INTRODUCTION TO SYNTAX

تَعْرِيْفُ النَّحْو

The Definition Of النحو

عِلْمُ النَّحْو is the branch of knowledge that teaches the rules of joining nouns, verbs and particles together to form sentences, and the methods of recognising the declension[1] (changes in form or إعراب) of the ends of Arabic words.

This branch of knowledge is called syntax in English.

فَائِدَة النَّحْو

The Benefit Of Studying النحو

The benefit of studying this science is that it helps a person to refrain from making mistakes in reading, writing and speaking the Arabic Language.

Example

جَاءَ, نَصْر ,الله – these are three separate words. By learning النحو one will be able to join them into a sentence in the correct order and apply the correct vowels at the ends of the words, thus making: جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللهِ (Allah's help came). Notice the vowels at the end. A person who knows نحو does not need the vowels to be written to be able to read and understand Arabic sentences.

Common terms:

اَلْفَتْحَةُ (*al-Fathah*)	The short vowel equivalent to the sound of 'a' in 'apple' or both 'a's in 'alpha'. This is represented by the symbol (َ) written above the letter.[2]
اَلْكَسْرَةُ (*al-Kasrah*)	The short vowel equivalent to the sound of "i/e/y" in 't<u>i</u>n/ <u>E</u>nglish/ pen<u>ny</u>' This is represented by the symbol (ِ) written under the letter[3].
اَلضَّمَّةُ (*al-Dhammah*)	The short vowel equivalent to the sound of "u" in 'p<u>u</u>ll'. This is represented by the symbol (ُ) written above the letter.[4]

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[1] In linguistics, declension is the changing of the form of a word, generally to express its syntactic function in the sentence, by way of some inflection. The inflectional change of verbs is called conjugation (تصريف).

[2] Al-Fathah is commonly known as "zabar" in Asian communities.

[3] Al-Kasrah is commonly known as "zer" in Asian communities.

[4] Al-Dammah is commonly known as "pesh" in Asian communities.

اَلْحَرَكَة (*al-Harakah*)	This is the term used to refer to the vowel symbols; fathah, *Kasrah* and dhammah, collectively they are called اَلْحَرَكَاث (al-harakaat), which is the plural of الْحَرَكَةُ.
اَلتَّنْوِين (*al-Tanween*)	This is termed 'nunation' in English. It adds the sound of the letter ن (n) at the end of a fathah, kasrah or dhammah. This is represented by a double *Fathah* (ً) making the sound "*an*"; a double kasrah (ٍ) making the sound "*in*"; and a double dhammah (ٌ), which makes the sound "*un*".
اَلسُّكُوْنُ (*al-Sukoon*)	This signifies the absence of a vowel or harakah[5] and is represented by the absence of a symbol on the letter Alif (preceded by a فتحة) and by the symbol (ْ) on any other letter.
اَلتَّشْدِيْد (*al-Tashdeed)* or اَلشَّدَّة (*al-Shaddah*)	This signifies the doubling of a letter in pronunciation represented by the symbol (ّ). The letter is pronounced as though it was written twice, once with a sukoon and then again with a harakah e.g. مَدَّ = مَدْدَ
اَلْمَفْتُوْح (*al-Maftooh*)	This represents the letter that has been vowelled with a fathah. For example, a ب with a *fathah* is called[6] البَاءُ الْمَفْتُوْحَةُ .
اَلْمَكْسُوْر (al-Maksoor)	This represents the letter that has been vowelled with a kasrah, e.g. المِيْمُ المكْسُوْرَةُ.
اَلْمَضْمُوْم (*al-Madhmoom*)	This represents the letter that has been vowelled with a dhammah, e.g. الدَّالُ الْمضْمُوْمَةُ.
اَلْمُتَحَرِّك (*al-Mutaharrik*)	This represents the letter that has any vowel or harakah, e.g. النُوْنُ الْمُتَحَرِّكَةُ.
اَلسَّاكِنُ (as-Saakin)	This represents the letter that has no harakah (or has a sukoon), e.g. الصَّادُ السَّاكِنَةُ
اَلْمُشَدَّدُ (al-Mushaddad)	This represents the letter that has been doubled (or has a tashdeed or shaddah), e.g. السِّيْنُ الْمُشَدَّدَةُ.

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[5] It is commonly known as a "Jazam" in Asian communities.

[6] The *taa* (ة) added at the end of the word الْمَفْتُوْحَةُ is the feminine article. This is necessary because all letters of the Arabic alphabet are considered feminine words.

<p style="text-align:center">الْكَلِمَة وَ الْكَلاَم</p>

<p style="text-align:center">The Word And The Sentence</p>

Anything a person utters in the form of speech is called اللَّفْظُ in Arabic. If the utterance has a meaning it is called الْمَوْضُوع. If it does not have a meaning it is called الْمُهْمَل.

In Arabic the meaningful utterance (اللَّفْظُ الْمَوْضُوع) is of two types:
1. الْمُفْرَد (single word)
2. الْمُرَكَّب (combined words)

الْمُفْرَد

The utterance (لَفْظ) of a single meaningful word is more commonly known as الْكَلِمَة

الْمُرَكَّب

The utterance (لَفْظ) that is a combination of two or more words is also called الْكَلاَم. It will be discussed after الْمُفْرَد.

الْمُفْرَد or الْكَلِمَة is of three types:
1. الْإِسْمُ (the noun)
2. الْفِعْلُ (the verb)
3. الْحَرْفُ (the particle)

الْإِسْم (the Noun)

الْإِسْم is the word that gives a specific meaning by itself and has no tense. Names of objects, people and places are all from this category.

Examples: رَجُلٌ (a man)[7] – إِمْرَأَةٌ (a woman)[8] – بَيْتٌ (a house)[9] – هذا (this)[10] – ذلك (that)[11] – هُوَ (he/it)[12]

الْفِعْل (the Verb)

الْفِعْل is the word that gives a specific meaning by itself and also connotes one of the tenses (past, present and future). Words that signify actions are mostly from this category.

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[7] Mentioned 57 times in the Qur'an
[8] Mentioned 83 times in the Qur'an
[9] Mentioned 64 times in the Qur'an
[10] Mentioned 221 times in the Qu'ran
[11] Mentioned 426 times in the Qur'an
[12] Mentioned 478 times in the Qur'an

Examples: عَلِمَ (he knew)[13]; يَنْصُرُ (he is helping or will help)[14]; اِقْرَأْ (read)[15]; لا تَضْرِبْ (don't hit)[16].

الْحَرْف (the Particle)

الْحَرْف is the word that does not give a specific clear meaning by itself but needs to be combined with an اسم or a فعل.

Examples: the particles مِنْ (from); إلى (to); عَلَي (on); فِيْ (in). These do not give a specific meaning by themselves but give a specific meaning when combined with another word. For example: فِي الْبَيْتِ (in the house).

أَقْسَامُ الاسْم

Different types of الْاسْم

There are 3 types of اسم:

1. الاسْمُ الْجَامِد (the rigid noun)
2. الْمَصْدَر (verbal noun/infinitive)
3. الاسْمُ الْمُشْتَقُّ (derivative noun)

الاسْمُ الْجَامِد (the rigid Noun)

This type of noun is not derived from a root nor is any other word derived from it according to the rules of etymology and inflection. For example: رَجُلٌ (a man) – وَلَدٌ (a boy)[17]

الْمَصْدَر (verbal noun/infinitive)

This type of noun is not derived from a root but many words are derived from it. For example: النَّصْرُ (to help). The words نَصَرَ (he helped), يَنْصُرُ (he is helping) and نَاصِرٌ (helper) are all derived from it.

الاسْمُ الْمُشْتَقُّ (Derivative Noun)

This type of noun is derived from a root namely a مصدر . For example: نَاصِرٌ (helper) and مَنْصُوْرٌ (the helped) are both derived from النَّصْر, which is a مصدر as shown above.

Different types of الْفِعْل

There are 4 types of فعل:

1. الفِعْلُ الْمَاضِي (the past tense verb or the perfect), e.g. نَصَرَ

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[13] 518 times

[14] 92 times

[15] 17 times

[16] 58 times

[17] 56 times

2. الْفِعْلُ الْمُضَارِع (the present and future tense verb or the imperfect), e.g. يَنْصُرُ

3. فِعْلُ الأَمْرِ (the imperative or command verb), e.g. أُنْصُرْ

4. فِعْلُ النَّهْي (the prohibitive verb), لاَ تَنْصُرْ

Details of the different types of verbs and their inflection are discussed primarily in the science of morphology (عِلْمُ الصَّرْف).

Different types of الْحَرْف

There are two main categories of الْحَرْف.

1. الْحَرْفُ العَامِل: (the governing particle)

2. غَيْرُ الْعَامِل: (the non–governing particle)

Many particles fall under each category. These will be discussed in some detail later.