Arabic-Studio.com

Course Code: TAS004A

Basic Arabic Grammar

part a

Saqib Hussain

© Saqib Hussain 2009. All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or otherwise, including photocopying, recording, Internet, or any storage or retrieval system without prior written permission from the copyright holder.

Contents

Introduction....2

1 Definite and Indefinite Nouns, and the Nominal Sentence....3

2 Adjectives and Definiteness Agreement....9

3 Gender....15

4 The Grammatical Cases and Prepositions....22

5 Verbs - The Perfect Tense....30

6 Dual Nouns....38

7 Plural Nouns....43

8 The Detached Pronouns and the Irregular Nominal Sentence....51

9 The Imperfect Tense and Negative Verbal Sentences....56

10 Using verbs and adjectives correctly....61

Introduction

This is the first part of a series of four courses (*Basic Arabic Grammar: Parts A - D*). By the end of the fourth course students should be able to recognise almost all of the grammatical constructions in any Arabic text, and understand the text with the use of an appropriate dictionary.

This first part focuses on correctly forming basic nominal and verbal sentences.

There are ten video lessons which accompany this textbook. Students will also need the following texts to derive the maximum benefit from this course:

- Basic Arabic Grammar: Part A - Answer Key
- Vocabulary Tickets Pack

This grammar course assumes an understanding of the Arabic alphabet and vowel system, and the basic rules for reading and writing Arabic, as covered in the course *Reading and Writing the Arabic Script* (TAS001A).

It is suggested that students work through the ten chapters in this course in the following manner:

1. Read through each chapter;
2. Watch the video lesson for the chapter;
3. Re-read the chapter - you should now have a thorough understanding of the main grammar points covered;
4. Memorise the vocabulary for the chapter using the Vocabulary Tickets Pack;
5. Attempt all of the translation exercises in writing, and check your answers in the Answer Key. Make sure you've understood any mistakes that you made.
6. As you work through the textbook, periodically review the translation exercises from prior chapters until you're able to complete them orally, without hesitation.

Before beginning this grammar course, students should read through the course *Introduction to Learning Arabic* (TAS003A), which explains how the vocabulary lists are organised, and gives a vocabulary memorization technique.

1 Definite and Indefinite Nouns, and the Nominal Sentence

A The Noun in Arabic

Arabic nouns are either *indefinite* or *definite*.

Indefinite nouns take a tanwīn on their final letter, and are generally translated into English using the word 'a':

a boy	وَلَدٌ
a book	كِتَابٌ
a man	رَجُلٌ

To make these nouns definite, we remove the tanwīn and fix the word اَلْ to the beginning of the word. This is generally translated using the word 'the':

the boy	اَلْوَلَدُ
the book	اَلْكِتَابُ
the man	اَلرَّجُلُ

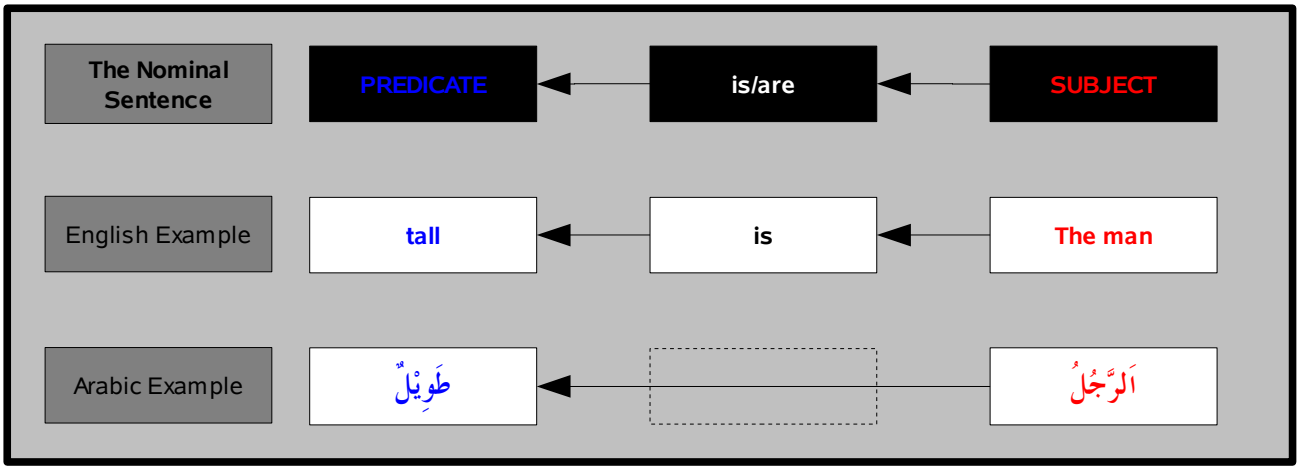
Unlike in English, adjectives in Arabic are also either definite or indefinite, just like the nouns. We'll come back to this point in the next chapter.

B The Nominal Sentence

The most basic sentence in Arabic is called the *nominal sentence*. This is of the form 'X is/are Y', such as 'The boy is tall', or 'The books are big.'

X is usually a definite noun, and is known as the *subject*. Y is usually an indefinite noun or an indefinite adjective, and is called the *predicate*.

This is illustrated below. Note that in Arabic we don't have a word for 'is/are' in the nominal sentence.



Consider the following nominal sentences:

The door is big	اَلْبَابُ كَبِيْرٌ
The man is a teacher	اَلرَّجُلُ أُسْتَاذٌ

C The Singular Detached Pronouns

We can replace the subject of a nominal sentence with a *pronoun*. For example, rather than saying 'The man is tall', we might want to say, 'He is tall'. The Arabic pronouns we use for this replacement are called the *detached pronouns*.

Detached pronouns are fully covered in Chapter 8; only the singular forms are given here. Note there are different words for 'you' in Arabic for addressing a male and a female person. We'll differentiate in English by using *SRm* (singular masculine) and *SRf* (singular feminine) in subscript.

I	أَنَا[1]
you$_{SRm}$	أَنْتَ
you$_{SRf}$	أَنْتِ
he/it[2]	هُوَ
she/it	هِيَ

1 The ا of أَنَا is silent, so it is pronounced as if it were: أَنَ .

2 Note that there is no separate pronoun for 'it'. Instead, we just use هُوَ or هِيَ depending on whether the subject being referred to is masculine or feminine respectively (see Chapter 3).

Consider the following sentences:

You$_{SRm}$ are tall	أَنْتَ طَوِيْلٌ
He is short	هُوَ قَصِيْرٌ
I am young	أَنَا صَغِيْرٌ

D Using 'And' in the Nominal Sentence

The word for 'and' in Arabic is وَ . Its use in the nominal sentence is very intuitive. Consider the following nominal sentences, each of which has more than one predicate:

The door is big and beautiful	اَلْبَابُ كَبِيْرٌ وَ جَمِيْلٌ
The man is a teacher and a student	اَلرَّجُلُ أُسْتَاذٌ وَ طَالِبٌ
The street is long and wide	اَلشَّارِعُ طَوِيْلٌ وَ وَاسِعٌ

'And' can also be used to link two nominal sentences together:

The sea is big	and	the river is small	اَلْبَحْرُ كَبِيْرٌ وَ النَّهْرُ صَغِيْرٌ
The man is a teacher	and	the boy is a student	اَلرَّجُلُ أُسْتَاذٌ وَ الْوَلَدُ طَالِبٌ
The chair is old	and	the door is new	اَلْكُرْسِيُّ قَدِيْمٌ وَ الْبَابُ جَدِيْدٌ

Vocabulary

man | PL	رَجُلٌ | رِجَالٌ
boy, son | PL	وَلَدٌ | اَوْلادٌ
teacher | PL	أُسْتَاذٌ | أَسَاتِذَةٌ
student | 2PLS[3]	طَالِبٌ | طُلاَّبٌ ، طَلَبَةٌ
river | PL	نَهْرٌ | أَنْهَارٌ
sea | 2PLS	بَحْرٌ | بِحَارٌ ، أَبْحُرٌ
book | PL	كِتَابٌ | كُتُبٌ
street | PL	شَارِعٌ | شَوَارِعُ[4]
chair | PL	كُرْسِيٌّ | كَرَاسِيُّ
door; chapter | PL	بَابٌ | أَبْوَابٌ
the Nile	اَلنِّيْلُ
big, great | PL[5]	كَبِيْرٌ | كِبَارٌ
small, young | PL	صَغِيْرٌ | صِغَارٌ
old, ancient | PL	قَدِيْمٌ | قُدَمَاءُ
new | 2PLS	جَدِيْدٌ | جُدَدٌ ، جُدُدٌ
long, tall | PL	طَوِيْلٌ | طِوَالٌ
short | PL	قَصِيْرٌ | قِصَارٌ
beautiful, handsome | PL	جَمِيْلٌ | جِمَالٌ

3 A single Arabic word may have a number of plurals. This is true of a few English words too (e.g. the plurals of *antenna* are *antennas* and *antennae*, the plurals of *fungus* are *fungi* and *funguses*), but is much more common in Arabic.

4 Notice that unlike most of the other words here, شَوَارِعُ doesn't have a tanwīn ending. Such words are called *diptotes*, and will be covered in *Basic Arabic Grammar: Part B*. For now, treat such words like any other, except that they **must never have a tanwīn ending**. You will also encounter other odd-looking plurals in the vocabulary lists (e.g. أَرَاضٍ in Chapter 3 and قُرًى in Chapter 10); these words should of course be learnt, but will be dealt with in *Basic Arabic Grammar: Part B*.

5 Many Arabic adjectives have plurals. This is needed for agreement between nouns and adjectives (see Chapter 7).

broken	مَكْسُوْرٌ
broad, wide	وَاسِعٌ

Translation Exercises

Exercise 1A

١ رَجُلٌ وَ وَلَدٌ.

٢ اَلأُسْتَاذُ وَ الطَّالِبُ.

٣ اَلأُسْتَاذُ جَدِيْدٌ.

٤ أَنَا طَوِيْلٌ.

٥ اَلنِّيْلُ قَدِيْمٌ.

٦ اَلنِّيْلُ نَهْرٌ.

٧ اَلْبَحْرُ كَبِيْرٌ.

٨ اَلْبَابُ قَدِيْمٌ وَ مَكْسُوْرٌ.

٩ اَلْكِتَابُ قَدِيْمٌ وَ جَمِيْلٌ.

١٠ اَلطَّالِبُ صَغِيْرٌ. هُوَ قَصِيْرٌ.

١١ اَلْكُرْسِيُّ طَوِيْلٌ. هُوَ جَمِيْلٌ.

١٢ اَلْوَلَدُ صَغِيْرٌ وَ جَمِيْلٌ.

١٣ اَلْبَابُ كَبِيْرٌ وَ وَاسِعٌ وَ جَمِيْلٌ.

١٤ أَنْتَ رَجُلٌ وَ أَنَا وَلَدٌ.

١٥ اَلشَّارِعُ جَدِيْدٌ وَ قَصِيْرٌ وَ النَّهْرُ قَدِيْمٌ وَ طَوِيْلٌ.

Exercise 1B

1. The river and the sea.
2. A book and a chair.
3. The street is long.
4. He is a boy.

5. The Nile is ancient.
6. I am a student and you$_{SRm}$ are a teacher.
7. The door is tall.
8. The sea is small and beautiful.
9. The door is beautiful. It is big.
10. The boy is young and short.
11. The man is big and the boy is tall.
12. You$_{SRm}$ are tall and he is short.
13. The chair is big, old and broken[6].
14. The teacher is tall and the student is short.
15. The book is small and new, and the chapter is short and beautiful.

6 This should be translated as if it were: 'The chair is big **and** old **and** broken.' As a general rule, in Arabic we use وَ to separate items in a list like the three predicates in this example, where in English we would use commas.

2 Adjectives and Definiteness Agreement

A Adjectival Agreement

There are two things we must remember about adjectives in Arabic:

Firstly, they come *after* the nouns that they describe, unlike in English, where they occur before the nouns. So, whereas in English we would say 'a narrow sword', in Arabic we say 'a sword narrow': سَيْفٌ ضَيِّقٌ .

Secondly, the adjective must *agree* with the noun it describes in four ways:

1. ***Definiteness***

   If the noun is definite, its adjective must also be definite; if the noun is indefinite, its adjective must also be indefinite.

2. *Gender*

   [See Chapter 3]

3. *Case*

   [See Chapter 4]

4. *Number*

   [See Chapters 6 and 7]

This chapter will focus on definiteness agreement. Consider the following phrases, in which the adjectives agree with their nouns in being definite or indefinite:

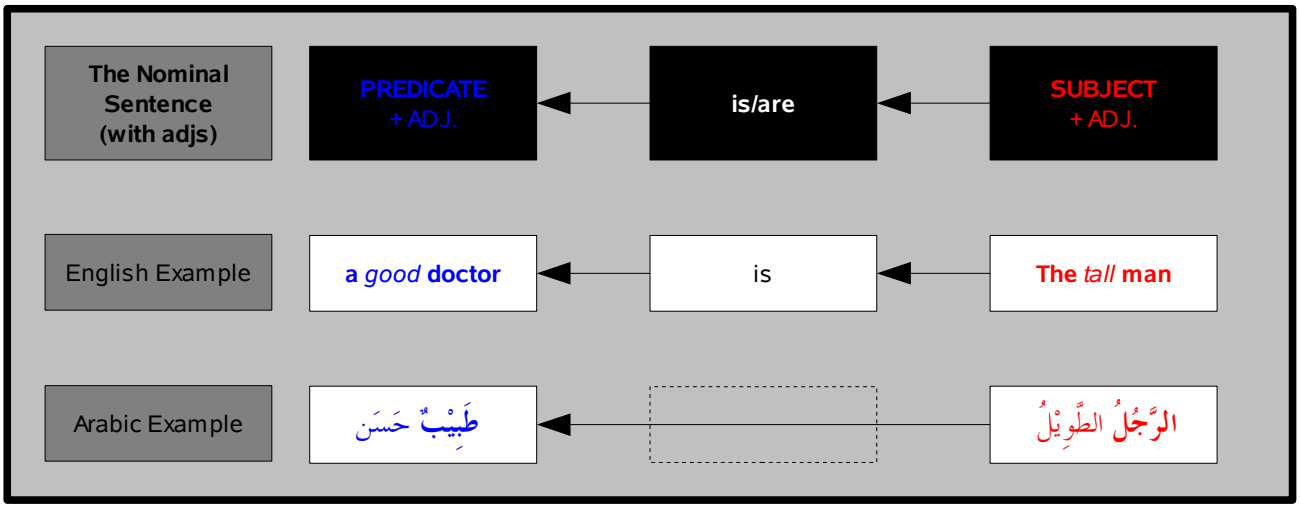
a narrow sword	سَيْفٌ ضَيِّقٌ
the narrow sword	اَلسَّيْفُ الضَّيِّقُ
a clean cup	فِنْجَانٌ نَظِيْفٌ
the clean cup	اَلْفِنْجَانُ النَّظِيْفُ
a narrow, ugly, dirty house	بَيْتٌ ضَيِّقٌ قَبِيْحٌ وَسِخٌ

the narrow, ugly, dirty house	اَلْبَيْتُ الضَّيِّقُ الْقَبِيْحُ الْوَسِخُ

Note that when there is a series of adjectives, as in the last two examples, each one must agree with its noun in the four ways described above.

B Adjectives in the Nominal Sentence

We can now make our nominal sentences more sophisticated, by giving the subject and/or the predicate their own adjectives. This is illustrated below:



Consider the following sentences:

The *narrow* house is **clean**	**اَلْبَيْتُ الضَّيِّقُ نَظِيْفٌ**
The *good* teacher is **short**	**اَلأُسْتَاذُ الْحَسَنُ قَصِيْرٌ**
The *ugly* garden is **hot** and **dirty**	**اَلْبُسْتَانُ الْقَبِيْحُ حَارٌّ وَ وَسِخٌ**

C Forming Questions

By putting the particle هَلْ or the particle أَ in front of a statement, we turn that statement into a question:

You$_{SRm}$ are tall	أَنْتَ طَوِيْلٌ
Are you$_{SRm}$ tall?	هَلْ أَنْتَ طَوِيْلٌ ؟

He is short	هُوَ قَصِيْرٌ
Is he short?	أَ هُوَ قَصِيْرٌ ؟
The narrow house is clean	الْبَيْتُ الضَّيِّقُ نَظِيْفٌ
Is the narrow house clean[7]?	هَلِ الْبَيْتُ الضَّيِّقُ نَظِيْفٌ ؟
The good teacher is short	الأُسْتَاذُ الْحَسَنُ قَصِيْرٌ
Is the good teacher short?	هَلِ الأُسْتَاذُ الْحَسَنُ قَصِيْرٌ ؟

In response to such questions, the word for 'yes' is نَعَمْ , and the word for 'no' is لاَ .

Questions are fully covered in Chapter 19.

7 When we put the particle هَلْ in front of a word which begins with a connecting hamzah, such as اَلْ , we encounter the *double-sukūn problem*: the ل of هَلْ and the ل of اَلْ both have a sukūn, and they are consecutive letters (remember, we're ignoring the connecting hamzah). To make the word pronounceable, we have to give the first ل a kasrah, which turns it into: هَلِ . This is the default way to avoid double-sukūns: change the first sukūn to a kasrah.

Vocabulary

garden | PL	بُسْتَانٌ | بَسَاتِيْنُ
stone | PL	حَجَرٌ | أَحْجَارٌ
house | PL	بَيْتٌ | بُيُوْتٌ
wall | PL	حَائِطٌ | حِيْطَانٌ
pen | PL	قَلَمٌ | أَقْلَامٌ
cup | PL	فِنْجَانٌ | فَنَاجِيْنُ
plate | PL	صَحْنٌ | صُحُوْنٌ
lesson | PL	دَرْسٌ | دُرُوْسٌ
sword | PL	سَيْفٌ | سُيُوْفٌ
clean | PL	نَظِيْفٌ | نُظَفَاءُ
dirty	وَسِخٌ
good, beautiful | PL	حَسَنٌ | حِسَانٌ
bad, wicked	سَيِّئٌ
ugly | PL	قَبِيْحٌ | قِبَاحٌ
hard, strong, powerful [thing]; stern [person] | PL	شَدِيْدٌ | شِدَادٌ
distant | PL	بَعِيْدٌ | بُعَدَاءُ
present | PL	حَاضِرٌ | حُضُوْرٌ
narrow	ضَيِّقٌ
hot	حَارٌّ
dead | PL	مَيِّتٌ | أَمْوَاتٌ

Translation Exercises

Exercise 2A

١ اَلدَّرْسُ الْقَصِيْرُ.

٢ هَلِ الْوَلَدُ حَاضِرٌ؟ نَعَمْ، أَنَا حَاضِرٌ وَ هُوَ حَاضِرٌ.

٣ اَلْقَلَمُ الْقَدِيْمُ.

٤ صَحْنٌ صَغِيْرٌ.

٥ اَلْبُسْتَانُ النَّظِيْفُ بَعِيْدٌ.

٦ هَلِ الْفِنْجَانُ الْحَارُّ مَكْسُوْرٌ؟ نَعَمْ، هُوَ مَكْسُوْرٌ.

٧ اَلْبَيْتُ الْقَبِيْحُ ضَيِّقٌ.

٨ اَلنِّيْلُ نَهْرٌ وَاسِعٌ. أَ هُوَ طَوِيْلٌ؟ نَعَمْ، هُوَ طَوِيْلٌ.

٩ أَ أَنْتَ وَلَدٌ حَسَنٌ؟ نَعَمْ، أَنَا وَلَدٌ حَسَنٌ.

١٠ اَلأُسْتَاذُ رَجُلٌ مَيِّتٌ.

١١ اَلسَّيْفُ الْجَدِيدُ الطَّوِيْلُ وَسِخٌ. أَ هُوَ مَكْسُوْرٌ؟

١٢ اَلْحَجَرُ الْكَبِيْرُ الشَّدِيْدُ جَمِيْلٌ.

١٣ هَلِ الطَّالِبُ وَلَدٌ سَيِّئٌ قَبِيْحٌ؟ لا، هُوَ حَسَنٌ.

١٤ اَلرَّجُلُ أُسْتَاذٌ جَمِيْلٌ طَوِيْلٌ.

١٥ اَلْحَائِطُ الشَّدِيْدُ الْقَدِيْمُ ضَيِّقٌ وَ قَصِيْرٌ.

Exercise 2B

1. A good lesson.
2. The long wall.
3. A broken pen.
4. The hot stone.
5. Is the new chair dirty? No, it is clean.
6. The strong door is narrow.
7. The big garden is far.

8. The teacher is a man. He is a small man.
9. Is the Nile a sea? No, it is a big river.
10. The beautiful student is dead.
11. The old house is ugly and the short street is bad.
12. The big wide cup is clean and new.
13. The ugly old book is long and bad.
14. The beautiful, distant sea is hot and powerful.
15. The good, small sword is dirty and broken.

For the complete textbook,
please visit

www.arabic-studio.com