

Acceptance Speech by
Dr. Nabil Ali Mohammad
Co-Winner 2012/1433H King Faisal International Prize
For Arabic Language and Literature
34th Ceremony
Tuesday 6/312012 -13/4/1433H

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Your Royal Highness Prince Salman Bin Abd Al-Aziz,
Minister of Defense,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests.

Assalamu Alaikum

It is truly a great honor to be rewarded this prestigious King Faisal International Prize.

One of the many advantages of receiving such an honor is that it has reinvigorated my incentive, in this later stage of my life, to continue my lifetime journey of researching Arabic computation.

The selection of (Computer Processing of the Arabic Language:

Individual and Institutional Endeavors}as the topic for this year's award only goes to confirm the importance of this scientific and technical field in which Arab scientists and engineers can significantly contribute to serving the objectives of comprehensive social development.

The importance of language has increased in recent times. Language serves as the royal gateway towards the knowledge society because language has become the focal point of the entire geo-ontological map. It is the only field of knowledge with close reciprocal relations with almost all other fields. With regard to the Humanities, for instance, namely psychology, sociology, anthropology and history, this complementary bidirectional relationship with language is very clear: psycholinguistics and psychology of language sociolinguists and the sociology of language, linguistic anthropology and anthropological linguistics, history of language and historiography, or the study of the methodology of history as a discipline relying on written texts.

The same trend can also be observed with the natural sciences, said to always contain a "narrative subpart". The most outstanding example is without a doubt the area of molecular biology, which has given birth to two complementary interdisciplinary fields, namely bio linguistics and linguistic biology. Today we hear of such notions as heredity texts, genetic sentences, genetic dictionary, genetic alphabet, and even the parsing of genetic structures or the semantic interpretation of the protein configurations. Such a pattern of interrelations can also be found between language and different genres of art, philosophy, engineering, and computer science.

Just as the importance of the Arabic language has increased, so has the importance of its computational aspects, particularly since we are currently witnessing a paradigmatic shift in the field. We have moved away from dealing only with the superficial aspects of language towards dealing with the more profound conceptual structures of language and meaning using different techniques of artificial intelligence. Such a shift will most certainly open new opportunities for both research and application, and this is perhaps why, fortunately, the award could not have come at a better time.

During my forty years of theoretical and applied research in the field, I have tried to maintain a balanced, interdisciplinary approach towards Arabic computation, one that draws on my extensive knowledge of both Arabic linguistics and Arabic natural processing. In this way, I have slightly shifted from the more traditional method that preceded me, one that dealt with linguistics and computer science as two fundamentally separate, individual entities of specialization. By doing so, I hope I have paved a path that seeks to benefit more from the endeavors of both.

Thank you.