

Facilitating Arabic Syntax: A Chronological Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study has a chronological approach, which aims to examine the notion of facilitating Arabic syntax through the following steps: firstly, it examines the emergence of syntax: its requirements, stages, and the origins of the theory on Arabic. Then it focuses on facilitating the examination of the following aspects of Arabic syntax: its definition, causes, and an exploration of a general categorization of its old and new calls, with an extended explanation for some of them, and a shortened one for others. The study concludes with an attempt to reach a proposed reading of the issue through examining the included calls and scholars views.

Keywords: Arabic, Language, Facilitating Arabic Syntax, Theory on Arabic Syntax.

INTRODUCTION

Historical Review of the Origin of Arabic Syntax

It appears from the historical context of the rise of Arabic syntax that the theory on Arabic syntax preceded without specific purposes, which caused, rather in a natural way, the emergence of the syntax theory of Arabic.

The cultural religious atmosphere that surrounds the Arabic language is the consequence of the Arabic peninsula. After the Holy Quran was bestowed upon humanity, Islam spread beyond its point of origin, and as the Islamic nation expanded, many people from different origins professed Islam in various continents). This caused a feeling of the necessity to understand Arabic, the language of the Holy Quran, and to make an accurate and clear conception of its structure, texture and usage, in order to "allow non-natives of Arabic to catch up with natives even if they aren't native speakers"⁽¹⁾.

Social circumstances (different cultural origins of Muslims and their effect on the Arabic environment) and linguistic reasons, such as the distinct differences between The Holy Quran's language and the daily language, contributed to Muslim scholars' tendency to study and analyze the language, in order to control, and to ensure that the speaker avoided a deviation from the truth, for the sake of God's book, to understand it, to be aware of its rules, and to protect its language.

Examining the texts which have contributed to the foundation of Arabic syntax are not among the purposes of this research since one can trace the roots of majority of the narratives back to Abu AlAswad Addo'ali (67H) who has been

directed by Al-Imam Ali and the first one to point to it may be Ibn Salam Al-Jomahi (232H)⁽²⁾.

Syntactic composition has started and advanced⁽³⁾ beginning with Abu Alaswad Addo'ali and improved by Abdulla bin abi Isshaq Al-Hadhrami (117H), Issa Bin Omar (149H), and Abu Amr Bin Al-Ala' (154H), who have developed many syntax principles, rules and controls which reached its growth climax at the hand of Al-Khalil Bin Ahmad Al-Frahidi Al-Azadi (175H) and his student Sebawaih (180 H).

Arabic syntax remained structurally weak throughout the first century and for most of the second century. Only by the end of the second century and part of the third century of the hegira it showed some progress since a general theory of the lingual phenomenon emerged.⁽⁴⁾ The Arabic syntactic school was based upon two main pillars: listening, which presents the first procedural step that formed the examined subject for native speakers of Arabic, and analogy which scholars used in order to categorize the subject under examination into specific rules and principles. A reasoning tendency arranged the situation by passing over the examined phenomenon to touch Arabs' wisdom in presenting it in this way, and a partial agreement was reached that the vowels and structure changes are just effect factors.

The cause issue and the syntactic agent theory became the most important sources for students starting from the middle of the third century until the fourth century of hijra when scholarly works in Greek were translated into Arabic. The interest of cause and effect increased, and the syntactic phenomenon was combined with philosophical and logical issues. It can be argued that many aspects were summoned in syntactic compositions. As the Arabic syntax was ascribed to being difficult, criticism increased and calls arose for the necessity of facilitating the

* Language Center, The University of Jordan. Received on 8/2/2014 and Accepted for Publication on 14/7/2014.

language and purifying it of every blemish.

Ibn Mudha' Al-Qortubi's attempt is considered to be the first one that discussed Arabic syntax principles⁽⁵⁾. It presents a chronological study of the attempts of facilitating Arabic syntax by the followers of both new and old schools. This study also clarifies that scholars of Arabic were compelled to facilitate the syntax, due to the need for simplifying the language for both learners and teachers. This need for facilitating continues even today given that the use of language is under a continuous progress.

The Definition of Facilitating

Literally, facilitation means mildness and obedience, it means also becoming easy, and it is the opposite of difficulty.⁽⁶⁾ On the other hand, facilitating has idiomatic meanings since concepts vary according to ideology and purpose, but all definitions focused on a frame that made the syntax available, easy, flexible to be studied and easy to obtain. Facilitating is a purpose within every field of life, and the need for it is general and broad, since Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: "Facilitate things for people, and don't make things hard for them".

For the purpose of our analysis, we mean by "facilitating" to prepare syntactic material and produce it with a complete approach, in order to make it flexible and easy for the students.

It was pointed out that Ibn Mudha' (592H) has called to rise against scholars and to falsify agent's theory and what it draws of causes, analogies and prospects that ruined syntax with its ensuing problems which we do not need in pronunciation, correcting and tongue adjustment. Also he has presented new solutions that recently Shawqi Dhaif has benefitted from in order to develop a simplified approach which will be elaborated on later⁽⁷⁾.

This call was followed by an abundant number of calls for facilitating the language, which can be categorized into two main schools of thought.

The Old Educational School of Thought

This school of thought is motivated by instructional purposes and approximating syntax to its students. Several figures have represented this school of thought since Khalaf Al-Ahmar's (180H) "muqadema fi alnahw"⁽⁸⁾. Some of the aforementioned figures are: Al-Akhfash Al-Awsat (215H), Abu Mohammad Al-Yazidi (202 H), AlKisa'a (189H), Hisham Bin Mo'awiah (209 H), Abu Omar Al-Jarmi (225 H), Tha'lab (291H), Al-Mufadhal bin Salama, Abu Musa Al-Hamed (305H), Ibn Kisan (299 H), Ibn Shuqair (317H) and Niftawaih's (323H) Summaries in syntax, Abu Ja'far Alnahas Al-Masri's (337H) "Al tuffaha", Ibn Khalawaih's (370H) "Mukhtasar al

zajaji",⁽⁹⁾ and Ibn Aqil's (769H) "Sharh al alfyaa", have guided students to its purpose, since he tended to clarify and define it⁽¹⁰⁾.

In his introduction of "Al kitab", Ibn Dosturawaih (347H) describes his own work as "A briefed composition, with a reduced number of sections, and shortened chapters regarding the opinion on clarifying the hidden and completing the truth, and moving from the weak to strong speech."⁽¹¹⁾ And Abu Ali Al-Farisi's (377 H) "Al awaleat fi alnhw", Ali Bin Issa Al-Rommani's (384H) "al Ejaz fi Alnhw", Ibn Babshath's (469H) "Muqadema", and Ibn Jenni's (392H) "Alluma' fi Al Arabia" benefitted from his former experience in grammar purification, section ordering, evidence statement, grammatical term stability, and statement obviousness and accuracy, since he aimed to compose a clear book on syntax which tailors to the need of beginners and students of Arabic, and Ibn Jenni's paper is confined to presenting the substantive problems in a simplified way. Whilst authoring the book, he avoided scholars' opinions, and took the side that what he thought was the right interpretation⁽¹²⁾.

Regarding his work "ALedah fi alnhw", Abu Qasem Al-Zajaji's (337H) stated that, "...this is a book that we have authored on syntax causes in particular, where we also mention its secrets, and unveil its ambiguity without principles because books written so far about principles are many. However, I did not see a single book that only specializes on syntax causes." It focuses on the concerns of beginners, approximates syntax from its purposes, its method isn't based on lengthening but rather on shortening, leaving disagreement, and choosing the best side in the issue⁽¹³⁾.

Abd ALqaher Al-Jarjani's (471H) "Aljuml", Al-Zamakhshari's (538H) "Alunmuthaj", and Al-Jawaliqi Al-Bagdadi has a summary, Ibn Berri Al-Masri's (582H) "Muqadema fi Alnhw", Al-Mutarazi Al-Irani's (610H) "Almisbah", Abd Al-Lateef Al-Bagdadi's (628H) "Qabsat al ajlan fi Alnhw", Ibn Al-Hajeb's (646H) a brief introduction, Ibn Malek Al-Andalusi's (672H) "Udat allafid fi mbade' alnhw", and Al-Baydawi's (716H) "Lub allubab fi ilm ali'rab"⁽¹⁴⁾. Ibn Abi Al-Rabee' Al-Ishbeli's (688H) "al mulakhas fi alnhw", Ibn Osfour's (669H) "Almuqrab wa sharhuhi fi alnhw", and three illustrations for Al-Zajaji's sentences. Besides, Ibn Al-Dha'e's (680H) comment on Sebawaih's book, and an illustration of the book, Ibn Kharouf's (609H) "Tanqeeh alalbab fi sharh gwamed alkitab", Abu Ali Al-shloben (645H) "Al tawtea' fi alnhw", plus an illustration of Sebawaih's book, and Abu Qasem Al-Saffar's (630H) an incomplete illustration of the book⁽¹⁵⁾ Abu Al-Abbas Ahmad bin Wallad Al-Masri (332H) has an ideology in attacking interpretation and expectation in syntax without

considering analogy and Arabs' opinions⁽¹⁶⁾.

The listing of all aforementioned works to show that facilitating the Arabic syntax was not a new phenomenon and it was the target of the old Arabs. Besides that, they also aimed at clarifying Arabic syntax for non-native speakers of Arabic.

Abu Hayyan Al-Andalosi (745H) has his own ideology which is described in his book "Taqriyb Al Muqarrab fi Al Nahw", where he states: "and I have collected in these papers of the book its best, and determined rules, which makes it easy for memorizing, reachable, without the need of explanations or examples; it improves (the level of) beginners and advanced in Arabic⁽¹⁷⁾.

Most of the scholars of Arabic language and syntax also tried to facilitate the syntax, because they were aware of the importance and the need for facilitating Arabic syntax. Some of those important scholars and their works are: Al-Zubaidi's (379H) "Alwadeh", Ibn Siraj's (316H) has a Summary,⁽¹⁸⁾ Ibn Aajroum Al-Mughrabi's (723H) "AL muqadema alajroumea fi mabade' ilm al arabia", Ibn Hisham Al-Masri's (723H) "AL irab an qwaid al irab", and Khaled Al-Azhari's (905H) "Almuqadema al azharea"⁽¹⁹⁾.

This listing for historical scholar figures shows, as mentioned before, that the goal of composing the majority of it was for educational purposes. Therefore, there were some scholars, who tended to provide introductions and summaries, and there was a call in some of those scholarly works to eliminate some of the theory's principles as there had been in Ibn Mudha's call.

There are some scholars from fields outside Arabic syntax who also called to facilitate and simplify the syntax. For instance, Ibn Khuldoun talked in his Introduction about the syntax, its foundations and the spread of grammatical mistakes. He considered the Arabic syntax to be the most important source of knowledge of Arabic language. As without specifying its purposes, and principles, the origins of the language will remain unclear, and there will be misunderstandings. Ibn Khuldoun also tackled the disagreement between the scholars, which created a challenge for the students of Arabic language, and he mentioned some attempts of facilitating and simplification, such as the attempts by Ibn Malik and Jamal Al-Din Bin Hesham⁽²⁰⁾.

Ibn Hazm Al-Andalusi has a part in this discussion since he stated that syntax knowledge can be attained by practicing and exercising, and not by memorizing and mentioning proofs. He refused second and third causes, and he labeled the research on syntax parts as "diverts from the most important", in vain, "these are trifles", so he called to make syntax educational in the function frame, but details - in his opinion - are beyond the need

of ordinary students but required only for specialists, because they are only one part of the science. The purpose of his call - which came from his virtual ideology, and his analogy through syntax on Islamic doctrine - was only for teaching the language in an easy way⁽²¹⁾.

Abu Al-Ala' Al-Ma'ari stated in his book "Risalat Al Ghufuran" that scholars of Al-Basra had extrapolated from the syntax, and thus, he disagreed with them. Since he does not agree with interpretation and analogy, his ideology is revealed by his discussion with Arabic syntax scholars, his disagreement with Baghdad's scholars, his discussions with other scholars and his advocacy for their opinions. He declared his own opinion accompanied by a judgment for some of them, just as he said about Abu Ali Al-Farisi: "he is stubbornly objecting against things that are beyond his area of expertise".⁽²²⁾

Followers of the Old Educational School of Thought

Among the proponents of the educational school of thought are:

Refa'a Al'tahtawi (1886 A.D.) authored "Al Tuhfa Al Maktabiyya fi Taqriyb Al Luga Al Arabiyya", Sheikh Ahmad Al-Marsifi (1886 A.D.) wrote "Taqriyb fan Al Arabiyya li Abna' al Medaaris Al Ibtidaiyah", Sheikh Hussein Al-Marsifi's "Al Wasiylah Al Adabiyah ila Uloom Al Arabiyya", Hafni Nasef's "Qawaid al Luga Al Arabiyya li Talamiyd Al Madaaris al Tanawiyyah", Al-Shartuni's "Mabadi' al Arabiyyah"⁽²³⁾ and Jabr Dhawmat (1909 A.D.) authored "Al Hawatir Al Irab fi Al Nahu wa Al Irab"⁽²⁴⁾. However, Sheikh Mustafa Al-Ghalayyni observed that it was absolutely necessary to author a new generation of books in Arabic language which have an easy style, clear meanings, that will also facilitate understanding Arabic syntax, and save teachers the hard work. Thus "Jami' Al Durus Al Arabiyya".⁽²⁵⁾

Other important scholars and their works within the educational school of thought are: Ibrahim Mustafa and Ahmad Baraneq's "Takwiyn al Jumal", and "Silsilat Kutub Qawaid al Luga Al Arabiya". Yaqub Abd Al-Nabi's "Islah al Nahu" and "Al Nahu Al Jadiyd", Sheikh Mohammad Arafa's "Mushkilat Al Luga Al Arabiya", Abd Al-Aziz Al-Qawsi's "Taysiyr al Nahu", Ali Al-Najdi Nasef's "Min Qadaya al Luga wa Nahu", and Mohammad Eid's "Al Nahu Al Musaffa".⁽²⁶⁾ Moreover, Sa'ed Al-Afgani had his own view on facilitating in his books "Muthakkarat fi Al Nahu Mujaza Shamila", and "Min Hadir Al Luga AL Arabiyya".⁽²⁷⁾

Abbas Hassan, for example presents his own methodology regarding this concept in his book "Al Nahu Al Wafi" where he categorized Arabic syntax according to the levels of learners in a clear way. In addition, he listed clear examples and proofs

from the Quran and poems. He also maintained the grammatical terms in their original way.⁽²⁸⁾ Shawqi Dhaif took a part in this discussion, as he facilitated Arabic syntax by categorizing it. For example, he eliminated some sections of the syntax, and called for using the vowels only if there was a need for them for clarifying the meaning of the sentence. He re-defined some syntax sections and added some important sections for accuracy. In this approach, he was inspired by Ibn Mudha.⁽²⁹⁾ Furthermore, Ahmad Mukhtar has elaborated on some of the facilitating attempts in his contribution "Al Nahu Al Asasi".⁽³⁰⁾

On the other hand, Tamam Hassan considers his book "Al Luga Al Arabiyya: Ma'naha wa Mabnaha", as he declared "The boldest attempt – after Sebawaih and Abd Al-Qader - to rearrange linguistic ideas. The book unveiled the theories of Arabic language and tried to solve, for the first time, the problems of applying theory to practice. In other words, he matched the phenomena with reality and different levels of meanings."⁽³¹⁾

Abd Al-Wahhab Bakr, Abd Al-Qader Al-Mohri, Al-Tuhami Naqra and Abdullah Bin Olayya have a method in this domain that is clearly declared in their book "Al Nahu Al Arabi min Hilal al Nusus". The book discussed grammar through various texts such as the Quran, poems and proverbs.⁽³²⁾ Hisham Olayyan and Sameeh Abu Mughli authored "Al Marja' Al Sahl fi Qawayid al Nahu al Arabi". This book deals primarily with syntax subjects, considering them as a basis, upon which examples and applications are given. It concludes with exercises and short-answer questions, since grammar, for the authors, is easy and the authors think that some people find it complicated because it had been presented wrongly, and studied through inappropriate methods.⁽³³⁾

Abdo Al-Rajihi and others wrote "Durus fi al Irab", which has the approach of applying grammar on Quran chapters, and on "Al Alfiiyya".⁽³⁴⁾ In addition, Ali Al-Jarem and Mustafa Amin have co-authored "Al Nahu al Waddih fi Qawaid al Luga al Arabiyya" for primary school students.⁽³⁵⁾ "Al Nahu Al Shaffi" by Mahmoud Husni was another attempt in this series beside Mohammad Al-Kassar's "Al Muftah li Taqriyb al Nahw", Mahdi Al-Makhzumi's "Fi al Nahw al Arabi Naqd wa Tawjiyh", and Abd Al-Aleem Ibrahim's "Al Nahw al Wazifiy".⁽³⁶⁾ Nihad Al-Musa, also, has his "blending" approach in which he categorizes grammar by considering the use of language, which results in the basic functional grammar while taking grammar principles of Arabic into consideration. He applied this same methodology in his books "Muqadima fi Elm Taliym al Luga al Arabiyya", "Muthakkara fi Qawayid al Luga al Arabiyya" and others.⁽³⁷⁾

Western School of Education in Arabic Syntax

Advocates of this school have been influenced by recent thinkers in the West, and have been driven by orientalist calls such as: "Willcocks", "Volmer", "Masnon", and "Spitta".⁽³⁸⁾ For the sake of reforming and improving the language on the one hand and protecting it on the other hand, calls continued to alter the language, simplify it and eliminate some of its sections. Furthermore, these calls didn't concentrate on syntax only, but also expanded to contain all sides of language.⁽³⁹⁾

Followers of Western School of Education in Arabic Syntax

Two among the most prominent followers are Jarjas Al-Khuri and Qasem Amin. They advocate eliminating short vowels, as does Amin Al-Kholi in his book "Al Ijtihad fi al Nahw", and Sate' Al-Hosari.⁽⁴⁰⁾ On the other hand, Anis Freha came up with a number of arguments regarding the morphological and syntactical term issues, categorization, controlling the irregulars, and he proposes to falsify the government and binding theory. His calls are clarified in his books "Tabsiyt Qawaid al Arabiyya wa Tabwiybuha ala Asas Mantiqi Jadiyah" and "Nahwa Arabiyya Muyassara". In addition to that, Yousuf Al-Sawda was a flower of this school of thought as well.⁽⁴¹⁾ Abd Al-Aziz Fahmi, Maron Ghusun, Salameh Musa and⁽⁴²⁾ Ahmad Amin's "Mustaqbal Al Adab Al Arabi", Mohammad Kamel Hussein's "Al Luga Al Arabiyya al Mu'asira",⁽⁴³⁾ Tawfiq Al-Hakim, Al-Mazini,⁽⁴⁴⁾ Abd Al-Muta'al Al-Sa'edi's "Al Nahw al Jadiyah", and Taha Hussein also called for facilitating syntax and writing⁽⁴⁵⁾ as did Mahmoud Taimour.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Opponents of Western School of Education in Arabic Syntax

The Western School of Education in Arabic Syntax was opposed by some advocates of Arabic syntax, who considered the previous attempts as an attack on Arabic language. Some of the scholars who defended Arabic from those attacks are Jerji Zaidan, who published a number of articles in "Al Hilal" journal, where he opposed the followers of the Western School of Education in Arabic syntax; as did Al-Yazji in his series of articles entitled "Lugat al Jaraid" as a critique to those attempts.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Among them, Arabic language academies, small associations, individuals and some Westerners (such as Leochester⁽⁴⁸⁾) played an important role in protecting the Arabic language against the followers of the Western School of Education in Arabic syntax, the latter of which aimed at smashing Arabs' cultural and spiritual record.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Conclusion

It is clear from the aforementioned arguments that calling to facilitate syntax became an urgent demand, and the attempts for facilitating syntax have varied and continued until today. Perhaps it is plausible to say that a complete approach in this section has not been declared yet, since most of the attempts so far remained at the individual level. However, syntax nature and language specialty demands an integrated approach, in which efforts unite and continue with clear steps, in order to have effective solutions. This approach has to take into consideration of the human attitude towards language.⁽⁵⁰⁾ It must distinguish between what is stable and what is not, considering the basic features of the language.

"Blacher" says: "We can't understand Arabic language's core and nature, if we ignore the importance of the "Quran", through which Arabic language exceeded the borders of

humanity, because as Islam appeared, Arabic language was no longer an ordinary means for speaking and addressing.⁽⁵¹⁾

Therefore, there is a need for developing a new method of writing in Arabic syntax, which offers the learner a general knowledge of the syntax and a clear explanation of grammar, without tackling with the disagreements of previous schools of thought.⁽⁵²⁾ Nevertheless, we do not call to discard these disagreements because they are strongly related to readings of the Quran, as well as with the linguistic beauty of Arabic. However, it considers the levels of students in studying grammar, as what is appropriate for specialists and advanced students may not be suitable for beginners in Arabic. As Al-Jahez pointed out, a pupil should be offered only that part of the syntax, which bars him from making big mistakes; when he writes, reads and describes. As Ibn Khaldoun has mentioned in his introduction, teaching in general should be done gradually.

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تيسير النحو العربي: مقارنة تاريخية

فاطمة العمري*

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تتبع قضية تيسير النحو العربي، فتعرض لنشأة النحو: دواعيها، ومراحلها، وأصول النظرية. ثم تتناول التيسير: مقصوده، ودواعيه، وتعرض لتصنيف عام للدعوات القائمة في مجاله قديماً وحديثاً، من خلال مدارس تيسير النحو وتعليمه منذ النشأة وحتى العصر الحديث.

الكلمات الدالة: اللغة العربية، نظرية النحو العربي، تيسير تعليم النحو.

* مركز اللغات، الجامعة الأردنية، عمان. تاريخ استلام البحث 2014/2/8، وتاريخ قبوله 2014/7/14.