

## THE STRUCTURE OF “AL-MUFASSAL”: COVERAGE OF MORPHOLOGICAL AND SYNTACTIC ISSUES

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### **Annotation**

This article explores the grammatical methodology of Mahmud az-Zamakhshari in his famous work *al-Mufasssal fi San'at al-I'rab*. The study presents a systematic overview of how the author categorized and analyzed Arabic grammar, particularly the rules of *nahw* (syntax) and *sarf* (morphology). The structure of the book is divided into four main parts: nouns, verbs, particles, and shared phenomena across categories. Each section is explained with a high level of clarity, drawing on examples from the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Arabic literature. Zamakhshari's approach emphasizes concise explanations, selected examples, and avoidance of excessive theoretical disputes. The study also highlights his influence on later grammarians and the enduring pedagogical value of his methods.

### **Keywords**

Zamakhshari, *al-Mufasssal*, Arabic grammar, syntax (*nahw*), morphology (*sarf*), linguistic methodology, classical Arabic, grammatical categories.

Mahmud al-Zamakhshari's major and foundational work on Arabic grammar has retained its significance and value from his era to the present day. It continues to be used with the aim of teaching Arabic in depth to students. The title of the work appears in different manuscripts and publications under various names such as “*Al-Mufasssal fi 'Ilm al-'Arabiyya*”, “*Al-Mufasssal fi al-Nahw*”, and “*Al-Mufasssal fi Sina'at al-I'rab*.”

The book was written in the 6th century AH and differs from earlier works in its organization and thematic structure. Following Sibawayh's “*Al-Kitab*”, this work became indispensable for scholars. Grammarians from the 7th century AH onward have recognized *Al-Mufasssal* as a complete and methodically structured

reference in studying Arabic grammar. Unlike previous works where grammatical rules were presented under categories such as syntax, morphology, and phonetics, Al-Mufasssal presents grammatical issues according to word classes, namely: noun (ism), verb (fi'l), and particle (harf).

The book consists of four major chapters, which are further divided into nearly 400 sub-sections of varying length<sup>115</sup>.

Regarding the importance of the work, the author himself states:

"I wrote this book concisely and systematically in order to shorten and ease the path for those learning Arabic. I divided the book into four sections, and within each section, I broke down the topics into chapters, explaining each issue in detail<sup>116</sup>."

The first chapter is dedicated to the noun category. The second, titled "Verbs," contains scholarly discussions related to verbs. The third chapter focuses on particles. The fourth section, titled "Al-Mushtarak" (The Shared), is particularly noteworthy: the author is among the first to highlight phenomena that are common across all three parts of speech and that require special study. This fourth section consists of ten chapters and addresses general issues applicable to the three previously discussed word classes shared linguistic phenomena are examined in detail. Topics such as "Iltiqā' al-Sākinayn" (the meeting of two consecutive sukūns), "Ziyādat al-Ḥurūf" (the addition of extra letters), and "Ibdāl al-Ḥurūf" (the replacement of certain letters with others when they occur together in one word) are scientifically discussed in this section.

Al-Mufasssal begins with a brief introduction that defines the concepts of the word and the sentence. The first part of the book is dedicated to nouns and consists of 51 chapters<sup>117</sup>. It opens with the classification of nouns that undergo *i'rāb* (inflection: the grammatical endings that change based on syntactic roles). Since this part focuses on nouns, a large portion of it deals with case endings, beginning with *marfū'āt* — nouns in the nominative case. This section elaborates on the rules governing the subject (*mubtada'*) and predicate (*khabar*), the predicate of the emphatic particle *inna* and its sisters, the predicate of the absolute negation particle *lā*, and grammatical rules related to the particles *mā* and *lā* when used in place of *laysa*.

The second section discusses *manṣūbāt* — nouns in the accusative case, which correspond to the accusative case in Uzbek grammar. This chapter includes grammatical elements associated with the accusative, such as: *maf'ūl muṭlaq* — the absolute object, which reinforces or emphasizes the action, *maf'ūl bihi* — the direct

<sup>115</sup> Nosirov Malika. O`rta asr nahvidan namunalar.—T.: TDSHI, 2004. -B.6.

<sup>116</sup> كتاب المفيد في التصريف الشيخ الإمام جاز الله اللامة فخر خوارزم محمود الزمخشري

<sup>117</sup> المعتاز حامد بشير. الشواهد الشعرية في كتاب النفل في صنعة الإعراب. دراسة نحوية تحليلية. جامعة أم درمان الإسلامية. 2010. -49.

object, *maf'ul fihi* – adverbials of time and place, *maf'ul ma'ahu* – indicating accompaniment, *maf'ul lahu / li-ajlihi* – expressing cause or purpose, *tamyiz* – the word that clarifies or specifies a vague term, nouns used in the accusative due to exception expressions, the predicate of the deficient verb *kāna* and its sisters, the subject of *inna* and its sisters, nouns in the accusative following the absolute negation particle *lā* and the predicate of *mā* and *lā* when replacing *laysa*.

The third part focuses on *majrūrāt* – nouns in the genitive case (*qaratqich kelishigi* in Uzbek). Following this is a chapter on *tawābi'* – dependent grammatical elements that follow the syntactic case of the words they are connected to.

The chapter also explains grammatical categories such as modifying words (*nā't*), emphasis (*tawkīd*), substitution (*badal*), clarification (apposition) (*'aṭf al-bayān*), coordinating particles, indeclinable nouns (*mabnī*), pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, relative pronouns, nouns with verbal meanings and onomatopoeic nouns, as well as adverbial expressions (*ẓarf*). Each of these categories is accompanied by rules, explanations, and illustrative examples supported by transmitted (*naqlī*) evidence.

Within the chapter on nouns, compound nouns (*murakkabāt*) and figurative meanings are also comprehensively addressed. Additionally, the formation and classification of dual and plural forms unique to the Arabic language are detailed, along with distinctions between definite and indefinite nouns, gender categories (masculine and feminine), diminutive forms, and relational adjectives (*nisba*).

The section also provides an in-depth treatment of number-related grammatical rules, including Arabic numeral systems and their concord. The chapter discusses word formation patterns in Arabic, including: *maqṣūr* (nouns ending with *alif maqṣūra*), *mamdūd* nouns (those ending with *hamza* preceded by an extended *alif*), deverbal nouns and adjectives derived from verbs, verbal nouns (*maṣdar*), active and passive participles, elative forms (comparative and superlative), nouns denoting time (*ẓarf zamān*), place (*ẓarf makān*), instruments (*ism al-āla*), and various grammatical rules related to triliteral, quadriliteral, and quinqueliteral noun structures.

This chapter also identifies verb-related nouns as a key object of our study, which will be explored in more detail in the following sections.

In the chapter titled “Verbs” (*Af'āl*) in *Al-Mufasssal*, *Zamakhshari* examines: the past and present-future tenses, verb moods derived from the present tense through changes in inflection (indicative, subjunctive, jussive, and imperative), active and passive voice, transitive and intransitive verbs, verbs expressing opinion and estimation (*ẓanna wa akhawātuhā*), deficient verbs (*al-af'āl al-nāqisha*), verbs

denoting imminence or nearness of action (af'āl al-muqāraba), bi'sa and nī'ma (used to express praise and condemnation), verbs of wonder or exclamation (af'āl al-ta'ajjub), trilateral roots, derived verb forms, and the requirement for Form VIII verbs to semantically follow Form VII verbs (i.e., the result of the action expressed in Form VII is embodied in Form VIII), as well as various forms of quadrilateral verbs.

The third chapter of al-Mufasssal is dedicated to particles and function words. In this part, particles (ḥurūf) are discussed across 29 chapters. In his grammatical works focusing on particles, al-Zamakhsharī provides a general classification of prepositions and offers simple illustrative examples. In al-Mufasssal, however, the system and classification of prepositions are explained in greater detail with comprehensive grammatical rules. The grammatical explanations of uniquely Arabic particles used with verbs such as "lakin", "kāna", and "la'alla" are also clarified. This chapter places particular emphasis on conjunctions, offering grammatical explanations of their usage.

Within the section on particles, 19 types of functional particles are analyzed, including:

- Negation
- Caution
- Interjection
- Affirmation and response
- Exception
- Address (vocative)
- Coordination (conjunction)
- Explanation
- Invocation
- Approximation
- Interrogation
- Conditionality
- Causality and purpose
- Absolute negation
- Future tense indicators

The use of the double lām (lam) for semantic emphasis, the feminine "tā'" with sukūn (pause/stopping), nunation for emphasis, and other function words expressing pauses or stops are also covered under the chapter on particles.

The fourth chapter, titled al-Mushtarak ("the shared"), is significant in that Zamakhsharī was among the first to highlight linguistic phenomena that are equally applicable across all word classes and require specialized investigation.

This chapter consists of ten sections, in which shared grammatical phenomena from the previous three parts (nouns, verbs, and particles) are systematically examined.

Among the linguistic phenomena addressed in this part are:

Iltiqā' al-sākinayn (التقاء الساكنين) – the meeting of two consecutive sukun (vowelless letters)

Ziyādat al-ḥurūf (زيادة الحروف) – the addition of extra letters not originally part of the word root

Ibdāl al-ḥurūf (إبدال الحروف) – the substitution or replacement of letters in certain contexts

Other critical grammatical aspects explained include:

Pronunciation of vowels in nouns and verbs

Rules of pausing and stopping in speech

The use of oath particles

Light pronunciation of hamza

The occurrence of two sukūn in sequence

Special cases of initial hamza in words

Augmented letters that are not part of the root

Letter substitution rules

Usage of weak letters (illat ḥurūf) such as wāw and yā' in the first, second, or third radicals of a word root

Idghām (إدغام) – assimilation of letters

The discussion above briefly summarizes the treatment of grammatical topics in al-Mufasssal. In each section, relevant morphological (ṣarf) and syntactic (naḥw) rules are elaborated upon. One of the strengths of the book lies in its methodical grouping of related topics, which greatly aids learners in assimilating material quickly and coherently.

Moreover, al-Zamakhsharī adopted a novel methodology in conveying the knowledge of his predecessors. He systematized the rules and refined complex grammatical terms to make them clearer. He emphasized that his aim was to present rules that are concise enough not to overwhelm the reader yet detailed enough not to cause ambiguity, stating:

"I composed this book, titled 'al-Mufaṣṣal fī Ṣinā'at al-I'rāb', dividing it into four sections: the first on nouns, the second on verbs, the third on particles, and the fourth on shared grammatical features. I classified each of these sections and then subdivided each classification until everything returned to its proper place and settled in its position. I did not spare any effort: I compiled in it abundant benefits



and organized scattered knowledge — all with concise clarity that neither distorts nor bores<sup>118</sup>."

### Conclusion

Throughout this research, the following principles were observed in al-Zamakhsharī's approach to presenting issues of syntax (naḥw) and morphology (ṣarf):

#### 1. General rule first, then elaboration:

He often presents a general rule, followed by detailed explanations or derived sub-rules. For example, in discussing oath particles, he explains how they may combine with other particles such as lām, an, and a negation particle:

بِاللّٰهِ أَفْعَلْتُ (By Allah, I surely did it)

وَإِنَّكَ لَذَاهِبٌ (Indeed, you are certainly going)

وَمَا فَعَلْتُ – وَلَا أَفْعُلُ (By oath, I did not / I will not do it)

#### 2. Selective and concise use of examples:

To draw attention effectively, he uses precise examples from the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions, and classical Arabic poetry and prose, avoiding verbosity. Especially with complex rules, he leans on illustrative examples rather than long theoretical expositions. The examples are carefully chosen to ensure logical and coherent understanding by the reader.

#### 3. Avoidance of repetition and prolixity:

He strives to avoid unnecessary repetition. For instance, after providing an in-depth discussion on exception (istithnā') in the first chapter, he refers to exception particles in the third chapter (on particles) with only a brief mention.

#### 4. Minimal engagement with controversial debates:

He does not delve deeply into disputed issues, but instead selects the opinions of respected scholars that clarify the topic at hand. His approach reflects academic etiquette, as he does not reject opposing views outright but rather presents them respectfully, drawing from them what supports his intended explanation.

For example, in the discussion on exception where the excluded term precedes the term from which it is excluded, he mentions two views:

According to Sibawayh, this is ignored and considered badal (apposition).

According to another view, since the adjective precedes its antecedent, it follows its grammatical case, thus appearing in the accusative.

Zamakhsharī established a new model in the treatment of grammatical issues for scholars who followed him. Notably, Ibn Ḥājib authored his famous Kāfiya in a manner inspired by al-Mufaṣṣal.

<sup>118</sup> أبو القاسم محمود بن عمر الزمخشري. المفصل في علم العربية. تحقيق الدكتور فخر صالح قدادة. عمان: دار عمار. 2003م

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