ARBC 302 The particles أَنَّ ، إِنَّ ، أَنْ

These three words cause more than their share of trouble, but unlike Lindsey Lohan, their 15 minutes of fame has not ended. They are even trickier in most print, where they are all written as ان. The only way to distinguish them is to understand how they are used, then the context will make it clear.

* The easiest of the bunch is أَنْ . This is also probably the first one you learned. Note the sukkun; it is the only thing that distinguishes it. أَنْ is used to connect two verbs and has the effect of the infinitive in English, although technically it means “that.” It is always followed by a verb and you can’t attach anything to it. You have seen many examples:

أريد أنْ أذهب إلى السينما

I want to go to the cinema (literally “I want that I go to the cinema”)

يستطيع أنْ يتكلم الفارسية

He is able to speak Farsi (literally “he is able that he speaks Farsi”)

Note that the conjugation on one side does not have to match the other:

أريد أنْ تذهب هناك

I want you to go there (literally “I want that you go there”)

* Next is إِنَّ pronounced “inna.” This one is easy because it has very few uses. By itself, it means “definitely” or “truly,” but is usually not translated at all:

إنَّ العربية صعبة

Truly, Arabic is hard

The far more common use, however, is with the verb قالَ (to say). This is the only verb to use this particle, so it is easy to remember:

قال إنّه سيذهب إلى الحفلة

He said that he will go to the party

Note that while “that” in the sentence above would be optional in English, it is mandatory in Arabic. Also notice that the pronoun هُ is attached directly onto the word. This is because إِنّ , like its brother أَنَّ , is always followed by the subject of the sentence after it. If the subject is a noun or a name, that is fine. If it is a pronoun (I, he, you, etc.) you must always use the attached version (ي، ك، نا، ها). Note the following examples, hopefully you can see that in both cases, the word following إِنَّ is the subject of the sentence after it.:

قالَ إِنَّ الطقس سيكون غائماً

He said that the weather will be cloudy

قالتْ إِنّها ستعمل غداً

She said that she will work tomorrow

* Finally, we have أَنَّ. The good news is that it works exactly like إِنَّ. أَنَّ is used whenever a verb is followed by a fact of some sort. This is basically any verb that in English would be followed by “that”; as in “he knows that…” “I believe that…” “I hope that…” but since “that” in English has a bewilderingly huge number of different meanings, this is often confusing. The closest literal meaning is “the fact that…” Note the following examples:

أعرف أَنّك تعمل هناك

I know that you work there

أتمنى أنَّني سأجد وظيفة جيدة

I hope that I will find a good job

Again, the “that” in English could be dropped, but not in Arabic.

It should be fairly clear from context which one you are dealing with. If it is followed directly by a verb, it must be أَنْ. If it is followed by a noun or pronoun, it is either أَنَّ or إِنَّ. If it is after قال , then it has to be إِنَّ.