and mutual intelligibility essential for effective communication.

However, English's adaptability also presents challenges. The absence of a central authority or standardized syntax across its many variants can lead to inconsistencies and misunderstandings, particularly in international communication. Unlike Arabic, which is unified in formal contexts by Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), English evolves organically, fostering innovation while also introducing variability. In contexts of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), non-native speakers often adapt English syntax based on their native grammatical frameworks, resulting in unique variations that may diverge significantly from native norms. While these adaptations enhance accessibility and inclusivity, they can occasionally impede mutual intelligibility, especially among speakers with vastly different linguistic backgrounds.

The dynamic nature of English syntax highlights its strength in accommodating diverse communicative needs, enabling it to function as



a global medium. However, this same flexibility necessitates strategies for managing syntactic variability to ensure clarity and effective communication. Balancing the inclusivity and diversity of English with the need for mutual intelligibility remains a central challenge in its continued evolution as a global lingua franca. This balance will be critical in sustaining English's role as a versatile and unifying medium for global communication.

Conclusion

The linguistic trajectories of Arabic and English showcase distinct paths shaped by their cultural, historical, and societal contexts. Arabic syntax, heavily influenced by the Quran and pre-Islamic poetry, was meticulously codified and preserved by grammarians such as Sibawayh. These foundational efforts established a grammatical system that remains highly stable, driven by cultural and religious priorities emphasizing linguistic purity and tradition. In contrast, English grammar has experienced dynamic evolution, marked by key historical milestones like the Norman Conquest (1066) and the Great Vowel Shift (1400–1700). The absence of a central linguistic authority allowed English syntax to adapt organically to the needs of its speakers, fostering inclusivity and flexibility.

The divergent development of Arabic and English syntax reflects their unique linguistic identities and cultural priorities. Arabic's preservation of classical norms underscores its deep cultural reverence for linguistic heritage, serving as a unifying force across diverse Arabic-speaking communities. The enduring use of *l'rab* (inflectional endings) in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) exemplifies its emphasis on stability and tradition, even amid the widespread use of regional dialects. Conversely, English epitomizes adaptability, reflecting its evolution as a global lingua franca. Its descriptive tradition has fostered flexibility, accommodating diverse linguistic influences and regional variations. The global spread of English has cultivated an environment prioritizing mutual intelligibility over uniformity, enabling innovation and inclusivity but often at the expense of consistent grammatical standards.

While Arabic's stability preserves its linguistic legacy, this rigidity poses challenges in contemporary contexts. The diglossic nature of Arabic, with MSA used for formal communication and dialects for informal interactions, creates barriers for learners navigating two distinct

linguistic systems. In contrast, English's adaptability allows for innovative syntax and seamless evolution, though it sacrifices uniformity. These contrasting approaches—preservation versus adaptation—highlight the profound influence of cultural, historical, and practical factors in shaping the linguistic identities of Arabic and English.

Future Directions and Limitations

The divergent syntactic paths of Arabic and English highlight the importance of examining syntactic preservation and evolution across other languages to gain broader insights. For instance, Sanskrit and Latin, like Arabic, exhibit remarkable syntactic stability preserved in classical forms, though they no longer have native speakers. Conversely, the diverse dialects of Chinese provide a compelling parallel to English, demonstrating how linguistic adaptability facilitates wide communication across regional and cultural divides. Future research could investigate the socio-cultural forces driving syntactic change or stability in these and other linguistic traditions, offering a more comprehensive understanding of language evolution.

Pedagogical practices present another critical area for exploration. Arabic's reliance on Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in formal education contrasts sharply with the dominance of regional dialects in informal contexts, creating unique challenges for learners. Students are often required to master two linguistic systems, leading to gaps in fluency and comprehension. Similarly, English's global variability, particularly in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contexts, raises questions about how educational systems address syntactic diversity. Understanding how non-native speakers adapt English syntax in ELF contexts could inform more nuanced and effective teaching methodologies.

The influence of technology on modern syntax also warrants further study. The growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine translation systems has significant implications for handling Arabic's syntactic complexity and English's syntactic diversity. Research into how these tools process classical Arabic structures or adapt to regional English variations could shed light on their potential to aid language preservation and support global communication.

This article acknowledges its limitations. Its focus has been primarily on the historical, cultural, and educational dimensions of syntax, with less



emphasis on phonological or lexical changes. Additionally, while Arabic and English were broadly analyzed, regional dialects and non-standard forms, such as Maghrebi Arabic or Nigerian English, were not examined in depth. Empirical research involving speakers of these variants could enhance our understanding of current syntactic practices and their socio-cultural implications.

Finally, the interplay between globalization and socio-cultural change on Arabic and English syntax deserves closer attention. English continues to evolve as a global lingua franca, integrating diverse influences, while Arabic grapples with the challenge of preserving its classical heritage while addressing the demands of modern communication. Future studies could explore these dynamics in greater detail, providing insights into how languages balance stability and adaptability in an increasingly interconnected world.

Closing Remark

By addressing these limitations and pursuing the suggested research directions, future scholarship can deepen our understanding of syntax as a reflection of broader cultural, historical, and societal dynamics. Such an enriched perspective will not only advance the study of linguistic preservation and evolution but also offer practical strategies for promoting accessibility, inclusivity, and adaptability in language education and global communication.

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