ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

USMAN NOTES
www.usmannotes.com

Name:

Registration No.:

Course Code: 1919

Program: BS

Semester: Autumn 2026

ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

Course: Arabic Grammar (1919) • Level: BS

Semester: Autumn 2026

Assignment No. 1

Total Marks: 100 • Pass Marks: 50

SOLVED ASSIGNMENT GUIDE

(For Study & Reference)

USMAN NOTES www.usmannotes.com

Note: This guide is prepared for study and reference purposes. Students are advised to read the relevant units of the course book, understand the concepts, and write the assignment in their own words.

Question 1: Kalimah and Its Three Essential Components (20 Marks)

Define Kalimah and explain its three essential components in detail.

Introduction

Every science begins by fixing the meaning of its smallest unit, and Arabic grammar (al-nahw) is no exception. Before a student can analyse a sentence, understand case endings, or translate a single line of classical Arabic, he must first know what a word is in the technical sense of the grammarians. That technical unit is the kalimah. The whole edifice of Arabic grammar rests on

this one concept, because sentences (al-kalam) are built out of words, and words in Arabic fall into a small, closed and beautifully ordered system of classes. The famous opening lines of the classical primer al-Ajurrumiyyah state the programme of the entire science in a few words: speech is composed of three kinds of word — ism (noun), fi'l (verb) and harf (particle). This answer first defines kalimah precisely, then explains each of its three essential components in detail, giving the signs by which each class is recognised, examples of each, and the reason why the division is exactly threefold and not more or less.

It is important at the outset to distinguish kalimah from two neighbouring terms. A mere sound or string of letters is called lafz, while kalimah is a lafz that has been assigned a single, independent meaning by the convention of the language. Likewise kalimah must be distinguished from kalam, which is a complete utterance composed of at least two words that delivers a full benefit to the listener, such as 'Zaydun qa'imun' (Zayd is standing). A single kalimah, by contrast, gives only a partial meaning that waits for other words to complete it. With this background, the definition and its three parts can now be taken up one by one.

Definition of Kalimah

The classical definition, given by Ibn Malik in the Alfiyyah and repeated in almost every grammar book since, is: al-kalimah is a word (lafz) that has been conventionally assigned to a single meaning (ma'na mufrad). Each element of this short definition does real work. 'Lafz' restricts the term to actual uttered sounds made of letters of the alphabet; written marks that are never pronounced, and meanings that exist only in the mind, are not kalimah. 'Conventionally assigned' (wudi'a) means that the link between the sound and the meaning is

not natural but established by the original imposition (al-wad') of the language and confirmed by the usage of the Arabs; this is why a reversed or invented string of letters with no agreed meaning is not a kalimah, a point developed fully in the next question of this assignment. 'A single meaning' (mufrad) excludes compound expressions: 'Abdullah as a proper name is one kalimah because it names one person, whereas a phrase such as 'the teacher of the school' contains several kalimah, each with its own single meaning.

A second classical formulation defines kalimah simply as 'a single word' (qawl mufrad), and the grammarians then divide it exhaustively into three: ism, fi'l and harf. The division is exhaustive by logical necessity. A word either gives a meaning by itself or it does not. If it does not — if its meaning appears only in combination with another word — it is a harf. If it does give a meaning by itself, then either that meaning is associated with one of the three times (past, present or future) or it is not. If it is not associated with time, it is an ism; if it is, it is a fi'l. There is no fourth possibility, which is why Arabic, like Greek and Latin grammar before it, organises its entire vocabulary under these three heads, and why every dictionary entry and every parsing exercise (i'rab) begins by assigning each word to one of the three.

Figure: The Three Components of Kalimah

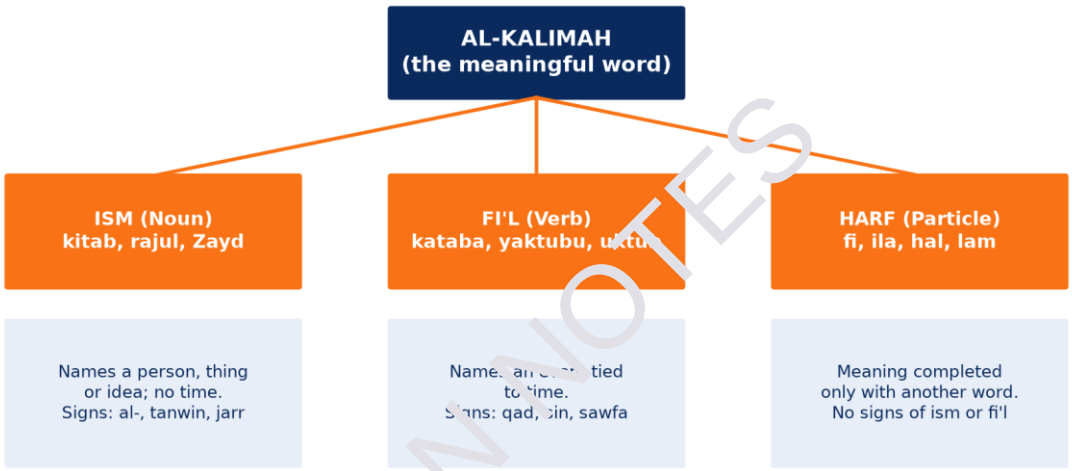


Figure 1: Al-Kalimah divides into exactly three components — ism (noun), fi'l (verb) and harf (particle).

First Component: Al-Ism (The Noun)

Al-ism is a word that indicates a meaning in itself, without that meaning being associated with any time. It names a person, a place, a thing, a quality or an idea: rajulun (a man), Makkatu (Makkah), kitabun (a book), 'ilmun (knowledge), shaja'atun (courage). The absence of time is the decisive test. The word kitabun tells us what the object is, but it does not tell us when anything happened; the meaning is timeless, which is precisely what distinguishes the noun from the verb, whose meaning is always anchored in time.

Because the noun carries no time, it receives a family of formal signs by which it can be recognised wherever it occurs. The grammarians, following the Ajurrumiyyah, list them as follows. First, al-jarr: a noun can be governed in the genitive by a preposition or by annexation, so any word ending in kasra or its substitutes for a grammatical reason is a noun, as in 'fi'l-bayti'

(in the house). Second, al-tanwin: the double vowel ending (kitabun, kitaban, kitabin) attaches only to nouns. Third, al-nida': a noun can be called with the vocative particle, as in 'ya rajulu' (O man!). Fourth, the definite article al-: 'al-kitabu' can only be a noun, because al- never enters upon a verb or a particle. Fifth, al-isnad: a noun can have something predicated of it — one can say 'Zaydun 'alimun' (Zayd is learned) — and it can serve as subject or object in a sentence. Pronouns, demonstratives and relative pronouns are all counted within the ism class, a point that matters for Question 4 of this assignment.

The noun is also the most flexible of the three components in its grammatical behaviour. It alone passes through the full system of i'rab: it is raised (marfu') as subject, lowered (mansub) as object, and drawn (majrur) after a preposition, and these case states form the subject matter of Assignment No. 2. It is masculine or feminine (Question 3), singular, dual or plural, definite or indefinite. In short, the ism supplies the 'things' of the sentence — the actors, the objects and the topics about which everything else is said.

Second Component: Al-Fi'l (The Verb)

Al-fi'l is a word that indicates a meaning in itself, with that meaning associated with one of the three times. It names an event — an action or a state — and places it in time: kataba (he wrote — past), yaktubu (he writes or will write — present and future), uktub (write! — a command seeking the act in the time after the command). Time is therefore not an accidental addition to the verb; it is part of its very definition, built into its form. Change the form and you change the time, which is why Arabic morphology (al-sarf) is largely the study of how verb forms are generated.

The verb too has its own recognisable signs, none of which can attach to a noun. They are: qad, which enters upon past and present verbs (qad kataba, qad yaktubu); the letter sin and the word sawfa, which mark the future (sa-yaktubu, sawfa yaktubu); and ta' al-ta'nith al-sakinah, the quiescent 't' of the feminine attached to the end of the past verb (katabat — she wrote). A word accepting any of these signs is certainly a verb. Verbs divide by time into three: al-madi (the past), al-mudari' (the present-future, so named because it resembles the noun in accepting i'rab), and al-amr (the command). The verb is studied in full as the core component of kalimah in Question 5 of this assignment, and its conjugation patterns form Question 1 of Assignment No. 2.

Functionally, the verb is the engine of the sentence. In a verbal sentence (al-jumlah al-fi'liyyah) the verb comes first and governs what follows: it raises its doer (al-fa'il) and, if transitive, lowers its object (al-maf'ul bihi). Without a verb, a nominal sentence can still exist, but no action can be reported, no event narrated and no command issued. The Qur'an, history, poetry and everyday speech all move through verbs; that is why the grammarians place the fi'l at the heart of their analysis of speech.

Third Component: Al-Harf (The Particle)

Al-harf is a word that indicates a meaning not in itself but in another word. This is the subtlest of the three definitions. The particle fi (in) by itself delivers no complete idea to the mind; its meaning of containment or location appears only when it is joined to a noun, as in 'al-ma'u fi'l-kuzi' (the water is in the jug). Similarly ila (to, towards) shows its meaning of endpoint only in 'dhahaba ila'l-madrasati' (he went to the school), and the interrogative hal shows its meaning of

questioning only when prefixed to a sentence. The particle is therefore a relational word: it exists to connect, qualify or direct the meanings of nouns and verbs.

The negative sign of the harf is as important as its positive definition: it accepts neither the signs of the noun nor the signs of the verb. It cannot take al-, tanwin or jarr as a governed noun can, and it cannot take qad, sin or sawfa. It is also invariable in form: all particles are mabni (built on a fixed ending) and never change their final vowel for case, because they are never themselves subjects or objects. Particles are numerous and are classified by their functions: particles of jarr (min, ila, 'an, 'ala, fi, bi, ka, li and others), particles that govern the present verb in nasb (an, lan, kay, idhan), particles that govern it in jazm (lam, lamma, la of prohibition), particles of nasb that enter upon nominal sentences (inna and its sisters), vocative particles (ya, aya), interrogative particles (hal, the hamza), conjunctions (wa, fa, thumma) and many more.

Small as they are, particles carry an outsized share of the precision of Arabic. The difference between 'sirtu ila'l-bayti' (I travelled as far as the house) and 'sirtu fi'l-bayti' (I moved about inside the house) is entirely the work of ila and fi. Translators of the Qur'an and of classical texts know that a single particle can decide between two quite different meanings, which is why the study of huruf al-ma'ani (particles of meaning) became a discipline of its own within Arabic grammar.

Summary Table of the Three Components

Table 1: The three essential components of kalimah compared

Feature	Al-Ism (Noun)	Al-Fi'l (Verb)	Al-Harf (Particle)

Basic meaning	Names a person, thing or idea	Names an event tied to time	Meaning appears only in another word
Relation to time	No time in its meaning	Past, present or future	No time of its own
Chief signs	Al-, tanwin, jarr, vocative ya	Qad, sin, sawfa, ta' al-ta'nith	Accepts neither noun nor verb signs
Examples (transliterated)	kitabun, rajulun, 'ilmun	kataba, yaktubu, uktub	fi, ila, hal, lam, inna
I'rab behaviour	Fully declined: raf', nasb, jarr	Mudari' declined; madi and amr mabni	Always mabni, never declined
Role in the sentence	Subject, object, topic, complement	Predicate and governor of doer/object	Connects and qualifies other words

USMAN NOTES www.usmannotes.com

The table summarises the whole doctrine at a glance: the three classes are distinguished first by meaning — timeless naming, time-bound event, and relational meaning — and then confirmed by formal signs and by behaviour in the sentence. A student who can apply this threefold test to any word he meets has already mastered the first and most frequently used tool of Arabic grammar.

Conclusion

To conclude, kalimah is the single word conventionally assigned to a single meaning, and it has exactly three essential components. The ism names a meaning in itself without time and is recognised by al-, tanwin, jarr, the vocative and predication. The fi'l names a meaning in itself together with one of the three times and is recognised by qad, sin, sawfa and the feminine ta'.

The harf names a meaning in another word, accepts the signs of neither of the other two, and serves to connect and qualify them. The division is logically complete, since a word must either mean something by itself or not, and if by itself, either with time or without it. Every later topic in this course — gender, pronouns, conjugation and the case systems of raf', nasb and jarr — is a detailed study of one corner of this threefold map, so the effort spent on mastering it here repays itself throughout the whole subject.

Question 2: Meaningful Words (Kalimah) and Meaningless Words (Muhmal) (20 Marks)

Differentiate between meaningful (Kalimah) and meaningless words (Muhmal) with examples.

Introduction

Human beings can pronounce far more combinations of letters than any language actually uses. The Arabic alphabet has twenty-eight letters, and even short combinations of two or three letters run into many thousands; yet the Arabs, in their classical speech, assigned meanings to only a portion of these possible forms and left the rest unemployed. Arabic linguistic science marked this difference with a precise pair of terms. A word that the language community adopted and loaded with a meaning is musta'mal — in use — and when it stands alone with its own single meaning it is the kalimah studied in Question 1. A pronounceable form that was never given a meaning is called muhmal, from a root suggesting something neglected or left unused, like a camel turned loose without a keeper. This answer explains both terms, sets out

the points of difference between them in an ordered way, gives examples of each, and shows why the distinction matters practically for dictionaries, for grammar and for reading classical texts.

The distinction belongs originally to lexicography (ilm al-lughah) and to the theory of al-wad', the original imposition of meanings on sounds. Sibawayh and the early lexicographers such as al-Khalil ibn Ahmad, who arranged his dictionary Kitab al-'Ayn by the points of articulation, were well aware that the Arabs did not exploit every pattern the tongue can produce. Later scholars of usul and balaghah refined the discussion: is the connection between word and meaning natural or purely conventional? The consensus reflected in the grammar books is that it is conventional and known only by transmission (al-sama') from the Arabs themselves. Muhmal forms are the clearest proof of this conventionality: if meaning followed sound by nature, an unused combination would still suggest something, but in fact it suggests nothing at all.

USMAN NOTES www.usmannotes.com

Meaningful Words: Al-Kalimah (Al-Musta'mal)

A meaningful word is any uttered form that the speech community has assigned a definite meaning, so that hearing it brings that meaning to the mind of a competent listener without any further clue. Kitabun brings 'book' to mind, ma'un brings 'water', kataba brings the event of writing in past time. Three conditions are packed into this description. First, the form must be a genuine lafz, composed of the letters of the language in an order the tongue accepts. Second, there must have been an act of imposition or an unbroken usage by which the form was tied to that meaning; private invention by one speaker does not make a word, because language is a

social contract. Third, the meaning must actually be current — transmitted in the speech, poetry and prose that the dictionaries record — for a word is known to be meaningful only through attested usage (al-sama' wa'l-isti'mal).

Meaningful words are the entire working stock of the language. They alone enter into sentences, receive i'rab, are listed as headwords in dictionaries such as Lisan al-'Arab and al-Qamus al-Muhit, and are divided into ism, fi'l and harf. They can be clear in meaning or ambiguous, literal (haqiqah) or metaphorical (majaz), but in every case there is a meaning there to be discussed. Even a word whose meaning has become rare or restricted to poetry remains musta'mal so long as the tradition preserves it; grammarians call such words gharib, not muhmal, because their meanings are attested, however unfamiliar.

A useful sub-case is the word that was once used and later abandoned (al-musta'mal al-mahjur). Some forms recorded in the oldest poetry fell out of everyday speech as the language developed. These are still meaningful words in the eyes of the lexicographer, because the old texts give them meanings that can be recovered and explained. Muhmal is a stricter category than mahjur: a muhmal form was, so far as the tradition knows, never used with a meaning at all. Keeping these categories separate prevents confusion when a student meets an unfamiliar word in an old text: unfamiliarity is not meaninglessness, and the dictionary, not guesswork, decides which of the two he is facing.

Meaningless Words: Al-Muhmal

Al-muhmal is a pronounceable combination of letters that conforms to the sounds of Arabic but was never assigned a meaning by the Arabs and never entered their usage. It is, so to speak,

raw material that the language left on the shelf. The clearest way to produce examples is by permutation: take a meaningful root and rearrange or alter its letters into a form the lexicon does not record. From the sphere of the root k-t-b (kataba, kitab) the tradition recognises a family of used forms, but other theoretically possible arrangements of letters of similar shape — for example a string such as 'th-j-' built into a pattern like 'thajun' — carry no meaning whatsoever; no Arab ever called anything by such a name, and a listener who hears it understands nothing beyond the sounds themselves. Invented strings used in modern textbooks to illustrate the idea — forms like 'dayzun' or 'kazmun' pronounced on an Arabic pattern — are muhmal in exactly this sense: well-formed sounds with an empty meaning.

Lexicographers were systematic about muhmal material. Al-Khalil's Kitab al-'Ayn explicitly notes, for the letter combinations it surveys, which are musta'mal and which are muhmal, and al-Azhari and others continued the practice; one of the services of the great dictionaries is precisely to fence off the used vocabulary from the unused. Phonetic constraints explain part of the phenomenon: certain combinations, such as two letters articulated from exactly the same point in a harsh sequence, were avoided by Arabic taste, and some patterns were simply never needed, because a language needs only as many words as its speakers have meanings to express. Historical accident explains the rest: imposition is an act of a community at a time, and what was never imposed remains forever outside the language unless a later age deliberately revives it — which is in fact how modern Arabic academies coin terms for new inventions, by assigning meanings, sometimes to previously muhmal patterns, through the recognised processes of derivation (ishtiqaq) and arabisation (ta'rib).

It follows that muhmal is not the same as a foreign word, a mistaken word, or a meaningless utterance like the babble of a child or the sounds of animals. A foreign word has a meaning in its own language and may be naturalised; a mistake intends a meaning and misses its form; animal sounds are not composed of the letters of the language at all. Muhmal, strictly, is the well-formed but never-employed Arabic-shaped form. Nor is muhmal the same as a word used in jest or in the artificial exercises of the grammarians, who sometimes strung muhmal syllables together precisely to test whether metre or grammar could be discussed without meaning — a famous proof that form and meaning are separate layers of language.

Points of Difference Between Kalimah and Muhmal

Table 1: Kalimah (meaningful, musta'mal) and muhmal (meaningless) compared

Point of difference	Kalimah / Musta'mal	Muhmal
Meaning	Has a definite meaning assigned by convention	Has no meaning at all
Usage by the Arabs	Attested in speech, poetry and prose (sama')	Never used by the speech community
Effect on the listener	Brings a concept to the mind on hearing	Brings only sounds; the mind finds nothing
Place in grammar	Divided into ism, fi'l and harf; receives i'rab	Outside grammar; no class and no i'rab
Place in dictionaries	Listed as a headword with explanation	Not listed, or noted only to mark it unused
Use in sentences	Builds kalam; can be subject,	Cannot perform any sentence

	verb, object	function
Examples (transliterated)	kitabun (book), kataba (he wrote), fi (in)	'thajun', 'dayzun', 'kazmun' — forms with no recorded meaning

Beyond the table, four differences deserve emphasis in prose. The first concerns knowledge: a kalimah is known through naql, transmission from the community, whereas a muhmal form can be recognised as muhmal only negatively, by its absence from the transmitted lexicon — which is why no individual, however learned, can declare a new meaning for a muhmal string on his own authority. The second concerns composition: kalimah combine into kalam and convey benefit (fa'idah), while muhmal strings, however many are joined together, convey nothing, because zero added to zero remains zero. The third concerns change: a kalimah can develop, widen, narrow or turn metaphorical over the centuries, since living usage works upon it; a muhmal form has no history at all until the moment an academy or a community imposes a meaning on it, at which instant it ceases to be muhmal. The fourth concerns error: confusing one kalimah with another is a mistake of meaning, but treating a muhmal form as if it had a meaning is a mistake about the language itself, and the classical scholars counted inventing meanings for unattested forms among the serious faults of careless commentators.

Why the Distinction Matters

The distinction is not a museum piece; it does practical work in at least four areas. In lexicography, it defines the dictionary's boundary and protects the student from chasing phantom meanings in old manuscripts, where a copyist's slip can produce muhmal-looking

strings that must be corrected against the lexicon rather than interpreted. In grammar teaching, it explains why kalimah — and only kalimah — is the subject of nahw: i'rab is the change of endings for meanings that arise in composition, and where there is no meaning there is nothing for grammar to govern. In Qur'anic and literary studies, it underwrites the doctrine that the text's words are all meaningful Arabic of the purest usage; apparent obscurity is gharib to be explained from attested sources, never muhmal to be passed over. And in modern terminology work, the old category gives language academies a principled way to expand the vocabulary: assigning a technical meaning to an unused pattern is legitimate precisely because everyone understands that meaning begins at imposition — the same act whose absence defines the muhmal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, kalimah and muhmal are opposites divided by a single line: imposition and usage. The kalimah — the musta'mal word — is a form the Arabs loaded with a single meaning; it is understood on hearing, classified as ism, fi'l or harf, declined in sentences and recorded in dictionaries, as with kitabun, kataba and fi. The muhmal is a well-formed but unemployed form, never given a meaning, never used, performing no function and recorded, if at all, only to be marked as unused, as with invented strings like 'thajun' or 'dayzun'. Between them stands the whole conventional nature of language: sounds mean what a community has made them mean, and nothing more. A student who grasps this will use dictionaries correctly, read old texts with proper caution, and understand why grammar begins where meaning begins.

Question 3: Al-Jins (Gender) in Arabic Nouns and Its Two Types (20 Marks)

Explain the concept of Al-Jins (Gender) in Arabic nouns and its two types.

Introduction

A learner coming to Arabic from English quickly discovers that gender in Arabic is far more pervasive than in his own language. English reserves gender mainly for pronouns referring to people and animals — he, she, it — and leaves the mass of nouns untouched. Arabic, by contrast, classifies every single noun as either masculine (mudhakkar) or feminine (mu'annath), with no neuter class at all, and this classification is not decorative: it controls the form of the adjectives that describe the noun, the pronouns that replace it, the demonstratives that point to it and even the shape of the verb when the noun is its subject. The grammatical term for this classification is al-jins, literally 'genus' or 'kind'. This answer explains the concept of gender in the Arabic noun, sets out its two types with their sub-divisions, lists the recognised signs by which a feminine noun is known, and notes the practical consequences that make the topic indispensable for correct speech and correct i'rab.

It should be understood from the start that grammatical gender and natural sex overlap only partly. All nouns denoting male human beings and male animals are masculine, and all nouns denoting females are feminine; so far, grammar follows nature. But Arabic also assigns gender to thousands of inanimate nouns where no sex exists at all: al-shamsu (the sun) is feminine, al-qamaru (the moon) is masculine, al-babu (the door) is masculine, al-sayyaratu (the car) is feminine. These assignments are known by transmission and usage, not by logic, and the

feminine among them is often called mu'annath majazi or lafzi — feminine by convention or by form — as distinct from the truly feminine, mu'annath haqiqi. The two great types of gender, and the refinements inside the feminine type, are the heart of this answer.

The Concept of Gender in the Arabic Noun

Al-jins in the terminology of the grammarians is the classification of the noun into mudhakkar and mu'annath such that the rest of the sentence agrees with it accordingly. Gender is therefore a property of the noun (ism) alone; verbs and particles are not themselves masculine or feminine, though the verb changes its form to agree with a feminine subject — one says 'kataba'l-waladu' (the boy wrote) but 'katabat al-bintu' (the girl wrote), where the added ta' is a sign of agreement, not a gender of the verb itself. Likewise the adjective follows the noun: 'rajulun karimun' (a generous man) but 'imra'atun karimatun' (a generous woman), and the pronoun differs: huwa for a masculine referent, hiya for a feminine one.

Two principles govern the system. The first is that the masculine is the origin (al-asl) and the feminine is a branch (far') built upon it. This is shown by the fact that the masculine noun is normally bare and unmarked — rajulun needs no addition — whereas the feminine is very often marked by an extra letter, as in karimun becoming karimatun, and by the rule that mixed groups and general statements default to the masculine form: a gathering of men and women is addressed with the masculine plural. The second principle is that the gender of a noun is known by sama', the heard usage of the Arabs, supported for the feminine by a set of formal signs. Where a sign is present, the decision is easy; where it is absent, the dictionaries and the classical texts must be consulted, because usage, not the learner's guess, is the authority.

The First Type: Al-Mudhakkar (The Masculine)

Al-mudhakkar is the noun that is not marked for femininity and to which masculine agreement applies. It includes, first, all nouns denoting male persons and male animals in reality: rajulun (man), waladun (boy), asadun (lion), jamalun (camel), and proper names such as Muhammadun and Zaydun. Grammarians call this mudhakkar haqiqi when a real male is meant and its female counterpart exists. It includes, secondly, the vast body of inanimate and abstract nouns that Arabic usage treats as masculine without any idea of sex: bahrun (sea), nahrun (river), jabalu (mountain), 'ilmun (knowledge), waqtun (time). No sign is required for the masculine; the absence of the feminine signs, together with masculine agreement in the texts, establishes it.

The effects of masculinity run through the sentence. The verb preceding a masculine subject stands in its base form, the adjective and the demonstrative take masculine shapes — hadha kitabi (this is my book) as against hadhihi sayyarati (this is my car); the pronoun of reference is huwa; and the relative pronoun is alladhi rather than allati. In i'rab exercises the student must state gender because several endings and constructions depend on it — for example, a masculine sound plural is formed with -una/-ina, while the corresponding feminine sound plural is formed with -at. Mastering the masculine is therefore mostly a matter of learning it as the default, and then concentrating effort on recognising the feminine, which is the marked and rule-bearing side of the system.

The Second Type: Al-Mu'annath (The Feminine) and Its Signs

Al-mu'annath is the noun to which feminine agreement applies. The grammarians divide it by the ground of its femininity. Mu'annath haqiqi is the noun denoting a real female, whether the

femininity appears in its form or not: imra'atun (woman), ukhtun (sister), ummun (mother), naqatun (she-camel), Fatimatu. Mu'annath majazi (also called lafzi or hukmi in different classifications) is the noun treated as feminine without denoting a female: shamsun (sun), ardun (earth), yadun (hand), sayyaratun (car), madinatun (city). The practical difference between the two appears in a few refinements — for instance, the verb of a majazi feminine subject that is separated from its verb may sometimes remain masculine in form, a licence not allowed with a true feminine — but for the beginner both classes take feminine agreement as the rule.

The feminine is recognised by three formal signs (alamat al-ta'nith), possession of any one of which makes a noun feminine. The first and most famous is al-ta' al-marbuta, the rounded 't' written with two dots, as in madrasatun (school), shajaratun (tree), karimatun (generous, feminine), Fatimatu. The second is al-alif al-maqsura, the shortened alif written like a ya without dots at the end of words such as kubra (greater/elder, feminine), dhikra (remembrance) and Salma. The third is al-alif al-mamduda, the lengthened alif followed by hamza, as in hamra'u (red, feminine), sahra'u (desert) and asma'u in certain usages. In addition to the signed feminines, usage has fixed whole groups as feminine without any sign: nouns denoting females by meaning (umm, ukht); the names of countries, cities and tribes (Misr, Makkah); nouns for paired parts of the body (yad — hand, 'ayn — eye, rijl — foot); a list of natural phenomena (shams, nar — fire, rih — wind); and, as a broad rule, broken plurals of inanimate things are treated as feminine singular for agreement, as in 'al-kutubu mufidatun' (the books are useful).

Table 1: The two types of gender and the signs of the feminine

Category	Description	Examples (transliterated)
Mudhakkar haqiqi	Denotes a real male; female counterpart exists	rajulun (man), waladun (boy), asadun (lion)
Mudhakkar (conventional)	Inanimate or abstract noun treated as masculine	bahrun (sea), 'ilmun (knowledge), qamarun (moon)
Mu'annath haqiqi	Denotes a real female	imra'atun (woman), ummun (mother), Fatimatu
Mu'annath majazi / lafzi	Feminine by form or convention, no female meant	shamsun (sun), madrasatun (school), sahra'u (desert)
Feminine sign 1: ta' marbuta	Rounded ta' ending	shajaratun, karimatun
Feminine sign 2: alif maqsura	Final shortened alif	kubra, dhikra, Salma
Feminine sign 3: alif mamduda	Final alif + hamza	hamra'u, sahra'u
Feminine without a sign	Fixed feminine by usage and meaning	ummun, 'aynun (eye), Misr (Egypt)

USMAN NOTES www.usmannotes.com

Practical Consequences of Gender in the Sentence

Gender earns its place in the grammar course because mistakes in it are mistakes everywhere. Verb agreement is the first consequence: a feminine subject requires ta' al-ta'nith on a preceding past verb (katabat al-bintu) and a ta- prefix in the present (taktubu'l-bintu as against yaktubu'l-waladu), so the writer who misjudges the gender of his subject produces a visibly wrong sentence. Demonstratives and relatives split by gender: hadha/hadhihi, dhalika/tilka,

alladhi/allati. Adjectives, participles and pronouns of every kind follow the same fork. Numerals from three to ten famously reverse their gender against the counted noun (thalathatu rijalin — three men, with a form that looks feminine, against thalathu nisa'in — three women), a rule that cannot even be stated without the concept of jins. Finally, gender interacts with other systems taught in this course: the sound plurals differ by gender, the diptotes (al-mamnu' min al-sarf) include several feminine categories, and the pronoun system of Question 4 presupposes the huwa/hiya distinction at every step. For translation the matter is equally serious, since English 'it' hides what Arabic must declare, and the translator must recover the gender of every referent before he can choose a single pronoun.

Conclusion

To conclude, al-jins is the obligatory classification of every Arabic noun as mudhakkar or mu'annath, there being no neuter. The masculine is the unmarked origin, covering real males and the greater part of inanimate and abstract nouns, and taking agreement with huwa, hadha and the base form of the verb. The feminine covers real females (haqiqi) and a large conventional class (majazi), and is recognised by three formal signs — ta' marbuta, alif maqsura and alif mamduda — together with fixed groups known by usage such as names of lands, paired limbs and words like shams and ard. Because verbs, adjectives, demonstratives, relatives, numerals and pronouns all agree with the noun's gender, this apparently simple two-way division is one of the load-bearing walls of Arabic grammar, and accuracy in it is a condition of accuracy in everything built upon it.

Question 4: Al-Damir (The Pronoun) and Its Primary Function (20 Marks)

Define Al-Damir (الضمير) and explain its primary function in the Arabic language.

Introduction

If a speaker had to repeat the full name of every person and thing every time he mentioned them, speech would become unbearably heavy: 'Zayd came, and Zayd sat, and Zayd opened Zayd's book.' Every language therefore keeps a small set of substitute words that stand in place of nouns once the referent is known. In Arabic these substitutes are called al-dama'ir, the pronouns, singular al-damir (الضمير). The word itself is instructive: it comes from a root connected with what is concealed and held in the mind, for the pronoun's meaning lies hidden until the listener recovers the noun it points back to. Pronouns are among the most frequent words in any Arabic text — a single page of the Qur'an or of a classical book contains dozens — and they perform delicate work in tying sentences together. This answer defines al-damir exactly as the grammarians define it, classifies its main forms so that the definition can be recognised in practice, and then explains its primary function in the language together with the secondary benefits that flow from it.

Pronouns belong to the class of the ism, since they name a meaning without time, but they differ from ordinary nouns in two ways. First, they are all mabni — built on fixed endings that do not change with case; their grammatical case is therefore described by position (fi mahall raf', nasb or jarr — 'in the position of' raising, lowering or drawing) rather than by a changing ending. Second, they are inherently definite (ma'rifah); indeed the personal pronoun is counted

the most definite of all definite nouns, because it points to a present, known referent. These two properties — fixed form and supreme definiteness — shape everything that follows.

Definition of Al-Damir

The standard definition is: al-damir is a noun placed to stand for a speaker (mutakallim), an addressee (mukhatab) or an absent party (gha'ib), whose intended referent is known. Unpacking the definition: it is a noun (ism), because it names a referent without reference to time, and it takes noun positions in the sentence — subject, object, possessor. It is 'placed to stand for' another: the pronoun is a deputy (na'ib) whose whole purpose is representation, so unlike an ordinary noun it has no independent descriptive content; 'huwa' tells us 'male, absent, singular' but not whether the man is Zayd, a teacher or a stranger — that must be supplied by context. And it serves exactly three persons: the first person, the one speaking (ana — I, nahnu — we); the second person, the one addressed (anta — you, masculine singular, and its fellows); and the third person, the one absent and spoken about (huwa — he, hiya — she, and theirs). Every pronoun in Arabic belongs to one of these three persons, crossed with number (singular, dual, plural) and gender (masculine, feminine).

Two clarifications protect the definition from confusion with neighbouring categories. The demonstratives (hadha — this) and relatives (alladhi — who/which) are sometimes loosely called pronouns in European grammars, and they are indeed definite nouns that refer; but in the Arabic classification al-damir is reserved for the personal pronouns listed above, while demonstratives and relatives have their own chapters. Also, the pronoun must be distinguished from the hidden subject inside a verb: in 'kataba' (he wrote) the doer is a pronoun too, but an

implied one (damir mustatir) estimated as 'huwa', whereas in 'kataba huwa' the pronoun appears openly. Both count as damir, which leads naturally to the classification.

The Main Forms of Al-Damir

For recognition in real texts the pronouns are classified by their attachment and their case position. The detached pronouns (al-dama'ir al-munfasilah) stand as independent words and serve mainly the nominative: ana, nahnu for the first person; anta, anti, antuma, antum, antunna for the second; huwa, hiya, huma, hum, hunna for the third. A small detached set also serves the accusative alone — iyyaya (me), iyyaka (you), iyyahu (him) — famous from the verse 'iyyaka na'budu' (You alone we worship). The attached pronouns (al-dama'ir al-muttasilah) are suffixes welded to the word before them: attached to a verb they may be its subject, as the -tu of katabtu (I wrote) and the -na of katabna (we wrote), or its object, as the -hu of ra'aytuhu (I saw him); attached to a noun they express possession, as in kitabuhu (his book); attached to a preposition they are its complement, as in 'alayhi (upon him) and minha (from her). The third class is the concealed pronoun (al-damir al-mustatir), which has no letters at all and is recovered from the verb's form: the subject of yaktubu is a hidden 'huwa', and of uktub a hidden 'anta'.

Table 1: The detached nominative pronouns (al-dama'ir al-munfasilah al-marfu'ah)

Person	Singular	Dual	Plural
First (speaker)	ana (I)	— (nahnu serves)	nahnu (we)
Second, masculine (addressee)	anta (you)	antuma (you two)	antum (you all)

Second, feminine	anti (you)	antuma (you two)	antunna (you all)
Third, masculine (absent)	huwa (he)	huma (they two)	hum (they)
Third, feminine	hiya (she)	huma (they two)	hunna (they)

Table 2: Attached pronouns — one set, three case positions

Host word	Example	Case position of the pronoun
Verb, as subject	katab-tu (I wrote), katab-na (we wrote)	Fi mahall raf' — subject (fa'il)
Verb, as object	ra'aytu-hu (I saw him), 'allama-ni (he taught me)	Fi mahall nasb — object (maf'ul bihi)
Noun (possession)	kitabu-hu (his book), madrasatu-na (our school)	Fi mahall jarr — possessor (mudaf ilayhi)
Preposition	'alay-hi (upon him), bi-ha (with her), la-kum (for you)	Fi mahall jarr — complement of the particle
Inna and its sisters	inna-hu (indeed he), la'alla-ha (perhaps she)	Fi mahall nasb — subject of inna

The economy visible in Table 2 is remarkable: a single small inventory of suffixes (-i/-ni, -ka, -ki, -kum, -hu, -ha, -na and their dual and plural companions) covers the subject, object, possessive and prepositional functions of the pronoun, the case being read off from the host word and the position. This compactness is itself part of the pronoun's function, to which we now turn.

The Primary Function of Al-Damir

The primary function of the pronoun, as the grammarians state it, is al-ikhtisar — brevity with clarity: the pronoun stands in place of the explicit noun (al-ism al-zahir) in order to shorten speech while keeping the reference unmistakable. Repetition of the full noun is heavy on the tongue, tedious to the ear and, in long passages, genuinely confusing, because each repetition forces the listener to ask whether the same referent or a new one is meant. The pronoun solves all three problems at once. Once Zayd has been introduced, 'huwa' carries him through the discourse at the cost of one syllable, and its very form certifies that it is the already-known Zayd who is meant, since a pronoun can only refer to what is definite and present to the mind. Classical rhetoric (al-balaghah) counts this among the chief beauties of Arabic style: the Qur'an introduces a subject and then weaves long passages together with attached and hidden pronouns, achieving a compression that translators into other languages can rarely match.

Within this primary function, three working parts can be distinguished. First, reference (al-'awd): the pronoun points back (or occasionally forward) to its referent, called the marji', and correct Arabic requires agreement between pronoun and referent in person, number and gender — misreading a pronoun's marji' is one of the commonest sources of error in understanding classical texts, and whole chapters of exegesis turn on settling it. Second, substitution in every grammatical position: because the pronoun deputises for the noun, it can do anything the noun can do — be a subject (huwa qaimun), an object (ra'aytuhu), a possessor (kitabuhu), the subject of inna (innahu), or the concealed subject of a verb — which is why the grammarians describe its case by mahall, position, preserving the noun's full syntactic life inside a fixed form. Third, connection (al-rabt): pronouns are the stitching of discourse. The attached

pronoun in a relative clause links the clause to its head noun ('al-rajulu'lladhi ra'aytuhu' — the man whom I saw — where -hu is the required link, al-'a'id); the pronoun inside a descriptive sentence links it to the noun it describes; and chains of pronouns carry a narrative across sentences without a single repeated name.

Several valuable secondary functions grow out of the primary one and should be mentioned. Emphasis (al-tawkid): a detached pronoun placed after an attached one stresses the subject — 'katabtu ana' (I myself wrote) — and the detached pronoun alone can carry meanings of exclusiveness, as in 'iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in', where fronting the object pronoun restricts worship and help-seeking to God alone. Separation and clarification: the pronoun called damir al-fasl (huwa in 'inna Zaydan huwa'l-fa'iz' — indeed Zayd, he is the winner) separates subject from predicate when both are definite, preventing the sentence from being misread as a mere phrase. Presence and address: the first and second person pronouns create the living scene of dialogue — question, answer, command and prayer (du'a) all run on ana and anta — a function no stock of nouns could perform. And politeness and dignity: reference by pronoun can honour a person by avoiding the bare name, a courtesy deeply rooted in Arabic usage. Each of these, however, is a refinement of the one primary service: to represent the noun briefly, clearly and in every position the noun itself could occupy.

Conclusion

To conclude, al-damir is the noun deputised to stand for the speaker, the addressee or the absent party, known in reference, fixed in form (mabni) and definite by nature. It appears detached, attached and concealed, and one small set of its forms serves the positions of raf',

nasb and jarr alike. Its primary function is ikhtisar — to replace the explicit noun so that speech becomes brief, fluid and unambiguous — and from that single function flow its works of reference, substitution in all positions, and the linking of clauses and sentences into connected discourse, as well as its rhetorical powers of emphasis, separation and courteous address. No element of Arabic repays study more quickly: the student who masters the pronouns and learns always to ask 'to whom does this pronoun return?' has acquired the key that unlocks the sense of connected Arabic prose and verse.

Question 5: Fi'l (Verb) – Definition and Role as a Core Component of Kalimah (20 Marks)

Define Fi'l (Verb) and explain its role as a core component of a Kalimah.

Introduction

Of the three components of kalimah — ism, fi'l and harf — the verb is the one that makes language move. Nouns name the world and particles connect it, but it is the verb that reports that something happened, is happening or is being commanded to happen. A list of nouns is an inventory; add verbs and it becomes history, law, story and prayer. Arabic grammar honours this centrality in its very structure: the verbal sentence is one of the two basic sentence types of the language, the science of sarf exists largely to generate the verb's forms, and the government of subjects and objects in nahw radiates outward from the verb as from a centre. This answer defines al-fi'l with the precision of the classical grammarians, sets out its divisions and recognising signs, and then explains, step by step, why it deserves to be called a core

component of kalimah — the component that supplies time, predication, government and the whole event-structure of speech.

It is worth pausing on the word itself. Fi'l in ordinary usage means an act or a deed. The grammarians took the word from the thing most typical of the class: just as 'act' in ordinary speech is the doing of something, the grammatical fi'l is the word that presents a doing — or a being or a happening — as located in time. Keeping this ordinary sense in mind prevents a common beginner's confusion: not every word connected with action is a verb. The verbal noun (al-masdar), such as kitabatan (writing), names the act but without time, and is therefore a noun; the active participle (ism al-fa'il), such as katibun (writer, writing), names the doer and is likewise a noun in its grammar. The verb alone fuses act and time into one indivisible meaning, and that fusion is its definition.

Definition of Al-Fi'l and its Signs

The classical definition is: al-fi'l is a word that indicates a meaning in itself, associated with one of the three times — past, present or future (kalimatun dallat 'ala ma'na fi nafsiha wa iqtarana bi-ahadi'l-azminati'l-thalathah). Each part excludes a neighbour. 'A word indicating a meaning in itself' excludes the particle, whose meaning appears only in another word. 'Associated with time' excludes the noun, whose meaning is timeless. The association is not added by context but built into the form (sighat) of the verb itself: the pattern fa'ala announces past time, yaf'alu announces present or future, and if'al (the command form) announces a demand for the act in the time following the command. This is why a single Arabic verb is a complete miniature of information — event, time, and (through its attached or concealed pronoun) even its subject —

whereas the corresponding English translation needs several words: 'katabna' is one word and a complete sentence, 'we wrote'.

The verb is recognised by signs that can enter upon it and upon nothing else: qad (qad kataba — he has written; qad yaktubu), the future markers sin and sawfa (sa-yaktubu, sawfa yaktubu), and ta' al-ta'nith al-sakinah, the still 't' that closes the past verb before a feminine subject (katabat al-bintu — the girl wrote). To these the books add the vocative-like test of the command and prohibition forms and the verb's acceptance of subject suffixes (-tu, -ta, -na). In its i'rab behaviour the verb stands between the noun and the particle: the past (al-madi) and the command (al-amr) are mabni, fixed in form, while the present (al-mudari') is mu'rab, its ending changing with raf', nasb and jazm — a resemblance to the noun (mushabahah) from which the mudari' takes its very name. This mixed behaviour is itself a mark of the verb's central, mediating position in the system of kalimah.

The Three Divisions of the Verb by Time

Table 1: The verb divided by time — al-madi, al-mudari', al-amr

Division	Time indicated	Examples (transliterated)	I'rab / bina'
Al-Madi (past)	Event completed before the time of speaking	kataba (he wrote), dhahaba (he went), 'allama (he taught)	Mabni — on fatha (or a substitute)
Al-Mudari' (present)	Event in the present or expected in the future	yaktubu (he writes / will write), yadhhabu,	Mu'rab — marfu', mansub or majzum

		yu'allimu	
Al-Amr (command)	Act demanded for the time after the command	uktub (write!), idhhab (go!), 'allim (teach!)	Mabni — on sukun (or a substitute)

The three divisions are not three separate vocabularies but three forms generated from one root by the rules of sarf, and their interplay covers the whole of time. The madi reports and narrates; it is the tense of history and of completed fact, and in conditional and supplicatory contexts it can even carry future meaning by a known rhetorical extension. The mudari' is the most versatile form in the language: by itself it spans present and future, with sin or sawfa it is pinned to the future, with lam it is thrown into the past as a negation (lam yaktub — he did not write), with qad it suggests occurrence or possibility, and under the governors of nasb and jazm it shifts its ending to display its grammatical state. The amr, together with its twin the prohibition (al-nahy, formed from the mudari' with la), is the form of demand, instruction and prayer. A student who can generate and read these three forms for any root possesses the working core of Arabic expression.

The Role of the Verb as a Core Component of Kalimah

The claim that the fi'l is a core component — not merely one item in a list of three — rests on at least five grounds, each of which can be seen operating in ordinary sentences. The first is predication (al-isnad). Speech exists to say something about something, and in the verbal sentence the verb is the predicate (al-musnad) itself: in 'kataba'l-waladu'd-darsa' (the boy wrote the lesson), the act of writing is what is asserted, and the whole sentence is organised

around asserting it of the boy. Without the verb there is nothing to assert — only names waiting for news. Even the nominal sentence, which begins with a noun, must contain a predicate, and very often that predicate is a verb or a whole verbal sentence, so the verb's predicating work reaches into both sentence types.

The second ground is time. The verb is the only component of kalimah that carries tense within its own form, and therefore the only anchor by which a discourse fixes its events in sequence. Narrative, biography, history, the accounts of the Day of Judgement, promises and warnings — all depend on the listener's ability to place events before, during and after the moment of speech, and that ability is delivered entirely by the alternation of madi, mudari' and amr, refined by particles such as qad, sin, sawfa and lam. Remove the verb and language loses its clock; a text of pure nouns could catalogue the world but could never tell what happened in it.

The third ground is government (al-'amal). The verb is the chief governor ('amil) of Arabic syntax: it raises its doer (fa'il) into raf', and if it is transitive it lowers its object (maf'ul bihi) into nasb, and it draws after it the whole train of complements — the absolute object, the object of purpose, the adverbials of time and place, the circumstantial qualifier — that constitute the mansoubat of Assignment No. 2. The case system of the noun, which occupies half the science of nahw, exists in large measure to display the noun's relation to the verb. In this sense the verb is not merely in the sentence; the sentence is arranged around the verb, and parsing a sentence properly means first finding its verb and asking what it governs.

The fourth ground is generation (al-sarf). From the verb's root-and-pattern system Arabic derives its richest families of words: the masdar, the active and passive participles, the nouns of

time, place and instrument, and the ten augmented verb forms (from fa'ala to istaf'ala) that fine-tune meaning — causation, intensity, reciprocity, seeking and more. The verb thus feeds the noun class itself; much of the vocabulary of the ism is the verb's offspring. The fifth ground is completeness of speech (al-kalam): the minimal useful sentence in Arabic is a verb with its subject — 'kataba' alone, with its hidden pronoun, already benefits the listener — so the verb is the smallest self-sufficient engine of meaning in the language. A component that predicates, tells time, governs the cases, generates the vocabulary and can constitute a sentence by itself has earned the title 'core' in the fullest sense.

Conclusion

In conclusion, al-fi'l is the word that indicates a meaning in itself bound to one of the three times, recognised by qad, sin, sawfa and the feminine ta', and divided into the madi, the mudari' and the amr. Its role as a core component of kalimah is visible on every side: it is the predicate that makes assertion possible, the clock that orders events in time, the governor that raises subjects and lowers objects and thereby organises the case system, the root from which sarf generates families of derived nouns, and the one word that can stand as a complete and beneficial sentence on its own. The noun gives speech its persons and things, and the particle its fine connections, but the verb gives speech its life and movement; that is why the grammarians, having divided kalimah into three, return again and again to the fi'l as the centre around which the rest of grammar turns.