

**A Comparative Study of Conditional Particles in Arabic and English:  
Structure and Meaning**

**By**

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**المستخلص:**

تعنى هذه المقالة بمقارنة اسلوب الشرط في اللغتين العربية والانجليزية من حيث البناء النحوي والمعنى، بحيث تسلط الضوء على اهم الفروقات من حيث المبنى والمعنى. هذه المقارنة عبارة عن دراسة حالة تصف الفرق بين اسلوبي اللغتين في التعبير عن المعنى المقصود، باستخدام المصادر المتاحة من اللغتين مثل نصوص القرآن الكريم الاصلية وترجماتها الى الانجليزية، مع التركيز على الفرق في المعنى بين ادوات الشرط العربية، بالرغم من ان مقابلها الانجليزي واحد. باستعمال ترجمة معاني القرآن الكريم التي قام بها محمد مرمادوك بيكال 1930م. ذلك لأنها كانت اول ترجمة لمرجم مسلم، كما انها اجيزت من الازهر، وان كل الترجمات التي سبقتها كانت لمرجمين غير مسلمين. فلذلك كانت هي مرجعية هذه المقارنة. أهم نتائج هذه المقارنة الفرق الواضح في المعنى بين أدوات الشرط العربية (إن وإذا ولو) يقابلها في الانجليزية (if)

**Abstract**

This article concerns itself with comparing conditional statements in Arabic and English in order to find out the main differences in both grammatical structure and meaning.

This comparison is a case study which follows a descriptive method. It describes the difference between the ways of expressing the intended meaning

by using conditionals in both languages, it uses the available sources from both languages such as extracts from The Holy Qur'an with their translations into English. It focuses on the difference of meaning conveyed by Arabic conditional particles Having the translation of The Holy Qur'an done by Mohamed Marmaduk Pickthal, 1930 AC. Because it was the first translation conducted by a Muslim translator, moreover, it was permitted by Alazhar,Cairo- Egypt. Therefore, it is appointed to be the frame work of the comparison

The most important finding of this comparison is the obvious difference between the Arabic conditional particles considering meaning. اذا

– ان لو

Key Words: Conditionals Particle Main clause result clause

## **- INTRODUCTION 1**

It is remarkable that conditionals are used in different linguistic situations. The primary purpose of a conditional sentence is to express hypothetical situations and their outcomes. They are used to talk about what would happen if something is true, as well as, what will happen when certain conditions are met or not met ( Salman,A. 2010).

Conditionals describe the result of a certain condition. The IF clause tells you the condition and the main clause tells you the result,  
( learning english,britshcauncil.org.)

Conditionals are extremely important in the English language because they help us express things that may happen in the present and future. Conditionals serve many purposes and take several different forms. They can be used to give advice, express regret and discuss facts among other things, (kaplaninternational.com)

As long as, translation between languages shoulders the responsibility of rendering the accurate intended meaning, it is very important that translators have to exert every effort to make sure of the exact meaning of every term which they translate from one language into another.

This article sheds light on conditionals used in English and Arabic by comparing them, in both, structure and meaning.

Languages express conditional sentences in different ways, each has its particular particles and structures. This might be resulted in misunderstanding of the intended meaning, when two languages are compared regarding meaning which rendered from one language into another (Hammadi, S:2019). The first translation of The Holy Qur'an conducted by a Muslim translator Mohamed Marmaduk Picthal is selected to be a frame work of this comparison, it was permitted by Alazhar –Cairo –Egypt. This is why it is appointed to be a frame work of this comparison.

***a- Definition of Terms:***

**Particle:** is a device or tool used in conditional sentences which companies the main clause

**Main clause:** the independent clause that contains the main action or state

**Result clause:** is the dependent clause which expresses the result of the conditional action.

**Protasis:** is the Arabic condition clause (where the first verb combines the particle)

جملة فعل الشرط ، حيث يرتبط فعل الشرط بأداة الشرط.

**Abodosis:** is the Arabic dependent clause ( in which the result of conditioning expressed).

جملة جواب الشرط، بحيث يكون فعلها نتيجة لحدوث فعل الشرط.

***b- The Article Question:***

what is the difference between English and Arabic conditional particles? And how should translators render them from one language into the other?

***c- Objective of The Article:***

Attempting to answer the article question, this paper aims at comparing English and Arabic conditional particles, in both, Arabic and English, focusing on the difference between them. Difference in meaning among Arabic particles is the main concern of this article. It sheds light upon the

specific meaning expressed by conditionals in English and Arabic in order to avoid committing mistakes while translating from either Arabic or English into the other.

***d- Significance of the article***

It gives translators, trainees, teachers and students of translation a clear idea about differences between Arabic and English conditional sentences, and conditional particles, which should be taken into consideration, while teaching or translating. This will help them to use the accurate type of conditionals in English and the right particle in Arabic on one hand, on the other hand it could be a considerable reference for researchers in question. Moreover, it may help in field of comparative studies. The following section discusses the Arabic conditional.

**Arabic Conditional 2-**

In the Arabic language, conditional sentences, typically, consist of two main components; the protasis and the apodosis . The protasis sets the condition, often, introduced by conditional particle, while the apodosis states the result or consequence of that condition ( nashraharabic.com).

These components work, in harmony, to create meaningful conditional expressions. Arabic grammar employs several conditional particles that can be utilized to form various types of conditional sentences. The most common conditional particles include

إذا - ان - لو..

كما في قول المتنبي : إذا راءيت نيوب الليث بارزة لا تظن ان الليث يبتسم.

**If/when** you see the teeth of the lion, do not think that it is smiling

وقول عنتر بن شداد: هلا سئلت القوم يا بنت مالك ان كنت جاهلة بما لم تعلمي.

Oh, daughter of Malik, you may ask the folk **if** you have no idea

وقول ابا العلاء المعري: لو ان النجوم لدي مال نفت كفاي اكثرها انتقادا.

**If** I got stars as money, my hands would reject most of them critically.( my translation).

وإذا سمعوا اللغو اعرضوا عنه( القصص – الآية55)

When they hear vanity, they withdraw from it.

فان لم يستجيبوا لك فاعلم انما يتبعون اهواهم (القصص- الآية 50)

And **if** they answer thee not, then know that what they follow is their lusts.

واذا يتلى عليهم قالو امنا به (القصص-الآية 53)

And **when** is recited upon them, they say we believe in it.

وقالوا ان نتبع الهدى معك نتخطف من ارضنا. ( القصص – الآية 57 )

And they say if we were to follow the guidance with thee, we should be torn out of our land.

واذا اذقنا الناس رحمة فرحوا بها واذا تصبهم سيئة بما قدمت ايديهم اذا هم يقنطون.

( الروم – الآية 36 )

***When** We cause mankind to taste of mercy, they rejoice therein, but if an evil thing befall them as the consequence of their own deeds, they are in despair.*

لو انزلنا هذا القرآن على جبل لرئته خاشعا متصدعا من خشية الله .

(الحشر –الآية 21)

***If** We had caused this Qur'an to descent upon a mountain, thou (O Mohamed) verily hadst seen it humbled rent asunder fear of Allah.*

واذا أنعمنا على الإنسان أعرض ونأا بجانبه . ( فصلت الآية 50 )

***When** We show favour unto him, he withdrawth and turneth aside.*

وإذا مسه الشر فذو دعاء عريض . ( فصلت - الآية 50 )

*When toucheth him, then he aboundeth in prayer.*

The Ayahs of The Holy Qur'an were translated by M. M. Picthall 1930.

Next section explains English conditionals:

### **3-English Conditionals**

English expresses conditional sentences in four structures named conditionals types.

According to Quirk et al (1985, p91-97), they are defined as conditional situations

**Type Zero:** This type is used to describe facts, scientific facts, rules or anything that's true. The structure of this type is present simple for both antecedent and consequent:

**IF you like it, we do it.**

**Type one :** This type refers to possibilities, potential which could happen in the future. The tense of this type is either present or future and modals can be used :

**If you come early, you can find them.**

**Type two :** This is used for imaginary and unreal event in the present or future. Past tense is used in this type to indicate present or future:

**If I were you, I would take it.**

**Type three :** It is used for unreal or impossible event (didn't occur) in the past. The structure can be with past perfect;

**If I had gotten the job, I would have started a new life.**

English language uses one particle in all types which is ( *IF* ).

According to Haegeman ( 2009, pp33-43), there are different ways of expressions implied condition in English. One of the ways of forming conditional sentence is using the term(*when*) instead of (*if*) when the conditional is type zero. The preceded translated Ayahs(versions) are Examples.

The coming section is going to present the similarities and differences between conditionals in both languages.

#### **4- Comparative Analysis**

##### ***a- Similarities:***

Although, both languages are different and each belongs to a different family of languages, there are some shared similarities between them. In that, both use a conditional particle and two clauses; the main clause which includes the conditional particle and the result clause which tells the result or effect of the first action included in the main clause.

such as: If it rains, streets will get muddy. (IF) is the English particle of conditioning. (It rains) is the main clause containing the main verb of action, and ( streets will get muddy) is the result clause expressing the result  
ان امطرت، سوف توحد الشوارع.

##### ***b- Differences:***

Whereas, Arabic depends on the type of particle to express conditional sentences, English uses tenses to do so.

Arabic uses forms of present and past verbs in most conditional sentences, in addition to imperative form, but English language expresses them by employing structures of tenses such as present simple, past simple and present perfect. Consequently, types of English conditional sentences depend on tenses rather than particles, in contrast, Arabic depends on the type of particle itself.

Arabic conditional particles, themselves, differ from each other considering meaning, as in the following examples:

فان لم يستجيبوا لك فاعلم انما يتبعون أهوائهم. ( القصص – الآية 50)

*If they answer thee not, then know that what they follow is their lasts.*

( Pickthal. M. M.,1930)

لو انزلنا هذا القرآن علي جبل لرايته خاشعا متصدعا من خشية الله. (الأنعام – الآية 157)

*If we were caused this Qur'an to descend upon a mountain, thou*

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( O Mohamed ) verily hadst seen it humbled, rent a sunder by the fear of Allah. ( Pickthal, M. M., 1930) .

Table-one. Similarities and Differences of Arabic and English Conditionals

Similarities	Differences
Both have particles. Both have two clauses. They use the conditional action within particle clause. Both use imperatives in result clauses.	English uses one form of particle, whereas Arabic uses three .  Arabic depends on the particle to express conditioning unlike English which uses tenses to do so.  In Arabic, conditional meaning is expressed through different particles, while in English, conditional meaning is conveyed primarily through tense and modality.

### 5-Conclusion and Recommendations

Spite the similarities between the two languages in structures, there are some differences in particles used by both, considering intended meanings. Whereas, English uses the same particle (IF), Arabic uses different particles to express conditional situations. Each has its particular meaning which refers to specific use, for instance, ( itha ) Is used for expressing real facts and scientific facts, it is, also, used for expressing repeated actions, therefore, it meets type zero in English, and it is always translated as WHEN, but (in ) is used for unreal or possible actions, it is, usually, translated as IF in type one. Whereas, (law) is used for expressing impossible incidents. It is, frequently, translated as IF in type two and three. The mentioned above differences should be taken into consideration from the side of translators, trainees and

teachers of translation, in particular, who are responsible of training students and trainees of translation.

Researches in this field, regarding difficulties that encounter translators and translation trainees, are recommended.

Professional and freelance translators should pay more attention to the differences between languages, particularly, English and Arabic while they are translating texts that includes conditionals.

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