00 - Introduction

Learning nahw analytically

1. **The elevator pitch**

Say you are reviewing نحو rules or are teaching it, or perhaps even learning it, be you a native Arabic speaker or non-native. Below are two versions describing the same نحو concepts. Read each for the same amount of time.

In this corner…

A standard reference book focused on precise scholarly definitions with all related information and minutiae for you to read, understand and digest.

<div dir="rtl">

العدد

هو من حيث التذكير والتأنيث على ثلاثة أقسام وهي:

الأول: يطابق المعدود تذكيرا وتأنيثا، وهو: (الواحد والاثنان).

تقول: هذا رجلٌ واحدٌ، وهذه امرأةٌ واحدةٌ، وهذانِ رجلانِ اثنانِ، وهاتانِ امرأتانِ اثنتانِ.

الثاني: يخالف المعدود فيذكر مع المؤنث، ويؤنث مع المذكر، وهو: (الثلاثة إلى التسعة).

تقول: اشتريتُ خمسةَ كتبٍ وخمس مجلاتٍ، فالكتب جمع كتاب وهو مذكر فوجب أن نؤنث العدد فنقول: خمسة، والمجلات جمع مجلة وهي مؤنثة فوجب أن يذكر العدد فنقول: خمس.

الثالث: له حالتان، وهو العشرة:

1 – إن استعملت مركبة مع عدد آخر طابقت المعدود.

تقول: قضيتُ في هذا المكانِ خمسةَ عشرَ يومًا، فالجزء الأول خمسة حكمه المخالفة كما سبق، واليوم مذكر فوجب تأنيثه، وأما الجزء الثاني عشر فيطابق المعدود وهو اليوم.

وتقول: سهرتُ خمسَ عشرة ليلةً، فالجزء الأول خمس مذكر لأن المعدود وهو ليلة مؤنث، والجزء الثاني ليلة مؤنث لأن المعدود مؤنث، أي أن الجزء الأول حكمه المخالفة، والثاني حكمه المطابقة.

2 – إن استعملت مفردة كانت مخالفة للمعدود. تقول: عندي عشرةُ كتبٍ، عشرُ مجلاتٍ.

</div>

And in the other corner…

The core concepts laid out with just enough hints for you to analyze and infer the rules yourself.
For this version, read in this order: Heading → **Observe** column. Ignore the Grey text until you figure out the rule yourself.
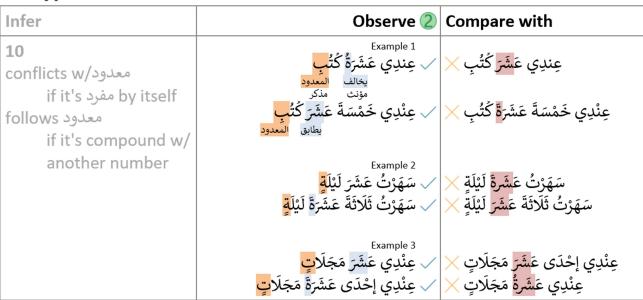
Is the gender of عدد based on معدود ؟

1. Type 1

Infer	Observe ①	
1, 2 follow the معدود	هذانِ رجلانِ اثنانِ ✓	هذا رجلٌ واحدٌ ✓ يطابق معدود
	وهاتانِ امرأتانِ اثنتانِ ✓	هذه امرأةٌ واحدةٌ ✓

2. Type 2

Infer	Observe ①
3-9 conflict with معدود	✓ اشْتَرَيْتُ ثَلَاثَةَ كُتُبٍ وَثَلَاثَ مَجَلَاتٍ المعدود يخالف مذكر ... ✓ اشْتَرَيْتُ خَمْسَةَ كُتُبٍ وَخَمْسَ مَجَلَاتٍ ... ✓ اشْتَرَيْتُ تِسْعَةَ كُتُبٍ وَتِسْعَ مَجَلَاتٍ

3. Type 3

Infer	Observe ②	Compare with
10 conflicts w/معدود if it's مفرد by itself follows معدود if it's compound w/ another number	**Example 1** ✓ عِنْدِي عَشَرَةُ كُتُبٍ يخالف المعدود مؤنث مذكر ✓ عِنْدِي خَمْسَةَ عَشَرَ كُتُبٍ يطابق المعدود	✗ عِنْدِي عَشَرَ كُتُبٍ ✗ عِنْدِي خَمْسَةَ عَشَرَةَ كُتُبٍ
	Example 2 ✓ سَهَرْتُ عَشَرَ لَيْلَةٍ ✓ سَهَرْتُ ثَلَاثَةَ عَشَرَةَ لَيْلَةٍ	✗ سَهَرْتُ عَشَرَةَ لَيْلَةٍ ✗ سَهَرْتُ ثَلَاثَةَ عَشَرَ لَيْلَةٍ
	Example 3 ✓ عِنْدِي عَشَرَ مَجَلَاتٍ ✓ عِنْدِي إِحْدَى عَشَرَةَ مَجَلَاتٍ	✗ عِنْدِي إِحْدَى عَشَرَ مَجَلَاتٍ ✗ عِنْدِي عَشَرَةُ مَجَلَاتٍ

Regardless of your Arabic proficiency, which version:
- Is easier to review with?
- Leads to a deeper understanding in the same amount of time?
- Conveys the concept behind the rules quicker?
- Conveys the rule hierarchy?
- Allows easier comparison of rules?

- Is easier to teach with?

2. What these notes can (and cannot) help you achieve

These are based on my experiences as a non-native early-intermediate level student of Arabic and as a teacher, not on empirical proof.

Students

✓	Recalling concepts and examples far quicker	than when using a reference book. This is the primary purpose of these notes.
✓	A deeper understanding of نحو rules	compared to a reference book, given identical time investment
✗	Cover all minutiae of نحو	I am not that qualified. Out of scope. The objective is to convey the core concepts.
✗	Providing numerous examples for each case	Out of scope
✓	Learning the rules conceptually	
✗	Learning precise definitions	Use reference books for this
✓	Expose gaps in your knowledge so you can fill them in	because you cannot deduce the rule from examples till you know the underlying concepts
✓	Make it easier to understand a classical sharh afterwards	
✗	Replace classical references	Different purposes, different audiences. Use the right tool for the right job.
✓	Proficiency in recognizing their usage in other texts	when practiced with other texts and examples
✗	Writing or speaking proficiently	as it requires more than just knowing نحو rules

Teachers (untested, expected outcomes)
- ✓ Teach Arabic grammar in a more engaging manner
- ✓ Less time spent structuring content ⇒ more time on delivering content
- ✓ Student-centric ⇒ Less lecturing ⇒ Less draining ⇒ More time for research *wink*

3. What are the prerequisites to using these notes?

A. For self learners

Note The primary purpose of these notes is for reviewing what you have already learnt or to be taught by someone. However, if you meet the below prerequisites, then you can likely self learn the nahw rules:

1. You know your sarf tables or can at least recognize sing, dual and plurals in most forms.
2. You know إعراب and its various types: فتحة، ضمة، كسرة، ، الألف، الياء، الواو etc.
3. You know basic roles in a sentence: فعل، فاعل، مفعول، مبتدأ، خبر
4. You are able to parse <u>basic</u> Arabic sentences into their constituent parts. مبتدأ، خبر، فاعل، مفعول معمول، حال etc. These are only mentioned where a rule cannot be deduced otherwise.
5. You have a solid beginner vocabulary. Difficult sentences are translated.

B. For teachers (untested, expected)
1. The fewer the above pre-requisites that students have met, the greater the teacher's focus and time

spent on background content than on grammar-related deductions and explanations.
2. Either way, students will be compelled to fill gaps in understanding as they learn new material.

4. What's the reading order for a table?

Read Table heading → Study the **Observe** columns and hints → Try deducing rules yourself → Check against Infer column

1. When to use singular form of فعل؟

Infer	Observe ①	Observe
Regardless of فاعل being sing, dual or plural	✓ حضرَ الرجلُ	✓ قامتْ هندُ
1. If فاعل is مذكر ⇐ فعل is مفرد مذكر	✓ حضرَ الرجلان	✓ قامتْ الهِنْدان
2. If فاعل is مؤنث ⇐ فعل is مفرد مؤنث	✓ حضرَ الرجالُ	✓ قامتْ الهِنْدَاتُ
	✗ حضرا الرجلان	✗ قامَتَا الهِنْدان
	✗ حضروا الرجالُ	✗ قُمْنَ الهِنْداتُ
	✓ يَحْضُرُ الرجالُ	✓ تَقومُ الهِنْدَاتُ

1. Table heading - indicates the topic addressed and is vital to know what patterns you should focus on.
2. **Observe** columns, its examples and hints - Analyze these without looking at Infer. How to analyze **Observe** is explained in the next section.
3. Deduce as much as possible of a rule using the examples and the provided hints.
4. Infer column should be used to check your inferences and when reviewing

Activity Now try this out on the above table. It's one of the simplest ones.

REMEMBER! Focus first on Table heading and **Observe** column, not Infer column.

5. How do I 'read' the examples and hints to infer rules?

In short, by analyzing **patterns** in the examples and with assistance from the provided **hints**.

A. What kind of patterns in the examples?

Remember! First study the table heading. This is vital to know what patterns you should focus on:
   a. What is the form of a particular word category? (e.g. فَاعِل أو مُكَرم for a doer)
   b. What are the specific conditions of a word that causes a rule to activate?
      i. Its gender or number? مذكر، مؤنث، مفرد، جمع
      ii. Its definiteness? معرفة، نكرة، إضافة
      iii. Its role? مبتدأ، خبر، فاعل، مفعول، حال etc.
      iv. Simple or compound? مفرد، مركب
      v. Is the word being brought forward or delayed, or assumed?

Naturally, there are far too many patterns in any sentence. This is why hints are used to direct you in the right direction.

B. Types of hints

i. Indicating usage allowance, preference, and prohibition

Observe the icons in the table below.
   a. **Type 1** is used for a row of examples if only correct/incorrect usage exists for them. Example:

See اسم الفعل

b. **Type 2** is now self-explanatory. Example: See اسم الفاعل مؤنث

Type 1	Type 2
✓ Correct usage	✓ Preferred
	✓ Not preferred
✗ Incorrect usage	✗ Incorrect

Providing correct and incorrect usages so you can infer the rule is an oft-used technique in these notes.

ii. Highlighting

To draw your attention to a key pattern in the examples that cause the rule, highlighting is used to indicate correct patterns or incorrect usages.

a. Example: what can be a فاعل

iii. Multiple patterns

Sometimes, there are multiple patterns to compare and contrast in a table. In such a case, Pattern 1 and Pattern 2 will use different colors. If they occur elsewhere in the row, your attention will be called to Pattern 1, and to Pattern 2, so you can compare across them.

a. Example: See اسم التفضيل on whether it should always be مفرد مذكر.

Note All highlight colors are color-blind safe and photocopy-friendly (i.e. you can differentiate between them in B&W, so color printing is not necessary).

iv. Indicating order of words

Notations are sometimes used if a rule requires it. Observe the **Notation** columns and try to infer what each notation means.

هَلْ زيدٌ قام أبوهُ

Meaning	Notation	Notation	Meaning	Notation	Meaning
هَلْ زَيدٌ come together	هَلْ + زَيدٌ	هَلْ ...	هَلْ begins sentence	∴	Because
زَيدٌ comes after هَلْ	هَلْ ↶ زَيدٌ	... هَلْ	does not begin it	∵	Therefore
زَيدٌ comes before قامَ	زَيدٌ ↷ قامَ	هَلْ ... زيدٌ	هَلْ and قامَ are not consecutive	⇐	Implies
They are equivalent	زَيدٌ قامَ أبوهُ ⇔ قامَ أبو زَيدٍ	زيدٌ ☞ هُ	هُ points to زيدٌ		

The above are building blocks and can be combined.

Explanation	Condition
هَلْ starts sentence, followed by زيدٌ. They are consecutive	✓ هَلْ ... | هَلْ ↶ زيدٌ
	✗ هَلْ ... زيدٌ

Keep in mind that the notation is just a hint to recall a rule. Neither does it explicate the rule in its entirety, nor is it formal logic.

v. Indicating assumed words

Assumed words are grey amongst black text.

a. Example: مَنْ أنتَ؟ أنا زيدٌ

b. For more examples, see حذف المبتدأ وجوبًا

vi. Difficulty level of rule extraction

Difficulty level
① Low   ② Med   ③ High

Each table will have one of the above icons to indicate how difficult a rule is to extract. Note the one in the table in Section 6.

1. When to use singular form of فعل؟		
Infer	Observe ①	Observe
Regardless of فاعل being sing, dual or plural	✓ حضرَ الرجلُ	✓ قامتْ هندُ
...	...	...

Difficulty depends on two factors:
1. Your background knowledge and skill
2. Limitations of the notation system to convey the complete rule (in which case, it's not your fault if you don't get it).

Use it as a barometer to either skip it, or pat yourself on the back if you get it right. Also, please remember that this is a work in progress, so the assigned difficulty level may be inaccurate.

6. What are the limitations of this system?

1. The Grey text is a mix of English and Arabic as it's geared towards English speakers with basic Arabic grammar skills. Another version with full Arabic will be made once these notes are complete, إن شاء الله

2. Not all rules, or all parts of a rule can always be inferred. This can happen
   a. In complex cases
   b. Due to lack of critical thinking effort by the student
   c. Limitations of this system to convey all aspects of a rule

However, with constant revision, recalling the rules by simply glancing at the examples becomes easier.

3. In some examples, I have intentionally not added information that fully explicate a rule. This is a conscious choice I made in case:
   a. It clutters the text
   b. It answers other aspects of a rule that you must deduce yourself

4. The system has difficulty expressing miscellaneous information. Examples include:
   a. How many مفعول do different variations of a فعل take?
   b. لا مشبهة بليس is used only in poetry, not prose
   c. It is a خبر only when attached to a مبتدأ.
   d. Misc information about اسم الفعل

7. Great! Which page should I begin with?

The below topics are arranged from simple to complex (in terms of using the system). Work your way through them sequentially to ease into using these notes:

31 - الفاعل

45 - اسم الفاعل

47 - اسم التفضيل

42 - المستثنى

8. I can recall the rules fairly well by looking at examples. What next?

(This below is just a theory. I will update this when I try it myself. - 8/13/22)

Try recalling the rules after

1. Removing all text highlighting
2. Ignoring small text that provides hints
3. Leaving only the correct/incorrect usage icons

9. What are your references?

1. All content is from Baghdadi's نيل المنى and Ibn Hisham's شرح قطر الندى.
2. The Table of Contents is based on نيل المنى.
3. The examples are primarily from نيل المنى, some from شرح قطر الندى.
4. In some examples, I have changed proper names to uniformize the examples for ease of understanding (عمر to زيد, etc.).
5. In some scenarios, I have filled in implied examples (for gender, count, etc.) for complete explication.
6. I only created 3 examples from my own self in Table 15.4 (last row).

10. Why make these notes?

It came about while reviewing my Arabic grammar notes in the summer of 2022. Doing so rapidly was proving near impossible. I had already tried multiple ways of note-taking for نحو over the past decade, but none were to my satisfaction.

Remember the elevator pitch I mentioned above? While studying Baghdadi's نيل المنى and Ibn Hisham's شرح قطر الندى, I realized they are wonderful reference books, but inefficient for internalizing the نحو rules and, more importantly, when reviewing them.

These are the issues I found from a learner and reviewer's perspective and the mechanism I have used to address them in my notes:

Issue	How it is addressed in these notes
Issue 1 A 'definitions and rules primary, and examples secondary' approach. This spoon-feeds rules and lifts much of the burden of rule analysis and comprehension from the reader. This is great for reference, but inefficient when learning.	It is well known through research that arrival at answers through analysis (a higher-level cognitive act) leads to a deeper, quicker understanding and better retainment, as opposed to simply reading an answer (which requires simply understanding, a lower-level cognitive task). These notes seek to implement this paradigm using the following strategies 1. Icons to indicate examples of usages that are allowed, incorrect, preferred and not-preferred. 2. Using minimal commentary in complex examples. 3. Highlighting words and/or إعراب to indicate critical patterns that cause a rule. 4. Ordering examples (correct and otherwise) in a specific

	[sequence](#) such that learners can deduce the rule.
Issue 2 The 'know how to read Arabic to learn نحو' problem which is a somewhat chicken-and-egg problem.	This is only partially resolved in these notes. The symbolic design with minimal verbal commentary makes it much more language-agnostic than other learning mechanisms. It relies on the student's critical thinking skills than their Arabic (or English) reading skills.
Issue 3 A 'wall of text' approach devoid of appropriate sectioning and layout that is time-consuming to parse rules, to compare and contrast related rules, and to visualize their hierarchy.	1. Laying out related examples [side-by-side](#) such that learners can compare & contrast the rules. 2. Aligning [child or related rules](#) so they are easier to parse. 3. Using a [flowchart scheme](#) wherever possible. The layout helps students focus on the key task of analyzing the rules rather than waste time and effort trying to parse a wall of text and deciphering its structure.
Issue 4 It is also time consuming to review using these books due to the wall of text. My notes from them were just another wall of text with slightly more structure.	The layout acts as a quick reference mechanism that, again, lets students focus on quickly reviewing what's important - the rules themselves. Adequate space is provided around a page for a student to further annotate it.
From a teaching perspective: **Issue 5** Teaching Arabic becomes lecture-centric (i.e. talking head format) which goes back to Issue 1 (listening and understanding), instead of a more engaging system (student-centric analyzing and inferring).	Explaining how to teach with these notes is out of scope. Suffice to say that the instructor now guides more than lectures. He/she engage students' critical thinking and application skills instead of just being a talking head. It leads to more effective teaching as they can isolate gaps in a student's understanding far quicker, something impossible in a lecture format.

As I created the notes, I realized that they were worth sharing with others, and also extremely good for teaching, so I added many features such that it's accessible to the largest possible group. I began in Aug 2022, and بِفَضْلِ اللهِ prepared 19 of the 52 chapters by its end.

11. Why would this work? You are not an Arabic scholar/teacher!

- Spot on, I am not an Arabic scholar! I am just an early-intermediate Arabic student, so definitely expect errors in the notes. [Please contact me in this case](#). Likewise, for suggestions on the notes' design.
- I am, however, a university professor. I have been teaching at the university level since 2005 so I have some experience in designing courses, teaching complex topics, and writing and reviewing scholarly papers.
- I designed these notes based on my experience as a teacher and as an Arabic student to address the issues I have mentioned. These notes work for me, and perhaps they will benefit you.

12. What's the roadmap of features you plan to add?

Version	Planned features
v0.00 - v0.54	Add all chapters of نيل المنى
>v0.54	Port to Word for printability

	Full Arabic text 'Advanced examples' companion pages

13. How can I help?

Email me if interested. For now, I can use help with
1. The above roadmap features
2. Proofreading rules and translations

14. Acknowledgements

Restricting myself to those who helped with reading and comprehending Arabic, beginning with the most recent:

1. My teachers at Al Salam Institute and their excellent Alimiyyah program in which I studied the reference books used here and much more. This would not be possible without the efforts each of my أساتيذ - Tariq Pandor, Sabih Khwaja, Ahmad al-Barouni, Shafiur Rahman, Shahanaz Begum, Usaama al-Azami, and Umer Khan.
   Special shoutout to Ustadh Abdul Hakim for his infinite patience and for answering my questions, no matter how many I would lob at him.
2. Mufti Yusuf Mullan and his 2 year online Arabic program. Hands down, the best program to learn to parse Arabic grammar that I have come across.
3. Ustadh Ahmed bin Mahfooz who taught selflessly for years, come rain or shine, seeking no remuneration for his tremendous efforts.

As for this project: my wife who functioned as my advisor and test subject to refine the system, to say nothing of her patience with an egghead academic.

To each I owe what no words can describe, nor actions suffice, nor do justice. I pray that your reward is with the One who rewards بغير حساب.

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Page	https://github.com/zahidsyed/learning-nahw-analytically