

Cognate Accusative

The *cognate accusative* (المفعول المطلق) is a special stylistic use of the accusative case in Arabic. It occurs fairly frequently, but it can usually be replaced by other expressions. Thus, you do not necessarily need to be able to use it yourself, but you do need to recognize it when you see it.

In English, you would not usually say something like:

He *helped* me a great deal of *help*.

You would probably be told by your writing teacher to say instead:

He *helped* me a great deal.

or

He *gave* me a great deal of *help*.

This is because English style frowns on the repetition of a verb and a noun of the same derivation (in this case *help*) too close together. It is thought to be confusing.

In Arabic (perhaps because verbs and masdars are not easily confused with one another) this kind of repetition is considered a mark of good style. Repeating the verbal noun after the verb makes the sentence more emphatic. So, to see the following would not be considered at all odd, even in very contemporary Arabic:

سَاعَدَنِي مُسَاعَدَةً عَظِيمَةً

You, of course, would not want to translate it literally (as " He helped me a great help ") into English, but would instead want change it so that it sounds more natural in that language--as " he helped me greatly " or " he gave me a great deal of help."

The cognate accusative may also take the form of an idafa. These are usually of two kinds. In the first kind, the first term (al-mudaf) is usually a partitive noun (like كُلُّ or بَعْضُ , which will be in the accusative case) or an elative.

شَارَكْنَا فِي الْاجْتِمَاعِ كُلَّ الْمَشَارَكَةِ.
We participated fully in the meeting.

Here (as you can see) the masdar is *definite*. This is the usual procedure for these kinds of constructions.

With the second kind of idafa construction, the masdar is the mudaf, and the mudaf ilayhi is a noun giving more information about who (or what) is doing the action.

تَرَكْتُ بَيْتَهَا تَرَكَ الرَّجُلُ الْحَزِينُ.

I left her house as a sad man would.

(Literally: I left her house [with] the leaving of the sad man.)

Here are some other examples of cognate accusative (all taken from Najib Mahfuz' s novel Al-Khan al-Khalili):

١. ولم تكن تتصوّر أن رجلاً في سنّه يرتبك ارتباكك. (ص. ٩٥)

٢. لعلّها ابتسمت ابتسامه الضيف لمن يستقبله. (ص. ٩٥)

٣. وامتعض الآخر امتعاضاً شديداً. (ص. ٩٨)

٤. وفكر فيه تفكيراً جدياً. (ص. ١٠١)