

Letters of Construction and Signification in the Arabic Language and their Significance

Dr. Ibrahim Babikir Elhag Abd Elgadir, Ms. Zahanah Binti Mohd Nadzir
International Islamic University Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah (UniSHAMS), Malaysia

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i10/18671> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i10/18671

Published Date: 01-10-2023

Abstract

The Arabs had a deep understanding of the secrets of the Arabic language and its signification. Some books have documented the division of speech into nouns, verbs, and particles, as transmitted from Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) (Al-Qifti, 1986). Abu alAswad al-Du'ali also had knowledge of the rules of case endings and grammatical inflections Arabic movements, especially among the early scholars of Arabic. They delved into the study of letters and linguistic articles, and some of them dedicated specific books to the topic of letters. One of the earliest of these books is "Kitab al-Huruf" by Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi (al-Farahidi, 1918). While grammarians and interpreters wrote their observations and opinions about letters within their general discussions, a group of them recognized the importance of this field of study and felt the need to compile independent books dedicated to it. Al-Zajjaji authored his book "Al-Lamat" and Al-Harawi wrote "Al-Azhhiyah fi 'Ilm alHuruf," among others. Through these efforts, this field of study progressed towards independence and maturity. The researcher of this study followed a descriptive and analytical approach to address the subject, clarifying the types of letters in terms of construction and signification as they appear in the Arabic sources. The researcher explained their scientific aspects, analyzed their types, and discussed their application in Arabic sentence structures, elucidating their characteristics and features. One of the most important findings of the researcher is that

letters have a significant impact on changing the signification within a sentence. Additionally, letters provide another dimension that can be understood from the context of the text. Furthermore, it was discovered that there are books dedicated solely to studying letters due to their importance in the Arabic language. The researcher recommends dedicating research papers, books, and studies to the field of letters in order to enrich the Arabic language in this field. It is also recommended to study these letters in the Qur'an to gain further understanding of the purposes behind the words of Allah. **Keywords:** The Letters, Their Types, Their Significations, Their Applications

Introduction

Praise be to Allah, who revealed the Noble Qur'an in the Arabic language, a clear truth. We send blessings and peace upon our master Muhammad, his family, his companions, and all those who follow them with excellence until the Day of Judgment. To learn Arabic, its grammar and morphology, is a path to understanding the language of the Noble Qur'an, the tongue of Islam, and the vessel of its culture. Considering the importance of letters in clarifying grammatical, morphological, and rhetorical issues in the Arabic language, as well as their impact on changing signification, concepts, and purposes of Arabic texts, and in order to comprehend the secrets and methods of Arabic, this research focuses on Arabic articles and letters in their various aspects. The research explores the significations and functions of letters in grammatical, morphological, and rhetorical contexts within texts. It enables the reader to familiarize themselves with a wide range of articles and letters, studying their applications in grammatical, morphological, and rhetorical issues, and the impact they have on altering the significations and varying the connotations of texts. The research examines compound letters consisting of two or more letters, as well as individual letters, presenting their categories, uses, structures, and functions they perform. It provides a deeper understanding of the role of letters in clarifying and defining the significations and purposes of texts, extracting the significations of letters from the purposes of speech. May Allah grant us success, and it is upon Him that we rely for guidance on the right path.

The Definition of Letters and Articles The Meaning of "Harf" (Letter) Linguistically

The term "Harf" originates from the concept of "side" or "edge." It is used to refer to a letter of the alphabet. This is because a letter is a distinct sound produced from a specific position or direction. For example, when someone turns their face away from what they desire, it is said that they have turned their face "Harfan" (in a different direction). It implies anticipation and expectation (Ibn Manzur, 2000). In other words, if someone does not see what they like, they turn their face away from it. So, every object has a side or aspect, just like the side of a mountain, a river, a sword, and so on (Al-Azharī, 1981). The term "Harf" also refers to the linguistic function known as "rabīṭah" (conjunction). It serves to connect nouns with other nouns and verbs with other verbs. Examples include "min" (from), "alā" (on), and similar ones. In the book "Tahdhīb al-Lughah," it is mentioned that every word is constructed with a naked article in speech to differentiate meanings. This article is called a "Harf." Even if a word is built with two or more letters, such as "ḥattā" (until), "hal" (whether), "bal" (rather), and others, each word that is recited in various ways in the Qur'an is considered a "Harf" (Ibn Manzur, 2000).

The Meaning of "Harf" (Letter) in Technical Terms

1-Sībawayh defined a "Harf" (letter) as "...a letter that conveys a meaning that is neither a noun nor a verb..." (Sībawayh, 1977).

2-Ibn 'Aṣfur defined a "Harf" as something that indicates a meaning in something else (Ibn 'Aṣfur, 1971).

3-Ḥasan al-Sharīf stated that a "Harf" is a pronunciation that signifies a meaning in something else, not in itself (Hasan, 1966).

The broadest of these definitions is what al-Murādī mentioned, stating that "...a letter is a word that indicates a meaning in something else only" (al-Murādī, 1992).

Based on this, it can be said that "Harf al-Ma'ānī" (letters of meaning) are every letter or semiletter that serves a syntactic, morphological, or phonetic function with significance. Al-Murādī discussed the importance of establishing a comprehensive definition that distinguishes "Harf al-Ma'ānī" and outlined various boundaries set for it by previous scholars. He concluded that the best of these boundaries is the statement of some scholars: "A letter is a word that indicates a meaning in something else only." Then, al-Murādī explained the elements of this boundary, stating that "word" encompasses nouns, verbs, and letters. It is known from this boundary that what is not a word is not a letter, such as the glottal stop (hamzah) in tanwīn and alif maqṣūrah. They are letters of pronunciation, not letters of meaning, as they are not considered words. Al-Murādī further explained that "indicates a meaning in something else" applies to verbs and most nouns, as verbs do not indicate a meaning in something else, and likewise for most nouns. He added that "only" introduces a second distinction, which includes nouns that indicate a meaning in themselves and a meaning in something else, such as interrogative and conditional nouns. Each of them, due to the inclusion of the meaning of the letter, indicates a meaning in something else along with its significance for the assigned meaning. For example, when you say, "Man yaqim, iqim ma'ahu." (Whoever stands, stand with him,) the word "man" indicates a rational person by its placement and also implies a connection between the consequence clause and the conditional clause, by implying the meaning of the conditional "in" (if). Therefore, al-Murādī added "only" to emphasize this distinction (al-Murādī, 1927).

(Aladato) Tool In Language and Terminology

Tool: A small machine, (al-Murādī, 1992), and its plural is "Adwat". The tool of war is its weapon, and every person has their own tool. It is the instrument by which they practice their craft. The letter "Alif" used for (Aladato) the tool is (Waw) because its plural is "Adwat" (AlJawahiri, 1957). Therefore, the tool refers to the necessary machine that a person uses to achieve what they create.

Article in Terminology

The semantic meaning of the article evolved to a mere mental concept. The sensory article refers to a mere mental concept. In the terminology of grammarians, the article means: "... the word is used to connect speech or to indicate a meaning in something else" (Ibn Manzoor, 2010). If the tool/machine establishes a craft, then the article establishes speech and connects its parts, in addition to its other functions in vocabulary and sentences (Al-Saghir, 2002). This is what can be relied upon in determining the semantic meaning of the article in terminology. Studies have not revealed a concept that clarifies its nature and defines its boundaries. In this book, we attempt to establish a concept that approximates its meaning. Sibawayh did not

mention the article in his book, but he mentioned the letter that came to represent a meaning that is neither a noun nor a verb, and made it "thumma" (then), "sawfa" (will), "waw" (and), and "al-qasam" (the oath) (Sibawayh, 1977). Al-Mubarrad understands the articles in a specific sense. According to him, the tools mean factors, as he said: "... I know that verbs are articles for nouns, they function in them just like letters ..." (Al-Mubarrad, 824). The term "Adwat" (articles) refers to the letters of meanings according to the Kufan grammarians, due to their abundance and diverse functions. Therefore, the concept of articles can be defined as a term used by the Kufans to refer to the letters of meanings (AlSamarra'i, 1987).

The Relationship Between Letters Of Meanings And Articles

Grammarians use the term "article" to refer to the letter that functions among the letters of meanings, such as when it is a letter of reduction a noun, opening or elision a conform verb, and so on. This term "article" can also be applied to some nouns that closely resemble letters, such as when the noun is construction, ambiguous in its meaning, or not susceptible to noun relationships. However, verbs do not fall under the category of tools, even though they function in other aspects, such as in regularity the subject or opening the object.

Some inert verbs that remain in one form and do not change from past to present or imperative can be considered closer to letters, which led us to include them in the list of active tools. For example, the verb "laysa" (not to be) is a deficient past tense verb, an inert verb, a article of negation, and primate annulers.

In conclusion, if a letter among the letters of signification is active, it falls under the category of article. This is because articles encompass active letters, nouns that resemble letters, and some verbs. Therefore, we can say that the relationship between letters of signification and articles is a general and specific relationship, where articles are more general and letters of signification are more specific (Mayu, 1989).

Division of Letters Based on Construction and Signification First section: Letters of Construction

We notice that some books combine letters of construction and letters of signification, while others only discuss letters of signification. They elaborate on their explanations, interpretations, and significances, mentioning all their types and providing various categories for them. For the singular form, they have sections, and for the compound form, they have separate sections. We can observe this division in books such as "Al-Jana Al-Dani" and "Mughni Al-Labib," as well as other books dedicated to the study of letters and articles, especially those of a more recent nature.

Furthermore, these books include numerous examples from Arabic poetry, proverbs, wise sayings, the Holy Quran, and the noble Prophetic Hadith. They also discuss the opinions of grammarians regarding these letters, their meanings, significances, and usages, as well as the differences among Arabic grammatical scholars in their usage and meanings within sentences. Additionally, they address their inflectional aspects, such as their composition and individuality, which can alter their function and significance within sentences. Some other books solely focus on studying letters of construction, excluding other letters. Examples of such books are "Al-Daad wal-Thaa" which provide concise explanations and interpretations of these letters.

A letter of construction is one that contributes to the structure of a word. When the letter is separated from the other letters that form the word, it does not indicate anything on its own, such as the letter "waw" in "waqad" (and indeed) or the letter "fa" in "farah" (joy).

Al-Zajjaji mentioned some grammatical and morphological issues related to Sibawayh, such as his statement regarding "qad" (indeed) as follows: "...it is for people who expect an order, so they say, 'Indeed, it has happened.'" (Sibawayh, 1965). He discussed how "qad" can have the meaning of realization with the present tense.

He also mentioned Sibawayh's statement regarding the term "qarabtuka" (your proximity means your nearness) (Sibawayh, 1965). Regarding the term "mahma," Al-Zajjaji stated that it is equivalent to "ma" (whatever) in the conditional sense. Al-Khalil mentioned that when "ma" is combined with "ma," it becomes redundant. For example, "mata-ta'ti atika" (whenever you come, I will come to you) and "mata mata'tini atika" (whenever you come, I will come to you). He further mentioned, "...but they disliked repeating the same sound, so they replaced the letter 'ha' with 'alif'" (Al-Zajjaji, 1986). Sibawayh also stated that it is possible for it to be "muh" with a (ma) added to it (Sibawayh, 1942). This is a literal quotation from Sibawayh's speech. Sibawayh is also quoted as saying about the term "lat" (it is not): "...it does not resemble 'laisa' (not) in some cases, and they did not use it explicitly, as it is not like 'laysa' (not to be) with the ya of address and reporting about an absent person..." (Sibawayh, 1942).

Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi mentioned: Its origin is "lam," then the letter "ha" was added at the beginning, and the people of "al-Hijaz" do not make it duale or plural (Al-Yaqut, 1997). (Al-Zajjaji, 1986). Al-Zajjaji also mentioned that the Arabs say: "ramaytu 'an al-qaws" (I shot from the bow), meaning "with the bow" (Al-Zajjaji, 1986). Imrou' Al Qais said: (Tasuddu wa tubdi 'an Asilin wa tataqi, Binaziratin min wahshin wa jaratin mutafall). "You turn away and appear distant from Asil, And guard yourself with a gaze of a wild beast and a tilted water jug." (Al-Qais, 1984).

The commentator notes: "عن أسيل" means "with Asil."

Al-Zajjaji, quoting Ibn Qutaybah, said: enters 'min' onto 'ala' mentioned the following verse by Al-Kisa'i: (Batat tunawwash al-hawd nawshan min 'ala, Nawshan bihi taqta'u ajwaza alfala). "She starts watering the trough with lofty water, Water that cuts through the veins of mountains." (Al-Zajjaji, 1986)

The preposition "مِن" (min) can be used interchangeably with "على" (ala), as mentioned by Al-Kisa'i. Additionally, the preposition "عن" (an) is used in the verse by Thul-Rumah: (Wa hifun tuhijj al-bayyin ba'da tajawuz, 'Idha nafhat min 'an yamin al-mashariq). "And Haif will rage after surpassing, When it emanates from the right of the East" (Thul-Rumah, 1965) The phrase "مِنَ عَن" (min 'an) is used in this case.

And it is said: "I was with my companions, so I met with them, and he was with her, so I took him away from her."

And Al-Farra' said: "Al-a'n" is a particle built upon the letter "alif" and "lam," and they were not omitted. It was left in the category of attribute because it functions as an attribute in meaning and expression, so they left it in the category of article (Al-Farra', 1983)

And Al-Kisa'i said: "Min" enters with all the attribute letters except for "ba" and "lam," and the Arabs only refrained from using it with "ba" and "lam" because it is not an ism (noun) on a single letter. .

Al-Zajjaji said, "...Al-Asma'i said, the Arabs say 'Lahu al-wail wa al-ail,' where al-ail means lamentation, and it speaks of the meaning of 'wail'...."

In his statement, "fi" means "min" (from) (Al-Zajjaji, 1986), like the saying of Imrou' Al Qais: "Wa hal yunamman man kana aqrab ahdiḥ Thalathin shahran fi thalatha ahāwāl".

"Would anyone be blessed, who was closest in his promise, For thirty months, in three conditions." (Al-Qais,1984). The evidence is in the phrase "fi thalathah," meaning "from three."

Seebawayh said, "Nawaluka an taf'al kathā wa kathā," which means "It is appropriate for you to do this and that" (Seebawayh, 1988).

And from the mono lateral

Al-Hamzah: It can be used in various ways, including indicating hesitation. (Abu 'Ubaidah, 209) claimed that it indicates affirmation because the angels do not oblige unless Allah obliges (Seebawayh, 1988).

Al-Ba': It is used for annexation, such as in the phrase "marartu bi-Zayd" (I passed by Zayd). (Al-Muradi 1992) mentioned that its meaning is attachment, which is its fundamental meaning. Seebawayh did not mention any other usage. Attachment is divided into two types: literal, as in "amsaktu al-habl bi-yadi" (I held the rope with my hand), and metaphorical, as in "marartu bi-Zayd" (I passed by Zayd).

Al-Ta': It is a preposition (harf jar), but it only functions in the name of Allah Almighty in oaths, as in "ta Allahi la-akhrujanna" (By Allah, I swear that I will go out.) (Al-Muradi,1992). **Al-Seen:** It is used for the future. Ibn Hisham al-Ansari mentioned that some grammarians believed that it restricts continuity. However, Ibn Hisham argued that continuity is derived from the present tense, and al-Seen is beneficial for the future (Ibn Hisham,1985).

Al-faa: is considered a neglected letter and it has three functions: conjunction, answer, and augmentation. The scholars Al-Ramani and (Al-Muradi, 1992). agree on this. The answer can be understood in two ways. One of them is when the verb that follows the conjunction "فاء"

(faa) is opened after the word "أن" (an)is implicated, in six cases: interrogation, command, prohibition, wish, denial, and conditional statement. Regularity is also permissible for interruption or resumption. (Al-Muradi,1992). mentioned that some people believe that "فاء" can indicate a period, meaning "then" or for emphasis, as in the phrase "تزوج فلان فولد له" (someone married, and then he had a child).

Al-kaaf: it is a letter of reduction for what follows it. Al-Rummani divided it into a noun and a particle. As a noun, it can be used in phrases like "مررت برجلٍ كعمرو" (I passed by a man like Amr), indicating similarity. As a particle, it can be used in phrases like "مررت بالذی کزید" (I passed by the one like Zaid), It can also be used as an augmentation, as in "ما رأيت كمثلك" (I have never seen anyone like you) (Al-Rummani, 1981).

It is not permissible for "كاف" to be used in any other form, as it would be considered blasphemous. Al-Ramani justified this by stating that affirming "مثل" (like) negates the comparison, making the statement "ليس مثل مثله" (There is nothing like His likeness). Thus, it affirms the unique essence of Allah. (Al-Rummani, 1981).

Al-lam: Al-Rummani stated that the letter "لام" (lam) can be used to confirmate the predicate of a sentence, like how "إن" (in) is used to confirmate the entire sentence. Originally, it was appropriate for "لام" to come before "إن" (in) in order to avoid combining the two emphasis

particles. However, they disliked the combination of the two confirmation particles and moved "لام" to the predicate. However, Al-Rummani justified the precedence of "إن" by stating that it acts as an active letter in the sentence, and therefore, the active letter should come first in the

sentence. Additionally, (Al-Rummani, 1981) provided an explanation for the presence of an openness in sentences like "الثوب لك" (Al-thawb laka) where he said that the single letters originally take "فتح" but when they are attached to a pronoun, they return to their original form because implicit generally revert things to their original state. These are general linguistic rules that he relied on to explain the presence of "openness" on the "lam" when it is attached to an implicit. (Al-Rummani, 1981).

The dual lateral like: (أن)"An"

The dual letters like (أن)"an" were extensively discussed by Al-Rummani, who presented various opinions of the Basri and Kufi schools without expressing his own stance. Regarding (أن), it can function as an active or a non-active. As an operator, it modifies the verb in interpreting the infinitive, as in your statement: "يعجبني أن تقوم" "I like that you stand up," where the meaning is "يعجبني قيامك" "I like your standing up." When (أن) is in its abbreviated form, it does not affect the verb. As a non-active, it can be categorized into two types: the first type is explanatory. The second type occurs after "لما" (when), and the Kufis claim that it can be understood as "إذ" (if). The Basris argue that (أن) in this case is in an opening position because it is a direct object, and the interpretation is "لأن جاءه" "if something happened to him." (Al-Rummani, 1981)

As for "إن," it is said that when it precedes "ما" (what), it nullifies her work as "إن" replaces the verb, as in your statement: "إنما زيد قائم" "Zaid is standing." The Kufis claim that it can mean "إذ" (if) and argue that its meaning is "if Allah wills." The Basris reject this interpretation and state that "إن" in this case is a conditional particle. (Al-Anbari, 1999).

Regarding "أو" (or), Al-Rummani said that it implies the presence of "أن" when its meaning is equivalent to "ح ن" (until). (Al-Rummani, 1981) Imrou' Al Qais said:

So I said to him, "Do not shed tears, For we strive for sovereignty or we die, and thus it is excusable." (Al-Qais, 1984)

In this verse, Imrou' Al Qais employs the phrase "ح ن نموت فنعدرا" (hatta namoota fanu'dhirra) which can be translated as "until we die, and thus it is excusable." The particle "أن" (an) is concealed and implied after "ح ن" (hatta), giving it the meaning of "until." This usage is acknowledged by Al-Rummani, 1995). Al-Muradi (1992) stated that Basrians believed that the verb after "ح ن" should be opened with an implied "أن," which is the correct understanding according to them. On the other hand, Kufans considered "ح ن" as an opening particle, that opens the verb by itself (Al-Muradi, 1992).

The Triliteral Letters

Among them is "على" ('alā), which can function as a preposition, a noun, and a verb. When it functions as a preposition, its meaning is "on" or "upon," as in the sentence "جلست على الكرسي" (You sat on the chair). When it functions as a noun, it can be used in phrases like "جئت من عليه" (I came from on top of it). As a verb, its usage and meaning are described by (Al-Rummani, 1981).

Another example is "أن" (anna), which is one of the active particles. It takes the opening case for the noun and regulates the predicate. Its ruling is like that its (Hamzah) is reduced. It can be understood as meaning "لعل" "perhaps" or "maybe." For example, you can say: "أتيت السوق"

ت ي لنا (you came to the market, perhaps you will buy something for us). Al-Khalil mentioned this usage.

As for "ألا" (allā), it has three meanings

1. It can function as an alert or an introduction to speech.
2. It can function as a presentation, as in the phrase "ألا تقصدنا فنكرمك" (Don't you intend to visit us? We will honor you).
3. It can express a wish, with opening nouns following it.

"إذا" (izan) (Therefore), it is one of the particles that is active one time and is not active another time. In the Basran script, it is written as "إذا" with an alif, while in the Kufan script, it is written with a nun. This is because, it is a nun and not a tanween, as mentioned by (AlMubarrad, 1992).

Fourthly, the Quadrilateral Letters

"Hasha" (حاش) is one of the quadrilateral letters. According to Al-Rummani, it is one of the active particles, and its function is that of a reduction particle. This is the opinion of Sibawayh (765). However, Al-Mubarrad and the Kufans believe that it is a verb. Ibn Jinni also supported this view, and they argued for the veracity of "hashi" being a verb based on its conjugation and its usage in preceding the letter "الحرف" (al-harf), resulting in forms like "hashayt" (حاشيت) meaning "I excepted" or "I excluded." This is mentioned by (Al-Mubarrad, 1992).

Conclusion

This research falls within the studies that examine the Arabic letters regarding their usage in words and sentences, as well as the implications and meanings associated with them. There are books that have focused on this aspect, specializing in the study of the letters of construction and signification. These books have explored their types and implications in the Quran and Arabic literature. Some of these books solely focused on studying the letters, such as "Rasaf al-Mabani fi Sharh Huruf al-Ma'ani" by Imam Ahmad al-Malaqi, "Kitab al-Huruf" by Al-Rummani, "Kitab al-Azhiyah," "Kitab al-Jana al-Dani," "Kitab al-Lamat" by Al-Zajjaji, "Kitab al-Lamat" by Al-Nahas, "Kitab al-Fusul al-Mufidah fi al-Waw al-Mazidah," and others that specialized in studying the Arabic letters due to their importance in Arabic texts and enriching their meanings and implications.

There are also books that categorize the letters into monolateral, dual lateral, trilateral, and quadrilateral letters, explaining their functions and detailing their usage in sentences. These comprehensive and detailed studies of Arabic letters highlight their significance in the Arabic language, particularly in sentence structure and the clarification of their implications and purposes. These letters have a significant impact on the various aspects of meanings and sentence analysis, as they dictate the grammatical roles of regularity, opening, elision, and reduction in Arabic texts, consequently leading to changes in the implications and meanings of sentences.

Additionally, the study of Arabic letters holds importance in the phonetic aspect, as these letters serve as the building blocks for vocabulary formation. Words and sentences are composed of individual units, and language is the means through which every community expresses their purposes and intentions. Therefore, the study, explanation, and detailed analysis of letters in words and sentences are of active importance, especially within the

context of the growing interest in the Arabic language, the advancement of research and studies in this field, and the expansion of the scope of studying the letters to enrich their various aspects.

References

- Anbari. (1999) *Asrar al-Arabiyyah*, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah Manzur.
(2000), *Lisan al-Arab*, Beirut: Dar Sader.
Khatib. (1974), *Al-Ihatah fi Akhbar Gharnatah*, Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah.
Sibawayh. (1942), *The Book*, Cairo: Dar Maarif,
Suyuti. (1964), *Baghiyat al-Wuhat*, Cairo: Al-ShaerArts Library Farra.
(1983), *Ma'ani al-Quran al-Kareem*, Egypt: Dar Al-Surur.
Al-Qays, A. (1984), *Diwan*, Beirut: Dar Sader
El-Muradi. (1992), *Proximal Genie*, Beirut: Bo Muhammad al-Hasan bin Qasim bin Abdullah Al-Zajjaji. (1986), *Meanings of the Quran*, Beirut: World of Books