

# Nahw - An Introduction to the Science of Arabic Grammar

أَهْمُهَا النَّحْوُ إِذْ لَوْلَاهُ أَصْلُ التَّفَاهُمِ

The most important of the sciences associated with the Arabic language is *نحو*, for without it no communication can exist :  
Ibn-e- Khaldun

*نحو* is the science of Classical Arabic which describes:

1. How to arrange words to make meaningful sentences
2. How to determine the grammatical structure of a sentence (by determining the positioning of

( حرف ، فعل ، اسم ) by change in the last letter of a word

Recall that a sentence in Classical Arabic is defined as a group of words conveying a complete idea and which has a Subject/Predicate relationship. Whenever we want to convey something to our listeners we first form a mental image into our own minds and then describe that image in words to other people.

The 'something' or the 'primary' part of the idea is the *Subject* of the sentence and its 'description' is the *Predicate* of the sentence. The *Subject* is called *مُسْنَدٌ إِلَيْهِ* and the *Predicate* is called *مُسْنَدٌ* in Classical Arabic grammar. In English Language it is fairly easy to differentiate between the Subject and Predicate in a sentence by using the word *is*. As an example, note the sentence 'Amr is standing'. Here *Amr* is Subject and *standing* describes what is happening with the Subject. As another another example note the sentence 'The cat ate the rat'. Here it is very obvious that the *cat* is the subject and 'ate the rat' is the predicate, the *rat* being the *object* of *eating* . In English there is a sequence of words which determines which part is the Subject and which is the Predicate. However, in Arabic there is no such

rule that a Subject has to come before the object i.e. there is no sequence rule. At first this might seem a little odd; however, this is what gives the language its flexibility, where using only a few words one can express themselves in variety of ways.

So how do we determine which is Subject and which is Predicate in a sentence? To make this easier,

Scholars of *نحو* have divided sentences into two types, based on the first word, and have named the

Subject and Predicate in each differently:

1. *جملة اسمية* (Nominal Sentence): This is the kind of sentence which begins with an *اسم* e.g. *الولدُ قائمٌ*

(The boy is standing). The Subject, *الولدُ*, is called *مبتدأ*, and the predicate, *قائمٌ*, is called *خبر*

2. *جملة فعلية* (Verbal Sentence): This is the kind of sentence which begins with a *فعل* e.g. *ذهبَ حامدٌ*.

Here *ذهبَ* is *فعل* and *حامد* is *فاعل*

Exactly how we determine which is the Subject and which is the Object will be dealt with once we define the concept of *Grammatical States* in Arabic, where we will make use of all the terms defined above and will see which grammatical state each fits in.