

عِلْمُ النَحْوِ

An Introduction to the Science of Arabic Grammar



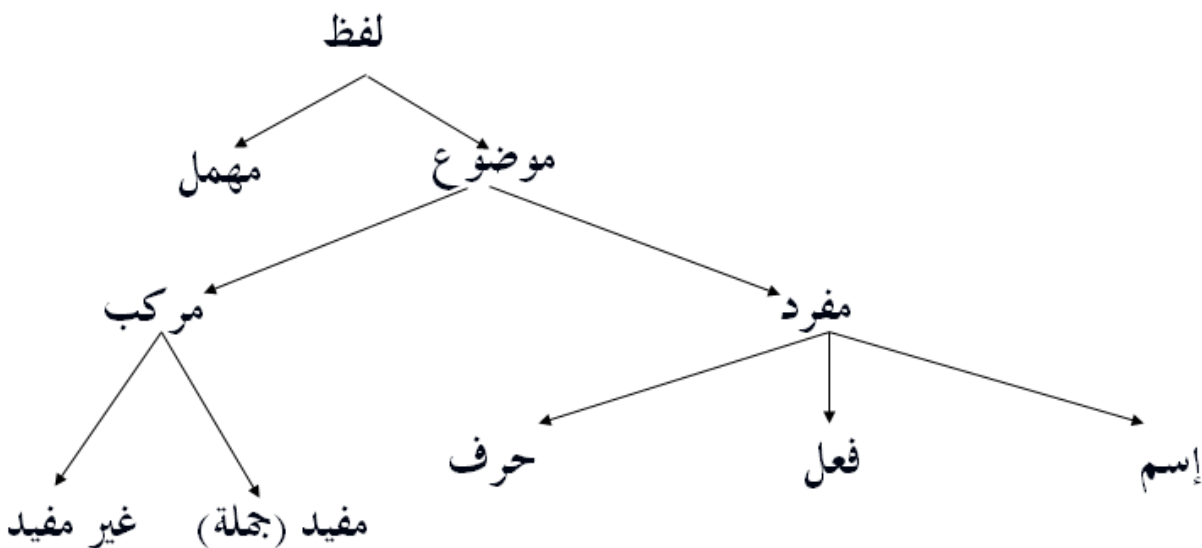
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Definition: نحو (Al Nahw) is the science of classical Arabic which deals with how to identify the grammatical positioning of the three parts of speech; اسم, فعل and حرف by recognizing the changes which occur at their end. In addition to this, it discusses how to connect the parts of speech with one another and make meaningful sentences.

The purpose of نحو is to protect one from making errors when speaking and understanding the language of the Arabs. From the various sciences associated with the Arabic language, النحو is by far the most important.

All discussions in نحو are centered upon words, phrases, and sentences. This varies from صرف which deals with derivation and patterns of individual words prior to entering into a sentence.

The Arabic language



Classification of the Arabic Language: The most basic utterance which comes out of the human beings mouth is termed 'لفظ'. This is the most basic utterance which occurs from the different points of articulation.

If it has no established meaning, it is known as 'مهمّل' (meaningless), whereas if it does convey established meaning, it is called 'موضوع' (meaningful). The meaning of the موضوع is assigned by the ancient Arabs.

مَوْضُوع could be either one word, termed مُفْرَد (single) also known as 'كلمة' (word) or a group of words; مُرَكَّب (compound). The group of words can be linked together so as to result in a complete sentence; مُرَكَّب مفيد/جملة/كلام (beneficial combination/sentence), or it may constitute a phrase; مُرَكَّب غير مفيد (non-beneficial combination).

The Arabic 'word' (كلمة) is divided into three types; حرف, فعل, and اسم. Stated otherwise, every word in the Arabic dictionary falls into one of these three categories. Unlike English which has eight parts of speech, in Arabic there are only three. This inconsistency will become clear only after precise definitions are given to the three types:

1. **اسم:** is the 'كلمة' that gives a full independent meaning in itself and is not linked to time, e.g. رجل (man), بيت (house). The category is broader than 'noun' in that it also includes three others from the eight English parts of speech, namely pronouns, adjectives and adverbs.

2. **فعل:** is the 'كلمة' that gives a full independent meaning in itself and is also linked to time, e.g. كَتَبَ (wrote), يَنْصُرُ (helps). This is exactly the same as the 'verb' in English.

3. **حرف:** is the 'كلمة' which has no independent meaning of its own i.e. can only be understood after coupling either a noun or a verb to it, e.g. في (in), على (on), و (and). This category includes prepositions, conjunctions, and articles.

The Signs of the إسم

The إسم is marked and identified by the following 4 signs:

1. Can be preceded by a particle of جَرُّ

These particles include: إلى، من، عن، على، في، ل

The word following these particle will be in the genitive state (مَجْرُورٌ) and the word will have a kasra on its last letter. e.g.

المسجد من زيد رجع (Zayd returned from the mosque)

المدرسة إلى زيد ذهب (Zayd went to the school)

2. Can be in the genitive state (مَجْرُورٌ). This can occur in one of three ways which will be explained later on Insha' Allah
3. It accepts tanween (تَنْوِين).

The تَنْوِين is defined as a نُونٌ سَاكِئَةٌ (unvowelled نُونٌ) suffixed to أَسْمَاءٌ which even though it is pronounced as a نُونٌ سَاكِئَةٌ is not written as one but rather as “the second of two حَرَكَةٌ” i.e. the second of two ضَمَّة, two فَتْحَة or two كَسْرَة e.g. رجل - رجلا - رجلين

One of its main usage is to make a noun indefinite.

4. The prefixing of the أَلِف and لَام (i.e. the definite article ال).

The main usage of using ال is for the meaning of definiteness

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ رَسُولًا شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُولًا

Surely We have sent to you a Messenger, a witness against you, as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh

فَعَصَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ الرَّسُولَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُ أَخْذًا وَبِيلًا

But Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger; so We seized him with a heavy Punishment

The Signs of the فعل

The فعل is marked and identified by the following 4 signs:

1. Can be preceded by the particle قد

e.g. قد رجع زيد “Indeed, Zayd returned”

2. Can be preceded by the particle س (used to indicate the close future)

e.g. سأزورك هذا المساء “I will visit you this evening”

3. Can be preceded by the particle سوف (used to indicate the distant future)

e.g. سوف نقوم أمام الله جميعاً “We will all stand in front of Allah”

4. Can have the unvowelled تاء of Femininity (تاء التأنيث الساكنة) entered upon it

e.g. جاءت زينب “Zaynab came”

The Signs of the حَرَف

The حَرَف is that for which the sign of the اِسْم and the sign of the فِعْل are not valid.