

The Imperative in Arabic (al-Amr)

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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

The Imperative in Arabic (al-Amr) describes the ordinary linguistic system of Arabic imperative constructions. For the rhetorical device in which an imperative construction is used for a purpose other than genuinely commanding, see **IMPERAT: The Imperative**. That article treats the rhetorical mechanism and purposes of imperative expression in Arabic rhetoric.

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Overview

From the sources

The sources identify four grammatical forms (*ṣīgh*) through which the Imperative is realised.^{[1][2][3]}

Types of Imperative

From the sources

Type 1: fiʾl al-amr (The Imperative Verb)

The action word appears in the dedicated imperative verb form.^{[3][2][1]}

Source Example

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ

O John, take the Scripture with determination

Quran 19:12

Explanation

khudh is a verb in the dedicated imperative form, addressed by God to Yaḥyā (John), illustrating the basic morphological realisation of the Imperative. Cited by al-Hāshimī as the first of the four *ṣīgh* immediately following his definition of the Imperative.^[4]

Constructed Example

أُدْرِسْ جَيِّدًا لِهَذِهِ الْاِخْتِبَارَاتِ!

"Study well for these exams!"

Explanation

udrus is a verb in the imperative form, directly requesting an action from the addressee.

Type 2: al-muḍāriʾ al-majzūm bi-lām al-amr (The Jussive Present Prefixed with the *Lām* of Command)

A present-tense verb, prefixed with the *lām* of command and placed in the jussive mood.^{[3][2][1]}

Source Example

لِيَنْفِقَ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِنْ سَعَتِهِ

Let a man of wealth spend from his wealth.

Quran 65:7

Explanation

li-yunfiq is a present-tense verb prefixed by the *lām* of command and placed in the jussive mood, functioning as an imperative. Cited by al-Hāshimī as the second of the four *ṣiḡh*.^[4]

Constructed Example

لِيَحْضُرَ كُلُّ طَالِبٍ فِي الْمَوْعِدِ الْمَحَدَّدِ.

"Let every student attend at the appointed time."

Explanation

li-yahḍur shows the jussive present verb prefixed with *lām al-amr*, functioning as a command directed at a third party.

Type 3: ism fi'l al-amr (The Imperative Verbal-Noun/Name)

A dedicated word standing in for the imperative verb, e.g. ṣaḥ ("be silent").^{[3][2][1]}

Source Example

عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ

Hold fast to / attend to yourselves; he who has gone astray cannot harm you if you are rightly guided.
Quran 5:105

Explanation

'alaykum functions as an imperative verbal-noun/name meaning "hold fast to" or "attend to", standing in for a verb of command. Cited by al-Hāshimī as the third of the four *ṣiḡh*.^[4]

Constructed Example

صَهِ! الْاجْتِمَاعُ بَدَأَ.

"Quiet! The meeting has begun."

Explanation

ṣaḥ is an imperative verbal-noun/name meaning "be silent", used in place of an inflected imperative verb.

Type 4: al-maṣḍar al-nā'ib 'an fi'l al-amr (The Verbal Noun Substituting for the Imperative Verb)

A verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) is used in place of the imperative verb.^{[3][2]}

Source Example

سَعْيًا فِي سَبِيلِ الْخَيْرِ

"[Strive] in the path of good."

Explanation

sa'yan is a verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) standing in for an imperative verb such as "strive" (*is'a*), illustrating the substitution of a verbal noun for the imperative verb.^[4]

Constructed Example

سَعْيًا فِي طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ.

"[Strive] in the pursuit of knowledge."

Explanation

sa'yan is a verbal noun substituting for an imperative verb such as "strive", consistent with the mechanism attested in the sources.^[2]

See also

- **IMPERAT: The Imperative** — the main [Encyclopedia](#) article on the rhetorical use of imperative constructions.

References

1. ↑ ^a ^b ^c ^d Faḍl Ḥasan ‘Abbās, *Al-Balāgha: Funūnuhā wa-Afnānuhā - ‘Ilm al-Ma‘ānī* (Irbid: Dār al-Furqān lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, 1997), 149-153.

2. ↑ ^a ^b ^c ^d ^e ^f Aḥmad al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-Balāgha fī al-Ma‘ānī wa-al-Bayān wa-al-Badī‘* ↗ (Windsor: Hindāwī Foundation, 2019), 79-117, ISBN 9781527316386.

3. ↑ ^a ^b ^c ^d ^e Ḥafnī Nāṣif, Muḥammad Diyāb, Sultan Muḥammad and Muṣṭafā Ṭammām, *Durūs al-Balāgha* ↗ (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2012), 31-32, ISBN 9786144162798.

4. ↑ ^a ^b ^c ^d Aḥmad al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-Balāgha fī al-Ma‘ānī wa-al-Bayān wa-al-Badī‘* ↗ (Windsor: Hindāwī Foundation, 2019), 80, ISBN 9781527316386.

Category: [Normal grammar](#)

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