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# *Adab Al-Rafidayn Journal*

**A refereed journal concerned with the publishing of scientific researches  
in the field of arts and humanities both in Arabic and English**

**Vol. Ninety / year Fifty- Second / Safar - 1444 AH / September 2022 AD**

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### **Editor-in-chief**

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## *Verb-like Particles in Arabic Language with Reference to English*

Radwan Nafie Hamid \*

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### **Abstract:**

Allah Almighty distinguishes Arabic by making it as a container of His speech. Hence, it becomes eternal by the eternity of Allah and conserves by His immortality. So, Arabic is a unique language in terms of its grammatical and idiomatic structures, and in terms of its using of ways that English lacks due to the wide gap between the two languages.

Verb-like particles are considered as one of the peculiarities of Arabic which are unmatched in English. The nature, functions and meanings of verb-like particles are complicated since Arabic is flexible, and this flexibility enables it to have particles with more than one meaning. I'na and its sisters are extensively used in Arabic. They play essential semantic and stylistic multiple roles. Some of the rare meanings and uses of verb-like particles are unmatched in English .

**Keywords:** Verb-like, Particles, I'na, A'na and Translation.

### **Introduction**

Allah Almighty distinguishes Arabic by making it as a container of His speech. Hence, it becomes eternal by the eternity of Allah and conserved by His immortality.

Verb-like particles are part of the class of Arabic words that are known as *nawaasix* (نَوَاسِخ). They are usually used as subordinating conjunctions linking two clauses in spite of I'na itself may also be used at the primacy of the sentence. Verb-like particles have the

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grammatical impact by making the subject (المبتدا) in the following clause accusative, and in the case that subject is covert , a suffix pronoun is attached to the particle (Ryding, 2005: 422).

This term is related only to I'na and its sisters (إِنَّ وَأَخَوَاتِهَا) amongst other annulling particles (الْحُرُوفُ النَّاسِخَةُ)\*. Seebaweih for instance, devotes a section for verb-like particles which act on what are after them as the verbs do. He states that verb-like particles are in the rank of what are after them but are not verbs (Seebaweih, 1988: 131). This term is also clarified by Al-Mubarrad when he categorizes a section for this purpose (Al-Mubarrad, 2010: 107).

In this study, the title Verb-like Particles is opted because there is a rapport between this term and its significance. Az-Zajjaji, Ibn Jinni and Al-Jurjani talk about the significance of these particles and their act besides their assimilation to the verbs in terms of:

1-Specialization of nouns only.

2-They are opened endings as the past verb.

3-Their significance is the significance of the verbs in confirmation (التوكيد), similitude (التشبيه) , hope (الترجي) and retractation (الإستدراك) (Az-Zajjaji, 1988: 51-52; Ibn Jinni, 1988: 41; Al-Jurjani, 1982: 443).

Seebaweih (1988:131) classifies verb-like particles into **five** particles, I'na(إِنَّ), A'na(أَنَّ), Laki'na(لَكِنَّ), Layta (لَئِنَّ), Laa'lla (لَعَلَّ) and Kaa'na (كَأَنَّ) considering the opened A'na as a branch of the reduced one. Al-Mubarrad, Ibn As-Sarraj and Az-Zajjaji consider verb-like particles as **five** (Al-Mubarrad, 2010: 107). But, Al-Jurjani considers them **six** when he separates between I'na and A'na (Al-Jurjani, 1982: 443).

Consequently, verb-like particles are named by such a term because\*:

1-All these particles are structured on opening (مَبْنِيَّةٌ عَلَى الْفَتْحِ).

2-They are on the measure of the verb (عَلَى وَزْنِ الْفِعْلِ).

3-They have the significance of the verbs, for example, I'нна (إِنَّ) and A'нна (أَنَّ) have the meaning of that I accomplished (حَقَّقْتُ) and that I

confirmed, (أَكَّدْتُ) Kaa'нна (كَأَنَّ) has the meaning of that there is a similitude (شَبَّهْتُ), Laki'нна (لَكِنَّ) has the meaning of that I retracted (اسْتَدْرَكْتُ), Laa'lla (لَعَلَّ) has the meaning of that I hoped (تُرَجَّيْتُ) and finally, Layta (لَيْتَ) has the meaning of that I wished (تَمَنَّيْتُ).

4-These particles are specific to nouns just as that in verbs. Verb-like particles operate on nominal sentence by opening (نَصَبَ) the subject (المُبْتَدَأُ) and regularity (رَفَعَ) the predicate (الخَبَرُ).

5-Noon of separation (نُونُ الْوَقَايَةِ) links with these particles as that in verbs

(Gaddawi, 2003: 3). إِنْني، لَيْتَني، لَكَنَّي، أَكَّرَمَني، كَأَفَأَني، أُعْطَانِي

### 1. I'нна (إِنَّ)

In this verb-like particle Al-Hamza is reduced (مَكْسُورَةُ الْهَمْزَةِ) and An-Noon (النُّونُ) is geminated (مُشَدَّدَةٌ). It operates on the nominal sentence which contains the subject (المُبْتَدَأُ) and the predicate (الخَبَرُ), opening the former to be its noun and regularity the latter to be its predicate (Ar-Rummani, 1981: 109).

Grammarians state that I'нна (إِنَّ) has several significances. It can be used as:

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\*The translation of all Arabic grammatical expressions and terminologies are taken from Muajam Mustalahat Al-Eerrab Wa Al-Binaa Fi Qawaed Al-Arabiya Al-Aalamiya(1988).

A. A *particle of confirmation* (التوكيد) and *authenticity* (التحقيق) as in:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾ (البقرة: ٢٠)

(Allah has power over all things) \*

The entering of Al-Lam (اللّام) on its predicate increases the conformation as in:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾ (العنكبوت: ٦)

(Verily, Allah stands not in need of any of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists) (Al-Asmar, 2005: 83).

In English certain adverbs use to express confirmation i.e. either to confirm or deny the action of the verb. They are also used to reinforce the action that is described by the verb such as (surely, certainly, indeed, ...etc.) (Haddad, 2005:133).

B. A *particle of causality* (التعليل) as in:

﴿وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ﴾ (التوبة: ١٠٣)

(and invoke Allah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of security for them)

C. A *particle of answer which means yes* (نعم) when I'anna recites in geminated case as in:

﴿قَالُوا إِنْ هَٰذَانِ لَسَاحِرَانِ يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَاكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا﴾ (طه: ٦٣)

(They said: "Verily, these are two magicians. Their object is to drive you out of your land with magic) (Al-Asmar, 2005: 83; Yaqub, 1995: 139).

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\*All given Qu'ranic verses in this study are translated by Khan and Al-Hilali(1996).

The two above functions of I'na (إِنَّ) are unmatched in English, since Arabic is a flexible language, and this flexibility enables it to have particles with more than one meaning. However, English uses conjunctions of causality to explain how something works and why is happened. These conjunctions may be subordinating conjunctions such as since, because, as.... etc., or coordinating conjunctions such as yet and so (Haddad, 2005:135).

## 2. A'na (أَنَّ)

In this verb-like particle, Al-Hamza is opened and An-Noon (النون) is geminated (مفتوحة الهمزة ومشددة النون) operates on the nominal sentence which contains the subject (المبتدأ) and the predicate (الخبر), opening the former to be its noun and regularity the latter to be its predicate (Ar- Rummani, 1981:109).

A. *This particle is used as a particle of confirmation (توكيد) as in:*

﴿وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾ (البقرة: ١٩٦)

(and know that Allah is Severe in punishment)(Ghalayini, 2004: 298).

This function is also expressed in English by adverbs of confirmation which are mentioned in I'na(ان) such as (surely, certainly, indeed.....etc.).

B. *It can be used to mean Laa'lla (لَعَلَّ) as in:*

﴿وَمَا يَشْعُرْكُمْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (الأنعام: ١٠٩)

(and what will make you (Muslims) perceive that (even) if it (the sign)

came, they will not believe?) (Al-Lughawi: 130). Also, this meaning is unique and unmatched in English.

## 3. Kaa'na (كَأَنَّ)

Grammarians disagree about the structure of Kaa'na (كَأَنَّ) into two views:

The **first** view says that Kaa'na is a combination of Kaf of similitude (كاف التشبيه) and the confirmative A'na (أَنَّ المؤكدة). Al-

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Khaleel bin Ahmad Al-Farahidy and Ibn Jinni are among those who adopt this view. Their argument is the existence of Kaf of similitude alone as an independent letter and the same case with confirmative A'na.

The **second** view says that the simplicity is the origin and the extraordinary is the combination (Yaqub, 1995: 343). The argument of the second view is that if Kaa'na (كَأَنَّ) is combined, in this case Al-Kaf (الكاف) will be a preposition which requires being related to something, and at the same time it is not redundant. Hence, the complete sentence will be the segment one and it means that the assumption (التقدير) in the sentence:

(كَأَنَّ زَيْدًا قَائِمٌ) هُوَ (كَفَيَاً زَيْدٌ)

(As if Zaid is standing) is (As standing of Zaid), and here there is a

need for something to complete this sentence; this is incorrect since (كَأَنَّ) (زيدًا قائمًا) considers a complete speech by itself (Ibid: 344).

Kaa'na (كَأَنَّ) is one of verb-like particles. An-Noon is geminated. Kaa'na (كَأَنَّ) operates on the nominal sentence which contains the subject (المبتدأ) and the predicate (الخبر), opening the former to be its noun and regularity the latter to be its predicate (Ash-Shareef, 1996: 801).

**A. A confirmative similitude (التشبيه المؤكد)** as in:

﴿كَأَنَّهُمْ بُنَيَّنْ مَرْمُوسٌ﴾ (الصف: ٤)

(as if they were a solid structure.) (Mutar, 1986: 80).

As if and as though, which are conjunctions, use in English to express similitude i.e. to talk about imaginary position that may not be true but is probable or possible.

**B. A certitude (اليقين)**

Az-Zarkashi states that Kaa'na (كَأَنَّ) with (وَيَ) used for certitude as in:

﴿وَيَكَاَنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾ (القصص: ٨٢)

(ah! Know that the ungrateful are never successful) (Ahmed, 2013: 36).

This meaning considers as one of Arabic language's peculiarities, which is unmatched in English.

#### 4. *Laki'nna* (لكنّ)

It is a simple particle (non-combined) according to some grammarians, whilst according to others it is formed by combining Laa (لا) and A'nna (أَنَّ); Al-Kaf (الكاف) is redundant and Al-Hamza is omitted because of heaviness (للتثقل). Al-Farraa believes that it is a combination of Lakin (لكنّ) and A'nna (أَنَّ), then Al-Hamza (الهمزة) of (أَنَّ) and An-Noon (النون) of Lakin (لكنّ) are omitted (Al-Lughawi: 170).

The majority of grammarians agree that *Laki'nna* (لكنّ) is considered as one linguistic unit (Al-Muradi, 1976: 566).

*Laki'nna* is the verb-like particles which is used with a nominal sentence that contains the subject (المبتدأ) and the predicate (الخبر), opening the former to be its noun and regularity the latter to be its predicate (Ash-Shareef, 1996:98).

*Laki'nna* (لكنّ) has two significances:

**A. *It can be a particle of retractation* (استدراك) which is used to negate what is foresaid (Ibn Hisham, 1987: 290).**

(ما زيد شجاعا ولكنه كريم)

**(Zaid is not brave but generous) (As-Samirraei, 1987:332).** If there is no disagreement on what is said after *Laki'nna* and that said before it, the significance will be a confirmation (توكيد).

(ما زيد نائم ولكنه مستيقظ)

**(Zaid is not asleep but awake) (Al-Azhary: 212).**

**B. *Some grammarians say that Laki'nna* (لكنّ) *is always used for confirmation* (التوكيد) *which is accompanied by retractation as in:***

﴿ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَقْتَسَلُوا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ ﴾ (البقرة: ٢٥٣)

**(If Allah had willed, they would not have fought against one another, but Allah does what He likes)**

Retractation in English is expressed by the conjunction But which uses to negate what is foresaid.

### 5. *Laa'lla* (لَعَلَّ)

It is one of verb-like particles that operates on the nominal sentence which contains the subject (المبتدأ) and the predicate (الخبر), opening the former to be its noun and regularity the latter to be its predicate (Ar-Rummani, 1981: 124-125).

Al-Lam (اللام) of *Laa'lla* (لَعَلَّ) may omit to become (عَلَّ). Grammarians disagree about this Lam. Some of them say that this Lam is original whilst others consider it is a redundant (Al- Muradi, 1976:529).

*Laa'lla* (لَعَلَّ) is used to mean agreeable or disagreeable thing. The former is called hope (الرَّجَاء) and the latter is called pity (الاشفاق).

Hope (الرَّجَاء) as it has mentioned is to expect an agreeable thing. It is the famous significance of *Laa'lla* (لَعَلَّ) as in:

(May Allah have mercy (لَعَلَّ اللهُ يَرْحَمَنَا)  
 on us)

Pity is the expectation of disagreeable thing as in:

(لَعَلَّ الْعَدُوَّ يَتَقَدَّمُ نَحْوَ الْمَدِينَةِ)  
 (Perhaps the enemy is advancing towards the city) (Ibid: 343).

English uses certain adverbs to express hope such as (perhaps, maybe, perchance) (Haddad, 2005: 232).

#### A. *Laa'lla* (لَعَلَّ) can be referred to causality (التعليل)

This function has been proved by Al-Kissaei and Al-Akhfash (Ibn Malik, 1967: 78).

﴿ فَقَوْلًا لَهُ، قَوْلًا لِنَا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى ﴾ (طه: ٤٤)

(And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition of fear (Allah)

#### B. *Laa'lla* has the significance of similitude (التشبيه)

This significance states by At-Tabari from Ibn Abbas and Qatada as in:

﴿ وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلَدُونَ ﴾ (الشعراء: ١٢٩)

(as if you will live therein for ever) (At-Tabari, 1970: 612-613).

These two meanings are unmatched in English and consider also one of Arabic language's peculiarities.

**C. It can be for interrogation (الإستفهام)**

This significance has proved by Kophians and Ibn Malik by saying that La'lla is used for interrogation as in:

﴿وَمَا يَدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهٗ يَزِيغُ﴾ (عبس: ٣)

**(And how can you know that he might become pure (from sins?).)**

(At-Tabari, 1970: 781; Yaqub, 1995: 395; Al-Muradi, 1976: 528; Al-Andalusi, 1971: 39).

The last three functions of Laa'lla (لعل) consider within the rare use of this particle in Arabic which unmatched in English.

**6. Layta (لَيْتَ)**

This verb-like particle operates on the nominal sentence which contains the subject (المُبتدأ) and the predicate (الخبر), opening the former to be its noun and regularity the latter to be its predicate (Ar-Rummani, 1981: 113).

With respect to the significance of Layta (لَيْتَ), most grammarians state that its famous function is wish or optative (التمني).

Wish is the request to have something usually impossible to happen as in:

**(If only youth** (لَيْتَ الشَّبَابُ يَعُودُ يَوْمًا)  
**returns)**

or something possible that is unexpected to happen as in:

**(If only Saeed travels with** (لَيْتَ سَعِيدًا يُسَافِرُ مَعَنَا)  
**us)**

(As-Samirraei, 1987: 328).

Layta (لَيْتَ) doesn't occur with the inevitable cases as in:

**(If only tomorrow comes)** (لَيْتَ غَدَا آتٍ)

because the coming of tomorrow is an inevitable thing (Ibid: 343).

English uses I wish, I wish I had, if only, would that to express wishing (Murphy, R. 1998: 80).

***Conclusions***

In the light of our investigation of verb-like particles in Arabic with reference to English, some significant conclusions have been arrived at:

1-I'anna (إِنَّ) and its sisters have played multiple semantic and stylistic roles in Arabic.

2-Some of verb-like particles have rare meanings and functions that are misunderstood by translators and consequently, mistranslated into English.

3-Having one function only, some verb-like particles have stable English

translation, while others could not have fixed translation because of their multiple functions in Arabic.

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الأحرف المشبَّهة بالفعل في اللغة العربية

مع الإشارة الى اللغة الانكليزية

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المستخلص

لقد ميَّز الله اللغة العربية بأن جعلها وعاءً لكلماته، فخلدها بخلوده وحفظه بحفظه؛ لذا فإنَّها لغة فريدة من حيث التراكيب النحوية والاصطلاحية، وكذلك من ناحية استخدامها لأساليب تفتقر إليها اللغة الإنكليزية، وذلك للبون الشاسع بين اللغتين. وتُعَدُّ الأحرف المشبَّهة بالفعل إحدى خصوصيات اللغة العربية، التي ليس لها مثل في اللغة الإنكليزية، إنَّ طبيعة ووظائف ودلالات الأحرف المشبَّهة بالفعل مركَّبة؛ لأنَّ اللغة العربية لغة مرنة، وهذه المرونة مكَّنتها من إعطاء هذه الحروف أكثر من معنى.

وتستخدم الأحرف المشبَّهة بالفعل في اللغة العربية بشكل كبير؛ إذ تُؤدِّي دورًا متعددًا دلاليًا وأسلوبياً، وهناك بعض المعاني والاستخدامات النادرة للأحرف المشبَّهة بالفعل ليس هناك مثيلاتها في اللغة الإنكليزية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** مُشَبَّه بالفعل، حُرُوف، إنَّ ، أنْ ، ترجمة.

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