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THE ANALYSIS OF A MODERN TERM CLAIM IN ARABIC LINGUISTICS: İHMÂL	ARAP DİLBİLİMİNDE MODERN BİR TERİM İDDİASININ ANALİZİ: İHMÂL
<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>This study investigates the validity of classifying ihmâl (inactivation) as a technical term within Arabic linguistics. Fundamentally, ihmâl refers to a grammatical state where a linguistic element, whether a noun, verb, or particle, fails to exert influence over another element or does not fulfil its expected function. While some contemporary researchers have attempted to systematize this phenomenon by introducing rigid typologies, such as permissible versus obligatory or accidental versus inherent forms, this research argues that such classifications are historically unfounded. Through a comprehensive comparative analysis, the study reveals that classical nahw scholars employed the concept across divergent fields. For instance, early linguists used the term to describe unrelated phenomena, ranging from phonetic incompatibility in morphology to a simple lack of governance in syntax. The study contends that in foundational texts, the word functioned primarily in its lexical sense of “neglect” rather than as a fixed grammatical rule or term. Consequently, the study concludes that the modern terminology of ihmâl is a retrospective imposition that distorts the fluid nature of the classical tradition, where it served as a descriptive tool for non-functionality rather than a unified theoretical category.</p> <p>Keywords: Arabic Language and Rhetoric, Linguistics, Inactivation, Phenomenon, Term</p>	<p>ÖZET</p> <p>Bu çalışma, Arap dilbiliminde ihmâl (atıl bırakma) kavramının teknik bir terim olarak sınıflandırılmasının geçerliliğini eleştirel bir şekilde araştırmaktadır. Temel olarak ihmâl, isim, fiil veya harf gibi bir dilbilgisi unsurunun başka bir unsur üzerinde etki gösterememesi veya beklenen işlevini yerine getirememesi durumunu ifade eder. Bazı çağdaş araştırmacılar, bu olguyu câize karşı vâcip veya arızîye karşı vaz'î biçimler gibi katı tipolojiler getirerek sistemleştirmeye çalışsalar da, bu araştırma söz konusu sınıflandırmaların tarihsel olarak dayanaksız olduğunu savunmaktadır. Kapsamlı bir karşılaştırmalı analiz yoluyla çalışma, klasik dönem alimlerinin bu kavramı farklı alanlarda farklı bağlamlarda kullandığını ortaya koymaktadır. İlk dönem nahiv bilginleri bu terimi, morfolojideki fonetik uyumsuzluktan sözdizimindeki basit bir amel eksikliğine kadar uzanan birbiriyle görece ilgisiz olguları tanımlamak için kullanmışlardır. Çalışma, temel metinlerde kelimenin sabit bir kuraldan ziyade, öncelikle “ihmal etme” şeklindeki sözlük anlamıyla işlev gördüğünü ileri sürmektedir. Sonuç olarak, çalışma ihmâlin modern dönemde terimleştirilmesinin birleşik bir teorik kategoriden ziyade işlevsizlik için betimleyici bir araç olarak hizmet ettiği klasik geleneğin akışkan doğasını bozan, geriye dönük bir dayatma olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.</p> <p>Anahtar kelimeler: Arap Dili ve Belagati, Dilbilim, İhmâl, Olgu, Terim</p>

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Introduction

This study addresses the phenomenon of ihmāl in Arabic grammar and aims to examine its validity as a technical term. Ihmāl, as a term adopted by contemporary researchers, refers to the condition in Arabic grammar in which a linguistic element fails to exert influence on other elements within a sentence. While this ineffectiveness is permanent for some structures (such as ¹ for question), for others it occurs contingent upon the fulfilment of specific conditions. The phenomenon of ihmāl essentially implies the absence of the phenomenon of i‘māl. For this reason, it is first necessary to address the phenomenon of ‘amal and its related concepts in the Arabic language, as it is difficult to comprehend a phenomenon without its opposite.

The ‘āmil theory, which is one of the cornerstones of Arabic grammar, is based on the principle that the i‘rāb changes at the end of words in Arabic syntax occur through a preceding ‘āmil. This morphological variation results from the grammatical relationships among the linguistic units that make up the sentence, such as nouns, verbs, and particles (Sībawayh, 1988, s. 1/13). In this context, the element that appears first in the sentence and produces the effect is called the ‘āmil (Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, 1983, s. 145), while the element to which this effect is directed and which consequently undergoes change is termed the ma‘mūl, and this reciprocal process of interaction is expressed by the concept of ‘amal. The ‘āmil theory is functional in the process of learning and teaching Arabic grammar and, consequently, the Arabic language (Bulut, 2006, ss. 63-64; Kınar, 2006, ss. 157-158; Öztürk & Çınar, 2025, s. 151).

In this study, it is important to analyse certain interrelated concepts. These are: word, concept, phenomenon, and term. These concepts are the fundamental building blocks of language and thought systems, and they exist in a complex relationship with one another. Concepts are abstract mental constructs that are concretized through words and used in communication. Phenomena express experienceable realities and form the basis of concept definitions. Terms, on the other hand, are words with special and precise meanings in specific disciplines. While concepts are abstract, words concretize them and can express phenomena. Terms are words that carry precise meanings in specialized fields and serve the functions of knowledge transfer, delimitation, and logic. The relationship between these elements is shaped through linguistic similarities and functional differences (Gencer & Çiçek, t.y., ss. 1-33).

Just five studies on this subject have been found. One of these works is Sameer Ahmad Abduljawad’s book: “*al-Ihmāl: dirāsa tafşīliyya nahwiyya*”. The other one is Saeed Ahmad al-Batati’s master’s thesis (University of Mustansariyah: Baghdad, 1998) called “*Zahira al-ihmāl fi al-nahw al-Arabi*”. Both are unavailable to read, because they could not be found on the internet, and the physical form could not be found in the Turkish libraries or bought from abroad.

The third one is an article written by Omar Faris Yousef al-Kafaween. The name of the article is “*Zāhirat al-muḥmal fi ma‘ājim al-lughah*”. This study investigates the phenomenon of neglected lexical items and morphological structures in Arabic lexicography. The article has not been mentioned in the literary review because it does not include grammatical aspects of the ihmāl concept (al-Kafaween, 2016).

The fourth study is the doctoral dissertation prepared by Ilyas el-Hâj İshak, titled “*al-Ihmāl fi’l-‘Arabiyya: asrāruh wa maẓānnuh*”. The final study is the article written by Jihad Yosef al-Arcâ, titled “*al-Ihmāl fi’n-nahw*”. This study was undertaken because of the limited number of studies in the field.

Regarding the method, this study employs a qualitative research design based on document analysis and thematic analysis. The data collection process was conducted in two distinct layers to enable a comparative evaluation of the term ihmāl. The first layer of the dataset focuses on two modern academic scholarship, which are mentioned above, to determine how ihmāl is currently conceptualized. The second layer comprises primary sources from the classical tradition. The data analysis was conducted in three stages. The first, classical and modern (dictionaries include) texts were scanned for the word to identify whether the word was used in a lexical sense or a conceptual/technical sense. The second, modern definitions were analysed. Finally, the diverse and scattered usages in classical sources were compared against the systematic definitions in modern studies to evaluate the validity of claiming ihmāl as a unified technical term. This study is limited to the epistemological and terminological analysis of ihmāl. It does not aim to provide an exhaustive inventory of every instance of inactivation (‘amal) for all nouns, verbs, and particles individually.

1. Literature Review

As it is mentioned that five studies have been noticed, but one of them is just about the lexical aspect of ihmāl, and two of them are not available to reach. There are the last two studies (Ilyās al-Ḥāj Ishāq, 2002; Jihād Yūsuf al-Arcā, 2007) that address the subject of ihmāl in Arabic grammar. In this part, an attempt is made to explain what the two studies explain about ihmāl and what the differences are between their concepts. The general assessment is going to be done in the analysis heading.

The authors of these works, Ilyas el-Hāj Ishaq and Jihad Yosef el-Arcā, who examine the phenomenon of ihmāl in Arabic grammar, fundamentally diverge from the present research as they presuppose that it is a clearly defined technical term and proceed directly to functional classifications. While these works systematize the subject from a modern perspective under categories, this study argues that the scattered usage found in classical sources does not support the claim of terminological clarity asserted in modern scholarship. Consequently, this article occupies a distinct position in the literature by problematizing the weak historical foundations of this terminological formation of ihmāl and by analyzing the transition of ihmāl from a phenomenon to a concept and ultimately to a term in the modern period, rather than treating it as a pre-established grammatical category.

In the doctoral dissertation (*al-Ihmāl fī'l-‘Arabiyya: Asrāruh wa Mazānnuh*), the phenomenon of ihmāl in Arabic and its manifestations in nouns, verbs, and particles are examined. The study begins by providing a definition of ihmāl in Arabic. Specifically, the meanings of fundamental grammatical elements such as nouns, verbs, and particles are explained within the context of ihmāl. Two types of ihmāl are addressed in the dissertation. The first is called “vaz‘ī ihmāl” (inherent inactivation). This type of ihmāl refers to the condition where a grammatical element is fundamentally non-functional. For example, some nouns or particles by their nature do not carry any grammatical function. The second type is referred to as “‘āriḍī ihmāl” (accidental inactivation). This type of ihmāl refers to the situation in which a normally functional grammatical element loses its function in specific circumstances. In the dissertation, the phenomenon of ihmāl is examined in detail in the context of nouns, verbs, and particles. The causes, consequences, and different types of ihmāl for each element are explained with examples. This dissertation contributes to the literature in the field by comprehensively addressing the phenomenon of ihmāl in Arabic grammar. Within the dissertation, ihmāl is treated as a term and taken beyond simply

being a concept (Ilyās al-Hāj Ishāq, 2002). This approach can be understood from the author's explanation of the definition and types of the ihmāl phenomenon, as well as from the detailed examples of linguistic structures provided.

The article (*al-Ihmāl fi'n-Naḥw*) aims to address and examine the category of “permissible ihmāl” (jā'iz ihmāl), which operates in Arabic according to specific conditions and forms and can lose its effectiveness due to the absence of a particular condition or form. The author divides ihmāl into two categories, naming them permissible (jā'iz) and obligatory (wājib) ihmāl. He explains permissible ihmāl as the inactivation that occurs when a condition is removed from the parts of linguistic elements that operate with special conditions and forms, or when one of these forms is disrupted; according to the author, the element's 'amal is then nullified as if it had never functioned. Obligatory ihmāl, on the other hand, remains unchanged by any alteration in the state, conditions, or forms of the linguistic elements. In the introduction to his article, the author dwells on the lexical meaning of the word 'ihmāl' and subsequently defines it by examining its terminological usage with examples from classical and modern grammatical literature. In the next section, he addresses the ihmāl of complete and defective verbs and presents different views on the matter. The following section is devoted to the ihmāl of particles, discussing how some particles function similarly to verbs but can be inactivated under certain conditions. The final section pertains to the ihmāl of nouns. The conditions required for nouns to function like verbs and the ihmāl that arises in the absence of these conditions constitute the subject of this section. In the article, as in the previously mentioned dissertation, 'ihmāl' is treated as a term with conceptually clear (Jihād Yūsuf al-Arcā, 2007, ss. 55-112). However, the author does not give this theoretical section its due importance, focusing instead on examining examples concerning nouns, verbs, and particles.

When the two works are examined, the following findings on the phenomenon of *ihmāl* emerge:

1. Both works investigate the phenomenon of *ihmāl* in Arabic grammar. According to these works, *ihmāl* refers to the state in which words or grammatical elements fail to perform their functions ('amal) or become ineffective (Ilyās al-Hāj Ishāq, 2002, ss. 9-16; Jihād Yūsuf al-Arcā, 2007, ss. 55-56). In other words, a precise definition has been established in this manner.
2. In addressing the subject of *ihmāl*, both studies have approached the topic through the grammatical functions and dysfunctions of nouns, verbs, and particles (Jihād Yūsuf al-Arcā, 2007, ss. 3-7).
3. The study titled *al-Ihmāl fi'l-Naḥw* distinguishes between two types of *ihmāl*: *jā'iz* (permissible) and *wājib* (obligatory) (Jihād Yūsuf al-Arcā, 2007, s. 56). In the dissertation titled *Ihmāl fi'l-Arabiyye: Asrāruhu ve Mazānnuhu*, the concepts are divided into two subcategories: *'ariḍī* (accidental) and *vaz'ī* (inherent) (Ilyās al-Hāj Ishāq, 2002, ss. 7-8). Yet, in both works, a detailed explanation of these subtypes of *ihmāl*, which are treated as terms, has not been provided.
4. In *al-Ihmāl fi'l-Naḥw*, only permissible *ihmāl* is addressed in the context of nouns, verbs, and particles, whereas in the doctoral dissertation (Jihād Yūsuf al-Arcā, 2007, ss. 58-108), these elements are discussed separately as *'ariḍī* and *vaz'ī*. On the contrary, *vaz'ī ihmāl* is not addressed with respect to verbs (Ilyās al-Hāj Ishāq, 2002, s. 41).

5. While the doctoral dissertation discusses both types of the *ihmāl* phenomenon, the article addresses only one type.
6. Although both works allude to different domains concerning the phenomenon in classical literature, this aspect is not discussed, and *ihmāl* is clearly explained as a term. Additionally, the historical examples of the phenomenon in this literature have not been examined from a developmental perspective.

2. Lexical Meaning and Classical Context

Ihmāl (إهمال) is a verbal noun (maṣḍar) derived from the root همل on the grammatical pattern if'āl. The root word همل conveys meanings such as “to leave something unattended, to neglect, or to leave without supervision”. One of the primary meanings of الهملُ is السدى، which also means neglected or left to itself (al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, 1988, s. 4/56). السدى that is given as the meaning of الهملُ, in the Quranic context, signifies that Allah does not leave people without reward or punishment, in other words, unattended or unowned (al-Qiyāmah, 75/36). The phrases إبلٌ هواملٌ or أهملتُ الإبلَ describe camels that have no shepherd and are left to roam freely. The expression أهملتُ الإبلَ means, “I let the camels roam freely in the pasture”. The plural forms هواملٌ and هُمَّلٌ are also used for such animals (Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Ibn Durayd, 1987, s. 2/988). This refers to camels grazing day and night without a shepherd. An abandoned or undone task is called as أمرٌ مُهمَلٌ (Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Azharī, 2001, s. 6/169-170). For a person to perform أهمل on their work means to abandon it and not complete it perfectly. The expression أهملتهُ means “I left it to its own devices”. The term الهملُ can also refer to water that flows without a barrier to contain it. The phrase هَمَلَتْ عَيْنُهُ تَهْمُلُ means “the eye sheds tears”, and هَمَلُ الدَّمْعِ يَهْمُلُ هُمُولاً signifies the flowing of tears. The part of the eye from which tears flow is called as مَهْمِلُ الْعَيْنِ. Additional meanings found in sources include الهملُ, which is a type of blanket used by Bedouins, an old goat-hair tent, or a patched garment, and الهماليلُ, which refers to the remnants of pastures or a light rain (Ismā'īl b. Ḥammād al-Jawharī, 1990, s. 1854).

When classical studies in linguistics (generally syntax) have been examined, the phenomenon of ihmāl becomes apparent. However, this phenomenon does not constitute a separate heading or chapter. Linguists employ the concept when mentioning other topics. For example, in the work of al-Sīrāfī (d. 368/979), who analyses the verses cited as proof (istiṣhād) by Sībawayh (d. 180/796), one of these verses is discussed in the context of two verbs in contention (tanāzu‘) (Erdim, 2011, ss. 92-94), where the first verb acts upon a word (‘amal) and the second is rendered inactive (ihmāl). The verse, which the author attributes to Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī (d. c. 610 CE [?]), is cited as follows (‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘ah, t.y., s. 177)¹:

إذا هي لم تستكِّ بعود أراكية ... تُنخل فاستاككت عودُ إسجيل

The author explains that the verb involved in the situation exemplified in this verse is تتخل, and that the sentence is to be understood as if it were: تتخل عود فاستاككت به (An ishīl stick is selected, and she brushes her teeth with it) (Abū Sa‘īd al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abdullāh al-Sīrāfī, 2008, s. 1/130). In the verse cited, the grammatical phenomenon of tanāzu‘ occurs where two verbs (تُنخل فاستاككت) compete to govern the single noun “stick” with the first verb successfully acting upon it while the second is rendered inactive. When addressing this topic, Sībawayh does not use the word ihmāl;

¹ This verse appears in the diwan of ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘ah. Its meaning is: “So much so that if she cannot find a branch of the arak tree for a *miswak* (tooth-stick), she cleanses with a branch of the *ishīl* tree and then brushes her teeth with it.”

he quotes this verse from ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a (d. 93/711-12) under the heading “two objects (maf‘ūl) and two subjects (fā‘il)” (Sībawayh, 1988, s. 1/73).

That Sībawayh has not mention ihmāl means this word is not necessary to assess the inactivation. The absence of the term ihmāl in Sībawayh’s foundational analysis is critical. It suggests that in the formative period of Arabic grammar, the concept of inactivation was understood simply as the absence of governance (‘amal), rather than requiring a distinct terminological label. Later scholars like al-Sīrāfi applied the term retrospectively as a descriptive tool, not as a pre-existing technical category.

Al-Anbārī (d. 328/940), in his work, addresses the concept under the heading “The reasons for the tribe of Tamīm’s inactivation (ihmāl) of ما (negative particle)”. In explaining this situation, he states that a particle has a grammatical effect (‘amal) when it is specific to either nouns or verbs, but because the aforementioned particle (ما) is used with both, it is ineffective (Abū al-Barakāt ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Anbārī, 1999, s. 120). Ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239), however, brings a different perspective to the issue. He states that in terms of grammatical operation, the active participle (ism al-fā‘il) is more powerful than the adjectival noun (al-ṣifah al-muṣabbahah). He attributes this to the active participle being the origin (aṣl), while the adjectival noun is merely analogous to it. He notes that the same situation exists between ليس and ما. According to the author, this is why ليس operates on both definite and indefinite nouns, and its predicate can, by consensus, precede its subject. He also reports that its operation continues even in exceptional cases. However, since ما is merely an analogue, it is weaker; therefore, when its predicate precedes its subject, or when لا comes between its subject and predicate, or when it is followed by something that nullifies the negation, its operative function is nullified by consensus, and the predicate becomes nominative (raf‘). This is because the reasons for the resemblance between it (ما) and that which it is modeled on have been diminished (Majd al-Dīn Abū al-Sa‘ādāt Ibn al-Athīr, 1978, s. 91). These linguists have used the word ihmāl when citing these views on the particle ما. While al-Anbārī mentions a case specific to a dialect, Ibn al-Athīr uses the word ihmāl to convey a rule derived by analogy (qiyās).

The contrast between al-Anbārī and Ibn al-Athīr further fragments the historical consistency of the term. While al-Anbārī treats ihmāl as a dialectal exception (samā‘ī), Ibn al-Athīr frames it within the theoretical hierarchy of governance (qiyāsī). This variation reinforces the argument that classical scholars employed ihmāl to describe effects arising from disparate causes, preventing it from evolving into the monolithic technical term presented in modern classifications.

Al-Rummānī (d. 384/994), thinking the same as al-Anbārī, states in his work *Ma‘ānī al-Ḥurūf*, where he discusses particles, that because the hamza can precede both a noun and a verb, it does not perform any grammatical operation (‘amal) and is therefore considered one of the hawāmīl (inactive elements) (Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā al-Rummānī, t.y., s. 4). The issue of whether the previously mentioned particles have a grammatical effect was also addressed by Al-Rummānī, and a conclusion was drawn regarding the hamza. However, the question here is whether the hamza is ineffective, as it can precede both a noun and a verb. Al-Rummānī also pointed to the grammatical ineffectiveness of the particle through the phenomenon of ihmāl.

Al-Rummānī employs hawāmīl not to establish a technical term, but to describe the state of functional ineffectiveness resulting from the particle’s lack of specificity, using its lexical sense.

This approach indicates that ihmāl is a general attribute denoting the absence of influence within the ‘āmil theory, rather than the categorical and schematic term proposed by modern definitions.

Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002) in his work *al-Khaṣā’iṣ*, says that the combination of letters in some roots is subject to ihmāl (neglect) even though it is theoretically possible. The reason for the ihmāl of most such elements is that they are phonetically difficult (too heavy to pronounce), and the author states that they are abandoned for this reason. He also notes that some words whose usage is rejected due to the proximity of the articulation points (*makhārij*) of their constituent letters are also subject to ihmāl (such as combinations like *ظث*, *نظ*, *ضش*, *طس*, *سص*, and *شض*). In this context, ihmāl is not related to ‘amal (syntactic governance) in the field of syntax (*naḥw*). Here, ihmāl indicates that, for phonetic and morphological reasons, some letters cannot combine to form a meaningful word (Abū al-Faḥ ‘Uthmān Ibn Jinnī, t.y., s. 1/55).

This usage by Ibn Jinnī marks a sharp divergence from the syntactic focus seen in modern definitions. By applying ihmāl to phonetic incompatibility, he demonstrates that the word functioned as a broad lexical descriptor for non-occurrence or neglect across different linguistic layers, rather than a specialized syntactic term restricted to governance relations.

Ibn al-Khaṣṣāb (d. 567/1172) states that particles are divided into two categories, operative (‘āmil) and non-operative (*ghayr ‘āmil*), and that the non-operative ones are called *muhmal* (inactive). He specifies that operative particles are exclusive to a single word type, either nouns or verbs. This statement supports the previously mentioned views (Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Aḥmad Ibn al-Khaṣṣāb, 1972, s. 168). In other words, particles that can precede both nouns and verbs have been designated as subject to ihmāl. While bifurcating particles into operative (‘āmil) and non-operative (*ghayr ‘āmil*), Ibn al-Khaṣṣāb designated the non-functional group with the word *muhmal*. This usage serves as evidence that ihmāl is not a theory or term with independent rules. Consequently, the author’s classification aims to express the absence of grammatical operation rather than confining the word within a technical framework.

Ibn Ya‘īsh (d. 643/1245) discusses the syntactic rules governing the conditional particle in and its interaction with the condition and answer. He argues that it is stylistically weak for the first verb to be a variable imperfect (*muḍāri‘*), which manifests the jussive case (*jazm*), while the second verb is a fixed perfect (*māḍī*). He justifies this by explaining that allowing the particle to govern the first verb demonstrates its full operative force. Consequently, failing to apply this force to the second verb constitutes a contradiction. He articulates this by stating: “...والغاؤه إهمال وإطراح...” (...canceling it is neglect (ihmāl) and discarding...) (Ibn Ya‘īsh, 2001, s. 5/108).

Ibn Ya‘īsh, in his critique of specific conditional structures, employs the word ihmāl to describe the inconsistency of allowing a particle to govern one verb while nullifying its effect on the next. Crucially, he pairs ihmāl with the word *iṭrāḥ* (casting aside/discarding) and equates it with *ilgā’* (cancellation). This semantic comparison demonstrates that he is using ihmāl purely in its lexical sense, as a synonym for abandoning or leaving unattended, rather than as a specialized technical term.

Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) provides explanations on the declension (*i‘rāb*) of the word *Ibrāhīm* in the verse: “قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتَىٰ يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ” (They said, ‘We heard a youth speak of them; he is called Abraham’) (Surah al-Anbiyā, 21/60). For the author, the fact that this noun is in the nominative case (*raf‘*) is a matter that requires explanation. While stating that the nominative case can be explained in different ways, he reports that one of the ways Abū al-Ḥajjāj al-Ishbīlī (Abū

al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf b. Sulaymān b. ‘Īsā al-A‘lam al-Shantamarī al-Naḥwī) (d. 476/1084) said the word is in the nominative case (marfū‘) because of ihmāl. This indicates that ihmāl is a debatable topic in syntax (naḥw) and that different opinions can exist (Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, 1964, s. 11/298-299). Ibn ‘Aṭīyya (d. 541/1147), who was a source for the Qurṭubī’s view, also explained this situation, giving the example of it being a subject (mubtada‘) and stating that it is in the nominative case because none of any operative (‘āmil) affects it. Ibn ‘Aṭīyya also mentions the same name: Abū al-Ḥajjāj al-Ishbīlī (‘Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Ghālib Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, 2001, s. 4/87). As can be observed in this example, when explaining the reason for the nominative (marfū‘) case in the ayah, the governing role of any verb, noun, or particle is not mentioned; rather, the focus is on the state of not being governed (ma‘mūl). That is, the name Ibrāhīm is in the nominative case due to the absence of any grammatical operative. In this instance, ihmāl has been used to describe the very absence of any operative (‘āmil). Another issue: this explanation of ihmāl in the ayah is just one of the many, and only al-Ishbīlī is the main source of ihmāl.

In explaining the i‘rāb of the word “Ibrāhīm” in the ayah, Al-Qurṭubī reports that it is in the nominative case (marfū‘) because of ihmāl, as it is not preceded by an ‘āmil. In this context, ihmāl signifies the absence of grammatical influence, indicating the word is not subject to any governing element, but rather functions as a grammatical operator. This usage clearly reveals that ihmāl is a context-dependent explanation describing the absence of an ‘āmil, rather than a technical term representing a fixed rule, because the commentary has mentioned a noun that is not affected. All others mention the operative.

Ibn Nāzīm (d. 686/1287) states that some Arabs would render the particle أَنْ inactive (ihmāl), thus putting the subsequent imperfect verb in the nominative case (raf‘). He cites the following line of poetry as an example (al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād, t.y., s. 58)²:

مِنِّي السَّلَامَ وَأَلَا تُشْعِرَا أَحَدًا... أَنْ تَقْرَأَ عَلَى أَسْمَاءَ وَيَحْكُمَا

The author also gives the ayah “لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرِّضَاعَةَ” (“...for one who wishes to complete the nursing period”) (al-Baqara 2/233) as an example of this situation. It is reported that the first particle أَنْ in the poem, and the same particle in some variant readings (qirā‘āt) of the ayah, do not perform their grammatical function (‘amal) (Abū ‘Abdillāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Nāzīm, 2000, s. 476). This demonstrates that the state of grammatical ineffectiveness can have different, optional applications. In other words, unlike the previous examples, there is no obligatory condition for ihmāl in this case.

By stating that the particle أَنْ is rendered inactive (ihmāl) by some Arabs, Ibn Nāzīm presents the matter as a dialectal preference. Presenting ihmāl here as an optional choice rather than a mandatory and standard rule undermines the claim that it is a clearly delineated technical term. The author’s stance indicates that he views ihmāl as an exceptional and variable usage where the particle fails to fulfill its function, rather than as a systematic grammatical principle.

For the same ayah’s recitation, Ibn Hishām’s (d. 761/1360) study, regarding the view held by some concerning the recitation of Ibn Muḥayṣin: “لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرِّضَاعَةَ...” (...for one who wishes to complete the breastfeeding period), positing that the underlying form is the plural (أَنْ يُتِمُّوا), this is considered plausible. This is because the plural accords with the semantic import of مَنْ, as exemplified in Sūrat Yūnus, 42. (وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ...). The view of the majority is more apparent:

² “O you two who will recite to Asma, give her my greetings and tell no one!”.

this usage occurs based on the inactivation (ihmāl) of the particle أَنْ, by analogy to مَا (mā al-maṣḍariyya).

Significantly, he does not present ihmāl here as an inherent, self-standing grammatical rule, but rather as a functional explanation for a deviation from the norm, achieved through analogy (qiyās) to the particle مَا. This comparison confirms that ihmāl was not viewed as a monolithic technical term with a fixed domain; rather, it served as a descriptive tool to rationalize cases where the expected governance (‘amal) of a particle is absent due to its resemblance to a non-operative element.

In the work of al-Murādī (d. 749/1348), ihmāl is again addressed in the context of the grammatical operation (‘amal) of particles. The author states that particles are divided into two categories: operative (‘āmil) and non-operative (ghayr ‘āmil). While operative particles produce an effect—such as the nominative (raf‘), accusative (naṣb), genitive (jarr), or jussive (jazm) case—on the word they precede, the non-operative ones do not exhibit such an effect and are called as muhmal (inactive) (al-Ḥasan b. Qāsim al-Murādī, 1992, s. 27). Al-Murādī, who divides particles into two based on the grammatical effect they exhibit, thus describes as muhmal the particles he previously termed non-operative. As can be seen, here too, the state of non-operation is conveyed by the phenomenon of ihmāl. This definition does not support the assertion that ihmāl is a theoretical term with unique conditions; on the contrary, it demonstrates that it is used merely as a synonym of the concept of ghayr ‘amil (non-operative).

In another study, Al-Murādī addresses the formation of relative adjectives (nasab) for plural nouns. He classifies the word عَبَادِيد under a category where the singular form has been subject to ihmāl (al-Ḥasan b. Qāsim al-Murādī, 2008, s. 1466). Here, the term is used strictly in its lexical sense of abandonment or disuse, referring to the historical linguistic reality that the singular form of the word dropped out of usage. Al-Murādī does not employ ihmāl as a syntactic operator or a technical grammatical category; rather, he uses it to describe a morphological void: the absence of a singular root. This reinforces the argument that classical scholars used the root ه-م-ل as a descriptive term for various forms of non-existence or non-occurrence rather than as a unified technical term.

Ibn Hishām (d. 761/1360) states that although the particle لَيْت is specific to nominal sentences, it can be used together with مَا, and for this reason, its grammatical operation (‘amal) is maintained; however, by analogy with similar structures, its inactivation (ihmāl) is also considered permissible (jā’iz) (Ibn Hishām, 2004, s. 151). In this example, as in the previous one, a similar situation exists. The inactivation of the mentioned structures is the result of an option. It is also possible for it to remain operative. This reveals that the choice may vary depending on the arrangement of the sentence’s elements.

Ibn Hishām’s approach demonstrates that ihmāl is a zone of functional latitude within the language structure, rather than an immutable technical term bound by precise rules. This situation demonstrates that, contrary to the certainty asserted by modern studies, ihmāl was not rigidly categorized in the classical period but was viewed as a context-dependent phenomenon.

Ibn ‘Aqīl (d. 769/1367) states that there are four particles that operate like لَيْس, and that while the particle لَا is made to operate like لَيْس by the people of Hijāz, it is rendered in the commentary as inactive (ihmāl) by the people of Tamīm (Bahā’ al-Dīn Ibn ‘Aqīl, 1980, s. 306). In this explanation, what Ibn ‘Aqīl means by ihmāl is that in the usage of a particular dialect, the particle

has no grammatical operation (‘amal). In other words, he uses this word to clearly express the state of grammatical non-functionality. This is significant because when these particles precede a sentence, they cause a series of declensional (i‘rābī) changes in it.

The examination of classical sources reveals that ihmāl was not employed as a monolithic technical term, but rather as a versatile concept adapted to various linguistic contexts. While early authorities like Sībawayh (d. 180/796) described the phenomenon of inactivation without explicitly using ihmāl, later scholars applied it to distinct grammatical layers. Al-Sīrāfī (d. 368/979) utilized it within syntax to describe the non-governance of a verb in cases of contention (tanāzu‘), whereas Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002) shifted the context to morphology, using ihmāl to denote phonetically incompatible letter combinations that fail to form meaningful roots. Furthermore, scholars like Al-Anbārī (d. 328/940) and Al-Rummānī (d. 384/994) invoked the concept to explain the functional ineffectiveness of particles such as “ما” and “إِ”, attributing their inactivation to their lack of specificity to either nouns or verbs. This multifaceted usage underscores that in the classical period, ihmāl served primarily as a descriptive expression for non-functionality rather than as a rigidly defined category.

3. Analysis of The Phenomenon

Based on the examples found in classical linguistic works, at first glance, the phenomenon of ihmāl generally describes the non-realization of a grammatical rule. But the concepts have some contradictions. Beyond these descriptive observations, a theoretical critique of the terminological process reveals fundamental epistemological ruptures. From a theoretical standpoint, a technical term is expected to be univocal and domain-specific. However, the classical usage of ihmāl violates these criteria by straddling divergent fields.

The Ihmāl concept has been observed within the frameworks of both syntax (naḥw) and morphology (ṣarf). In the context of morphology, it refers to the specific case of letters that cannot be used together in word formation. In the context of syntax, it describes the inability of grammatical structures to fulfil their functions, thereby failing to project their expected effects onto subsequent structures. Furthermore, in syntax, the state of ihmāl sometimes implies an obligation by analogy (qiyās), while at other times it is explained as a matter of choice or dialect. As seen in the example from Sūrat al-Anbiyā, ayah 60, the state of a word not being subjected to any grammatical influence was also explained with the word ihmāl (قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتَىٰ يَذُكُرُ هُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ). As observed, while scholars like Ibn Jinnī employ the term in morphology to describe phonetic incompatibility, syntacticians use it to denote the absence of governance. This semantic polysemy indicates that classical scholars were utilizing the word’s lexical core rather than deploying a fixed technical concept.

When examining the ways and sources in which classical linguists approached the phenomenon of “ihmāl”, it is evident that this concept was used across different areas of grammar and in various contexts. In other words, there is no common conceptual domain. Moreover, while this situation was addressed by analogy (qiyas) in some examples, at other times it was based on transmitted sources (samā‘ī), such as dialectal variations, and at still other times on optionality. This different and ambiguous basis or methodology is not sufficient to become and evaluate ihmāl as a term.

The study titled “al-Ihmāl fi'n-Naḥw” divides ihmāl into two types: jā‘iz (permissible) and wājib (obligatory). However, in the dissertation titled “Ihmāl fi'l-Arabiyya: Asrāruhu ve

Mazānnuhu,” this situation is described using the concepts ‘āriḍī (accidental) and vaz‘ī (inherent). These different terminologies demonstrate that the two studies employ distinct theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of ihmāl, indicating they did not arrive at a common nomenclature. While the terms jā‘iz and wājib focus on the conditions under which ihmāl occurs, the terms ‘āriḍī and vaz‘ī focus on the source of the ihmāl—that is, whether it stems from the nature of the element itself or from contextual factors.

Consequently, the taxonomies proposed in modern scholarship -specifically the binary divisions of wājib/jā‘iz and vaz‘ī/‘āriḍī- appear to be retrospective impositions rather than organic discoveries. By categorizing ihmāl into rigid types, modern studies engage in an anachronistic systematization, projecting modern taxonomic logic onto the fluid and pragmatic tradition of classical grammar.

Furthermore, both works provide examples in the first part of the different usages of the ihmāl phenomenon found in classical literature. It is so clear to see that ihmāl usages are in different contexts (for example: unavailable letter combinations). Because of the usage of the word, a complexity has occurred. Two authors did not draw attention to this complexity. Additionally, both works defined ihmāl as a technical term and provided examples of its various types. In this regard, the part of these works that should have examined the conceptual clarity of the phenomenon and its process of terminological was lacking. It must be acknowledged that without this discussion, the explanations and elaborations provided were merely assumptions and thus unfounded.

When classical grammar books are examined, the phenomenon of ihmāl does not appear to be a technical term. In fact, it can be discerned that it was likely used more in line with its lexical meaning rather than as a term. In other words, proceeding from its dictionary meaning, the sense of ‘non-occurrence’ can account for the phenomenon in the given examples. The fact that it does not appear as a heading or a chapter in classical linguistic books is also significant. Moreover, while the classification found in modern literature can be perceived as an allusion to classical works, such a classification is not explicitly made. For it to have terminological clarity and be used as a term, having both morphological and syntactic implications is problematic. Furthermore, it was not only linguistic structures that were described; the state of being free of any influence, in the context of the name Ibrāhīm, was also explained by this phenomenon. This situation does not conform to the terminological definition given in modern literature.

When the phenomenon is viewed from a modern perspective, the proposal of an ihmāl concept has been conveyed in definitive terms, and types have even been created based on whether it is permanent or partial. In addition to this, it has been explained using different linguistic structures. The function of the ihmāl concept within the field of i‘rāb, in the context of declinable (mu‘rab) and indeclinable (mabnī) words, agents (‘āmil), and patients (ma‘mūl), should also be a topic of discussion. In short, the claim that the phenomenon of ihmāl is a term with the clarity suggested by modern two works is not supported by classical sources.

Conclusion

In this study, the comparative analysis of the phenomenon of *ihmāl* in Arabic grammar demonstrates a distinct epistemological rupture between classical and modern approaches. Classical scholars, including Sībawayh and Ibn Jinnī, utilized the root ٤-م-ء in its lexical sense to describe disparate phenomena ranging from phonetic incompatibility to dialectal variations in

governance. They did not operate under a unified “theory of inactivation”. By revealing this disparity, this study makes an original contribution to the field by problematizing the retrospective formation of *ihmāl*. It shows that modern definitions are not rediscoveries of a classical concept but are rather artificial categorizations that impose a later taxonomic logic on the fluid tradition of classical grammar.

The phenomenon of *ihmāl* has been addressed from different perspectives in modern grammatical literature and expressed with various terms. While the reviewed article divides *ihmāl* into *jā'iz* (permissible) and *wājib* (obligatory), the dissertation used the terms *‘arīḍī* (accidental/temporary) and *vaz ‘ī* (inherent/foundational). These different approaches demonstrate the complexity and multidimensionality of the *ihmāl* phenomenon.

It has been observed that in classical works, the term *ihmāl* was used more in line with its lexical meaning and was not discussed in detail, and became a strictly technical term. In modern studies, however, *ihmāl* has been examined more systematically, defined, and subjected to various classifications.

In conclusion, while the phenomenon of *ihmāl* has a place in Arabic grammar, it is a complex subject that can be treated in different ways in various grammatical traditions and works. Further research on this topic will contribute to a better understanding of *ihmāl* and to its more solid placement within grammatical theories.

It should be noted that this study is limited to the conceptual and terminological evolution of the phenomenon and does not encompass an exhaustive inventory of every specific instance of non-governance (‘amal) across all grammatical particles. Future research building upon these findings would benefit from a comparative analysis.

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