

“AL-MISBĀḤ FĪ AN-NAḤW” BY MUTARRIZĪ: ITS STRUCTURE, LINGUISTIC FEATURES, AND PLACE IN THE GRAMMATICAL TRADITION**Diyora Abduraimova**

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the structure, content, and linguistic significance of Nasir al-Din al-Mutarrizī’s work “Al-Miṣbāḥ fī al-naḥw”, one of the key grammatical manuals of the 13th century. The study analyzes the author’s classification of parts of speech, the treatment of particles and their syntactic functions, the theory of i’rāb, and sentence structure as presented in the work. Special attention is given to al-Mutarrizī’s methodological approach, including his concise definitions, pedagogical style, integration of both Basran and Kufan grammatical principles, and his extensive use of Qur’anic citations as grammatical evidence. The findings demonstrate that Al-Miṣbāḥ played a significant role in the development of the Central Asian school of Arabic grammar and served as an essential instructional text in medieval linguistic education. The article highlights both the theoretical contribution and the practical pedagogical value of the work.

Keywords: Mutarrizī, Al-Miṣbāḥ fī al-naḥw, Arabic grammar, i’rāb, parts of speech, Basran school, Kufan school, Central Asian linguistic tradition, syntax, medieval Arabic linguistics.

Introduction

One of the scholars who played a significant role in the development of Arabic linguistics in the 13th century is Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Mutarrizī (d. 610/1213). His work Al-Miṣbāḥ fī al-Naḥw is among the most important manuals of the medieval Central Asian grammatical tradition. The treatise harmonizes the classical grammatical doctrines of the Basran and Kufan schools, systematically presents linguistic terminology, and was composed as a practical guide for learners.

The significance of this work has been noted by numerous researchers. In his preface, al-Mutarrizī connects the necessity of studying grammar to the correct understanding of the language of the Qur’an:

«فإنَّ النحوَ ميزانُ العربيةِ، وبه يُفهم كلامُ الله وكلامُ رسوله»

(“Indeed, grammar is the criterion of the Arabic language; through it the Word of God and the speech of the Messenger are understood”).

This article examines the overall structure of the work, its grammatical concepts, its approaches to the classification of parts of speech, and its place in the development of the grammatical tradition.

I. The Structure and Source Base of Al-Miṣbāḥ fī an-Naḥw**Purpose of the Work**

Al-Miṣbāḥ was composed as a concise and accessible manual for learners. As the author himself emphasizes:

«هذا مختصر وضعته تيسيراً لطلاب العربية»

(“I have written this treatise in a concise form in order to provide ease for learners of the Arabic language”).

His aim was to produce a concise yet systematic manual amid the major grammatical works such as Ibn Mālik’s Al-Kāfiya, al-Zamakhsharī’s Al-Mufaṣṣal, and Ibn Hishām’s Qaṭr al-Nadā.

The work consists of three principal sections:

1. The word and its categories (al-kalima wa aqsāmu-hā)
2. Issues of inflection (al-i‘rāb wa al-binā’)
3. Sentence structure and constructions (al-jumla wa namādhij al-tarkīb)

The author maintains a coherent logical connection between the sections. For instance, presenting the concept of i‘rāb after the discussion of the parts of speech is a deliberate and refined choice, since inflection manifests itself through the interaction of verbs, nouns, and particles. He also does not conceal his sources:

«واعتمدتُ في هذا الكتاب على أقوال سيبويه والفرّاء والزجاجي»

(“I relied in this book on the views of Sībawayh, Farrā’, and Zajjājī.”)

Connection with the Khwarezm School of Grammar.

Al-Mutarrizī is a successor of the Zamakhsharī school, and the influence of Al-Mufaṣṣal is clearly visible in Al-Misbah. However, he simplifies many chapters and selects lighter, more accessible formulations.

For example, definitions that appear complex in al-Zamakhsharī are rendered more concise by al-Mutarrizī:

Zamakhsharī: «الاسم ما دلّ على معنى في نفسه»

Mutarrizī: «الاسم: ما دلّ على معنى مستقل»

This conciseness is regarded as a sign of pedagogical mastery.

Presentation of Parts of Speech and Grammatical Categories in Al-Misbah

Definition of the Noun and the Approach to Its Indicators

Al-Mutarrizī defines the noun according to the traditional interpretation:

«الاسم ما دلّ على معنى غير مقترن بزمن»

In his view, the primary indicator of the noun is its ability to undergo i‘rāb, as well as its acceptance of any of the markers:

«الجرّ، والتنوين، والنداء، وأل»

He supports these indicators with examples such as:

«جاء زيدٌ»، «رأيتُ الرجلَ»، «يا طالبُ العلمِ».

2.2. Definition of the Verb

He links the verb directly to temporal meaning:

«الفعل ما دلّ على معنى مقترن بزمن»

and discusses the three main types of verbs (māḍī, muḍāri‘, amr) in separate chapters.

He provides corresponding examples:

«كتبٌ»، «يكتبُ»، «اكتبُ».

In discussing the verb’s i‘rāb, the author stands close to the Basran school and firmly defends the principle of the built form (binā‘) of the imperative verb.

Definition of the Particle and Its Meaning

Regarding the particle (ḥarf), al-Mutarrizī offers an important definition:

«الحرف ما لا يظهر معناه إلا بغيره»

(“A particle is that whose meaning becomes evident only in conjunction with something else.”)

This definition remains free from Kufan influence and aligns closely with Basran terminology.

Among the types of particles, he discusses:

- Particles of genitive: (إلى، من، ل، ك، ب، ...)
- Particles of coordination: (و، ثم، أو)
- Particles of condition: (إذا، إن، ...)

In his examples, he frequently draws from Qur’anic verses:

«بِسْمِ اللَّهِ»، «ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ»، «إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ».

Al-Mutarrizī provides a theoretically sound classification of constructions:

- idāfa construction (المضاف والمضاف إليه)
- adjective–qualified noun construction (ṣifa–mawṣūf)
- verb–subject construction (fi‘l–fā‘il)
- subject–predicate pairing (mubtada‘–khabar)

For example, his definition of idāfa:

«الإضافة: نسبة بين اسمين على تقدير من»

with the example:

«عبدُ الله».

Analysis of I' rāb and Sentence Structure (al-jumla)

For al-Mutarrizī, i' rāb represents the fundamental mechanism expressing the grammatical relationship between nouns and verbs:

«الإعراب: تغيّر أواخر الكلم لاختلاف العوامل الداخلة عليها».

He divides the governing agents (al-'awāmil) into three categories:

- phonetic (syntactic) agents (lafziyyah: verbs, particles)
- semantic agents (ma'nawiyah: initiation, specification, etc.)
- figurative agents (majāziyyah)

This classification reflects the tradition of Sībawayh, albeit in simplified form.

3.2. Sentence Structure

Al-Mutarrizī defines the sentence as follows:

«الجملة: كلامٌ تامٌ يُفيد فائدةً يحسن السكوت عليها».

He divides sentences into two major types:

- Verbal sentence (الجملة الفعلية)

— «قام زيدٌ»

- Nominal sentence (الجملة الاسمية)

«زيدٌ قائمٌ»

He discusses the interchangeability of the subject (mubtada') and predicate (khabar), the types of predicates, and the role of emphatic elements within the sentence.

Scientific Significance of Al-Misbah and Its Influence on Later Grammarians.

The work was widely used in the madrasas of Khwarezm, Bukhara, and Samarkand during the 13th–15th centuries. In the eastern Islamic world, Al-Misbah was often taught alongside major works such as Al-Mufaṣṣal, Al-Kāfiya, and Sharḥ al-Jāmi'.

He was later recognized by scholars such as Sa'd ad-Din Taftazani, Abu-l-Barakat al-Nasafi, and grammarians of the 'Ali Qushji school, who frequently drew upon al-Mutarrizī's definitions in their own works.

Scholarly Style of the Author:

- Conciseness: Concepts are expressed succinctly, clearly, and logically.

- Pedagogical Approach: Each definition is followed by a simple illustrative example.
- Preference for the Basra School: In many cases, he favors the grammatical rules established by the Basra tradition.
- Grounding in the Qur'anic Language: A significant portion of his examples is derived from Qur'anic verses.

Conclusion

Al-Miṣbāḥ fī al-Naḥw is a seminal work illustrating the development of Arabic grammar in Central Asia. Al-Muṭarrizī presents grammatical categories pedagogically, offering concise, student-friendly treatments of parts of speech, letters, i'rāb, and sentence theory. By synthesizing Basra and Kūfa school traditions and drawing extensively on Qur'anic evidence, the work significantly shaped Eastern grammatical thought and continues to serve as an essential source for the study of Arabic grammatical history.

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