

Syntactic Government and Expository Principles in The Treatment of Vocatives in Kifāyat Al-Naḥw

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Abstract: The Arabic vocative presents a problem of grammatical description because its syntactic position does not always correspond to an overt accusative ending. This article examines how Ziyā' al-Dīn al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī explains that relationship in Kifāyat al-naḥw fī 'ilm al-i'rāb. A qualitative philological analysis is applied to the vocative passages transcribed in the study materials from manuscript no. 10518, held at the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Selected comparisons with al-Zamakhsharī's Al-Mufaṣṣal and al-Sakkākī's Miftāḥ al-'ulūm contextualize the treatment within classical Arabic grammar. The analysis identifies four connected expository principles: locating the vocative within accusative government; conditioning overt case marking on nominal structure and referential specificity; distinguishing surface form from syntactic position in dependent expressions; and extending the basic account to constructions of mediation, possession, and expressive address. The findings support an interpretation of the discussion as a coherent account of grammatical government rather than a list of vocative forms. Its distinctive value lies in the organization and integration of established grammatical explanations. The study does not claim the invention of these rules or establish direct influence on later grammarians. Its conclusions remain limited to the transmitted excerpts and bibliographic evidence available for analysis.

Keywords: Arabic vocative, syntactic government, grammatical exposition, Kifāyat al-naḥw, al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, Arabic grammatical tradition.

Introduction: The vocative, traditionally termed al-munādā, brings together syntax, reference, and the communicative act of address. Its description requires an explanation of why some addressed nouns display an accusative ending while others retain a fixed form associated with the nominative. A precise account must therefore distinguish overt inflection from syntactic position and identify the conditions under which each pattern occurs. This distinction is especially important when describing the principles through which a classical grammatical manual organizes its material.

Kifāyat al-naḥw fī 'ilm al-i'rāb offers a useful case for such an investigation. In the passages considered here, al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī treats the vocative within the

discussion of al-maf'ūl bihi, the direct object, rather than presenting it simply as an independent item in an inventory of accusative nouns. The placement connects address with an underlying governing expression whose omission forms part of the grammatical analysis (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fol. 35a). It also creates a framework for explaining why a noun can occupy an accusative position without displaying an ordinary accusative ending.

The comparative setting is supplied by al-Zamakhsharī's Al-Mufaṣṣal fī 'ilm al-'Arabiyyah and al-Sakkākī's Miftāḥ al-'ulūm. The former provides relevant parallels in the treatment of vocative constructions and specification, while the latter offers a comparable discussion of address and related expressions (al-

Sakkākī, 1987, pp. 102, 109; al-Zamakhsharī, 2003, pp. 62, 67). These parallels provide a basis for assessing explanatory emphasis. They do not, by themselves, demonstrate direct borrowing or establish a historical chain of influence.

The article asks how the placement of the vocative relates to grammatical government, how structural and referential conditions determine its form, and how the discussion develops from a general rule to dependent and specialized constructions. Its contribution is a focused reconstruction of this explanatory sequence. The analysis concentrates on the author's organization of grammatical reasoning rather than expanding the subject into a general survey of all rules of address.

METHODS

Research design and textual basis

The study uses qualitative philological analysis and selective comparison of grammatical explanations. The immediate evidence consists of the Arabic examples, Uzbek exposition, and manuscript locators preserved in the supplied working text. The primary work is identified there as manuscript no. 10518 in the collection of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. The principal vocative passages are assigned to folios 35a–46a; the adjacent discussion of specification is assigned to folio 46b. These locators are retained as reported references, not as the results of a new examination of manuscript images (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fols. 35a–46b).

This is an analysis of transmitted excerpts, not a critical edition or a collation of manuscript witnesses. The material permits examination of the reported sequence of rules and examples, but it does not permit independent verification of handwriting, marginal additions, original vocalization, or the completeness of individual excerpts. Accordingly, Arabic examples are romanized with explicit grammatical endings where necessary for clarity; they are not presented as diplomatic reproductions of the manuscript.

Selection and analytical procedure

Passages were selected when they directly concerned the placement, government, form, or exposition of the vocative. Each was examined for the grammatical category being explained, the relevant condition, the form predicted by that condition, and the explanatory

function of the example. Particular attention was given to the relationship between surface form, traditionally described as *lafz*, and syntactic position, termed *maḥall* or *mawḍiʿ*.

The comparison was restricted to relevant passages and locators already identified in the working text for Al-Mufaṣṣal and Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm. References unrelated to vocatives were excluded. Citations lacking a recoverable bibliographic entry were not retained as independent evidence. The sections on object omission and clause-initial accusatives were also excluded because they would require a separate study of object government. The adjoining construction of specification was retained only to clarify the boundary between address and a formally related accusative construction.

Arabic technical terms are transliterated consistently, and examples are translated into English according to their grammatical function. Construct position is distinguished from number: *mufrad* in this context means a noun that is neither a construct head nor construct-like, rather than necessarily a morphologically singular noun. Manuscript references use folio numbers with a and b for the two sides of a leaf. Author–date citations identify the consulted editions or the undated manuscript; no conjectural composition dates are supplied.

RESULTS

The vocative as an expression governed by an omitted element

The first organizing feature is the treatment of the vocative through an obligatorily omitted governing expression. At the opening of the relevant discussion, the vocative is included among accusative expressions whose governing element must remain unexpressed (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fol. 35a). The governing expression is therefore part of the grammatical explanation even though it does not occur as an overt verb in ordinary address.

The example *yā ʿAbda Allāhi*, “O ʿAbd Allāh,” illustrates this relationship. Its construct structure licenses an overt accusative form on ʿAbd. The analysis relates that form to an understood act of directing speech toward an addressee. Reconstructions such as “I mean” explain the presumed grammatical government; they should not be mistaken for literal translations of the utterance.

The communicative meaning remains direct address.

This opening provides a reason for placing vocatives within object-related accusative constructions. It also anticipates the need to distinguish an accusative syntactic position from a visibly accusative ending. Consequently, the placement is explanatory: it introduces the governing relation before the text divides vocatives into their formal subtypes.

Nominal structure and referential specificity as conditions on form

The next stage identifies three environments for an overtly accusative vocative: a construct expression, a construct-like expression, and a non-specific indefinite expression. In *yā ghulāma Zaydin*, “O servant of Zayd,” the head noun is accusative because the vocative is a construct expression. The same pattern appears in *yā rasūla Allāhi*, “O Messenger of God” (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fols. 35a–36b).

A construct-like vocative contains a dependent element that completes its meaning without forming an ordinary possessive construct. The example *yā dāriban Zaydan*, “O you who strike Zayd,” contains an active participle followed by its object. Similarly, *yā khayran min Zaydin*, “O you who are better than Zayd,” contains a comparative expression completed by a prepositional phrase. The accusative ending belongs to the addressed expression, while the following constituent explains why it is classified as construct-like.

Referential specificity supplies a different condition. In *yā rajulan khudh bi-yadī*, “O man, take my hand,” the appeal is directed toward an unspecified person. The accusative *rajulan* marks the non-specific indefinite vocative. By contrast, *yā rajulu aqbil*, “O man, come here,” addresses an intended individual. The difference concerns the identification of the addressee, not merely whether the noun has the definite article.

The proper-name vocative *yā Zaydu*, “O Zayd,” and the intended-indefinite vocative *yā rajulu* belong to the fixed-form pattern. They are built on *ḍamm* in an accusative syntactic position. Calling them simply nominative would conceal the distinction on which the explanation depends. Their final vowel resembles a nominative ending, but their grammatical status is not that of an ordinarily inflected nominative noun (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fol. 36b).

Surface form and syntactic position in dependent expressions

The distinction between form and position becomes more visible in the account of dependents. The working text reports that certain non-construct modifiers of a fixed-form vocative may follow either its surface form or its accusative position. Thus, *yā Zaydu al-ẓarīfu* and *yā Zaydu al-ẓarīfa* both mean “O eloquent Zayd,” but they represent different grammatical alignments. The nominative modifier follows the visible *ḍamm*-based form; the accusative modifier follows the syntactic position of the vocative (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fol. 37b).

The discussion extends comparable reasoning to particular coordinated and emphatic expressions. The significance is analytical rather than a claim that all dependents behave identically. The eligibility of a dependent for alternative case forms remains conditioned by its construction. In particular, the reported account assigns the accusative to a dependent adjective that itself forms a construct expression. These restrictions prevent the form–position distinction from becoming an unrestricted license for variation.

The result is a layered explanation. The noun’s construction determines whether it is overtly inflected or fixed; the dependent’s construction then determines whether agreement follows the surface form or the underlying position. A single example can therefore illustrate two levels of grammatical reasoning. The passage is valuable because it makes those levels work together within one account of vocative government.

Mediated address and the limits of direct attachment

The construction *yā ayyuhā al-rajulu*, “O man,” supplies another example of conditioned exposition. In the reported explanation, *ayyu* functions as the vocative and *al-rajulu* as its following descriptor; *hā* is the intervening particle of attention. The descriptor appears in the nominative. The construction thus mediates address to a noun carrying the definite article rather than treating every definite noun as directly attachable to *yā* (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fol. 40b).

The expression *yā Allāhu*, “O God,” is treated as an exception to the ordinary restriction on direct address to a noun with *al-*. Al-Sakkākī’s discussion supplies a relevant comparison concerning the exceptional status

of the divine name (al-Sakkākī, 1987, p. 102). The comparison helps identify the scope of the restriction without requiring a broad claim about the historical origin of the article in that name.

Possessive and expressive extensions of the basic account

The discussion subsequently moves to vocatives connected with the first-person possessive ending. Forms corresponding to “my servant” are explained through retention, omission, or alteration of that ending. The reported examples show that the explanation proceeds from a recognizable base expression to reduced or modified forms. The form *yā rabbāh*, “O my Lord,” also illustrates the interaction of address with expressive extension and a final *hā* associated with pausal pronunciation (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fol. 42a).

Related passages concern lamentation, appeals for help, and exclamation. Their grammatical role is to show how the basic construction of address is modified by communicative purpose. The working text locates the discussion of the open-vowel *lām* used in appeals and expressive address at folio 44a, with a comparison to al-Zamakhsharī’s discussion of related poetic evidence (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fol. 44a; al-Zamakhsharī, 2003, p. 62). The comparison supports a shared grammatical setting; variation in examples alone does not prove a different doctrine.

The treatment of truncation, *tarkhīm*, adds restrictions concerning the type and structure of the addressed name. The reported account connects truncation with proper names, excludes construct expressions and certain expressive uses, and imposes a length condition in the examples considered (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fol. 45a). These conditions are best understood as the restrictions reported in this passage, rather than an exhaustive statement of every exception discussed across the grammatical tradition.

The boundary between address and specification

The adjoining discussion of specification, *ikhtiṣāṣ*, clarifies why surface resemblance does not establish grammatical identity. In *naḥnu āla fulānin kuramā’u*, “We, the family of so-and-so, are generous,” the accusative phrase identifies the group intended by the pronoun. It does not call upon an addressee. The explanation therefore concerns an omitted expression

of specification rather than an act of address (al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, n.d., fol. 46b).

The comparison with Al-Mufaṣṣal and Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm shows the relevance of distinguishing communicative purpose from case form: the specification reading must be identified even when an accusative expression resembles a vocative construction (al-Sakkākī, 1987, p. 109; al-Zamakhsharī, 2003, p. 67). This boundary reinforces the broader finding that grammatical analysis depends on structure and function together.

DISCUSSION

Expository coherence and scholarly significance

The findings support four connected principles of exposition. First, the discussion begins with government, giving a reason for the vocative’s accusative position before describing its formal subtypes. Second, it attaches grammatical outcomes to conditions, especially construct structure and the intended identification of the addressee. Third, it distinguishes surface form from syntactic position when explaining dependent expressions. Fourth, it develops specialized constructions as extensions of a basic account rather than as unrelated exceptions.

These principles explain the importance of the material more precisely than a general claim that the work is concise or pedagogically useful. Its organization allows the reader to connect an underlying relation with observable forms and then apply the distinction to increasingly specific constructions. The contribution identified here is therefore expository: the sequence integrates government, nominal structure, reference, and dependency within a compact treatment.

Comparison with al-Zamakhsharī and al-Sakkākī situates this organization within a shared classical grammatical framework. The evidence supports continuity in grammatical categories and explanatory concerns. It does not establish that al-Makkī originated the distinction between form and position, nor does it prove that later authors obtained their analyses from *Kifāyat al-naḥw*. Demonstrating such claims would require fuller textual correspondences, a controlled comparison of sources, and evidence of transmission.

Interpretive limitations

The principal limitation is the dependence on excerpts and reported locators rather than a fresh examination

of the manuscript. This affects the verification of individual readings, foliation, and the relation between quoted Arabic and explanatory paraphrase. The comparisons are also selective and do not constitute a complete analysis of the vocative chapters in all three works. The article therefore identifies a defensible explanatory pattern within the available material without claiming a comprehensive reconstruction of the author's entire grammatical system.

Some items in the working text were unsuitable for firm conclusions. In particular, unattributed or incompletely documented comparisons could not support claims about scholarly influence. Ambiguous poetic translations and potentially corrupt truncation examples were not reproduced as proof. A subsequent manuscript-based study should verify these passages against images, recover the complete verse contexts, and compare the relevant editions before using them to establish textual variants or distinctive doctrinal positions.

CONCLUSION

The treatment of vocatives in the examined passages of *Kifāyat al-naḥw* is organized around the relationship between grammatical government and the conditions determining nominal form. Its placement within object-related accusative constructions supplies the initial framework; the distinction between overt accusative forms and fixed forms in an accusative position supplies the central analytical tool. The treatment of dependents and specialized address constructions develops that tool through progressively narrower conditions.

The article's central finding is that the scholarly value of this discussion lies in its integrated exposition of established grammatical reasoning. The available evidence supports a structured relationship between rule, condition, example, and extension. It does not establish doctrinal invention or direct influence. Verification against manuscript images and fuller comparative readings remains necessary for stronger historical and textual claims.

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