

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Fundamental Sources Of "Al-Mufasssal"

G'aniyev Akmaljon Adxamjon o'g'li

Researcher, Alisher Navoi National University of Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This article examines the fundamental sources relied upon in Arabic linguistics to establish the validity of grammatical rules. It discusses which of these sources were accepted by scholars and widely utilized in the formulation of linguistic principles. The study also explores which sources Mahmud al-Zamakhshari employed in his work Al-Mufasssal as primary evidence for supporting grammatical rules. Particular attention is given to his skillful use of the Holy Qur'an as a linguistic authority. Furthermore, the article highlights how al-Zamakhshari addressed scholarly disagreements regarding certain disputed sources by incorporating them into his work, thereby contributing to a clearer understanding of their role and legitimacy in Arabic grammatical studies.

KEY WORDS

Qur'an, Hadith, Arabic Poetry, Nahw (Syntax), Sarf (Morphology), Evidence, Linguistic Proof, Qiyās (Analogy).

INTRODUCTION

Every linguist relies on the most reliable sources available prior to their own work when formulating grammatical rules. The factors that stimulated the development of Arabic linguistics have been discussed in the preceding sections of this study. Among these factors, one of the most significant was the coexistence of newly converted non-Arab Muslim communities with Arab tribes. This interaction contributed to gradual changes in the Arabic language. Thus, the expansion of Islam not only created conditions that facilitated linguistic change but also laid the foundation for the development and widespread dissemination of Arabic grammar. For this reason, linguists based their grammatical analyses on sources originating from the pre-Islamic period and the early Islamic era. These sources were regarded as authoritative because linguistic changes emerged at a later stage, whereas the earlier sources remained largely unaffected by such influences and preserved the purity and authenticity of the Arabic language. Consequently, they became the primary references for the formulation and justification of grammatical rules.

These sources are known in Arabic linguistic scholarship as "أصول النحو" (Uṣūl al-Naḥw, the foundational evidences of Arabic grammar). The term "أصول النحو" refers to the sources that constitute the basis of Arabic grammar and upon which grammatical rules are established. The first scholar to discuss this concept systematically was Ibn al-Anbārī, who provided its theoretical framework. His work entitled "لمع الأدلة في أصول النحو" (Lum' al-Adillah fī Uṣūl al-Naḥw; A Concise Exposition of the Evidences Underlying the Foundations of Arabic Grammar) is devoted entirely to this subject.

In this work, Ibn al-Anbārī presents a detailed discussion of the definition of this discipline, the various types of sources that linguists have regarded as evidence and employed in their writings, their definitions, and the contexts in which they are applied. He also explains the methodological principles governing the use of these sources in the formulation and justification of grammatical rules. In his treatise, Ibn al-Anbārī defines "أصول النحو" as follows:

"أدلة النحو التي تفرعت عنها فروعها و فصولها،"

Ibn al-Anbārī defines "أصول النحو" as: "the evidences of Arabic grammar from which both major and minor grammatical rules are derived." According to scholars, the term "أصول" in this context denotes evidences or authoritative sources. This is because the word literally signifies the foundation, root, or origin of something, from which other elements are derived and established.

Regarding the significance and benefit of this discipline, Ibn al-Anbārī states as follows:

"و فائدته: التعويل في إثبات الحكم على الحجة و التعليل"

Concerning the benefit of this discipline, he states: "Its benefit lies in relying upon evidence and reasoning in the formulation of grammatical rules." By "الحجة" (al-ḥujjah), the author refers to transmitted evidences derived from authoritative linguistic sources, whereas "التعليل" (al-ta'īl) denotes rational argumentation and logical justification.

In other words, understanding that grammatical rules are founded upon valid evidence and sound reasoning is essential for their acceptance and for establishing their legitimacy. Furthermore, the scholarly value of any linguistic work is determined largely by the strength of the evidence it presents and the soundness of the arguments upon which its conclusions are based. Recognizing this, Ibn al-Anbārī classifies the evidences of Arabic grammar into three principal categories and states as follows:

"اعلام أن أقسام أدلة النحو ثلاثة: نقل، و قياس، و استصحاب حال"

Ibn al-Anbārī states: "Know that the evidences of Arabic grammar are three: transmitted evidence (naql), analogy (qiyās), and presumption of continuity (istiṣhāb al-ḥāl)."

Accordingly, the evidences of Arabic grammar may be classified into three principal categories:

1. Transmitted evidences (al-adillah al-naqliyyah)
2. Analogical or rational evidences (al-adillah al-qiyāsiyyah/al-'aqliyyah)
3. Istiṣhāb al-ḥāl (the presumption of continuity of an established state)

A closer examination of these three categories reveals that each of them encompasses several subtypes of evidence. Ibn al-Anbārī elaborates on this point as follows:

"اعلام أن النقل ينقسم إلى قسمين: تواتر و آحاد. فأما التواتر فلهذا"

...القرآن، و ما تواتر من السنة و كلام العرب

و أما الآحاد فما تفرد بقله بعض أهل العرب. و لم يوجد فيه شرط...التواتر. و هو دليل مأخوذ به"

Ibn al-Anbārī further explains:

"It should be known that transmitted evidence (naql) is divided into two categories:

1. Mutawātir (mass-transmitted evidence);
2. Āḥād (solitary or non-mass-transmitted evidence).

Mutawātir evidence includes the Holy Qur'an, hadith reports transmitted through mutawātir chains, and the speech of the Arabs that has reached us through mutawātir transmission. As for āḥād evidence, it consists of reports transmitted by certain authorities of the Arabic language that do not fulfill the conditions of mutawātir transmission. Nevertheless, it also constitutes admissible evidence and may be relied upon."

Accordingly, the evidences employed by Arab linguists in establishing grammatical rules may be summarized as follows:

1. The Holy Qur'an;
2. Mutawātir hadiths;
3. The speech of the Arabs transmitted through mutawātir chains;
4. Hadiths transmitted through āḥād reports (subject to specific conditions);
5. The speech of the Arabs transmitted through āḥād reports;
6. Qiyās (analogical reasoning);
7. Istiṣhāb al-ḥāl (the presumption of continuity of an established state).

Thus, Arabic grammatical theory is founded not only upon transmitted linguistic material but also upon rational methods of analysis and inference. Together, these sources constitute the principal evidential framework through which grammarians formulate, justify, and evaluate grammatical rules.

Mahmūd al-Zamakhsharī relied on a wide range of sources in composing Al-Mufassal. In explaining and interpreting grammatical rules, he consistently based his arguments on authoritative evidence. Whenever possible, he supported each rule with proofs drawn from the Holy Qur'an, Prophetic traditions, Arabic poetry and prose, as well as the views of

earlier scholars. His presentation is characterized by brevity and conciseness, focusing primarily on the citation of evidence rather than lengthy discussions. This distinctive feature of Al-Mufassal makes the work highly beneficial, as it enables readers to concentrate on the grammatical issues without being distracted by unnecessary details. Furthermore, al-Zamakhsharī arranged his evidences in a clear, systematic, and accessible manner, facilitating the reader's understanding of the subject matter.

1. The Holy Qur'an. Since the emergence of Arabic grammar as a systematic discipline, scholars have consistently relied upon Qur'anic verses to support their grammatical analyses and arguments. The Holy Qur'an was revealed during the period in which the Arabic language had reached its highest level of eloquence and linguistic refinement, astonishing its audience with its unparalleled style and rhetorical excellence. For this reason, linguists unanimously regard the Qur'an as the supreme model of authentic Arabic usage. Moreover, the Qur'anic text has remained preserved from linguistic alteration and has retained its original form throughout history, making it the most reliable source for grammatical evidence.

Consequently, virtually every major grammatical work contains citations from the Qur'an. For example, Sibawayh cited approximately four hundred Qur'anic verses in his Kitāb as evidence for grammatical rules. Later grammarians followed his example and likewise employed Qur'anic verses to substantiate their linguistic views. Al-Zamakhsharī, adhering to the methodological tradition of the Basran school, extensively utilized Qur'anic evidence in formulating grammatical principles and demonstrating their validity.

A clear indication of his profound engagement with the Qur'an is his celebrated Qur'anic commentary, *Al-Kashshāf*. In this work, he conducted an in-depth analysis of the Qur'an's wording, meanings, syntactic structures, and variant readings, presenting his findings with remarkable linguistic insight and eloquence. In *Al-Mufassal*, more than 350 Qur'anic verses drawn from eighty-six sūrah are cited as grammatical evidence. These citations appear in a variety of contexts and serve multiple functions within the work. Their usage may be classified into the following categories:

A. Qur'anic evidence alone. In some instances, al-Zamakhsharī considered a Qur'anic verse sufficient proof for establishing a grammatical rule and therefore cited no additional evidence.

B. Qur'anic evidence accompanied by Arabic poetry. In other

cases, he combined Qur'anic verses with examples from Arabic poetry, employing both sources to strengthen and illustrate a particular grammatical argument.

C. Confirmation of Earlier Scholarly Opinions. At times, al-Zamakhsharī adopted the views of earlier Basran grammarians and cited passages from their works. He then reinforced the validity of those opinions by providing supporting evidence from the Holy Qur'an.

2. Prophetic Hadith. The second principal source of Islamic teachings is the Prophetic Hadith, namely the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). In Islamic thought, the Prophet did not speak on his own accord; rather, his teachings were guided by divine revelation. Consequently, Muslim scholars have consistently relied upon both the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Hadith in deriving and explaining religious rulings.

In the early stages of Arabic grammatical studies, however, grammarians did not always follow the methodology of religious scholars. In particular, the grammarians of the Basran and Kufan schools generally refrained from using Hadith as grammatical evidence in support of their linguistic arguments. This reluctance was primarily due to the widespread practice of transmitting Hadith by meaning rather than by exact wording, as well as the fact that many Hadith transmitters were non-Arabs. As a result, some grammarians questioned the suitability of Hadith as a reliable source for establishing grammatical rules.

Al-Zamakhsharī, however, was among the scholars who made extensive use of Hadith in linguistic analysis. Indeed, he was one of the leading proponents of employing Prophetic traditions as grammatical evidence. By citing Hadith in support of grammatical principles, he departed from the position of earlier grammarians who considered such usage inadmissible. In some instances, he relied not on the exact wording of a Hadith but on reports transmitted according to their meaning.

Throughout his scholarly works, and particularly in *Al-Mufassal*, al-Zamakhsharī frequently utilized Hadith as linguistic evidence. Through this approach, he demonstrated to his contemporaries the significant scholarly value of Hadith for the study of Arabic grammar and language. His methodology influenced later scholars, including Ibn Kharūf and those who followed him, especially prominent grammarians such as Ibn Mālik and Ibn Hishām, who made extensive use of Hadith in their grammatical writings. In *Al-*

Mufassal, al-Zamakhsharī cites a total of seventeen Hadiths. These traditions are employed in a variety of contexts and serve different grammatical functions, illustrating his confidence in the linguistic authority of Prophetic speech and his commitment to integrating Hadith into the evidential framework of Arabic grammar.

3. Arabic poetry. Furthermore, it can be observed that the author made extensive and effective use of Arabic poetry throughout the work. For instance, in the section devoted solely to particles and auxiliary words, he cited approximately sixty poetic verses as linguistic evidence.

Mahmud al-Zamakhsharī frequently employs poetic citations in Al-Mufassal to support grammatical explanations and linguistic arguments. In this regard, Dr. Fāḍil Ṣāliḥ al-Sāmarrā'ī, in his monograph *Dirāsāt al-Naḥwiyya wa al-Lughawiyya 'inda al-Zamakhsharī* ("Grammatical and Linguistic Studies in the Works of al-Zamakhsharī"), states:

"Al-Zamakhsharī cited 424 poetic verses in his book Al-Mufassal as evidence and illustrative examples. The authorship of more than 90 of these verses remains unidentified. In addition, there is scholarly disagreement concerning the attribution of over 80 verses to specific poets. Furthermore, the actual authors of more than 170 verses have not been conclusively determined."

4. The Opinions of Earlier Scholars. In addition, al-Zamakhsharī made extensive use of the views of earlier scholars, including 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān Sibawayh (760–796), Abū al-Ḥasan Sa'īd ibn Mas'adah al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ (755–830), Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Amr al-Farāhīdī (718–792), Abū al-'Abbās Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Mubarrad (825–899), and Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb (713–798). He effectively employed their opinions in explaining grammatical rules, conducting in-depth analyses, and uncovering linguistic truths through critical scholarly investigation.

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that the fundamental sources relied upon in Arabic linguistics for establishing and validating grammatical rules consist of seven principal categories, most of which were extensively employed by al-Zamakhsharī. These sources include the Holy Qur'an, the Prophetic Hadith, Arabic poetry and prose, works on grammar, Qur'anic readings (*qirā'āt*), and lexicography, as well as the proverbs of Arab tribes and the statements of earlier scholars. Furthermore, by incorporating into his work sources whose

admissibility as grammatical evidence had been disputed among linguists—particularly Prophetic Hadith and the poetry of third-generation poets—al-Zamakhsharī advanced the view that such materials may legitimately be regarded as fundamental sources for the establishment of grammatical rules.

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