



الْمَعْرِفَةُ وَالنَّكِرَةُ

Definite and Indefinite Nouns

Just as nouns are (for example) masculine and feminine, they are also grouped into:

الْمَعْرِفَةُ وَالنَّكِرَةُ

Note their respective definitions:

2	1
النَّكِرَةُ Indefinite Noun	الْمَعْرِفَةُ Definite (Proper) Noun
<i>This noun does not refer to a specific person, object, or place.</i>	<i>This noun refers to a specific person, object, or place.</i>
This noun will not contain the <i>definite article</i> and usually has a Tanween. Example: كِتَابٌ A book. Referring to <i>any</i> book.	Nouns containing the definite article (الْ) are definite. Example: الْكِتَابُ <i>The</i> book. Referring to a <i>specific</i> book.

Notes:

- The above clearly demonstrates that the definite article and Tanween are two opposites.
- They can never co-exist in a noun (i.e. be in a noun at the same time).
- It is also important to remember that the definite article and Tanween never enter upon a verb.
- Thus, **the definite article and Tanween are (physical) signs of a word being a noun.**
- Just as the definite article is the sign of a definite noun, there are also several other nouns that are considered as a definite noun. These are:

Examples	Arabic definition	Type of definite noun	
هُوَ / أَنْتَ / أَنَا	ضَمَائِر	All personal pronouns	1
هَذَا / هَذِهِ	أَسْمَاءُ الْإِشَارَةِ	All demonstrative ¹ pronouns	2
الَّذِي / الَّتِي	الْأَسْمَاءُ الْمَوْصُولَةُ	All relative pronouns	3
زَيْدٌ / فَاطِمَةٌ	عَلَمٌ	All names of people.	4
مِصْرٌ / لَنْدَانٌ	عَلَمٌ	All names of places.	5
كِتَابُ الرَّجُلِ	مُضَافٌ	The possessed.	6

Now that you are aware of the different types of definite nouns, you will be able to make a variety of nominal sentences. The next section looks at this.

¹ These nouns are used to point towards a person or object.

The subject (مبتدأ) is mostly always a definite noun

Rule: The subject (مبتدأ) is mostly a definite (proper) noun.

Rule: The predicate (خبر) is mostly an indefinite noun (نكرة).

Thus, the various categories of definite nouns all will qualify to be the subject (مبتدأ).

Look at these examples:

3	2	1	
Example 2	Example of subject and predicate	Type of definite noun	
أَنَا طَبِيبٌ . I am a doctor.	هُوَ مَرِيضٌ . He is ill.	Personal pronoun	1
هَذِهِ سَيَّارَةٌ . This is a car.	هَذَا مِفْتَاحٌ . This is a key.	All demonstrative pronouns	2
فَاطِمَةُ قَائِمَةٌ . Fatima is standing.	زَيْدٌ قَائِمٌ . Zaid is standing.	All names of people.	3
لِنَدْنٍ بَعِيدَةٌ . London is far.	مِصْرٌ جَمِيلَةٌ ² . Egypt is beautiful.	All names of places.	4
طَعَامُ خَالِدٍ لَذِيذٌ . Khalid's food is delicious.	كِتَابُ زَيْدٍ جَدِيدٌ . Zaid's book is new.	The possessed.	5

Terminology

2	1
Indefinite Noun	Definite Noun
نَكْرَةٌ	مَعْرِفَةٌ

² Names of places in Arabic are regarded as feminine.

Conclusion

- The Subject is mostly a proper / definite noun.
- There are several different types of definite nouns.
- The predicate is mostly an indefinite noun.

2	1		
خبر	مبتدأ		
نَكْرَة	مَعْرِفَة		
مَفْتُوحٌ. حَلْوٌ.	الْمَسْجِدُ السُّكَّرُ	أَلْ	1
جَالِسٌ. طَوِيلٌ. طَوِيلَةٌ.	خَالِدٌ يُوسُفٌ ³ فَاطِمَةٌ	Names of people.	2
بَعِيدَةٌ. كَبِيرَةٌ.	مِصْرُ لِنَدَنْ	Names of places.	3
كَبِيرٌ. كَبِيرَةٌ. عَجِيبٌ. عَجِيبَةٌ.	هَذَا هَذِهِ ذَلِكَ تِلْكَ	Demonstrative Pronouns أَسْمَاءُ الْإِشَارَةِ	4
مَسْرُورٌ. مَسْرُورَةٌ. مَسْرُورٌ / مَسْرُورَةٌ.	هُوَ هِيَ أَنَا	Personal Pronouns ضَمَائِر	5

³ Many names of people (in particular feminine names) and names of places CANNOT contain a Tanween. You will learn more about this later on.

Demonstrative Pronouns - Near

Feminine	Masculine	
هَذِهِ This	هَذَا This	وَاحِدٍ Singular
هَاتَانِ Nominative Case	هَذَانِ Nominative Case	تَثْنِيَّةٌ Dual
هَاتَيْنِ Accusative / Genitive	هَذَيْنِ Accusative / Genitive	
هَؤُلَاءِ These		جَمْعٍ Plural

Demonstrative Pronouns - Far

Feminine	Masculine	
تِلْكَ That	ذَلِكَ That	وَاحِدٍ Singular
تَانِكَ Nominative Case	ذَانِكَ Nominative Case	تَثْنِيَّةٌ Dual
تَيْنِكَ Accusative / Genitive	ذَيْنِكَ Accusative / Genitive	
أُولَئِكَ Those		جَمْعٍ Plural

Terminology:

بَيْتٌ .	هَذَا
مُشَارٌ إِلَيْهِ (خبر)	إِسْمُ الْإِشَارَةِ (مبتدأ)

Using Demonstrative Pronouns

Carefully note the difference in the following examples:

2	1
Incomplete Sentence	Complete Sentence
هَذَا الْبَيْتُ ... This house ...	هَذَا بَيْتٌ . This is a house.
ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ ... That book ...	ذَلِكَ كِتَابٌ . That is a book.
هَذِهِ السَّيَّارَةُ ... This car ...	هَذِهِ سَيَّارَةٌ . This is a car.

You will notice that examples such as هَذَا الْبَيْتُ are incomplete sentences that require a predicate. Note the following where the predicate has been added.

2	1	
Complete Sentence	Incomplete Sentence	
هَذَا الْبَيْتُ قَرِيبٌ . This house is near.	هَذَا الْبَيْتُ ... This house ...	1
قَرَأْتُ ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابَ . I read that that book.	ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ ... That book ...	2
هَذِهِ السَّيَّارَةُ نَظِيفَةٌ . This car is clean.	هَذِهِ السَّيَّارَةُ ... This car ...	3
ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ جَدِيدٌ . That book is new.	ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ ... That book ...	4
سَاقَ الطَّالِبِ هَذِهِ السَّيَّارَةَ . The student drove this car.	هَذِهِ السَّيَّارَةُ ... This car ...	5
دَخَلْتُ فِي هَذَا الْبَيْتِ ⁴ . I entered in this house.	هَذَا الْبَيْتُ ... This house ...	6

⁴ Note where the Kasra (to represent the genitive case) is placed.

Extension

الْمُعْرَبُ وَالْمَبْنِيُّ

Declinable & Indeclinable Nouns

Nouns are split into declinable and indeclinable.

Note the following definitions⁵:

2	1
<p>الْمَبْنِيُّ</p> <p>Indeclinable Nouns</p>	<p>الْمُعْرَبُ</p> <p>Declinable Nouns</p>
<p>These are nouns that cannot physically accept a Dhamma, Fatha and Kasra.</p> <p>Rather, they remain the “same” all the time, and we assume there is a (virtual) Dhamma etc.</p>	<p>These are nouns that can physically accept a Dhamma, Fatha and Kasra.</p> <p>All the nouns we have covered so far are declinable.</p>

Notes:

- All demonstrative pronouns are indeclinable (مَبْنِي).
- All personal pronouns are also indeclinable (مَبْنِي).
- This means, although they can (for example) be in the nominative case, they will not physically accept a Dhamma.
- Note and compare the following:

⁵ These definitions are suitable for beginners.

3	2	1	
الْمَبْنِي Indeclinable		الْمُعْرَب Declinable	
Personal Pronouns		Demonstrative Pronouns	
هُوَ جَدِيدٌ .		هَذَا جَدِيدٌ .	حَالَةٌ الرَّفْعِ Nominative
We will look at pronouns in the accusative and genitive case later on. Note: You cannot say: قَرَأْتُ هُوَ . I read it.	قَرَأْتُ هَذَا .	قَرَأْتُ الْكِتَابَ .	حَالَةٌ النَّصْبِ Accusative
	عَلَى هَذَا .	عَلَى الْكِتَابِ .	حَالَةٌ الْجَرِّ Genitive

2				1
الْمَبْنِي Indeclinable				الْمُعْرَب Declinable
أَنَا	هُوَ	ذَلِكَ	هَذَا	سَيَّارَةٌ / بَيْتٌ / كِتَابٌ
Does not accept physical Harakah.				Accepts Harakaat physically.

Exercise 1

- Change the following nouns to dual form.
- You will be learning about this more in the next handout.

Dual Accusative + Genitive Case	Dual Nominative Case	Singular	
بَيْتَيْنِ	بَيْتَانِ	بَيْت	
حَجَرَيْنِ	حَجَرَانِ	حَجَر	
		قَلَم	1
		حَدِيقَةٌ	2
		مِفْتَاح	3
		مَطْبَخ	4
		مَجَلَّة	5
		وَلَد	6
		مَلِك	7
		جَنَّة	8
		مَشْرُوب	9
		مَنْظُور	10
		سَاجِد	11
		جَالِس	12
		شَجَرَة	13

Exercise 2

- a) Change the following sentences into Dual form (for now you will use that Dual that ends in “Alif Noon” – you will learn about this in more detail in the next handout).
- b) Analyse each sentence and also determine why ان has been used.
- c) Do not forget to translate.

Dual	Singular <i>Subject & Predicate</i>	
<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>هُوَ طَالِبٌ .</p> <p>.....</p>	1
<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>هِيَ طَالِبَةٌ .</p> <p>.....</p>	2
<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>أَنْتِ مَرِيضٌ .</p> <p>.....</p>	3
<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>أَنْتِ مَرِيضَةٌ .</p> <p>.....</p>	4

Analyse (determine where each subject and predicate are) and translate:

<p>هَذَا مُحَمَّدٌ وَذَلِكَ خَالِدٌ ، هُمَا مِنْ أَمْرِيكََا .</p> <p>.....</p>	5
<p>هَذِهِ فَاطِمَةٌ وَتِلْكَ أَمِنَةُ ، هُمَا دُكْتُورَانِ مِنْ فَرَنْسَا .</p> <p>.....</p>	6

Exercise 3

1. Change the following sentences into Dual (for now you will use that Dual that ends in “Alif Noon” – you will learn about this in more detail in the next handout).
2. Analyse each sentence and also determine why you have used a particular case ending.
3. Do not forget to translate.

Dual	Singular	
هُمَا طَالِبَانِ	هُوَ طَالِبٌ	1
.....	الطَّالِبِ قَائِمٌ	2
.....	الْمُدَرِّسِ نَائِمٌ	3
.....	الْمُسَافِرِ جَائِعٌ	4
.....	الْخَادِمِ صَائِمٌ	5
.....	ذَهَبَ الطَّالِبُ	6
.....	ذَهَبَتِ الطَّالِبَةُ	7
.....	دَخَلَ الْمُؤْمِنُ	8
.....	دَخَلَتِ الْمُؤْمِنَةُ	9

Exercise 4

1. Analyse each sentence and determine the components of the sentence.
2. As applicable, change the following sentences into Dual as well.
3. Do not forget to translate.

English	Arabic	
	الطَّعَامُ حَائِرٌ وَهُوَ لَزِيذٌ .	1
	الْعِرَاقُ بَعِيدَةٌ وَهِيَ كَبِيرَةٌ .	2
	هَذَا طَبَّاحٌ وَ ذَلِكَ خَبَّازٌ .	3
	هَذَا الطَّبَّاحُ مِنَ الْعِرَاقِ .	4
	هَذَا جِدَائِرٌ وَهُوَ كَبِيرٌ .	5
	هَذَا الْجِدَائِرُ كَبِيرٌ .	6
	هَذِهِ دَرَّاجَةٌ وَ تِلْكَ مَائِدَةٌ .	7
	هَذِهِ الدَّرَاجَةُ لِحَالِدٍ .	8
	تِلْكَ مَائِدَةٌ .	9
	تِلْكَ الْمَائِدَةُ نَظِيفَةٌ .	10
	تِلْكَ الْمَائِدَةُ لِلْمُدِيرِ .	11
	ذَلِكَ مَطْعَمٌ وَهُوَ لَزِيذٌ .	12
	ذَلِكَ الْمَطْعَمُ جَدِيدٌ .	13
	ذَلِكَ الْمَطْعَمُ لِجَعْفَرٍ .	14
	طَعَامُ الْمَطْعَمِ حَائِرٌ وَ شَهِيٌّ .	15
	هَلْ أَكَلْتِ الطَّعَامَ ؟	16
	نَعَمْ! أَكَلْتُ الطَّعَامَ الَّذِيذَ .	17

Exercise 5

1. Analyse each sentence and determine the components of the sentence.
2. As applicable, change the following sentences into Dual as well.
3. Do not forget to translate.

English	Arabic	
	تِلْكَ سَيَّارَةٌ .	1
	تِلْكَ السَّيَّارَةُ مِنَ الْيَابَانِ .	2
	تِلْكَ السَّيَّارَةُ جَمِيلَةٌ .	3
	ذَلِكَ الطَّالِبُ مُجْتَهِدٌ .	4
	ذَلِكَ طَالِبٌ .	5
	تِلْكَ الطَّالِبَةُ مُجْتَهِدَةٌ .	6
	تِلْكَ طَالِبَةٌ .	7
	هَذَا طَبِيبٌ وَ ذَلِكَ خَيَّاطٌ .	8
	هَذِهِ طَالِبَةٌ وَ هِيَ مِنَ الْيَابَانِ .	9
	هَذِهِ الطَّالِبَةُ مِنَ الْيَابَانِ .	10
	تِلْكَ السَّيَّارَةُ مِنْ فَرَنْسَا .	11

Practice reading without the Harakah:

	ذهبوا إلى المطار وهو بعيد .	12
	نسكن في ذلك الشارع .	13
	هذا الولد مريض وهو نائم .	14
	ذلك المهندس من الصين .	15
	سوف أذهب إلي بيت خالد .	16

Vocabulary

- The following words are a possessive compound.
- Each word has an individual and literal meaning.
- Both words together (in the form of a possessive compound) give a “new” or “different” meaning.
- Ensure you focus on the individual meaning of each word, as this will allow you to appreciate the overall “new” meaning.

1	طَبِيبُ الْأَسْنَانِ	Dentist
2	كُرَّة	Ball
3	كُرَّةُ الْقَدَمِ	Football
4	كُرَّةُ السَّلَّةِ	Basketball
5	كُرَّةُ الطَّاوِلَةِ	Table tennis
6	سَيَّارَةٌ إِسْعَافٍ	Ambulance
7	سَيَّارَةٌ أُجْرَةٍ	Taxi
8	مَوْقِفُ السَّيَّارَاتِ	Carpark
9	قَلَمُ رِصَاصٍ	Pencil
10	قَلَمُ حَبْرٍ	Fountain pen
11	عُرْفَةٌ	Room
12	عُرْفَةُ نَوْمٍ	Bedroom
13	عُرْفَةُ طَعَامٍ	Dining room
14	عُرْفَةُ جُلُوسٍ	Living room Sitting room
15	صَلَاةٌ	Prayer
16	صَلَاةُ الْجَمَاعَةِ	Congregational prayer
17	صَلَاةُ الْجَنَازَةِ	Funeral prayer

18	صَلَوَةُ الْكُسُوفِ	Eclipse prayer
19	صَلَوَةُ الْعِيدِ	Eid prayer
20	صَلَوَةُ اللَّيْلِ	Night prayer
21	لَحْمٌ	Meat
22	لَحْمُ الْبَقَرِ	Beef
23	لَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ	Pork
24	مَحَطَّةٌ	Station
25	مَحَطَّةُ الْقَطَارِ	Railway station
26	مَحَطَّةُ بَنْزِينَ	Petrol station
27	دَرْسٌ	Lesson
28	دَرْسُ الْقُرْآنِ	Quran lesson
29	دَرْسُ الْقِرَاءَةِ	Reading lesson
30	قَاعَةٌ	Hall
31	قَاعَةُ الْمُؤْتَمَرَاتِ	Conference hall
32	قَاعَةُ الْإِمْتِحَانِ	Exam hall
33	مَكْتَبٌ	Office
34	مَكْتَبُ الْبَرِيدِ	Post office
35	مُغَادَرَةٌ	Departure
36	بَوَابَةُ الْمَغَادَرَةِ	Departure gate
37	وَزِيرٌ	Minister
38	وَزِيرُ الدِّفَاعِ	Minister of defence Defence Minister
39	وَزِيرُ الْمَالِيَّةِ	Minister of finance Finance Minister

Updated: 08.05.2024