

**International Linguistic  
Association 54<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Conference**

April 3 - April 5, 2009

**Imagination And Language  
Learning And Teaching**

# **The Relationship between Syntax and Semantics in the case of Ma`ani Nahwi in Arabic Grammar and the idea of Modistae in Latin**

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# Introduction

- The research emphasizes on the connection between the Arabic concept of ma`ani nahwi and modistae in Latin. In order to identify this connection, the researcher has to elaborate on the role of Aristotle`s categories in influencing the concept of modistae in the Middle Ages then the paper will reevaluate of Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averoes. Then clarify the role of Jurjani in introducing his concept of Nazm. As a result of these also will enhance the understanding of the relationship between syntax and semantic.
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# The role of Jurjani In Introducing the concept of Nazm

- According to Jurjani, the relationship between syntax and semantics has not been effectively clarified within the framework of traditional Arabic grammatical theory.
- Thus, he differentiated between meaning and form in a sentence.
- In this case, the concept of nazm combines three aspects, they are:– 1) *lafza hamil*
- 2) *ma`na bihi qaaim* 3) *Ribaat lahuma naazim*

- To produce a nazm the construction of lafaz and rabaat must be constructed together. This construction called eloquence or fasohah.
- This means that the production of eloquence or *fasohah* is not depended on single words only in producing a meaning.
- In his major contribution to the discussion about the *`ejaz al-Qur'an* he concentrated on *ma`ani* (meaning) and *lafz* (expression). Both concepts have been subject to debate between logicians and grammarians.

- ▶ According to logicians, the meanings are the logical ideas that were signified by the expressions.
  - ▶ Otherwise the grammarians concentrated on the functions of the words.
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- ▶ The idea of semantic as forwarded by Jurjani was taken up by as-Sakkaki (d.1229M) the author of *Miftah al-Ulum* “key of the sciences”, in which he introduced the term of ilmu al-adab as the name for a new science, which was to embrace all sciences that in one way or another dealt with language.

- ▶ We can conclude that the special meaning of *nazm* exists when the meaning is quoted after the process of entering *siyak* السياق such as *mubtada`* existed cause of *khobar*. To exemplify this, المنطلق زيد *al-muntoliqu Zaydun* means ‘the one who leaves is zayd’, زيد المنطلق *Zaydun al-muntoliqu*, Zayd is the one who leaves, and also فاعل *feil* (agent) existed cause of فعل *feil* (verb) and so on.

- ▶ Accordingly, we can say that the originality of al-Jurjani as a rhetorician is very clear when he linked his view on meaning as the determining factor in the quality of a text to a linguist dimension by considering it not in isolation but always as it is realized within a coherent text composition or cohesion or نظم (nazm).

- ▶ To support the ideas above, I will enclose some remarks on the system which show that the concept of meaning is powerful via the concept of إعراب `irab and عامل `amil.
- ▶ The first example is ﴿لَوْ لَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ﴾ the word وَأَكُنْ ` wa `kun sukun by the thinking of تَوَهَّمُ شَرْطِي *tawahhum sharli* (Sibawayh, *al-Kitab*, 3 / 117)

- The second example is accusative cause by the removal of genitive jar *an-tanazu ala al-khafid* which means the removal of the genitive is a result of accusative on the governee or ma`mul.
- The third example is العطف على المحل *al-`a tofala al-mahalli* it is *al-`athar al-ma`nawi* or understanding of meaning according to the implicit item (Karim, Abdullah Ahmad Jaad, *at-Tawahhum Inda an-Nuhah*, p.161) such as Allah said:

• ﴿ وما يعزب عن ربك من مثقال ذرّة في الأرض ولا في السماء ولا أصغر من ذلك ولا أكبر ﴾

- Yunus: 6.

- ▶ The fourth example is *al-ittisol wa-inqito` bisababi al-ma`ana* connection or disconnection because of meaning such as Allah said: ﴿ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعُ الظَّنِّ ﴾ . An-Nisa` : 157.

- ▶ From the above analysis, it has become clear that *nahw* investigates into the syntactic relation between the words of an utterance. These examples are basically concerned with the function of case endings in the sentence. The kinship between *nahw* and concept of *balagah* is thus self-explanatory.

- ▶ In expressing the realm of *ma`ani*, it is concerned with the means of making the utterances express the desired meaning with utmost exactitude through a number of syntactical devices such as conjunction and disjunction and also the relation between subject and predicate

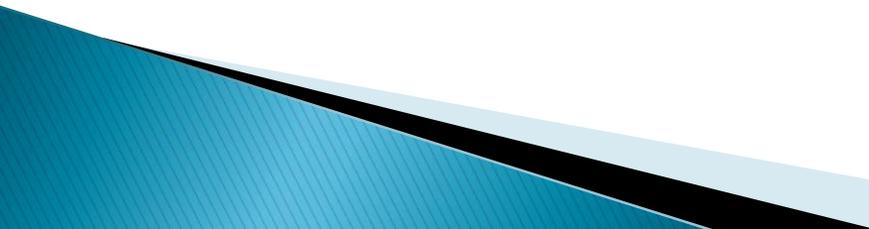
- ▶ In other words, without the expression of a desired meaning, the concept of understanding the meaning could not be produced.
  - ▶ Actually, more studies are needed on the relationship between *nahw* and its meaning to further clarify this relation, especially in terminology.
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# Brief History of Modistae

- The Modistae (also called speculative grammarians) were a school of grammarians of the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD (Vivien Law, *Grammar and Grammarians in the Early Middle Ages*, 1997, p.267).
- Most of them were active in northern France, Germany, Britain and Denmark, their influence being much less felt in the Southern part of Europe with its opposing tradition of the so-called ‘pedagogical grammar’.

- ▶ Their philosophy was based on a tripartite theory of modes via modes of being (*modi essendi*) or properties of real world entities, modes of understanding (*modi intelligendi*) of the mind and modes of signifying (*modi significandi*) or grammatical properties which directly reflected the *modi intelligendi*.

- ▶ According to Modistae, the various parts of speech were viewed as representing reality in terms of these modes.
  - ▶ Thus, modistae stands for those who attempted to trace a systematic relationship between the reality thought and words.
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- From the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards, the incorporation of Aristotle`s logic began to play a very important role in the logicisation of grammar. The latter became available from the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD (G.L. Bursill-Hall, *Speculative Grammars of the Middle Ages*, 1971 p.37–38).
  - As a result of this, grammar became associated with the formulation of concepts of reality and the expression of language.
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- ▶ From the darkest period to the intellectual revival of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the learning especially of grammar was encouraged by Charlemagne. At that time, grammar as a science had not seen any progress.
  - ▶ It was defined as the art of speaking and writing in interpreting the poets only.
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- ▶ In the 2<sup>nd</sup> period of the Middle Ages, grammar came to be regarded as a prerequisite for all scholarship. This state continued until the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century which culminated in the complete philosophy of language of the modistae (G.L.Bursill Hall, 1971, p.23).
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- From this stage, there were four important stages which are closely connected to the intellectual history of this period in as far as grammar is concerned:- the discovery of Aristotle and the associated or concomitant introduction of logic into grammar, the influence of Peter Helias (d.1140 AD) and William of Coches, the triumph of the grammarians over the humanist school such as against the rising influence of logic in the school of Paris and the constitution of speculative grammar establishing. (1971, p.23).

- In contrast to Chomsky's TG (Transformational Grammar), the Modistae always took the relationship between syntax and semantics as closely linked. They called grammatical features *modi significandi* because they saw each feature as an aspect of the way meaning is encoded.
  - So, accounted by influencing these above mentioned stages, we can say that the modistae dealt a lot with logic and words in grammatical concepts.
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# Meaning as a Logical Approach

- The Modistae Grammar concept as a dependency framework does not provide phrase structure rules.
- Let us discuss a minor concept in the construction of the modistae concept in sentences, such as the construction of `*homo currit*` “The man runs” is an intransitive construction in which a verb has an immediate dependence on the substantive which represents the first constructable.

- ▶ In analytic approach, it would be considered as follows: There is at least one individual, a man, and he is running; or more simply: Something that was a man (regardless of whether it still is or not) has run, or there is at least one individual, which is a man and that it has been the case that he is running, or more simply. Something that is now a man has run.

- However, Radhulphus adopts the fundamental distinction between intransitive and transitive construction.
- This can be divided into four basic constructions :–intransitive construction of acts such as *Socrates currit*, Socrates runs, intransitive construction of persons such as *homo albus*, white man, transitive construction of acts such as *lego librum*, I am reading a book, and transitive construction of persons such as *cappa Socratis*, Socrates' cloak (1994, p.299).

- ▶ In another case, Thomas of Erfurt believed the concept of suppositum (noun phrase) and appositum (verb phrase) such as *Socrates percutit Plato*, Socrates bit Plato, depends on the term of verb either oblique or not which follows it in a verb + oblique construction (1994, p.300). Therefore, he concentrated on the meaning of the word in the sentence.
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- We can say, the aim of the grammarians to explore how a word matched things apprehended by the mind and how it signified reality was quite successfully realized. Since a word cannot signify the nature of reality directly, it must stand for the thing signified in one of its modes or properties such as being, understanding and signifying; it is this discrimination of modes that the study of categories and parts of speech is all about.

# The Role of Arab Logicians in Enhancing the Concept of Meaning

- ▶ Even though, some of the modesties claimed that the idea of modistae was taken from the idea of Aristotle directly, we cannot deny the contributions of Arab logicians – whereby they lived in the golden period of Muslims – enhanced the concept of meaning in the sentence structure.
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- This statement has been supported by Prof. Bursill Hall when his statement was *“Nevertheless, the attention paid to syntax by the grammarians of the later 12<sup>th</sup> century laid the basis for the continued close association between logic and grammar, a relationship fruitful enough to create a logical grammar within the domain of grammar and which culminated in the speculative grammars of the modesties. This was a development from the result of the full assimilation of the `new` Aristotle and the works of the Arab logicians”*(1971, p.29).

- Charles E. Butterworth in his book highlighted the similar statement by saying “*Aristotle’s writing found a much more receptive audience on the other side of the Mediterranean as learning on his writings flourished in Constantinople, Edessa and Antioch. When the School of Alexandria was forced to close, it moved to Antioch in Syria. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, many of Aristotle’s writings had been translated into Syriac. This activity continued until some of Syriac translations were rendered into Arabic. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the school moved to Baghdad*” (Charles E. Butterworth, *Averroes` Middle Commentaries on Aristotle`s Categories and De Interpretatione*, 1983, p xi).

- ▶ This statement has been proved by Ahmad Amin when he introduced a number of specialists translated Greek philosophy and science within Islamic world such as Hunain bin Ishak, Yahya bin Bitriq and Ibn al-Muqaffa' (Amin, Ahmad, *Dhuha al-Islam*, vol 1, pp 298 and 313).

- ▶ Due to, the translation of Greek philosophy had gone through a process of serious endeavours when the translation from Arabic into Hebrew occurred in the time of Islamic Spain and then into Latin in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to this, the writings of Aristotle were unknown in Western regions. Arabic and Syriac translations were based on Andronikus Greek edition of Aristotle writings.
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- In the East, they had been studied and commented by al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, then in the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> century followed by Averroes.
- Even after the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204 and the discovery of new Greek manuscripts, the most complete translations of Aristotle`s works were still those done from Arabic (Charles E.Butterworth, 1983, p xi).

- The researcher wants to highlight some of the tremendous contribution of Averroes in enhancing the ideas of Aristotle when he translated the `Categories` in his `Middle commentary on Aristotle`s categories`, thereby giving a big impact on the development of the modistae in Europe and, as it seems, this is the starting point in the progress of understanding Aristotle`s categories in the Middle Ages.

- ▶ In supporting the idea, Charles E. Butterworth wrote *without exaggeration, the beginnings of scholarship in the later middle ages can be traced to the effect this newly found legacy had upon western Europe, especially to the effect it had upon such important thinkers as John of Salisbury, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon* ( 1985, p.xi).

- ▶ According to our understanding from his view, in order to start something he gave an example of man and horse where to differentiate between human and animal, as both of them have relationship of depending on each other, as in `Zayd rode a white horse last year`.

- ▶ The words Zayd and horse are understood by the listener when they have been combined. It also gives a new meaning when it comes with the new word 'white', it is a white horse, the word white showed the concept of quality in the sentence and is called adjective.

- ▶ The analysis shows that he concentrated more on meaning where it has a relation with the concept of thinking, i.e. there is relation between words and mind which depends on the logic of utterances when combined.

- ▶ This statement is look like the nazm introduced by al-Jurjani in his book *Dalaila al-`ejaz* when the understood that the sentence is depending on the connection of meanings in utterances.

# Conclusion

- ▶ In conclusion, the connection between *Ma`ani an-Nahwi* in Arabic and the idea of Modistae in Latin is able to prove that the relationship between the concept of thinking in Arabic grammar and semantic, and the concept of modesties – without exaggeration – existed especially when some of the learned men from Latin were students of Averroes have previously been called Averroists.

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