

Nahw - Attached Pronouns: their Grammatical States

A pronoun is a substitute of for a noun. Thus, you can say *This is Zaid's book* or you can say *This is his book*, the *his* being the pronoun. Similarly, you can say *I gave the book to Zaid and Amr* as well as *I gave the book to them*, the *them* being the pronoun here.

In Arabic we can have two forms of a pronoun: *attached* and *detached*. An example of each is:

هُوَ طَالِبٌ *He is a student* (detached pronoun)

ابْنُهُ مُجْتَهِدٌ *His son is hardworking* (attached pronoun)

In this post I will show, Insha Allah, how we can determine the grammatical state of attached pronouns.

There are a total of 14 attached pronouns, same number as the verb conjugations. However, the attached pronouns for 3rd person dual masculine and dual feminine, as well as those for 2nd person dual masculine and dual feminine, are the same. Thus, we are left with $14 - 2 = 12$ attached pronouns to deal with. The table below shows the listings for attached pronouns:

3rd Person Masculine Singular	هُ
3rd Person Masculine dual	هُمَا
3rd Person Masculine Plural	هُمْ
3rd Person Feminine Singular	هَا
3rd Person Feminine dual	هُمَا
3rd Person Feminine Plural	هُنَّ
2nd Person Masculine Singular	كَ
2nd Person Masculine Dual	كُمَا
2nd Person Masculine Plural	كُم
2nd Person Feminine Singular	كِ

2nd Person Feminine Dual	كُـمَا
2nd Person Feminine Plural	كُنَّ
1st Person Masculine/Feminine Singular	نِي
1st Person Masculine/Feminine Dual/Plural	نَا

One point to note about 1st Person Masculine/Feminine Singular: The نِي ending is *only* attached to

verbs. For اسم and حرف (preposition) the ending is a simple ي . I will, Insha Allah, provide an explanation for this shortly.

Grammatical States of attached pronouns:

Why do we need to determine grammatical states for attached pronouns? The answer to this question is

that these attached pronouns lack *endings*. For example, we can say زَيْدٌ and right away know that this

is a case of رفع because of the *dhamma* at the end. However, the attached pronouns *cannot* have

dhamma, fatha, or kasra as their endings: كُـمَا will *always* be كُـمَا and نَا will *always* be نَا , for example.

We cannot stick a *dhamma, fatha, or kasra* at their end to reflect grammatical states. Yet, we know that

attached pronouns do possess grammatical states, an example of which is ضَرَبْتُهُمُ which means *I*

hit them. Clearly, *I*, the pronoun, is the subject here and *them* is the object and thus has to have

grammatical states in Arabic. Other examples of the same pronoun in the three grammatical states

would be:

1. ضَرَبْنَا (zarab'na): *we hit*. Here نَا is in رفع since it is the subject of hitting
2. ضَرَبَنَا (zarabana): *he hit us*. Here نَا is in نصب since it is the object of hitting
3. آلِهَاتِنَا (aalihatina): *our gods*. Here نَا is in جر since it is مضاف إليه .

Rule for determining Grammatical States of attached pronouns

The pronoun will either be attached to a verb or a non-verb. If it is attached to a verb then it will either be from the endings we learned in **صرف** or it won't. If it is, then **رفع** on the basis of either **فاعل** or **نائب فاعل** (deputy doer). If it isn't, then **مفعول به** on the basis of **نصب**.

If it is attached to an **اسم** then its Grammatical State would be **جر** on the basis of **مضاف إليه**.

If it is attached to **حرف** then it could be attached to either a preposition or one of the **إن** sisters. If it is attached to a preposition then **جر** because of being the object of that preposition. If it is attached to one of the **إن** sisters then its Grammatical State would be **نصب** on the basis of **إسم إن**.

These rules are depicted diagrammatically in the following chart (click to enlarge):



Examples:

Pronoun attached to a verb:

Attached pronoun with the **صرف** table ending: **ضَرَبْنَا** (*zarab'na: we hit*). Here **نا** is **فاعل** because it is the doer of *hitting*. This is conjugation number 13 from the **صرف** table.

Attached pronoun with ending not from the **صرف** table: **يَذْكُرُهُمْ** (*mentioning them*). Here **هُمْ** is in **نصب** because it is the **مفعول به** of *mentioning*. The catch here is that the **صرف** tables only talk about *we* and not about *them*; in other words, we do not have a conjugation in the **صرف** tables which translates to anything relating to *them*. Thus, this is an example where we have a pronoun attached to a verb-ending

which cannot be found in the صرف tables.

Pronoun attached to a non-verb:

- Attached to an اسم: e.g. كتابُكُم (your book). This is a possessive phrase so the attached pronoun is in the state of جر
- Attached to a حرف : This can have two instances:
 - Attached to a preposition: e.g. فيه (in it), مِنْهُمْ (for them). Here the attached pronoun is in the state of جر because in and it are the objects of their respective prepositions
 - Attached to an إن sister: e.g. أَنْتُمْ (you are). Here you is إِسْمٌ, thus it is in the state of نصب

Note on the use of the نى ending in the 13th conjugation:

In Arabic if we want to say *my book*, we will say كتابي; however, if we want to say *I hit*, we will say

ضربته. Notice the extra ن which is used when a verb is used with an attached pronoun in the 13th

conjugation. Recall that اسم can experience grammatical states in Arabic because of governing agents.

For verbs, however, only the مضارع verb experiences grammatical state and that only of جزم : it cannot

take the state of رفع or نصب or جر . Yet, the 13th conjugation dictates that the verb takes a kasra, since

this conjugation ends in a ي . It is to protect the verb from taking the kasra (and thus undergoing جر ,

which it cannot) that an extra ن is inserted. This extra ن does not have a meaning of its own; it is simply

used as a means of protecting the verb from undergoing a grammatical state which a verb is not allowed to take.