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Elementary Arabic Syntax 1

(MABĀDĪ AL-'ARABĪYYAH)

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A study of syntax of the Arabic language volume 1. Translated by Hamid Hussein Waqar.

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A Completer Sentence

1. Can a sentence be made up of only one word?

One word is insufficient to express one's intended meaning. One must use two or more words to convey a complete sentence.

2. What is an example of a complete sentence?

An example of a complete sentence is: **نَافِعُ الْعِلْمُ** (knowledge is beneficial.)

3. What does a sentence consist of?

A sentence is made up of single words which are divided into three categories: verbs, nouns and prepositions.

4. Does every sentence have a verb, noun and preposition?

A sentence is not conditional on always having a verb, noun and preposition. Instead it can be made up of:

- Two nouns: **اللَّهُ عَادِلٌ** (Allah is just.)
- A verb and a noun: **سِرَاجٌ انطفأ** (A lamp died out.)

Syntax

5. What does syntax teach us?

Syntax teaches us the different cases of words when they are found in different combinations.

6. Is every word alike in the way it changes due to different combinations?

There are two types of words that are put into combinations:

- Indeclinable: the end of the word does not change.
- Declinable: the end of the word changes.

7. What must one do to speak correctly, according to the principles of syntax?

One must know the declinable and indeclinable words in order for his speech to be correct. He must also know the different cases of declinable words in order to stay away from mistakes.

8. Is there a rule which teaches us what the last syllable of a indeclinable word should be?

There is no rule which teaches us what the last syllable of a indeclinable word should be, instead we must refer to dictionaries.

9. Is there a rule which teaches us what the last syllable of a declinable word should be?

There are rules that teach us what the last syllable of a declinable word should be.

10. What different cases can a declinable word have?

The different cases of declinable words are as follows:

- For verbs: nominative, subjunctive and jussive
- For nouns: nominative, accusative and genitive

11. How can we understand which case should be used?

If we want to correct our mistakes in speech we must know when a verb is nominative, subjunctive or jussive and we must know when a noun is nominative, accusative or genitive.

Subjunctive Cases of a Verb

12. When is a verb put into the subjunctive case?

A verb is put into the subjunctive case if it follows one of the four following prepositions:

أَنْ لَنْ إِذْنَ كَى

For example:

- 1) التَّحْوِ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَ (I want to learn syntax.)
- 2) البَخِيلُ يَجُودَ لَنْ (A miser will not be generous.)
- 3) دارنا فى نُزلكَ إِذْنَ (In that case, we will let you stay in our house.)
- 4) تَحْفَظْ كَى أُدْرَسَ (Study so that you preserve.)

Jussive Cases of a Verb

13. When is a verb put into the jussive case?

A verb is put into the jussive case when it is preceded by one of the following prepositions:

لَمَ لَمَّا لَامُ الِ أَمْرٍ لَالنَّاهِيَةِ إِذَا مَنَ مَا مَهْمَا أَيُّ كَيْفَمَا مَتَى أَيْنَمَا أَيَّانَ أُنَى حَيْثَمَا

14. How many kinds of jussive prepositions are there?

There are two types of jussive prepositions:

- Four of them put one verb into the jussive case:
 - 1) لَمَ for example: أَحَدٌ يَذْهَبُ لَمَ (Nobody came.)
 - 2) لَمَّا for example: يَكْتُبُ لَمَّا وَ الْقِرَاءَةَ تَعَلَّمَ (He learned to read and has not written yet.)
 - 3) لَامُ الِ أَمْرٍ for example: نَفْسُكَ لِتَطِبْ (You must become happy, yourself.)
 - 4) لَالنَّاهِيَةِ لَ for example: اللهُ رَحْمَةٌ مِنْ تَيْاسٍ لَ (Don't lose hope in Allah's mercy)
- Twelve of them put two verbs after them into the jussive case. The first verb is the conditional verb and the second verb is its answer.
 - 1) إِذَا for example: تَخْسِرُ تَكْسِلُ إِذَا (If you become lazy you will suffer a loss.)
 - 2) إِذَا for example: تَتَقَدَّمُ تَتَعَلَّمُ إِذَا (Whenever you learn you will advance.)
 - 3) مَنَ for example: يَجِدُ يَطْلُبُ مَنَ (Whoever seeks finds.)

- 4) **مَا** for example: **الْكِبَرُ فِي يَنْفَعَكَ الصَّغَرُ فِي تَتَعَلَّمُ مَا** (Whatever you learn in youth will benefit you in old age.)
- 5) **مَهْمَا** for example: **أَفْعَلُهُ بِالْخَيْرِ تَأْمُرُ مَهْمَا** (Whenever you order me to do good I will do it.)
- 6) **أَيُّ** for example: **أَكْرَمُ تُكْرَمُ أَيُّ** (Whoever you respect I respect.)
- 7) **كَيْفَمَا** for example: **خَيْرًا تُصَادِفُ تَتَوَجَّهُ كَيْفَمَا** (Whenever you go you will pass by well.)
- 8) **مَتَى** for example: **ظَاهِرُكَ يَصْلِحُ بِاطْنِكَ يَصْلِحُ مَتَى** (Whenever your inner-self becomes fixed your outer-appearance will become fixed.)
- 9) **أَيْنَمَا** for example: **تَنْجَحُ تَذْهَبُ أَيْنَمَا** (Wherever you go you will be saved.)
- 10) **أَيَّانَ** for example: **أَجِيبُكَ تَسْأَلُنِي أَيَّانَ** (Whenever you ask me I will answer you.)
- 11) **أُنَى** for example: **يُكْرَمُ الْعِلْمُ صَاحِبُ يَذْهَبُ أُنَى** (Wherever a scholar goes he will be respected.)
- 12) **حَيْثَمَا** for example: **تَنْبُتُ تَسْقُطُ حَيْثَمَا** (Wherever you fall you will stay.)

Nominative Cases of a Verb

15. When is a verb put into the nominative case?

A verb is put into the nominative case if it is not preceded by a subjunctive or jussive preposition. For example: **الْمَطَرُ يَنْزِلُ** (The rain is falling.)

16. Are vowel signs present at the end of a weak verb?

If the last letter of weak verb is an *alif*, the *d[umma]* is erased in the nominative case and the *fath[ah]* is erased in the subjunctive case. But, if the last letter of the weak verb is either a *wāw* or a *yā'*, the *d[umma]* is erased in the nominative case because of the difficulty of pronouncing it.

Nominative Cases of a Noun

17. In how many different cases is a noun put into the nominative case?

A noun is put into the nominative case in six different cases:

- First: if it is an actor
- Second: if it is a subject of the predicate
- Third and fourth: If it is a inchoative or predicate
- Fifth: If it is an inchoative of the verb *kāna* or one of its sisters
- Sixth: If it is a predicate of *inna* or one of its sisters

Actor

18. What is an actor?

An actor is a noun that is preceded by a verb and denotes the person who carried out that verb. For example: **الصَّغِيرُ لَعِبَ** (The child played). Here, child is the actor because it came after the verb and denotes who played.

19. Does the verb remain in the same form if the actor is feminine?

If the actor is feminine the verb is placed into the feminine form by adding a *tā'* to the end of a preterite tense verb or a *tā'* at the beginning of an aorist tense verb. For example: **سَلِمَى تُسَافِرُ وَ مَرِيَمُ سَافَرَتْ** (Maryam traveled and Salma is traveling.)

20. Does the verb remain in the same form or is it put into the plural form if the actor is in the dual or plural form?

The verb remains in the single form even if the actor is in the dual or plural form.

Subject of the Predicate

21. What is a subject of the predicate?

A subject of the predicate is a noun that takes the place of the actor in a sentence after the actor is erased. For example: **سَاعَةٌ سُرِقَتْ** (A watch was stolen.)

22. What is the difference between an actor and a subject of the predicate in terms of meaning?

An actor is the one who performs the action where the subject of the predicate is the one that the verb was performed on. When we say that Joseph stole a watch, Joseph is the actor because he is the one who stole. But, if it is unknown who stole the watch or we do not want to mention his name, we say: A watch was stolen. Here we erased the actor from the sentence and placed the thing that received the action 'watch' in its place. We also put the verb into the passive tense.

23. What state is the verb in when there is a subject of the predicate?

The verb should be placed into the feminine state if the subject of the predicate is feminine. The verb should remain in the singular state if the subject of the predicate is in the dual or plural form.

24. What is a sentence that has a verb and an actor or a subject of the predicate called?

A sentence consisting of a verb and an actor or subject of the predicate is called a verbal sentence. For example: **المَطَرُ نَزَلَ** (The rain fell.)

Inchoatives and Predicates

25. What is an inchoative and what is a predicate?

An inchoative and a predicate are nouns that make up a complete sentence. For example:

صَادِقُونَ المومنونَ (The believers are truthful.)

26. How many kinds of predicates are there?

There are three kinds of predicates:

- Single word: زِينُ الصَّمْتِ (Silence is beautiful.)
- Sentence (both nominal and verbal)
- Prepositional phrase (which is either comprised of an adverb of time or place or a word preceded by a *jar* preposition (which will be explained later): العُشْبُ تَحْتَ الحَيَّةِ (The snake is in the grass.)

27. What is a sentence comprised of a inchoative and a predicate called?

A sentence comprised of a inchoative and a predicate is called a nominative sentence.

Inchoative of a Verb Kana or One of its sisters and the Predicate of the Preposition Inna or One of its Sisters

28. What is *kana*?

Kana is a verb that is placed before an inchoative and a predicate and puts the inchoative in the nominative case and puts the predicate in the accusative case. For example: كَانَ قَارِسًا البَرْدُ (The cold weather was severe.)

29. What is *inna*?

Inna is a preposition that is placed before an inchoative and a predicate and puts the inchoative in accusative case and the predicate in the nominative case. For example: إِنَّ قَارِسُ البَرْدِ (Verily, the cold weather is severe.)

30. Are there other verbs that perform the same action as *kana*?

There are twelve verbs that perform the same action as *kana* and are called *kana's* sisters. They are:

اصْبَحَ اضْحَى ظَلَّ بَاتَ امْسَى مازَالَ مابَرَحَ ماانْفَكَّ ماقتَى مادامَ
صارَ ليسَ

31. Are there other prepositions that perform the same action as *inna*?

There are five prepositions that perform the same action as *inna* and are called *inna's* sisters. They are:

أَنَّ كَأَنَّ لَكِنَّ لَيْتَ لَعَلَّ

Accusative Cases of a Noun

32. How many different cases are there where a noun is put into the accusative case?

A noun is put into the accusative case in eleven different places:

- If it is an objective compliment
- If it is a congnate
- If it is an adverbial qualification of purpose
- If it is an adverbial qualification of time or place
- If it is a *ma'* accusative
- If it is an exceptive
- If it is an *hā'* accusative
- If it is an specificative
- If it is a vocative
- If it is a predicate of the verb *kana*
- If it is an inchoative of the preposition *inna*

Objective Compliments and Cognates

33. What is an objective compliment?

An objective compliment is a noun that receives the action of a verb, but does not change the structure of the verb. For example: **قَلَمًا التَّلْمِيذُ بَرَى** (The student sharpened a pencil.) In this sentence, pencil is the objective compliment because it received the verb to sharpen and does not affect the structure of the verb. Of course, if an objective compliment affects the structure of the verb it is a predicate and must be put in the nominative case.

34. What is a congnate?

A congnate is a noun that is mentioned after the verb:

- for emphasis: **قَتَلَ اللَّصَّ الْحَارِسُ قَتَلَ** (The watchman murdered the thief a murder.)
- for explanation: **جَمِيلًا صَبِرًا إصْبِرْ** (Be patient, a beautiful patience.)
- for numeration: **دَقَّتِ السَّاعَةُ دَقَّتِ** (The watch ticked two ticks.)

Adverbial Qualifications and Adverbial

Qualifications of Time and Place

35. What is an adverbial qualification of purpose?

An adverbial qualification of purpose is a noun mentioned after the verb to express the purpose of the verb. For example: **لِلأَمِيرِ إِجْلَالاً الْجُنْدُ وَقَفَ** (The army stopped, honoring the commander.) In this sentence the word honoring is the adverbial qualification of purpose because it is expressing the reason why the army stopped.

36. What are the signs of an adverbial qualification of purpose?

The sign of an adverbial qualification of purpose is that it should be the answer to the question why after the verb. For example: **لِلْحَاكِمِ إِكْرَاماً الْمَدِينَةُ زُيِّنَتْ** (The city was beautified to respect the governor.)

37. What is an adverbial qualification of time and place?

An adverbial qualification of time and place is a adverb of time or place or noun mentioned to express the time of the verb or where it took place. For example: **أَمَامَ صَبَاحاً حَضَرْتُ الْمُعَلِّمَ** (I was present in the morning in front of the teacher.)

38. Are all of the nouns that denote time or place able to put into the accusative case because of their being adverbs?

Every noun that denotes time is able to be put into the accusative case because of their being adverbs. For example: **سَاعَةً وَ يَوْمًا وَ شَهْرًا سَافَرْتُ** (I travelled a month and a day and an hour.) But, not all nouns that denote a place are able to be put into the accusative case, only words that are not clear are able to be put into the accusative case, for example directions or distances.

Ma' Accusative and the Exceptive After *Ila*

39. What is a *ma'* accusative?

A *ma'* accusative is a noun preceded by a *wāw* that has the meaning of with mentioned to describe what the action was performed with. For example: **وَالْجَدِيدِ الشَّارِعِ وَ إِذْهَبْ** (Go on the new road.)

40. What is an exceptive after *ila*?

An exceptive after *ila* is a noun mentioned after the preposition *ila* which has a different ruling than what was mentioned before *ila*. For example: **خَالِدًا إِلَّا الْمَدْرَسَةَ النَّامِذَةَ خَرَجَ** (The students left the school, except Khālid.) Here Khālid is the exceptive because it is mentioned after *ila* and is not part of the rule 'leave' which is related to the students.

41. When is it obligatory to put the exceptive after *ila* into the accusative state?

It is obligatory to put the exceptive after *ila* into the accusative state if the phrase before it is complete and positive, for example: **إِلَّا الْكَسْلَانَ إِلَّا بَرَاةَ النَّاسِ يَعِشُ** (People live in comfort, except lazy people.) Here it is obligatory to put lazy people into the accusative case because the phrase before the *ila* is complete and positive.

The Hāl Accusative

42. What is a *hāl* accusative?

A *hāl* accusative is a noun mentioned to describe the state of the actor or the objective compliment when the action took place. For example: **ظافراً القائدُ جاءَ** (The leader came in a state of victory.) or **صافياً الماءَ شربتُ** (I drank water while it was pure.)

43. What are the signs of a *hāl* accusative?

The sign of a *hāl* accusative is that it is the answer to the question how. For example, how did the leader come? - In a state of victory. Or, how was the water that you drank? - Clear. This first example describes the state of the actor and the second example describes the state of the objective compliment.

44. How many types of *hāl* accusatives are there?

There are two types of *hāl* accusatives.

- Single: **ظافراً القائدُ جاءَ**
- Sentence: **فتىً أنتَ و العلمَ أطلب** (Seek knowledge while you are young.)

Specificative

35. What is a specificative?

A specificative is a noun mentioned to explain what is meant by the noun mentioned before it because of its obscurity. For example: **زيتاً رطلاً اشتريتُ** (I bought an amount¹ of oil.) If one only said: "I bought an amount," the listener would not know what was meant. He could have bought an amount of soap, oil or anything else. But, when he mentions the word oil, the word amount becomes clear and in this sentence oil is an specificative.

¹. A specified weight, in English around 450 grams.

Vocative

46. What is a vocative?

A vocative is the intended result of saying 'I call...'

47. How many forms of vocatives are there?

There are two forms of vocatives:

- One that is in the possessive form and accusative case: for example **الله عبد يا** (Ay, 'Abd Allah or Allah's servant) or a common noun that is not specified: for example **تنبه غافلاً يا** (Ay heedless one! Pay attention.)
- One that is indeclinable on whatever would put it in the nominative case and is either a proper noun or a common noun that is specified. For example: **يا خالد** (Ay, Khalid) or **يا رجل** (Ay, man).

A Predicate of the Verb Kana of an Inchoative of the Preposition Inna

48. What do you know about the predicate of the verb *kana* or its sisters and the inchoative of the preposition *inna* and its sisters?

The predicate of the verb *kana* and its sisters as well as the inchoative of the preposition *inna* and its sisters has been explained in the section of nominative nouns.[1](#)

[1](#). Refer to questions 28-31

Genitive Cases of a Noun

49. How many genitive cases of a noun are there?

A noun is put into the genitive case in two cases:

- If it comes after a preposition.
- If it is a word after a prefixed noun.

50. How many prepositions are there?

There are eleven prepositions:

**مِنَ إِلَى عَنَ عَلَى فِي رُبِّ الْبَاءِ الْكَافُ اللَّامُ وَالْقَسَمُ وَ
تَاءُ الْقَسَمِ**

For example: **الْمَدِينَةَ إِلَى الْبَيْتِ مِنْ دَهَبْتُ** (I went from the house to the city.)

51. What is the compliment to a prefixed noun?

The word before a prefixed noun is a compliment to a prefixed noun. For example: **حَادِمُ الْأَمِيرِ** (the general's maid)

52. What is the ruling of a prefixed noun?

If the prefixed noun has nunation it must be erased. For example **الْمَدِينَةُ سَوْرٌ** (the city's wall) takes the place of **الْمَدِينَةُ سَوْرٌ**. If the prefixed noun is in the dual form or the masculine sound plural form, the *nūn* must be erased. For example: **الرَّجُلُ يَدَا** (the man's two hands) takes the place of **الرَّجُلُ يَدَانِ**.

Hiding the Vowel Signs of a Declinable

Noun

53. How many declinable nouns hide their vowel signs?

There are three types of declinable nouns that hide their vowel signs:

- A compliment to a prefixed *yā'* personal pronoun.
- Nouns whose last letter is an *alif maqsūrah* (ى).
- Nouns whose last letter is a *ya'* preceded by a *kasrah*.

54. Which declinable nouns hide all of their vowel signs?

All of the vowels are hidden:

- if the noun is a compliment to a prefixed *yā'* personal pronoun because it would be difficult to pronounce the vowel. For example: **لَصِيْفِي اِكْرَامِي مَذْهَبِي اِنْ** (Verily, my creed makes me respect my guest.)
- if the noun's last letter is an *alif maqsūrah* because an *alif* cannot take a vowel. For example:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُدٰى الْهُدٰى اِنْ (Verily guidance is Allah's guidance.)

55. Which declinable nouns hide the *dūmmah* and *kasrah*?

The *dūmmah* and *kasrah* are hidden in nouns whose last letter is a *ya'* preceded by a *kasrah* because of it being difficult to pronounce. For example: **الْجَانِي عَلَى الْقَاضِي حَكَمَ** (The judge sentenced the criminal.)

Adjectives and Conjunctions

56. What is an adjective?

An adjective is a word that is mentioned after the word it is describing. For example: **الْمَجْتَهِدُ التَّلْمِيذُ يُحَبَّبُ** (A striving student is loved.)

57. What are the conditions of an adjective?

The conditions for an adjective are that it follows the word that it is describing in:

- In its being a definite or indefinite noun.
- In its being masculine or feminine.
- In its being singular, dual or plural.

58. What is a conjunction?

A conjunction is a preposition connecting two phrases that follow each other in vowel signs. The prepositions used as conjunctions are:

الْوَاوُ الْفَاءُ ثُمَّ أَوْ أَمْ لَكِنْ لَا بَلَّ

For example: **الدَّوَاةُ وَالْقَلَمُ كَسَرْتُ** (I broke the pen and ink holder.)

Corroboratives and Substitutes

59. What is a corroborative?

A corroborative is a word that emphasizes another word and is used to take away any doubts about the emphasized word being used figuratively. The words used to emphasize are:

نَفْسٌ وَ عَيْنٌ وَ كُلٌّ وَ جَمِيعٌ

For example: **نَفْسُهُ الْأَمِيرُ زَارَنِي** (The commander visited me, himself.)

Or: **كَلَّةُ الْجَيْشِ سَارَ** (The army marched, all of it.)

The word 'himself' was used to emphasize the commander and to take away any doubt that the person coming to visit is the commander himself, not his servant or messenger.

The phrase 'all of it' was used to emphasize the army and used to take away any doubt that the whole army was meant not part of it.

60. What is a substitute?

A substitute is a word that follows what it is substituting, either all of it, part of it or something that resembles it.

For example: **صَدِيقُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَخُوكَ** (Your brother, Abraham, is our friend.)

Or: **نَصَفَهُ الْكِتَابَ قَرَأْتُ** (I read the book, half of it.)

The Vowel Signs of Words and Sentences

61. Does the end of an indeclinable word change if it is placed in different parts of a sentence?

Every indeclinable word that is placed in a certain part of a sentence is given the declinable state that it would have had if it was a declinable word, but this state does not change the word at all.

For example: **ذَاهِبٌ أَنَا** (I am a leaver.)

Or: **صَادِقٌ إِنَّكَ** (Verily, you are truthful.)

Or: **الْعَمَلُ حَسَنٌ الْقَصْدُ صَدَقَ إِنْ** (If the intention is truthful the deed will be good.)

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