READE

Learning nahw analytically

1. The elevator pitch

Say you are trying to learn نحو rules or reviewing them, 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. For the second version, focus simply on the **Observe** column.

<div dir="rtl">

الفاعل

الفاعل: اسمٌ أو شِبْهُهُ أُسنِدَ إليهِ فعلٌ أو شِبْهُهُ متقدمٌ تامٌّ مبنيٌّ للمعلومِ.

فقولنا: (اسمٌ أو شِبْهُهُ) أي سواء أكانَ الفاعل اسما صريحا، أو مؤولا به، مثال الصريح: قامَ زيدٌ، ومثال المؤول: يجبُ أنْ تجتهدَ، فإنَ فاعل يجبُ هو المصدر المؤول مِن أنْ المصدرية والفعل، والتقدير: يجبُ اجتهادُكَ.

وقولنا: (أُسنِدَ إليهِ فعلٌ أو شِبْهُهُ) أي سواء أكان المسند للفاعل فعلا صريحا، أو كان بمعناه، مثال الصريح: قامَ زيدٌ، ومثال المؤول: زيدٌ قائمٌ أبوهُ، فأبوه فاعل قائم الذي هو اسم فاعل وهو بمعنى يقوم، ومثله كل اسم يعمل عمل الفعل، مثل: هيهاتَ الرجوعُ، فالرجوع فاعل هيهات الذي هو اسم فعل بمعنى بَعُدَ.

وقولنا: (متقدمٌ) أي أنه لا بد أن يكون الفعل متقدما على الفاعل، فإن قلتَ في قامَ زيدٌ: زيدٌ قامَ، فزيدٌ: مبتدأ، وقامَ: فعل ماض وفاعله مستتر تقديره هو يعود على زيد، والجملة من الفعل والفاعل المستتر في محل رفع خبر.

وقولنا: (تامٌّ) فلو كانَ ناقصا مثل: كانَ الرجلُ نائمًا، كانَ الرجلُ اسما لكانَ لا فاعلا.

وقولنا: (مبنيٌّ للمعلومِ) فلو كان مبنيا للمجهول مثل: ضُرِبَ اللصُّ، كانَ اللصُّ نائبا عن الفاعل لا فاعلا.

واعلم أن الفاعل قد يكون محدثا للفعل مثل: قامَ زيدٌ، وقد يكون قائما به مثل: ماتَ زيدٌ، فإن الموتَ حل بزيدٍ ولم يصدر منه.

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1. What can (and cannot be) a فاعل؟

Definition	Infer	Observe ①
اسمٌ أو شِبْهُهُ...	1. فاعل can be: a. صريح: i.e. an اسم ... b. ...or اسم مؤول	**الصريح** ✓ قامَ **زيدٌ** **المؤول** ✓ يجبُ **أَنْ تَجْتَهِدَ** = يجبُ اجتهادُك
...مبنيٌّ للمعلومِ	2. فاعل is not a نائب الفاعل	✗ ضُرِبَ **زَيدٌ**
...تامٌّ	3. كانَ زيدٌ اسما لكنّ لا فاعلا	✗ كانَ **زيدٌ** نائمًا Sentence is correct but زيد is not فاعل

2. What can govern the فاعل؟ i.e. be المسند للفاعل

Definition	Infer	Observe ①
...أَسنِدَ إليهِ فعلٌ أو شِبْهُهُ...	4. It (المسند للفاعل) can be: a. فعل صريح or b. Those that act فعل مؤول: like فعل	**الصريح** ✓ **قامَ** زيدٌ **المؤول** ✓ **هيهاتَ** الرجوعُ = بَعُدَ ✓ زيدٌ **قائمٌ** أبوه = يَقُومُ

Regardless of your Arabic proficiency, which version:
- 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 review with?
- 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 and a teacher, not on empirical proof.

Students

✓ 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.

✓ Learning them conceptually

✗ Learning precise definitions — Use reference books for this

✓ Recalling concepts and examples far quicker — than when using a reference book

✗ Providing numerous examples for each case — Out of scope

✓ Expose gaps in your knowledge so you can — because you cannot deduce the

fill them in	rule from examples till you know the core underlying concepts

✓ Make it easier to understand a classical sharh afterwards

✓ 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 outcome)
✓ 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. Can I self learn with these notes?
If you meet the below prerequisites, then yes, you can self learn. Those who lack in certain areas may struggle in the beginning or require someone to explain it.

4. What are the prerequisites to using these notes?
A. For self learners
I assumed you already have the following skills and knowledge. Lacking some may necessitate a teacher
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: الواو، الياء، الألف، ، كسرة، ضمة، فتحة etc.
3. You know basic roles in a sentence: خبر، مبتدأ، مفعول، فاعل، فعل
4. You are able to parse <u>basic</u> Arabic sentences into their constituent parts. خبر، مبتدأ، حال، مفعول معمول، فاعل etc. These are only mentioned where a rule cannot be deduced otherwise.
5. You can read with only the necessary diacritical marks present. Full tashkeel will be added in the future إن شاء الله
6. 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.

5. What are your references?
1. I used content from Baghdadi's نيل المنى and Ibn Hisham's شرح قطر الندى.
2. The Table of Contents is based on نيل المنى.
3. Examples are primarily from نيل المنى, some from شرح قطر الندى.
4. In some examples, I have changed the proper names of خبر، مبتدأ، مفعول، فاعل or the

فعل to uniformize the examples for ease of understanding.

6. How to use a table to learn نحو rules?
A. Reading order in a table
When learning, this should be your reading order for every table

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

3. When to use singular form of فعل?

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

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

Activity Now try this out on the above table

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

B. How to deduce rules from the Observe column
i. Analyzing the examples
The **Observe** column provides examples that you should analyze to infer the grammatical rules.

First study the table heading. This hints at what patterns you should focus on. Patterns like:
a. What is the form of a particular word category? (e.g. فَاعِل أو مُكْرِم 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?

ii. Icons 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

iii. Highlighting patterns

To draw your attention to key patterns in the examples that cause the rule, <mark>highlighting</mark> is used.

    a. Example: what can be a فاعل

iv. 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).

v. Indicating order of words

Observe the **Notation** column below to infer what each one means. This is used when order has to be mentioned.

Infer	Notation
فعل and اسم, in this order	✓ اسم 🔁 فعل ✗ فعل 🔁 اسم
اسم must start sentence	✗ 🔁 اسم
فعل and اسم must be consecutive, i.e. no فاصل	✓ اسم فعل ✗ اسم ... فعل

The above are building blocks and can be combined to create compound rules.

Infer	Observe
اسم starts sentence Followed by فعل No فاصل	✓ اسم 🔁 فعل ✗ 🔁 اسم، اسم ... فعل

Keep in mind that the entirety of a rule will not always be explicated, just what's most important.

vi. Indicating assumed words in a sentence

Assumed words are grey amongst black text.

    a. Example: مَنْ أنتَ؟ أنا زيدٌ

b. More: See حذف المبتدأ وجوبًا

Icons indicating difficulty level of rule extraction

Knowledge & skill required

① Low   ② Medium   ③ High

Each table or group of examples will have one of these icons to indicate how difficult a rule is to extract. 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.

C. Revisiting a table for revision

When revisiting a table, I again suggest reading in the same order to improve your understanding.

7. What are the limitations of this system?

1. Currently, it 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

2. In some examples, I have intentionally not added information that fully explicate a rule in case:

a. It clutters the text
b. It answers other aspects of a rule that you must deduce yourself

8. 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 reading them:

31 - الفاعل

45 - اسم الفاعل

47 - اسم التفضيل

42 - المستثنى

21 - المبتدأ والخبر

22 - أنواع تعدد الخبر، تقديم الخبر

23 - حذف المبتدأ

9. 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

10. Why make these notes?

They began so I could strengthen my Arabic grammar and review it rapidly. I tried multiple ways over the past decade, none to my satisfaction.

In 2021, when 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 reviewing them.

Remember the elevator pitch I mentioned above? I felt that the reference books and other Arabic grammar books, in English and in Arabic, classical and modern, have the same issues from a learner's perspective:

1. **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.
2. **Issue 2** The 'know how to read Arabic to learn نحو' problem which is a somewhat chicken-and-egg problem.
3. **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.
4. **Issue 4** It is also time consuming to revise using these books due to the wall of text. My notes from them were just another wall of text with slightly more structure.

From a teaching perspective:

1. **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).

So I worked my way backwards from what issues I wanted to address. 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.

11. How do these notes resolve the above issues?

Warning: This a work in progress

Please tell me what you feel are stumbling blocks when using these notes so I can improve it and others can also benefit from your experience. بارك الله فيكم

A. Issue 1

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.

B. Issue 2

This is only partially addressed in these notes. The notes 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. As such, it is also easier to translate to another language.

C. Issue 3

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.

D. Issue 4

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.

E. Issue 5 (untested, expected)

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.

To summarize, my intent is that by simply analyzing these examples, a student can infer most rules. However, not all rules, or all parts of a rule can always be inferred. This can happen

1. In complex cases
2. Due to lack of critical thinking effort by the student
3. 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.

12. 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.

13. How can I help?

Email me if interested. For now, I can use help with
1. Gathering more examples for a companion page for each chapter
2. Proofreading rules and translations

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