

Elementary Arabic Syntax I



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(MABD AL-'ARABYYAH)

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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: **العلم نافع** (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: **الله عادل** (Allah is just.)

- A verb and a noun: **إنطفأ سراج** (A lamp died out.)

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.

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 كَيْ

For example:

1) أَرِيدُ أَنْ أَتَعَلَّمُ النَّحْوِ (I want to learn syntax.)

2) لَنْ يَجُودَ الْبَخِيلُ (A miser will not be generous.)

3) (إِذْنَ نُنْزَكَ فِي دَارِنَا) (In that case, we will let you stay in our house.)

4) (أَدْرُسْ كَيْ تَحْفَظْ) (Study so that you preserve.)

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:

لَمْ لَمَا لَامُ الْأَمْرُ لَا النَّاهِيَةُ إِنْ إِذْمَا مَنْ مَهْمَا أَيْ كَيْفَمَا مَتَىْ أَيْنَمَا أَنَّىْ 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) (لَمْ يَنْهَبْ أَحَدْ) for example: (Nobody came.)

2) (تَعْلَمَ الْقِرَاءَةَ وَ لَمَا يَكْتُبْ) for example: (He learned to read and has not written yet.)

3) (لِتَطِبْ نَفْسُكَ) for example: (You must become happy, yourself.)

4) (لَا تَيَاسْ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ) for example: (Don't loose 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) (إِنْ تَكُسَّلْ تَخْسَرْ) for example: (If you become lazy you will suffer a loss.)

2) (إِذْمَا تَتَعَلَّمْ تَتَقدَّمْ) for example: (Whenever you learn you will advance.)

3) (مَنْ يَطْلُبْ يَجِدْ) for example: (Whoever seeks finds.)

4) (مَا تَتَعَلَّمْ فِي الصَّفَرِ يَنْفَعُكَ فِي الْكِبَرِ) for example: (Whatever you learn in youth will benefit you in old age.)

5) (مَهْمَا تَأْمُرْ بِالْخَيْرِ أَفْعَلُهُ) for example: (Whenever you order me to do good I will do it.)

6) (أَيْأَ تُكْرِمْ أَكْرِمْ) for example: (Whoever you respect I respect.)

7) (كَيْفَمَا تَتَوَجَّهُ تُصَادِفُ خَيْرًا) for example: (Whenever you go you will pass by well.)

8) (مَتَىْ يَصْلُحُ بِاطْنُكَ يَصْلُحُ ظَاهِرُكَ) for example: (Whenever your inner-self becomes fixed your outer-

appearance will become fixed.)

9) for example: أَيْمَانَ تَنْهَبَ تَنْجَعَ (Wherever you go you will be saved.)

10) أَيَّانَ تَسْأَلَنِي أَجْبَكَ (Whenever you ask me I will answer you.)

11) أَنِي يَنْهَبَ صَاحِبَ الْعِلْمِ يُكَرَمَ (Wherever a scholar goes he will be respected.)

12) حَيْئَمَا تَسْقُطَ تَثْبُتَ (Wherever you fall you will stay.)

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: يَنْزَلُ الْمَطَرُ (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 *dummah* is erased in the nominative case and the *fathah* is erased in the subjunctive case. But, if the last letter of the weak verb is either a *waw* or a *yeh*, the *dummah* is erased in the nominative case because of the difficulty of pronouncing it.

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 an inchoative or predicate
- Fifth: If it is an inchoative of the verb *ka-na* or one of its sisters
- Sixth: If it is a predicate of *in-na* or one of its sisters

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: لَعِبَ الْصِّفَيْرُ (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 *tashdeed* to the end of a preterite tense verb or a *tashdeed* at the beginning of an aorist tense verb. For example:

(سَافَرَتْ مَرِيمٍ وَسَافِرْ سَلَمَى) 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.

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: سُرِقَتْ سَاعَةً (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: نَزَلَ الْمَطَرُ (The rain fell.)

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:

الْمُؤْمِنُونَ صَادِقُونَ (The believers are truthful.)

26. How many kinds of predicates are there?

There are three kinds of predicates:

- Single word: الصَّمْتُ زَيْنٌ (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): الْحَيَّةُ تَحْتَ الْعُشْبَ (The snake is in the grass.)

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

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

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: **كانَ البردُ قارساً** (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: **إنَّ البردَ قارسٌ** (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:

اصَبَحَ اضْحَى ظَلَّ بَاتَ امْسَى مَا زَالَ مَا بَرَحَ مَا فَتَى مَا دَأَمَ صَارَ لَيْسَ

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:

أَنْ كَانَ لَكَنْ لَيْتَ لَعَلَّ

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 *hifdh*/ 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*

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: **بَرَى التَّلَمِيدُ قَلَمًا** (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 cognate is a noun that is mentioned after the verb:

- for emphasis: **فَتَّلَ الْحَارِسُ الْلَّصَّ قَتْلًا** (The watchman murdered the thief a murder.)
- for explanation: **إِصْبِرْ صَبِرًا جَمِيلًا** (Be patient, a beautiful patience.)
- for numeration: **دَقَّتِ السَّاعَةُ دَقْتَيْنِ** (The watch ticked two ticks.)

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: **وَقَفَ الْجُنُدُ إِجْلَالًا لِلَّامِيرِ** (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: **زُيَّنَتِ الْمَدِينَةُ إِكْرَامًا لِلْحَاكِمِ** (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: **(I) حَضَرَتُ صَبَاحًا أَمَامَ الْمُعَلِّمِ** (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: (I سافرت شهرًا و يومًا و ساعةً) 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.

39. What is a *ma'* accusative?

A *ma'* accusative is a noun preceded by a *waw* that has the meaning of with mentioned to describe what the action was performed with. For example: (إذهب و الشارع الجديد) 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: (خرج التلامذة المدرسة إلا خالد) (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: (يعيش الناس براحة إلا الكسلان) (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.

42. What is a *hifl* accusative?

A *hifl* accusative is a noun mentioned to describe the state of the actor or the objective compliment when the action took place. For example: (جاء القائد ظافرًا) (The leader came in a state of victory.) or (شربت الماء صافياً) (I drank water while it was pure.)

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

The sign of a *hifl* 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 *hifl* accusatives are there?

There are two types of *hifl* accusatives.

- Single: (جاء القائد ظافرًا)

- Sentence: (أطلب العلم و أنت فتى) (Seek knowledge while you are young.)

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: أشترىتْ رطلاً زيتاً (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.

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 يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ (Ay, 'Abd Allah or Allah's servant) or a common noun that is not specified: for example يَا غَافِلًا تَنْبَهْ (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: يَا خَالِدًا (Ay, Khalid) or يَا رَجُلًا (Ay, man).

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

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:

مِنْ إِلَى عَنْ عَلَى فِي رُبِّ الْبَاءُ الْكَافُ الْلَّامُ وَالْقَسْمُ وَتَاءُ الْقَسْمِ

For example: (أَنْهَيْتُ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ) 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: (خَادِمُ 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 (سُورُ الْمَدِينَةِ) (the city's wall) takes the place of سُورٌ. If the prefixed noun is in the dual form or the masculine sound plural form, the *nun* must be erased. For example: (يَدَا الرَّجُلِ) (the man's two hands) takes the place of يَدَانِ الرَّجُلِ.

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* (ي).
- 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: (إِنَّ مَذَهْنِي إِكْرَامِي لِضَيْفِي) (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: (إِنَّ الْهُدَى هُدَى اللَّهِ) (Verily guidance is Allah's guidance.)

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

The *dummah* 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: (حَكَمَ الْقَاضِي عَلَى الْجَانِي) (The judge sentenced the criminal.)

56. What is an adjective?

An adjective is a word that is mentioned after the word it is describing. For example:

(يُحَبُّ التَّلَمِيذُ الْمُجَتَهُدُ) (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:

الواو الفاء ثم أو أم لكن لا بل

For example: (كَسَرْتُ الْفَلَمْ وَ الدَّوَّاةَ) (I broke the pen and ink holder.)

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

Or: (سَارَ الْجَيْشُ كُلُّهُ) (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: (أَخْوَكَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ صَدِيقُنَا) (Your brother, Abraham, is our friend.)

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

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: (أَنَا ذَاهِبٌ) I am a leaver.)

Or: (إِنْكَ صَادِقٌ) (Verily, you are truthful.)

Or: (إِنْ صَدَقَ الْقَمْدُ حَسْنُ الْعَمَلِ) (If the intention is truthful the deed will be good.)

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