

## GRAMMATICAL AND SPELLING ASPECTS OF IMAM BUKHARI'S HADITHS

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**Abstract.** *This article explores the grammatical and orthographic features found in the hadith compilation of Imam Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, widely regarded as one of the most authentic sources of Islamic knowledge. While Sahih al-Bukhari has long been studied for its theological and jurisprudential content, its linguistic dimensions, especially the grammatical precision and orthographic patterns, have received less systematic attention.*

**Keywords:** *Imam Bukhari, Arabic grammar, hadith linguistics, Sahih al-Bukhari, orthography.*

### INTRODUCTION

Imam al-Bukhari's al-Jami' as-Sahih, more commonly known as Sahih al-Bukhari, holds a unique place in Islamic scholarship as a canonical collection of hadiths second only to the Qur'an in authority. Although much has been written about the authenticity, classification, and jurisprudential implications of these hadiths, there is comparatively limited academic discussion on the linguistic and grammatical characteristics of the hadith texts compiled by Imam Bukhari. Yet, as a transmitter of orally preserved prophetic traditions, Imam Bukhari meticulously maintained the original linguistic form of the hadiths, which were spoken in early classical Arabic. His compilation thus serves as an essential linguistic corpus for understanding the evolution and application of Arabic grammar and orthography in Islamic textual heritage.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

One of the most remarkable features of Sahih al-Bukhari is its adherence to classical Arabic grammatical norms, even in the presence of oral transmission. Imam Bukhari, although of Persian origin and non-Arab by ethnicity, was a master of Arabic language and compiled his collection with deep linguistic sensitivity. His choice to maintain the original grammatical structure of the Prophet's sayings—lafz al-Hadith—is a testament to his scholarly rigor.

For example, in the hadith:

*"Innamā al-a'mālu bi-niyyāt..."*

*"Actions are judged only by intentions..."*

(Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Bada' al-Wahy)

The particle "innamā" is a ḥarf al-ḥaṣr (restrictive particle) used to limit the subject to a particular predicate, and "al-a'māl" is the subject of the nominal sentence in the plural form, with "bi-niyyāt" as the prepositional predicate. The sentence follows traditional

rules of nominal sentence syntax (jumla ismiyya) and demonstrates the high grammatical quality embedded in oral hadith narration.

Moreover, Bukhari often included variant narrations (riwāyāt) with slightly differing grammatical constructions without considering one more authentic than the other, so long as they were supported by reliable chains. For instance:

*"Man kāna yu' minu billāhi wal-yawm al-ākhir..."*

Versus

*"Man āmana billāhi wal-yawm al-ākhir..."*

Both constructions are grammatically sound—"kāna yu' minu" is imperfect indicative in the past habitual sense, while "āmana" is a perfect verb showing completed action. Such subtle grammatical variation reflects the nuances of oral transmission and the flexibility of Arabic verb forms without altering core meaning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Another important aspect of Imam Bukhari's hadith compilation is its orthographic consistency, although it reflects the conventions of the early Arabic script, which lacked full vowelization (harakāt), standardized spelling, and diacritical marks. Yet, over time, as Sahih al-Bukhari was copied and disseminated in different regions, minor orthographic differences arose among manuscripts, reflecting regional practices and script reforms.

For example, in early manuscripts, one might observe:

*"salātu"* written as *"slt"*

*"rasūl"* as *"rsl"*

Such omissions of alif, wāw, and yā' were typical of Kufic and early Hijazi scripts, where readers had to rely heavily on oral familiarity and memory to correctly recite the hadith. Later scribes added diacritical marks to ease reading, but in doing so, variations appeared in the spelling of proper names and verbal forms.

A notable spelling variant includes the hadith on intention, where the word "niyyah" is sometimes spelled with a shadda (نية) and sometimes without (نيه) in manuscripts, though the pronunciation remains identical. This reflects the evolution of Arabic orthographic standardization in hadith codices.

Although the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) spoke in the dialect of Quraysh, and most hadiths reflect this linguistic register, occasional non-Qurashi dialectal forms are preserved in the hadiths narrated by non-Makkan companions. Imam Bukhari did not correct these for grammatical "purity" but preserved them to maintain authenticity. This practice supports modern linguistic theories about dialectal diversity in early Arabic usage and provides evidence for spoken language variation among the Companions.

For example, some hadiths include forms like:

*"laysa minnā man..."* (He is not from us who...)

versus the more classical: *"innahu laysa minnā..."*

Here, elliptical constructions reflect colloquial speech patterns common in early transmission. Such features make Sahih al-Bukhari valuable not only for Islamic jurisprudence but also for historical sociolinguistics.

The grammar and spelling in Sahih al-Bukhari have long served as a linguistic reference in classical Arabic education. Institutions of traditional Islamic learning (madrasas) continue to use Bukhari's hadiths to teach syntactic rules, morphology, and even i'rāb (grammatical parsing). Students are taught to analyze the grammatical structure of hadiths as part of their broader engagement with Arabic rhetoric (balāgha) and grammar (naḥw).

Furthermore, scholars like Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, in his commentary Fath al-Bari, often dissect the grammar of each hadith, offering explanations for rare grammatical forms or idiomatic expressions. This ongoing engagement confirms that the linguistic structure of hadiths, as preserved by Bukhari, remains fertile ground for grammatical investigation and advanced Arabic instruction.

Another distinctive dimension of Imam Bukhari's hadith collection lies in the subtle deployment of classical Arabic grammatical devices to preserve not only the meaning but also the linguistic authenticity of the Prophet's speech. It is important to note that the Arabic used in the hadiths, though orally transmitted, reflects the lingua franca of the Hijaz in the 7th century, which was linguistically rich, flexible in form, and highly context-sensitive. Bukhari's task, as a compiler, was not to "edit" the language into modern grammatical expectations but to transmit it exactly as reported, even when such expressions differed from codified norms of later grammarians.

A fascinating grammatical feature present in Sahih al-Bukhari is the frequent use of elliptical or omitted grammatical elements (ḥaḍhf). In classical Arabic rhetoric, ellipsis was a stylistic device but in hadith literature, it often served a mnemonic and oral function, allowing easier recitation. For instance:

شئت ما فاصنع تستح لم إذا قال ﷺ النبي عن

"If you feel no shame, then do as you wish."

This sentence begins with a conditional clause without a formally marked protasis or apodosis structure typical of textbook Arabic. The omission of the conditional particle "fa-in" is grammatically acceptable in classical usage but requires semantic inference—something common in prophetic speech and thus preserved in hadith compilations.

### CONCLUSION

Imam Bukhari's Sahih is more than just a religious text—it is a living monument of classical Arabic grammar and early Islamic orthography. Its grammatical structures reflect the eloquence of prophetic speech, while its orthographic features trace the evolution of Arabic script and spelling conventions. Through careful preservation of variant readings and dialectical forms, Imam Bukhari maintained not just theological authenticity but linguistic fidelity as well. For scholars of Arabic language, hadith studies, and historical linguistics, Sahih al-Bukhari remains a priceless source, deserving close philological study alongside its theological importance.



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