



Shariah Program
Keepers of Classical Arabic

How to Enhance Your Learning of Classical Arabic by 1600%

The Big Mistake that's preventing most students from succeeding with their Arabic studies

Insha'Allah in this series of short videos I am going to draw your attention to what I consider the big mistake which practically everyone studying Arabic is currently making. It is holding them back and stopping them from reaching their goal, and delaying the achievement of results in a big way. If you are able to get your head around this one big mistake and understand the proper approach, it will **enhance your benefits** by a factor of 16 (1600%). Every hour you put in will be as if you're putting in 16 hours.

It's a bold promise and it's huge, *insha'Allah* it is going to change your life. We are going to dive right in; we have a lot of ground to cover. *Insha'Allah* the slides will be given to you so you can print them out and study them. You can ask questions about anything that I am about to mention.

I am going to stick to one core concept. If you get it, it will make our job a lot easier. In the subsequent videos we are going to build upon what we cover in this introductory session.

The problem is that when most people approach the Arabic language they start with a series of textbooks. What is common between all the textbooks is that they use one particular method that progresses from the **simple to the complex**. You can probably relate to what I am talking about. If you open up the textbook, the first, second and third chapters will be talking about phrases, nominal sentences that have a subject and predicate, how to connect more words to create bigger sentences.

Intuitively this simple to complex method seems like the proper method. Because we have been taught that in order to attain any goal you don't look at it as a *project* but instead as *steps*. When you segment the achievement of a goal into steps and then gradually proceed to traverse those steps this makes it easier to attain the goal. But what I'm about to tell you here is that in the case of Arabic this is a **big error**.

When you approach from the simple to complex you are severely hampering your progress. This is true in the case of popular textbook series. What I'm telling you will make a lot of sense as I continue explaining *insha'Allah*. This is also true in the university curriculums. If you have taken any college level or university level Arabic course you'll notice this. So this approach *is* what causes the majority of frustration. This will not work as it ignores the fundamental nature of the Arabic language and the fact that Arabic is an intricate system of conveyance of meaning.

Results of this Approach

When you go from the simple to the complex you feel overwhelmed and you think the language is difficult because every rule that is introduced to you is not really tied to a big picture/central theme and just seems like something irrelevant and random. You get this sense of too much memorisation and disorganisation. This is because there is no big picture provided up front.

I am suggesting that in the opening days the teacher needs to focus on *how* the language works and teach the student the system. This enhances the speed of progress. Then every new detail and rule that is introduced you just tie it in to the big picture. Every time you learn something new it really makes sense and you get an *aha* moment, an epiphany.

Without this if you move from the simple to the complex you gain no momentum and quickly lose interest, and go from one textbook to the next and you move from teacher to teacher and you gain no *barakah* or traction.

What's the flaw to this method?

The fundamental flaw is that it ignores the system that I will be speaking to you about *insha'Allah*. I will give you aspects of this system in the next videos. This is the most superior system on the planet. This is documented by scholars such as Ibn Khaldun. The reason I say the simple to complex method does not work is because in Arabic the majority of meanings do not come from the words.

If you have a sentence that has five words the total number of meanings you will be getting is much more than five. The five words will individually be giving you five meanings and on top of that you will be getting an additional ten, twelve, thirteen meanings. The vast majority of meanings will come from **vowels, patterns** and **grammatical structure**. Vowels, patterns and grammatical structure *is* this system that I am talking about.

Ibn Khaldun tells us that Arabic has a core and a central theme. It is the most sophisticated system on the planet for conveyance of meaning. This is because the majority of meanings do not come from the words. They come from the vowels. So if you have a verb and multiple nouns, you need some sort of mechanism to tell you which of the nouns is the one doing the verb and which of the nouns is the one upon whom the verb is being done. Every language has its own method of determining this.

Certain languages would do it by introducing extra words. Along with the verbs and the two nouns you would have an extra word to indicate the **subject** and an extra word to indicate the **object**. In Urdu they would have "*nay*" and "*kow*". When you combine that you get five words: *Zayd nay Amr kow maara* (*Zayd hit Amr*). *Zayd* is the subject and *Amr* the object. If you switch it around *Zayd* becomes the object and *Amr* becomes the subject. The *nay* and *kow* are extra words being used to distinguish between the subject and the object. The word that is followed by the *nay* is the subject and the word that is followed by the *kow* is the object. Now it doesn't matter what comes first. This allows flexibility in the word order but you need more than necessary words. Other languages do it by **sequence**. They don't need five words, they can convey the meaning in three. This is very rigid; the subject will be at the front and the verb in the middle followed by the object.

SVO Format in English

SVO is the format they use in English. The subject is at the very front, verb in the middle and object at the end. If you change the word order it alters the meaning. What was originally the object now becomes the subject, what was originally the subject becomes the object. It limits you to only one way of expressing the meaning.

The Most Superior Method

The system the Arab people have developed to determine grammatical meanings is *by far* the most superior method. It does not restrict the speaker to a particular sequence. You can format the verb and two nouns in six different ways. Literally any permutation or arrangement of those words will be meaningful. This gives benefit of being able to stress. It is possible that the listener may already be aware that the event occurred and who did the event. The only confusion is with regards to the object, so you can format the sentence with the object at the front. It would convey the same meaning as if you were to put the verb at the very front. There is *flexibility* in the word order because it is not being done by sequence and neither are extra words being used. There is a third method which is the most superior method. And this is what we will try to cover in these videos.

Conveyance of Meaning at the Word Level and Sentence Level

This system of conveyance of meaning is true both at the word level and the sentence level. At the word level the letters combine together and then particular vowels are added to the word. These vowels give you more meaning. In this free video series I am going to expose you to this system and *insha'Allah* you will have over half the benefits you will ultimately achieve. This means that if you study for three years and you gain a considerable amount of benefit, I am promising you that in this one week I will give you half of that benefit. That is pretty phenomenal. How is it possible? *Insha'Allah* by the time we are done with this very first video it will be clear to you **how** this is achieved.

Lead with the Complex

If you want to gain some traction and momentum and finally finish your Arabic studies so you can appreciate the miracle of the Quran and understand it. And when you're standing in your prayer understand and be impacted by the verses just like the pre-Islamic Arab used to be impacted so that it becomes the most pleasurable thing in your day. Then the method is not from simple to complex, instead **leading with the complex and the elaborate**. Upon first glance it seems counter intuitive, but it is not. It is just because we are living in this over specialised world and everything is just so complicated. We don't have the big picture for anything really. Once we have the big picture it becomes effortless. All the details fall in place on their own. Not only that, but every detail that you learn once you have the big picture and you've mastered the system actually motivates you to move forward. A light bulb goes off and creates an *aha* moment. It happens again and again and every time it happens it gets you more excited.

80/20 Principle

This method is based on the 80/20 principle and it fully leverages the 80/20 principle. It is how the scholars learnt over the centuries. It is a feat of staggering genius on part of the

medieval grammarians that they were able to do this, they were able to look into the Arabic language and isolate from it a *core* and *central theme*. This is what needs to be taught **first** and after that you can go into the details and give them gradually. Obviously it is much more interesting because you are exposed to those aspects that make Arabic the most superior language right at the beginning and you don't have to wait for the payoff. It is a front loaded method so there is considerable effort in the opening days. After that, however, each week becomes progressively easier and the payoff increases. All the new details that are then introduced all create epiphany moments and motivate you to move forward. **The end result is that you end up learning 1600% faster.**

What is it that makes it so powerful?

The reason I feel this is important is because when you understand *how* something works then this is *fascination* and this is what really guarantees that you achieve your goals. On the one hand you have interest when you just want something. But fascination is you want to know how it works as opposed to just wanting to know it. You're concerned about the process. You want it and also learn how.

We are going to talk about the 80/20 principle. You've probably heard this a million times. Let me just tell you in advance that knowing something and actually leveraging it is two different things. So please don't dismiss what I am about to tell you because it is really really important.

The 80/20 principle states that there is a major imbalance between:

- inputs and outputs
- causes and effect
- effort and results.

What that means is that if you put in five hours of effort it is not necessarily true that you will receive five hours of results. That rarely ever happens. Normally if you put in a particular amount of effort then you receive either very less than what you put in (something someone else could have received in an hour) because you weren't spending your time on the most productive things **or** you achieve tremendous results, much more than you dreamed of because you did the right things and you focused on the aspects that had the most broad application. You focused all your energy and attention on the most productive things.

This principle is everywhere in your life. They say 80% of your happiness comes from 20% of your friends. It's in the clothes that you wear. Open up your closet and look at the clothes that you wear. You'll notice that 20% of your clothes are worn 80% of the time. They say that 20% of the carpets receive 80% of the wear and tear. If you go look in office buildings someone figured it out and decided to leverage this principle. Now they have modular

carpets. When they want to change the carpet they don't have to change the whole carpet. This principle is everywhere. In wealth, business, education, day to day work. If you run a business you will notice 20% of your prospects will be giving you 80% of your revenue. It is everywhere and the Arabic language is no different.

The Arabic language has a core/central theme that must be taught first. What is this core? It is roughly 20% of all the rules in the three sciences of the Arabic Language. They are *grammar, morphology and rhetoric*.

- **Grammar** talks about sentence structure and how to distinguish between the roles that the nouns are playing within the sentence. I.e. which noun is the one doing the verb and which noun is the one upon whom the verb is being done.
- **Morphology** is the area of classical Arabic that talks about verbs and how consonants are grouped together and vowelled using particular patterns that will be talked about. The consonants are given vowels; the vowels are giving you the tense and the voice. How to reflect the gender, plurality and the person of the one doing the verb so you know if the one doing the verb is a male or female and you are able to properly connect the verb with the pronoun.
- The third science is **Rhetoric**. It is the most advanced area of Arabic that teaches you how to craft impactful and influential speech. So you assess the mind-set, mental capacity, the desires, frustrations and pains of the audience and speak accordingly.

If you go through all 3 sciences you will notice there are certain rules that are *more important* than everything. They are the ones that have the **broadest application**. These are the fundamentals of the language and you would expect to see them in practically every sentence. But this 20% of the language that has the broadest application is not to be found at the beginning of the textbooks. Some of it will be at the beginning, some in the middle and some at the end. You need someone to take all of those aspects, isolate them, connect them together and provide it as a system. *Insha'Allah* this is what I am going to attempt to do in this free series of videos.

Reapplying the Rule in the top 20%

Without getting caught up in the complex math we are going to take the 80/20 rule and re-apply it within the 20% to get an **ever DENSER inner core**. 20% of 20 is 4. E.g. If you have a 200 page text book there will be 8 pages which have the greatest value. Sometimes I will be reading a book I will rip out 8 pages. This is true from everything. Even the Arabic language that if you go denser you can get an inner core of that 20% that I just talked about. That would be 4. If you learn and master that 4 it gives you 80 % of 80. i.e. 64%. This is mind blowing! Let me tell you this can be done in the span of a single week. When I teach my students I normally expose them to this system in the first 3 weeks of class. By the third week of class they will have already attained half of the benefits they will ultimately achieve. This is what we are going to cover in this free series of videos.

The system that Ibn khaldun spoke about and he said it is the most advanced/ sophisticated/ superior system on the planet for conveyance of meaning. This system has a word level and sentence level.

Word Level

At the **word level** it is about taking consonants and combining them to create meanings. Before doing that we need to run through the vowels. First of all there are 28 letters in the Arabic alphabet and they are all *consonants*. For the purpose of our discussion we are assuming that everyone watching this knows the Arabic alphabet. If you are still learning the alphabet then there are many places you can do that. Even on our website there is a [particular tutorial](#) that is free and it has 21 lessons. You can go through it in a week and it will teach you the Arabic alphabet. If you don't know the alphabet then the system that I am going to talk about will still benefit you *insha'Allah* because most of it is conceptual. The practice will begin after the system has been given. The alphabet is made up of consonants. These consonants are grouped in groups of three and they are given an associated meaning. The vowels are not part of the alphabet. They are introduced on top and underneath the letters and together they give us the sounds of a, e,i,o,u.

E.g. You take ن (*nun*), ص (*saad*) and ر (*raa*), group them together and you get the associated meaning of *to help*. If you take ج (*jeem*), ل (*laam*) and س (*seen*) and group them together you get the associated meaning of *to sit down*. Like this, if you combine the 28 consonants into groups of three you will get millions of groups of three. Every group of three has an associated meaning. The problem is that consonants on their own are not pronounceable. Because when people speak, they don't speak in consonants, they speak in syllables. A *syllable* is the sound that is produced by combining both a consonant and a vowel. In order to pronounce those three consonants you are going to need vowels. When the vowels are added to the word on the one hand it makes it a word and therefore pronounceable, but then the vowels are giving you more, they are giving the *tense* and the *voice*.

Short Vowels in the Arabic Language

Let's quickly go through the vowels.

- ضَمَّة (*dam-ma*): _____ - corresponds to an "o" or "u" in English
- فَتْحَة (*fat-ha*): _____ - corresponds to an "a" in English
- كَسْرَة (*kas-ra*): _____ - corresponds to an "e" or "i" in English

These are placed above and beneath the letters. If we have a ب (baa) with a _____ (dam-ma) on it, it will be بُ (bu). With _____ it will be بَ (ba) and with _____ (kasra) it will be بِ (bi).

The absence of vowel is *su-koon* (_____) or you can say it is the consonant that ends the syllable, because not every consonant will be vowelled. Even in English sometimes you will have a 3 lettered word, e.g. fun. The “f” at the front will be considered vowelled because it is followed by a “u” but the “n” is not followed by any vowel so that is the end of the syllable. We call it *su-koon* (_____).

Then there is one more symbol which is a *shad-da* (_____). This is when you have a two syllable word in English, the first syllable ends in the same consonant the next syllable begins in. In English when this happens they normally write the letter twice, e.g. pretty and funny. In Arabic it is not written twice, instead it is only written once. This symbol is placed on it and it means pronounce the letter twice.

Here is the example that I want to talk about: **استنصروا** (they sought help)

If you look at this structure on the screen it is pronounced *is-tan-sa-roo*. We are going to dissect it and talk about where the meanings are coming from. Although it looks like a single word it is actually a full sentence. Obviously there are multiple meanings involved.

1) First of all we have the **initial help**. It is coming from the particular group of 3 letters (ن - ر - ص) in the middle.

2) The **notion of seeking**. It didn't need to be “sought”, it could have been “they helped” without the seeking part of it. Where is this notion of *seeking* coming from? It is coming from the س (*seen*) and the ت (*taa*) at the front. They are non-base letters which are enhancing the meaning and the verb is becoming advanced.

How am I so sure that the ن - ص - ر are giving us the meaning of help? Because if we substitute the ن - ص - ر with three other letters then the meaning changes and everything else stays the same. The letters of food are ط (*Taa*) - ع (*ayn*) - م (*meem*). The word طعام

means “food”, so if I say اسْتَطَعُوا the translation of the structure becomes *they sought food*. Clearly the help is coming from the particular 3 consonants in the middle.

3) The **past tense**. The translation is *they sought help*, it is not “they are seeking help, they seek help or they will seek help”. *Where is the past coming from?* It is coming from the absence of a particular prefix at the front. I know this because in order to respond accurately to the question “where is the past tense coming from?”, you would need to know the present and future tense verb which we will teach you in this video series. Very briefly for the purpose of our discussion, this present tense verb needs to start with ي (yaa), ت (taa), أ (hamzah with fatha) or ن (nun). Either يَسْتَنْتَ (yas-tan), تَسْتَنْتَ (tas-tan), أَسْتَنْتَ (as-tan) or نَسْتَنْتَ (nas-tan). In the absence of these 4 beginnings the verb above cannot be a present or future tense verb.

It is not a command verb either because the command verb has a particular vowel on the middle letter. *Istansiroom* means “seek help” when speaking to a group of males. Just that change in that one single vowel will transform from a past tense verb into a command verb. Since we don’t have a *kasra* (_____) instead we have a *fatha* (_____). *Where did the third meaning come from?* The absence of the prefix at the front and the *fatha* (_____) on the ص (saad) contributed and pinpointed the translation as a past tense verb.

4) The **active voice**. It could have been *help was sought from them*. I.e. The seekers are someone else, the people we are talking about are not the seekers but actually the object or the ones from whom the help was sought. If that was the case then the vowels would have been different. Everything else would still be the same. It would be أُسْتَنْتَ (us-tun). The question is *where did the active voice come from?* The answer is it came from **pure vowels**. The *kasra* (_____) on the hamzah (ا) at the front and the *fatha* (_____) on the ت (taa) and the ص (saad) all 3 vowels together contributed and gave us the active voice. *You might be asking yourself what is that hamzah (ا) at the front doing?* It is not circled and has an x on top of it (refer to video); we call it an *enabling hamzah*. It is allowing pronunciation with the *sukoon* (_____). The first letter س (seen) has a *sukoon* (_____), and you cannot initiate pronunciation with a *sukoon* (_____). In many Eastern languages they don’t have that so that is why for “school” they say “iskool” or “sakool”. If you were wondering why that was then that’s an advanced secret for you.

The next 3 meanings are to do with the pronoun. The translation is “they”, referring to a group of males, not females. All of that is coming from the و (*waaw*). That و (*waaw*) is telling us that:

- 5) We are talking about **males**.
- 6) It is indicating it is a **group** of males.
- 7) And we are talking **about** them.

Summary:

Let's go through them one by one.

1. The **initial help** coming from the ن (*nun*) - ص (*saad*) - ر (*raa*).
2. The **notion of seeking** coming from the س (*seen*) and ت (*taa*) highlighted in green.
3. The **past tense** coming from the absence of the letter that needed to be there for the present and future tense, and also the *fatha* (————) on the ص (*saad*).
4. The **active voice**, coming from the pure vowels.
5. **Masculine** gender of the subject.
6. **Plurality of the subject**
7. **Third person** aspect of the subject

This is very comprehensive because what looks like a single word is actually giving you 7 meanings. The majority of the meanings are not coming from the word (meaning from the consonants), they are coming from the pattern, they are non-word meanings.

I made a claim earlier that **in Arabic the majority of meanings do not come from the words but instead come from vowels and patterns**. I just highlighted that for you at the **word level**. *Insha'Allah* in the next video we will talk about this happening at the sentence level. This is the most powerful system on the planet. This is comprehensiveness at its max because what looked like a *single word* was actually conveying *seven meanings*. English tried to do it, but they needed three words: They sought help. Even that wasn't precise because “they” did not differentiate between males and females. Whereas our example was clearly males, because if I wanted to say “they group of females” I would have done it differently.

As you see this is very powerful. This is what the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant when he said: وَأَخْتَصِرَ لِيَ (I was given words of great comprehensive meaning) أَعْطَيْتُ جَوَامِعَ الْكَلِمِ (And speech was made concise for me). He was talking about his own aptitude and talent because he was more eloquent than most. But he was also talking about the language because the language has these things built into it. When you know this then you

end up learning more in a single day that you learnt in a whole year. This is why when one student drove 22 hours from Mississippi to our 6 month intensive course, she made a comment and said that because of that in one day of class I learned more than I learned in an entire year studying at Harvard. She said that what you need in a class is someone to explain to you how the language works.

To recap the big mistake that almost everyone is making with their Arabic studies is they start with the simple and gradually progress to the complex without being exposed to the system and big picture up front. What I'm here to do *insha'Allah* in this free series of videos is provide you as much of that big picture as I can.

In this first session I gave you an idea of how it happens at the word level or more to do with the approach. Here we weren't teaching much about the actual language, instead more about the approach. It is a limitation, a constraint that is holding you back. The amount of effort is easy, people can put in effort and do the required work, but the belief needs to be correct first because the logical constraint is much more difficult to fix than the physical constraint. Hopefully *insha'Allah* I was successful in doing that. In the next video we will move forward with actual aspects of the system, speaking about the parts of speech and we will introduce you to the heart of the Arabic language.