Nahw - The Anatomy of a Sentence - Part 2

As promised here is the second part of our sentence analysis exercise. In this post, Insha Allah, I will take up a complex Arabic sentence and will show how rules of grammatical states apply to such sentences.

(*And Ibrahim would recognize that idols are rock*)و كانَ اِبراهيمُ يَعرِفُ أنَّ الاَصنامَ حِجارةٌ

Right away you can see that this sentence can be divided into two main parts: إسم of كانَ , which is

اِبراهيمُ , and the rest of the sentence, starting from يَعرِفُ , which is the خبر of كانَ. However, within

this خبر of كانَ are at least *two* other complete sentences: انَّ الاَصنامَ حِجارةٌ (*idols are rock*) and

انَّ الاَصنامَ حِجارةٌ(*he knew that idols are rock*). As a rule, whenever an Arabic sentence is composed of

other smaller sentences (and most of them do!) then the rules of grammatical states apply to the inner

sentences and the outer sentence is *assumed* to take the grammatical state which a stand-alone word

would have taken had there been one. To understand this concept fully take the word اِبراهيمُ . The

dhamma at its end signifies that it is in the state of رفع, which is expected since إسم of كانَ goes into the

grammatical state of رفع . However, the rest of the sentence which constitutes the خبر of كانَ has to go

into نَصَب but how do you put a complete sentence (which itself is composed of two other sentences)

into نَصَب؟ The answer is that we start analyzing the inner sentences and apply rules of grammatical

states to them individually and the complete outer sentence is *assumed* to be in the state of نَصَبSo let

us do exactly that and in the end we will recombine the inner sentences to complete the whole outer

sentence.

يَصَب thus the *fatha* on إنّ الاصْنامَ حِجارةٌ Here الاَصنام is the اِسم of اِن. As with اِن, the اِسم of اِن goes into يَصَب

الاَصنام. Similarly, حِجارةٌ is the خبر of اِن and therefore it is in the state of رفع, as signified by the

dhamma at the end. Also recognize that the complete sentence is a جملةأسميّه .

Now look at the verb يَعرِفُ: It needs a فاعل (the doer) and a مفعول به (the one upon whom the verb is

done. Do remember, though, that there are other verbs which do *not* require a مفعول به). The فاعل for

يَعرِفُ is implied since it is the first conjugation (*he recognize*). Since the فاعل is contained within the

verb, the rest of the sentence, انّ الاَصنامَ حِجارةٌ has to be the مفعول به of the verb يَعرِفُ (Revert back to

the previous paragraph and note that this مفعول به itself is a جملةأسميّه). Again, since we cannot put a

whole sentence into the state of يَصَب where a مفعول به is supposed to go, therefore we *assume* that this

part of the sentence is in the state of يَصَب Also, this sentence is a جُمله فِعلِيّه since it starts with a

verb, يَعرِفُ.

So until now we have desiccated and analyzed this sentence into at least 2 major parts: جملةأسميّه and

جُمله فِعلِيّه , and have seen how each word within these parts is following its particular rule for

grammatical states. Now let us move ahead and combine the *whole* sentence. Since the sentence starts

with كان , a verb, therefore the complete sentence is a جُمله فِعلِيّه , and the part starting from

يَعرِفُ up to the end is *assumed* to be in the state of يَصَب since it is the خبر of كانَ . As I mentioned

before, اِ بِراهيمُ, being the إسم of كان, goes into رفع , and hence the *dhamma* at the end.

I hope that this example further explains how the concept of grammatical terms is used in Arabic Language.