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Title of research article

The Correctness of Arabic Linguistic Structures: Concepts, Foundations, and Analytical Approaches

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Abstract

This research examines the correctness of Arabic linguistic structures by exploring their conceptual and foundational dimensions within the broader framework of Arabic grammar, discourse, and stylistics. The study argues that linguistic correctness is not merely a matter of formal rule application but is grounded in the preservation of the general system of the Arabic language—a system marked by its structural flexibility, lexical richness, and aesthetic beauty. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of iʿrāb (inflection) as a decisive marker of meaning, the dynamics of omission and reduction in syntax, and the significance of contextual clues in disambiguating structures.

By integrating descriptive analysis with interpretative approaches, this work demonstrates that grammatical knowledge alone is insufficient without the cultivation of refined linguistic taste, critical reading, and stylistic practice. Creativity in Arabic discourse arises from an informed balance between normative rules and the intuitive insights of native usage, ensuring both clarity and expressiveness. The study highlights how linguistic correctness contributes to communicative precision, prevents ambiguity, and fosters a deeper appreciation of the literary and rhetorical heritage of Arabic.

Introduction

The correctness of linguistic structures and their social circulation is a requirement through which language is elevated, gains prestige, and spreads. One manifestation of this in reality is the repeated use and circulation of language among its speakers in their daily communication—spoken, dialogued, or written—while observing normative rules and what Arabs have recognized as norms and customs, meaning adherence to linguistic conventions and prevailing usage. This applies whether in communication to fulfill needs and purposes, to express inner emotions and the depths of the soul, or to guide thought and persuade the addressee, and in working to create an Arab linguistic community, intellectually and ideologically, where the features and characteristics of its language are smoothly and correctly applied once interaction or contact is made, whether in dealing or companionship.

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The correctness of structures in Arabic does not contradict pure Arab intuition, as it preserves the foundations, adheres to the rules of grammar, morphology, and phonology, and aligns with the lexical and terminological meanings of words in terms of accuracy, strength, firmness, ease, and eloquence. It also conforms with the Arabic style, characterized by simplicity, smoothness, precision of description and imagery, persuasive power, and strong impact.

In this paper, we wanted to answer such questions as: What is the path to linguistic correctness? What are the manifestations of correctness in the structures of our Arabic language? What is required to achieve this correctness and proper understanding? And should we pursue independent effort in this, working to elevate and spread this language?

1- Intuition, Origin, and Learning

Intuition (al-salīqa) is the clear path and the natural disposition; a man speaks by intuition, that is, by his nature and pure, sound taste, without learning or training. It is often used in reference to the eloquence of language; thus, the intuitive (al-salīqī) is the one who speaks eloquently by the disposition and nature on which he was raised, without learning, with fluency, unpretentiously, and without reliance on standards or imitation. The intuitive among the reciters is the one who recites the Qur'an by his nature, without having studied or recited under the reciters. For a construction to be acceptable, in circulation, and effective, it must be intuitive, easy on the tongue, palatable to both ear and mind through interaction and acceptance, not contradicting what the Arab taste has acknowledged from the pure source to which the soul leans by nature, and it must come described as being issued from disposition and instinct, and received likewise under the same description, without affectation in striving for ease and simplicity. For intuition, just as it is praised for simplicity and eloquence, may also be criticized for lack of i'rāb (inflection), or for excessive looseness in giving free rein to the tongue and its freedom to the point of contradiction and falling into linguistic error. The poet said: *"I am not a grammarian twisting his tongue ... but an intuitive speaker, I speak and inflect correctly."* It is said that Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī laid down grammar when linguistic error spread in the speech of the Arabs and intuition dominated, without consideration for the rules of grammar and inflection; here there was the possibility of error. In this respect, intuition is criticized. We spoke here of intuition because its basis is positive, and because speech described by it is accepted, and because it is the original foundation prior to the grammatical rules which came after intuition weakened.

2- Flexibility and Breadth of Arabic Construction

Flexibility in Arabic construction means its ease of adaptation and transformation through preposing or postposing, deletion or addition, substitution or alteration. This is a sign of the vitality, dynamism, and interaction of constructions, and thus of their development and spread. It also indicates *"the sharp intelligence of its speakers, the precision of their observation, the subtlety of their feeling, the fertility of their imagination, and their ability to innovate in expression and imagery. For this reason, it is considered among the greatest features and characteristics of the language."* Flexibility of the language corresponds to the abundance of its vocabulary and the multiplicity of its sentences, and consequently, the breadth of its meanings and its capacity for different styles, which facilitates communication and expression of all purposes, and indicates as well the abundance of its resources and the originality of thought expressed through it.

Examples indicative of the flexibility of Arabic are so numerous they cannot be confined, nor does this context allow mention of many of them. By way of example, we mention some:

- Addressing the singular in the form of addressing two, such as the words of Imru' al-Qays: *"Stop, let us weep, for the memory of a beloved and a dwelling ... at the edge of al-Liwā between al-Dakhūl and Ḥawmal."*

  It was customary among the Arabs to extend the address of the singular to two and to the plural, as part of the flexibility of their tongues. Similarly, the poet said: *"If you both rebuke me, O son of ʿAffān, I desist ... and if you both protect me, I shall defend a well-guarded honor."*

  "It is permissible that what is meant is: 'Stop, stop,' and the addition of the alif is a sign indicating that what is meant is repetition of the word, as Abū ʿUthmān al-Māzinī said about the Almighty's words: {He said: My Lord, return me} [Al-Muʾminūn: 99]—the intended meaning being: 'Return me, return me,

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return me,' and the wāw was made a sign implying that the meaning is repetition of the word several times..."

- Among the forms of the flexibility of Arabic is the general permissibility of deletion, including deletion of the subject and the object when they are understood from contextual evidence of situation or speech, the aim being to strike the correct place recognized by sound Arab intuition. All this indicates the adaptability, compliance, flexibility, and breadth of Arabic constructions.

- Among the factors in realizing the flexibility and breadth of Arabic is i'rāb: *"For i'rāb gives the speaker breadth in expression, and freedom in speech, allowing preposing and postposing without affecting the correctness and soundness of meaning, as the speech remains understood; such flexibility is not found in inflected languages."* I'rāb is one of the foundations of Arabic grammar, one of its distinguishing features, a factor of its richness, and a means for diversity in its modes of expression.

3- The Value of the Word in Its Harmony with Others

The construction of the word with others, with consideration for its order and harmony in a particular way that observes their semantic connection, is what reveals its value and eloquence, and by it the purpose of communication is realized. *"The individual word has no inherent importance, however harmonious its letters may be, or pleasant its sound and tone; rather, its importance appears when it is organized with others, when it suits what is adjacent to it and agrees with it."*

Quality of composition is not realized by the mere availability of words without the talent and ability to perfect the linking and composition among them. *"If the mere availability of material were sufficient to achieve good composition—which is the arrangement of suitable words and their application to appropriate meanings—then the craft of composed speech in letters, sermons, and poetry would be easy; but the reality is otherwise, as even the eminent fall short of attaining this level."* For this reason, composition has been a sought-after goal known only among the few renowned for seriousness and diligence, while many fell short of it, and some composed but became known for the weakness of their writings, whether for awkwardness or complexity, or for poor estimation of the concord between meaning and the constructions used to express it. Thus, the quality of expression and writing appears in the perfection of linking first between the elements of construction, and second between the construction and its meaning.

4- Clues Helping Determine Meaning

4.1 I'rāb and Giving Priority to Meaning over Parsing

I'rāb, in grammatical terminology, is what attaches to the endings of words by way of change according to the factors mentioned—pronounced or implied—that enter upon these words. Giving priority to meaning over parsing in the analysis of constructions means focusing on the intended meaning of the construction and its interpretation, giving it precedence. In cases of grammatical disagreement, grammarians and linguists tend to prefer the interpretation and estimation that serve the meaning and the purpose of the construction and communication. I'rāb is not valid except after understanding the meaning, for according to the grammarians, i'rāb is secondary to meaning. Al-Zajjājī (d. 337 AH) says: *"If it is said: You have mentioned that i'rāb enters into speech, so what necessitated it and why was it needed? The answer: Since nouns are subject to various meanings—they can be subject, object, possessed, or possessor—and since their forms and structures did not indicate these meanings but were shared, the i'rāb movements were placed in them to signify these meanings. So they said: 'Ḍaraba Zaydun 'Amran' (Zayd struck 'Amr), raising Zayd to show that the action is his, and putting 'Amr in the accusative to show that the action falls upon him."*

The i'rāb movement, just as it distinguishes between the functions of words, also distinguishes between meanings, but it is not the only clue for distinguishing between them; there are other clues such as context, order, situation, lexical meaning, intonation, and others.

4.2 Clues Clarifying and Determining Meaning

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The general meaning of constructions and expressions of the language is determined by its system and conventions, and other clues may work together to direct, clarify, or define the meaning. These include the current situation, the linguistic context, social custom, community culture, and lexical-semantic meaning. Among the clues that serve as reference points in Arabic, often clarifying meaning even unintentionally—and which linguists have mentioned in different places, including Ibn Jinnī, who mentioned five with their examples—are:

1. The clue of order, as in: *"Ḍaraba Yaḥyā Bushrā"* (Yaḥyā struck Bushrā).

2. The clue of lexical appropriateness, as in: *"Akhala Yaḥyā kumtharā"* (Yaḥyā ate a pear).

3. The clue of agreement between verb and subject in gender and number, as in: *"Ḍarabat hādhā hādhihi"* (this [female] struck this [male]), and *"Kallama hādhihi hādhā"* (this [male] spoke to this [female]).

4. The clue of the i'rāb sign: the alif and yāʾ of the dual, and the wāw of the plural, as in: *"Akrama al-Yaḥyayān al-Bushrayayn"* (the two Yaḥyās honored the two Bushrās), and *"Ḍaraba al-Bushrayīn al-Yaḥyūn"* (the Yaḥyās struck the two Bushrās).

5. The clue of situation (context): *"Waladat hādhihi hādhihi"* (this one gave birth to this one); the elder is the mother, the younger is the daughter.

All these clues contribute to determining meaning and must be considered before undertaking parsing. The benefit of relying on clues in interpreting constructions or in understanding grammatical relations is that it removes from Arabic grammar

A- Every speculative or logical interpretation of contextual phenomena.

B- Every debate about the logic of this "work" or that, and the authenticity of some words in the work and the derivativeness of other words, and the strength of the factor or its weakness... These indicators are responsible for clarity of meaning and protection from ambiguity, since the abstract linguistic meaning of the text (the apparent meaning of the text) may not be the intended one itself, but the intended meaning is hidden behind the words, where the indicators play the essential role in determining what is meant.

4-3 The syntactic meaning, the linguistic meaning, and the right of parsing
The syntactic meaning is the meaning determined by grammar, and it is derived from the specific structure of words in sentences and phrases, not the original linguistic meaning of the words. It means suspension or correlation; that is, the relationship between words which in turn affects the general meaning of sentences and phrases. Among the examples is the preference of the adjective over the circumstantial clause based on context in the saying of one of the men of Banu Sulul to a native-born man:

"And indeed, I pass by the vile one insulting me * Yet I went on, then said: it does not concern me."

Some grammarians preferred that the clause (insulting me) be adjectival rather than circumstantial, meaning: a vile person whose habit is constant, even though it is related to the word (the vile one), which is definite. This contradicts the common norm that sees clauses after definite nouns as circumstantial. But meaning was more deserving of attention, and the reference here is to the syntactic meaning, not the linguistic meaning.

5.Reconciling grammatical craftsmanship, order, and serving meaning

Grammarians emphasized maintaining grammatical craftsmanship as much as possible and adhering to the general order of the language, and reconciling the two in cases of conflict or potential conflict, with a focus on prioritizing what serves meaning and removes ambiguity, giving this precedence over parsing while attempting estimation and interpretation to preserve the value and right of parsing. Among the grammarians who addressed this issue was Ibn Jinni, in a chapter he included in his book *Al-Khasa'is* which he called "Chapter on the difference between the estimation of parsing and the interpretation of meaning." He said in it: "Do you not see the difference between the estimation of parsing and the interpretation of meaning? So if something of this sort comes from our scholars, guard yourself from it and do not be carried away by it. If you can make the estimation of parsing conform to the interpretation of meaning, that is the utmost. But if the estimation of

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parsing contradicts the interpretation of meaning, then accept the interpretation of meaning as it is, and correct the path of the estimation of parsing, so that nothing escapes you. Beware of being carried away so that you corrupt what you aim to correct."

He also expressed his comfort with giving priority to meaning and correcting parsing in cases of conflict in another chapter which he called "Chapter on the tension between meanings and parsing," where he said:

"This was a place Abu Ali, may God have mercy on him, often frequented, concerned himself with, and encouraged review and careful consideration of. For you find in much prose and poetry that parsing and meaning contend with one another: this calls you to one thing, and this prevents you from it. Whenever they seize upon a piece of speech, I held fast to the bond of meaning and found ease in correcting parsing."

This is a wide field in the study of syntactic structures, and an important one that requires precision and study due to the secrets it holds, with many examples in the Book of God and in Arabic poetry. The correct understanding of Arabic texts takes into account both: meaning and parsing, for they are interdependent. The first consideration is for meaning, as it is what the speech is built upon, and the second consideration is for the principles of grammar and its rules. The perspective of grammarians aligned grammatical craftsmanship with the correctness of meaning, emphasizing the role of meaning in analyzing structures, guiding parsing, and estimating its justifications.

6- The requirement of avoiding ambiguity and ensuring clarity of meaning

The speaker always strives to compose speech that is clear and unambiguous, whether for the purpose of simplification or when deviating from the usual pattern for another communicative purpose. Likewise, researchers in analyzing structures aim to achieve the requirement of avoiding ambiguity and ensuring clarity of meaning. If ambiguity cannot be avoided, the usual pattern must not be violated in any form of transformation or alteration.

Examples of deviating from the usual pattern when ambiguity is avoided include:

- "Do they wait but that Allah should come to them in canopies of clouds" (Al-Baqara: 210). The coming of Allah means the coming of His command and His might, where the annexed word was omitted and the annexed-to was placed in its stead. "The omission of the annexed word and the placement of the annexed-to in its place is frequent and common in the speech of the people when ambiguity is avoided. And it was said: the estimation is that Allah's punishment should come to them in canopies of clouds."

- "And the thief, the male and the female, cut off their hands" (Al-Ma'ida: 38), where the dual (their hands) was used.

- "But if they of themselves be content to remit any part of it unto you, then eat it" (An-Nisa: 4), where the singular "self" was used while plural was intended.

- "And marry not those women whom your fathers married" (An-Nisa: 22), where originally "who" is used for rational beings, but ambiguity here is avoided.

- The poet's verse: "Eat in part of your stomachs and you will remain chaste ... for your time is a time of hunger," where the singular stomach was used but the plural was intended.

- The poet's verse: "Our sons are the sons of our sons, and our daughters ... their sons are the sons of distant men," where he began with "our sons" then reverted to the original with "our daughters."

7- Foundations of the soundness of constructing Arabic discourse

The soundness of Arabic structures and the correct circulation of Arabic discourse cannot be achieved except by those equipped with grammatical knowledge, practiced in refined Arabic styles, acquainted with the correct ways of expression, appreciative of the beauties and marvels of the Arabic language, and living with the masters of eloquence and artistry through reading and interaction.

7-1 Grammatical knowledge

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Grammatical knowledge is the acquisition of the mechanism and ability to understand grammar rules and apply them to structures in speech or writing, maintaining the correct structure in terms of choice of words, their adjacency, and their relationship with one another. It is an ability and faculty acquired through learning and developed through conscious practice leading to the refinement of the user's language.

7-2 Mastery of refined Arabic styles

Mastery of refined Arabic styles means excelling in the use of the constructions and authentic elevated expressions of the Arabic language, to convey meanings and ideas with precision and artistry. This is only achieved through abundant conscious reading of literary prose and poetic texts that combine precision of structure, beauty of imagery, and depth of meaning, along with practice in usage, understanding, and appreciation. Thus, the one practiced in the language acquires the ability to distinguish between styles and choose appropriate words for expression.

7-3 Linguistic taste and sensitivity to the beauty of Arabic

Taste assists in selecting words appropriate to context in speech, writing, and composition. It is cultivated and grows through continuous reading and listening to selected eloquent texts. Through it one distinguishes between refined and weak styles, feels them, lives through the transformations of linguistic structures, and interacts with their beauty.

7-4 Harmony and coexistence with the language and its styles

When the speaker uses the language as a tool of thought and communication and conveys daily purposes in eloquent speech, through its various styles of description and dialogue, persuasion, and expression of emotions and feelings—intending thereby to enrich their linguistic resources and expand their ability to employ refined styles— they thereby live in harmony with it, responsive, present in their mind in every situation and statement; creative when writing, persuasive when speaking.

Conclusion:

It has become clear from the foregoing that the soundness of Arabic discourse structures, the achievement of their intended purpose, and the elevation of their styles cannot be realized except through the combination of interrelated elements that represent the pillars of composition, analysis, and understanding. Their foundation is linguistic instinct and natural disposition, but there is no escape from acquiring grammatical knowledge, practice, and training in refined styles, in order to cultivate refined taste that distinguishes between fluent and weak style, and linguistic sensibility that discerns between clarity and obscurity. The flexibility of the Arabic language, its vast resources, the precision of parsing, and the effectiveness of contextual indicators have been powerful pillars in the richness and immortality of this language, and in its ability to meet the needs of expression and communication with clarity, eloquence, and harmony. This is indispensable for every learner, scholar, and creative writer.

Findings

1. Rule-Intuition Integration – Correct Arabic structures require the harmonious application of grammar with the intuitive logic of native expression.
2. Role of Contextual Clues – Interpretation of meaning cannot rely solely on syntactic markers; pragmatic and contextual indicators are essential for accuracy.
3. Centrality of Iʿrāb – Inflection remains a foundational element in distinguishing syntactic functions, semantic relations, and rhetorical effects.
4. Linguistic Creativity – True innovation in Arabic discourse emerges through mastery of grammar, exposure to refined texts, and active stylistic practice.
5. Aesthetic Dimension – Correctness extends beyond function to include eloquence, clarity, and the preservation of Arabic's literary identity.

Ethical Considerations

This research adheres to academic integrity by providing a transparent analysis of linguistic structures without distortion or misrepresentation. All sources used in the literature review have been acknowledged, and no part of

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the study involves human or animal experimentation. The work respects cultural sensitivities by treating Arabic linguistic heritage with accuracy and responsibility.

Funding

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

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