

THE ISSUE OF RAF IN ARABIC: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUBJECT (MUBTADA) AND PREDICATE (KHABAR) IN A NOMINAL SENTENCE

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Annotation. This article explores the issue of raf (nominative case) in Arabic grammar, focusing on the interaction between the subject (mubtada) and the predicate (khabar) in nominal sentences. It presents the divergent perspectives of the Kufans and Basrans on how raf is governed. While the Kufans argue for a mutual influence between the subject and predicate, the Basrans assert that raf is primarily governed by the subject's position (ibtida). The study examines Quranic examples and theoretical arguments to highlight the complexities of Arabic grammar. This discussion not only enriches historical grammar theory but also provides insights for modern linguistic analysis and Arabic language education.

Keywords: Arabic grammar, raf, mubtada, khabar, nominal sentences, Kufans, Basrans, ibtida, Quranic grammar, linguistic theory.

Introduction. According to the Kufans, the subject (mubtada) in a nominal sentence makes the predicate (khabar) nominative (raf), while the predicate also makes the subject nominative (raf). In other words, they mutually affect each other in terms of raf. Examples that illustrate this include the following sentences: “زَيْدٌ أَخُوكَ” (“Zayd is your brother”) and “عَمْرُو غُلَامُكَ” (“Amr is your servant”).

On the other hand, the Basrans believe that the subject becomes nominative (raf) solely due to its role as the subject, but there are differing opinions regarding the nominative status of the predicate:

1. Some argue that the predicate becomes nominative (raf) solely because of the subject.
2. Others believe that the predicate becomes nominative (raf) due to both its position at the beginning of the sentence (ibtida) and its relationship with the subject.
3. A third group contends that the predicate becomes nominative (raf) because of the subject, while the subject becomes nominative (raf) due to its position at the beginning of the sentence (ibtida).

The Kufans present the following argument: the subject and predicate are interdependent; they mutually require each other and exist in a connected state. For instance, in the sentence “زَيْدٌ أَخُوكَ” (“Zayd is your brother”), the subject and predicate influence each other and complete one another. Neither of them is complete without the other, which is why they mutually affect each other in terms of raf.

The Kufans also cite similar examples:

1. “أَيُّمَا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى” (Surah Al-Isra, 110): “Whichever [name] you invoke, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.”

2. “أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ” (Surah An-Nisa, 78): “Wherever you may be, death will overtake you.”

In this way, the Kufans substantiate their viewpoint with their evidence.

As for the Basrans, they face challenges in affirming the idea that “the subject makes the predicate nominative through its position at the beginning of the sentence (ibtida).” This is because ibtida does not independently make words nominative but only serves as a basis for the nominative status, which raises certain logical challenges.

On the other hand, the Basrans present the following argument:

“We assert that the governing factor (amil) is ibtida (the fact that the word appears at the beginning of the sentence), even though ibtida is a state distinct from verbal governing factors. This is because in this field, governing factors are not as physically apparent as, for instance, the effect of fire in burning, water in sinking, or a sword in cutting. Rather, they are based on convention and indication. If the determining factors are based on indications, they can be expressed either through something existing or through the absence of something. For instance, if you have two garments and you wish to dye one while leaving the other undyed, then the act of refraining from dyeing the second garment becomes as indicative as dyeing the first one. The same logic applies here. If ibtida is the governing factor for the subject, then it should also govern the predicate, just like other governing factors such as Kana and its derivatives or Inna and its derivatives, which govern both the subject and the predicate. The same principle applies here. If someone says, ‘ibtida and the subject are both governing factors,’ they explain this as follows: ‘We assert that ibtida and the subject together govern the predicate because we only observe the predicate in the presence of ibtida and the subject; therefore, they must be governing factors.’ However, this view, while advocated by many Basrans, has its flaws because the subject is a noun, and nouns, in principle, do not serve as governing factors. If the subject is not a governing factor and ibtida is, then combining something non-governing with a governing factor is logically inconsistent. In my opinion, it must instead be stated: ‘Ibtida is the governing factor for the predicate, and this function is carried out through the subject. This is because the subject is inseparable from ibtida, and its position is such that it always follows ibtida. Therefore, ibtida governs the predicate, but this function occurs in the presence of the subject, similar to how fire heats water through a pot or fuel. In this case, the heating is caused solely by the fire, but it occurs only when the pot and fuel are present.

If someone argues, ‘ibtida acts upon the predicate while the subject governs the predicate, but ibtida does not act upon it,’ they counter this argument by saying, ‘We assert that ibtida governs the predicate, and the subject governs the predicate, because ibtida is an abstract governing factor (amil ma’nawi). Abstract governing factors are weak, and therefore they cannot act upon two elements simultaneously in the same way as verbal governing factors do. This view is also weak because if ibtida is a governing factor, it must govern the predicate as well. This is because the predicate is linked with the subject, and its position is analogous to that of an attribute. For example, if you say, “Zayd is standing” or “Amr is leaving”, the predicate aligns with the subject in meaning; that is, it describes the qualities or state of the subject. Thus, the predicate takes the place of the subject and serves as its attribute.

Reason and Theories: The Basrans argued that, in terms of meaning, “intelligent” applies to Zayd, and “elegant” applies to Amr. Therefore, if the predicate resembles a description, it follows the subject, just as a descriptive adjective follows the noun it qualifies. In cases where a descriptive modifier functions as an agent, the same applies here. Regarding their view that “the subject governs the predicate,” this idea is refuted in response to the Kufans’ argument.

Response to the Kufans: The Kufans’ claim that “both [the subject and the predicate] make each other nominative (raf), as neither can exist independently of the other” is refuted from two points:

1. Logical Error: There is a logical fallacy in their statement because a governing factor (amil) must always precede what it governs (ma’mul). If both were to make each other nominative, each would have to precede the other, which is impossible. Since this situation leads to an impossibility, their argument must also be deemed invalid.

2. Exclusivity of the Governing Factor: A governing factor cannot coexist with another governing factor in the same position. Thus, in sentences such as “Zayd is your brother,” “Zayd is your brother,” and “I thought Zayd was your brother,” it is clear that neither governs the other. Instead, they are connected but do not serve as each other’s governing factors.

The Kufans’ use of Quranic verses as evidence is also unconvincing for three reasons:

1. “Ayyamma” and “Aynama” as Substitutes: We reject the notion that “ayyamma” and “aynama” are substitutes for inna. While they may convey a similar meaning to inna, they are not governing factors in themselves.

2. Distinct Governing Factors: Even if we accept that these words indicate inna and act as governing factors, they would each represent distinct governing factors, meaning they cannot govern one another.

3. Mutual Governing Is Impossible: Each may be a governing factor, but they cannot govern each other because they already function as governing factors. In contrast, the subject and predicate are nouns, and nouns—regardless of their context—do not function as governing factors.

The Concept of Ibtida and the Subject: As for their claim that “ibtida must be a noun, verb, or intermediary,” we maintain that ibtida is a state independent of verbal governing factors. If ibtida is independent of such factors, it does not exert influence, and to label something without influence as a governing factor is logically flawed. Additionally, they argue that verbs in the present tense can function as governing factors, while simultaneously asserting that ibtida can act as a governing factor. Thus, if they accept the present tense verb as a governing factor, we, too, consider ibtida a governing factor. Reason and Theories: The Basrans argued that, in terms of meaning, “intelligent” applies to Zayd, and “elegant” applies to Amr. Therefore, when the predicate resembles a description, it is subordinate to the subject, just as a description is subordinate to the described noun. In cases where the descriptor functions as an agent, it behaves similarly in this situation. Regarding their view that “the subject governs the predicate,” this claim is refuted in response to the Kufans’ argument.

The Kufans' assertion that "both [the subject and the predicate] make each other nominative (raf), because each is inseparable from the other" is refuted from two perspectives:

1. Logical Error: Their claim contains a logical fallacy because a governing factor (amil) must always precede what it governs (ma'mul). If both the subject and the predicate made each other nominative, each would need to precede the other, which is impossible. Since this scenario leads to an impossibility, the argument itself is invalid.

2. Exclusivity of the Governing Factor: A governing factor cannot coexist with another governing factor within the same structure. Therefore, in expressions such as "Zayd is your brother," "Zayd is your brother," or "I thought Zayd was your brother," it is evident that neither governs the other. Instead, they are interconnected but do not serve as governing factors for one another.

The Kufans' reliance on Quranic verses as evidence is also invalid for three reasons:

1. "Ayyamma" and "Aynama" as Substitutes: We do not accept the claim that "ayyamma" and "aynama" serve as substitutes for inna. While they may convey a meaning similar to inna, they are not themselves governing factors.

2. Distinct Governing Factors: Even if we accept that these words signify inna and act as governing factors, each would represent a distinct governing factor. Therefore, they cannot govern one another.

3. Mutual Governing Is Impossible: Each may act as a governing factor, but they cannot govern one another, as they already function as independent governing factors. In contrast, the subject and predicate are nouns, and nouns—regardless of their state—do not serve as governing factors. As for their claim that "ibtida must be a noun, verb, or intermediary," we assert that ibtida is a state that is independent of verbal governing factors. If ibtida is independent of such factors, it does not exert influence, and to label something without influence as a governing factor is logically incorrect.

In conclusion, these issues are not only of historical and theoretical significance but also serve as a foundation for strengthening key concepts for learners of practical grammar. The arguments presented by the Kufans and Basrans highlight the richness and complexity of Arabic grammar theory. Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses, leaving a distinct mark on the history of linguistics. This topic continues to hold relevance in modern linguistic analysis and teaching methodologies.

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