INTRODUCING GRAMMATICAL STATES

Like people, Arabic words experience states. Human emotional states occur as a result of our daily interactions and are indicated by our facial expressions. For example, meeting a friend makes us happy, which is then expressed on our faces by smiling.

Arabic words behave in a similar manner. In a sentence they interact with surrounding words and, as a result, experience grammatical states. These grammatical states are then expressed on the end of the word. Just as a person’s face indicates his emotional state, the last letter of a word reveals its grammatical state. While people experience many emotional states, Arabic words experience only four grammatical states:

1) rafa’ (رَفَعّ)
2) nasb (نَسْبَ)  
3) jarr (جَر)  
4) jazm (جَزْم)  

PRINCIPLE ONE

Of the four grammatical states, Arabic verbs only experience three:

1) rafa’ (رَفَعّ)  
2) nasb (نَسْبَ)  
3) jazm (جَزْم)  

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18 The fourth state, jarr (جَرّ), is experienced only by nouns.
PRINCIPLE TWO

All present tense verbs, active and passive voice, are in the state of *rafa‘* (رفع). Conjugations of the present tense verb end with either (1) a *dammab* (ُ) on the last letter or (2) a *née* (ن) as the final letter (table 4.2). Both of these endings are signs of the grammatical state of *rafa‘* (رفع).

PRINCIPLE THREE

When considering the grammatical states of words in general, and verbs in particular, three questions must be asked.

1) What is the grammatical state of the word?
2) What caused it to enter this grammatical state?
3) How does it reflect its grammatical state?

Asking these three questions helps illustrate the principles of this lesson.

Consider for example, *يَفْعَلُ* (he does):

1. What is the grammatical state of the verb?
   The verb *يَفْعَلُ* is in the state of *rafa‘* (رفع).
2. What caused it to enter this grammatical state?
   *Rafa‘* (رفع) is the default state of present tense verbs.
3. How does it reflect its grammatical state?
   The state of *rafa‘* (رفع) is reflected by the *dammab* (ُ) on the last letter of *يَفْعَلُ*. 
As a second example, consider the verb 

\( \text{ﺕَفَعُّلُونَ} \) (you [masculine, plural] do):

1. What is the grammatical state of the verb?

   The verb 

   \( \text{ﺕَفَعُّلُونَ} \) is in the state of 

   \( \text{ﺭَفُّع} \) (rafa').

2. What caused it to enter this grammatical state?

   Rafa' (ﺭَفُّع) is the default state of present tense verbs.

3. How does it reflect its grammatical state?

   The state of rafa' (ﺭَفُّع) is reflected by the 

   \( \text{nūn} \) (ن) at the end of 

   \( \text{ﺕَفَعُّلُونَ} \).

**PRINCIPLE FOUR**

As an exception to the principles of this lesson, a subset of Arabic words never enter states. These are called stateless (inactive) and are similar to a stoic person who is indifferent to emotional situations. Just as such a person does not experience emotion, stateless (inactive) words do not enter grammatical states.

**PRINCIPLE FIVE**

By definition, two conjugations of the present tense verb are stateless (inactive). They are the third person feminine plural (ﻲَفَعَّلنَ) and the second person feminine plural (ﺙَفَعَّلنَ). The final 

\( \text{nūn} \) on each of these conjugations is not a reflection of grammatical state; instead, it indicates the subject of the verb (i.e., a group of women). The importance of recognizing these two conjugations as stateless (inactive) will become apparent in the next lesson where changes in grammatical states are discussed.

**PRINCIPLE SIX**

All past tense verbs (lesson three) are also classified as stateless (inactive).