A New Semiotic Model for Analyzing Religious Discourse: From Greimas' Square to a Three-Dimensional Cube

Dini Söylemin Analizi İçin Yeni Bir Göstergebilimsel Model: Greimas'ın Karesinden Üç Boyutlu Küpe

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Abstract

This study seeks to reinterpret religious meaning through contemporary methodologies, aiming to present religious discourse to the world using practical and actionable frameworks. Rather than focusing solely on literal interpretation, the study explores the deeper layers of language and context. By applying semiotic analysis, the study facilitates a shift from surface structures to deeper structures, allowing symbolic meanings to emerge. In response to the growing interest in linguistic and religious studies, scholars have increasingly embraced modern approaches—building upon the foundational work of classical scholars in grammar, linguistics, and rhetoric, while integrating contemporary tools such as semiotics, the study of signs and their functions within texts. This synthesis of classical heritage and modern thought aims to clarify the role of semiotics in the analysis of religious discourse, particularly how Greimas's semiotic square, through interpretive processes, evolves into a semiotic cube that dynamically generates meaning through semantic interaction. The study further highlights the essential role of Arabic rhetoric in symbolic interpretation, as rhetorical strategies are designed to influence and persuade audiences—an aim closely aligned with religious discourse, which seeks to promote virtue and cultivate collective ethical awareness. To support this argument, the study presents an applied model for analyzing prophetic Hadith through semiotic methods, revealing the central role of prophetic discourse in shaping the ethical and social foundations of the community. Its continuous presence in sermons, religious lessons, and educational contexts emphasizes its enduring relevance and profound influence. Among the key findings is the recognition that religious discourse is not a fixed or static text, but rather a dynamic semantic system shaped by multiple contextual factors. The shift from surface-level analysis to a deeper structural understanding enriches the interpretation of symbolic meanings and uncovers intentional dimensions often overlooked in initial readings. When applied practically rather than merely theoretically, modern approaches offer powerful tools for examining the interplay between discourse and context, contributing to a continuous renewal in religious, linguistic, and rhetorical scholarship. Arabic rhetoric plays a foundational role in shaping the semiotics of religious discourse, employing a range of stylistic techniques attuned to the audience's context—thereby rooting the discourse within its authentic Arabic cultural framework.

Keywords: Religious Discourse, Arabic Rhetoric, Semiotics, Surface Structure, Deep Structure, Interpretation, Symbolic Interpretation, Greimas's Square.

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Öz

Bu araştırma, dini anlamı çağdaş göstergebilimsel metodolojiler ışığında yeniden yorumlamayı ve dini söylemi daha geniş kitlelere sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Literatürde yaygın olan yüzeysel, kelime düzeyine indirgenmiş yaklaşımlar yerine, dilin ve bağlamın çok katmanlı yapıları içerisinde gizli olan sembolik anlam üretimini analiz etmeye odaklanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, çalışma yüzeysel yapılardan derin yapısal düzeylere geçişi mümkün kılmakta, söylemin kültürel, tarihsel ve metinsel bağlamlarda nasıl anlam kazandığını görünür hale getirmektedir. Araştırma, Greimas'ın göstergebilimsel karesi, Peirce'ün gösterge kuramı ve Eco'nun yorumsal yaklaşımlarını temel alarak, üç boyutlu bir "göstergebilim küpü" modeli önermektedir. Bu model, klasik retorik geleneklerle çağdaş yorum kuramlarını bir araya getirerek, yorum sürecini statik bir yapıdan çıkarıp çok katmanlı, dinamik bir anlam çözümlemesine dönüştürmektedir. Aynı zamanda bu model, metnin semantik düzlemi ile kültürel kodlar arasındaki ilişkiyi daha ayrıntılı bir biçimde analiz etmeye olanak tanımaktadır. Bu bağlamda Arap retoriği, dini söylemin göstergebilimsel şekillenmesinde merkezi bir unsur olarak ele alınmakta ve söylemi, dinleyici kitlenin kültürel normları ve iletişimsel beklentileriyle uyumlu hale getirmektedir. Arap retorik stratejileri, söylemin otantik Arap kültürel çerçevede sağlam biçimde köklendirilmesine katkı sunarken, etik bilinç, kolektif anlam üretimi ve toplumsal değerlerin aktarımı açısından da belirleyici bir rol oynamaktadır. Ayrıca, bu stratejilerin estetik etkisi, söylemin duygusal gücünü artırarak metnin alımlayıcı üzerindeki etkisini derinleştirmektedir. Modern göstergebilimsel yaklaşımlar ise yalnızca kuramsal bir çerçeve sunmakla kalmayıp, uygulamalı analizlerde de son derece etkili araçlar sunmaktadır. Özellikle peygamberî söylemin incelenmesinde, bu yöntemler aracılığıyla çok katmanlı anlam

yapılarını çözümlemek ve söylemin bağlam içindeki işlevselliğini ortaya koymak mümkün hale gelmektedir. Bu analizler, dini metinlerin çağdaş dünyada nasıl yeniden konumlandırılabileceğine dair değerli içgörüler sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda dini söylemin pedagojik, kültürel ve toplumsal alanlardaki işlevine dair daha derinlemesine bir bakış açısı geliştirmektedir. Özellikle dini eğitimde, kültürlerarası iletişimde ve metin yorumunda anlam katmanlarının daha açık hale getirilmesi hem akademik çevrelerde hem de toplumsal uygulamalarda etkili sonuçlar doğurmaktadır. Sunduğu çözümleme modeli, geleneksel dini anlayış ile çağdaş düşünce arasında köprü kurmayı hedefleyen çok yönlü bir yaklaşıma dayanmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, önerilen yaklaşım yalnızca akademik analizlerde değil, aynı zamanda dini liderlerin hutbelerinde, öğretmenlerin ders anlatımlarında ve medya içeriklerinde de etkili bir şekilde kullanılabilir. Söylemin bağlamsal, kültürel ve retorik boyutlarını dikkate alan bu çok katmanlı model, dini metinlerin çağdaş toplumda yeniden anlamlandırılmasına katkı sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışmanın sunduğu model, disiplinlerarası geçişlere de imkân vererek, göstergebilimsel analizle sosyolojik, iletişimsel ve eğitsel alanlar arasında yeni bağlantılar kurulmasına olanak sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dini Söylem, Arap Retoriği, Semiotik, Yüzey Yapısı, Derin Yapı, Yorumlama, Sembolik Yorumlama, Greimas'ın Küpü.

Introduction

This research explores the evolution of semiotics and its application to religious discourse in communication, focusing on uncovering semantic, symbolic. The transition from Greimas's semiotic square to the proposed semiotic cube aims to reveal the meta-semiotic dimensions of discourse, promising insights into a realm rich with symbols and meanings. This methodological exploration is chosen for its rigorous analytical framework.

The methodology adopts a three-dimensional analysis framework, symbol, signification, and interpretation, building on the triadic relationships outlined by Greimas (antithesis, contradiction, inclusion) and further developed by Umberto Eco through the introduction of interpretation. The Prophetic Hadith chosen for analysis serves to illustrate this model's practical value; *"Shall I not guide you to something better in degree than prayer, fasting, and charity?" They said: "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said: "Reconciling relationships, for indeed the corruption of relationships is the shaver. I do not say it shaves hair, but it shaves the religion."* It is often recited in contexts that promote values of brotherhood and solidarity, foundational to the benign characteristic of religion.

This Hadith encapsulates dualities such as reform versus corruption and external worship versus intrinsic belief, set within the central metaphor of the 'shaver.' This metaphor alludes to the erosion of religious and ethical foundations in contrast to the proliferation of negative morals and the breakdown of communal bonds. Delving deeper into the linguistic, religious, and social contexts of this Hadith allows for an evolving understanding of the discourse's semiotics and semantics, mirroring a semiotic cube's ability to shift dimensions and structures to reveal deeper, often concealed meanings.

The analytical approach is grounded in seminal works, including those of the Moroccan researcher Said BenKarad on Greimas and Umberto Eco. These studies provide a foundation for exploring meta-linguistic structures and enhancing our understanding of complex semiotic frameworks.

1. Methodological Circles Surrounding the Discourse of the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān is the primary example -multiple perspectives converge to understand its message and objectives. The Qur'ān was revealed with a dynamic linguistic structure; rather, it was sent to

transcend time and space, achieving an interactive communicative process with its audience. Undoubtedly, the scholarly perspective differs from the general one. While the latter lacks a methodical approach, scholars delve deeper into interpretation through methodological tools that place immense importance on each letter within it. In this context, these studies did not stop at preserving the text, but rather, they adopted various strategies to think critically about it. The Qurʾān became a miracle in both its language and its rhetoric, equally remarkable in both aspects.

Thus, among them were grammarians like Sibawayh (d. 180 AH / 796 CE), who authored *al-Kitāb*; and Ibn Jinnī (d. 392 AH / 1002 CE), who left behind his work *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ*. There were also linguists like al-Farrāʾ (d. 207 AH / 822 CE), who studied the meanings of the Qurʾān, and *Gharīb al-Qurʾān* by Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 AH / 889 CE), along with rhetoricians such as ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471 AH / 1078 CE), who worked on *Dalāʾil al-Iʿjāz*, and al-Rummānī (d. 384 AH / 994 CE), whose *al-Nukat fī Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān* discussed the miraculous aspects of the Qurʾān.

Scholars have argued that Arabic linguistic studies originated within the context of the Qurʾān[1], which served as the primary catalyst for aligning the lives of Muslims with its teachings. *"Their pursuit of knowledge was fundamentally aimed at understanding the Qurʾanic text".*[2] In this framework, early scholars acknowledged the significance of the Qurʾān's linguistic features, recognizing it as a religious discourse articulated in a language that *"moved their emotions, stimulated their intellect, and enriched the Arabic tongue"*[3] The Qurʾān's linguistic miracle profoundly shaped Arab intellectual thought, steering it toward a religious culture and ultimately transforming the Arab nation into what could be described as a *"textual culture"*.[4]

These differences did not result in contradictions but instead filled the intellectual landscape with linguistic facts and rhetorical secrets, which would not have emerged without this shared effort. Among the classical views surrounding the *Qurʾān* was the grammarians' approach to preserving it from errors in syntax. They studied it within the framework of the Arabic language, both its roots and branches, based on the speech of the Arabs. Thus, the early stages of Arabic linguistic studies were directly connected to the religious discourse embodied in the *Qurʾān*. However, over time, they expanded their efforts beyond the grammatical realm, also justifying *Qurʾānic* linguistic deviations with a scholarly, evidence-based perspective.

For example, *Sībawayh* relied on citing the *Qurʾān* to issue grammatical judgments. He paid close attention to analyzing the linguistic structure and relating it to the context to extract the rules. He states in the section *"What Is Treated as a Source Referred to by Adjectives"*: "This is similar to saying: *Hanīʾan marīʾan* (a wish of joy and abundance), as if you said: 'It has been confirmed for you a joyful and abundant [blessing],' and it was congratulated for him in a joyful and abundant way." He uses this example to explain that the verb is omitted because it was replaced by the phrase itself. The reason for this omission is that 'to congratulate' is implicitly understood within the phrase, as the verb is substituted by the

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[1] Muḥammad Sulaymān Yāqūt, *Manhaj al-Baḥth al-Lughawī* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿrifah al-Jāmiʿiyyah, 2003), 59.

[2] ʿAbduh al-Rājiḥī, *Fiqh al-Lugha fī al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.), 33.

[3] ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī ʿArafa, *Qaḍiyyat al-Iʿjāz al-Qurʾānī wa-Atharuhā fī Tadwīn al-Balāgha al-ʿArabiyya*, 1st ed (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1985), 42.

[4] Muḥammad al-Nuwayrī, *ʿIlm al-Kalām wa-al-Naẓariyya al-Balāghiyya ʿinda al-ʿArab*, 1st ed (Ṣafāqis: Dār Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Ḥāmī, 2001), 7

expression: "He congratulated you".[5] In this example, *Sībawayh* cites the *Qurʾānic* verse to justify the omission of the verb, as it has become a substitute for the explicit wording.

For the sake of careful examination, *Ibn Jinnī* used the *Qurʾān* as evidence to differentiate between "speech" (*kalām*) and "utterance" (*qawl*). He stated: "One of the clearest proofs of the difference between *speech* (*kalām*) and *utterance* (*qawl*) is the consensus of people in saying: '*The Qurʾān is the speech of God,*' and not saying: '*The Qurʾān is the utterance of God.*' This is because the former refers to a fixed and unchangeable position, one that cannot be altered, and no part of its letters may be changed. Therefore, it is referred to as *speech*, which consists of complete, meaningful sounds, and it is differentiated from *utterance*, which may contain sounds that are not necessarily meaningful".[6] He argued that speech does not allow for distortion, whereas utterance may be non-meaningful.

al-Rummānī also linked rhetorical issues to this, as he states in the *Section on Conciseness* (*Ijāz*): "*Conciseness is the reduction of speech without compromising the meaning. (...) Conciseness occurs in two forms: omission and brevity. (...) An example of omission is: 'Ask the town*".[7]

In addition to them, a large number of Arabic scholars directed their attention to this, such as *al-Farrāʾ* (d. 207 AH / 822 CE), who studied the meanings of the *Qurʾān*, and *Ibn Qutaybah* (d. 276 AH / 889 CE), in his work *Gharīb al-Qurʾān*, where he focused on collecting unusual words and providing linguistic and semantic explanations for them. Additionally, *al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī* (d. 502 AH / 1108 CE), in his book *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qurʾān*, worked on uncovering both the semantic and rhetorical dimensions of *Qurʾānic* terms, among others.

It would be very beneficial to approach religious discourse from a purposive perspective, as the rhetorical goal it seeks to achieve is to convey meaning to the listener's heart, thereby exerting its influence on both the individual and the community. *Rhetoric* is defined as "the extent to which something reaches its ultimate purpose".[8] Religious discourse represents a unique rhetorical style. Through rhetoric, we can move from the surface structure to a deep structure that reveals much of what is not openly apparent—this is where it intersects with *semiotics*, the analytical framework we aim to apply.

2. Methodological Milestones in Semiotics

Constructing a historical account of a scientific discipline is inherently complex, due to the multiplicity of scholars involved, their epistemological orientations, and the methodological tools they employed. The progression from generalist perspectives to specialized branches signifies a deeper

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[5] ʿAmr ibn ʿUthmān ibn Qanbar (Sībawayh), *Al-Kitāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1988), vol. 1, 316–317.

[6] Abū al-Fatḥ ʿUthmān ibn Jinnī, *Al-Khaṣāʾiṣ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Najjār, 4th ed (Egypt: al-Hayʾah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah li-l-Kitāb) vol. 1, 19.

[7] Abū al-Ḥasan al-Rummānī, Al-Nukat fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān, ed. Muḥammad Khalaf Allāh and Muḥammad Zaghulūl Salām, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif), 76.

[8] Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Al-Ṣināʿatayn*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī and Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2nd ed (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī), 12.

transformation within the field. Although the historicization of semiotics is fraught with challenges, scholars have continually endeavored to reinterpret and clarify its development with notable precision.

A critical re-evaluation of semiotic thought in the twentieth century—from the Geneva School of structuralism to the theoretical expansions of the 1960s—reveals that the discipline emerged primarily from the concept of the *sign*. This shift emphasized interpretive variability and introduced a focus on the experiential dimension of meaning-making processes. These foundational developments were driven by linguists and philosophers united in their focus on language, though divided in their methodological orientations.[9]

For instance, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), who established the groundwork for what he termed *semiology*, proposed a science of signs embedded within social life. Though he consciously distinguished *semiology* from traditional linguistic inquiry[10], he acknowledged its potential to deepen our understanding of vital aspects of human experience.[11]

In parallel, the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), working within a distinct intellectual context, reconceptualized human phenomena by redefining their conceptual boundaries and interrelations.[12] He introduced the term *semiotics* to denote this broader analytical lens.

This stage starts with a methodological classification that includes the structuralist approach by Greimas, followed by the pragmatic approach by Morris, and finally the postmodern interpretation approach by Eco.

Algirdas Julien Greimas (1917–1992), significantly advanced the field through the development of the *semiotic square* and the *syntactic analysis* of signs. His contributions formalized a *semantic architecture* based on the interrelations of *contradiction*, *opposition*, and *implication*, establishing a critical procedural foundation for *structural semantics.*[13]

Concurrently, *Charles W. Morris* (1903–1979), an American philosopher, argued in his *semiotic theory* that a thing is not a *sign* unless someone interprets it as a *sign* for something, thereby affirming that *semiotics* does not investigate *objects* in themselves, but rather considers them insofar as they participate in the *meaning-making process.*[14]

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[9] Umberto Eco, *Semiotics: Concepts and Applications,* 3rd ed,(Syria: Dar Al-Hiwar for Publishing and Distribution, 2012), 10–11 (Introduction).

[10] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, compiled by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye (Paris: Rayot, 1971), 35–36. "It is up to the psychologist to determine the exact place of semiology; the task of the linguist is to define what makes language a special system in the whole of semiological facts. The question will be taken up again later; we retain here only one thing: if for the first time we have been able to assign linguistics a place among the sciences, it is because we have linked it to semiology".

[11] Saïd Benkrad, "The Emergence and Subject of Semiotics," ʿĀlam al-Fikr 35, no. 3 (March 2007): 7.

[12] James Jakob Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Manufactured in the United States of America, 1996), 31. "The being of a symbol consists in the real fact that something surely will be experienced if certain conditions be satisfied. Namely, it will influence the thought and conduct of its interpreter".

[13] A.J. Greimas, *Narrative Semiotics*, trans. Abdelmajid Noussi (Arab Cultural Center, 2008), 18.

[14] Charles Morris, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 11. "A language, then, as a system of interconnected signs, has a syntactical structure of such a sort that among its permissible sign combinations some can function as statements, and sign vehicles of such a sort that they can be common to a number of interpreters. The syntactical, semantical, and pragmatical features of this characterization of language will become clearer when the respective branches of semiotic are considered".

Lastly, *Umberto Eco* (1932–2016) constructed a comprehensive methodological framework that began with the relationship between a *sign* and its *referent*, ultimately encompassing *cultural meaning adoption* and *interpretative dynamics*.[15]

This evidences that *semiotics* is neither a monolithic field nor a theory defined by uniform principles. Rather, it constitutes a dynamic and interdisciplinary domain. In essence, *semiotics* explores the processes by which humans create, assign, and interpret *meaning*, both in *behavior* and in its *symbolic representations*. The task of the *linguist* is to define what makes *language* a special system within the whole of *semiological* facts.

Eco also reflects, under the heading *"A Metaphysics of Total Semiotics,"* on a phase that spans from the *Romantics* to the German philosopher *Martin Heidegger* (1899–1967), discussing a new perspective on how things are manifested through *language*. He refers to the idea that *"language is the voice of being, and truth is nothing other than the revelation of being through language".*[16]

The sign, derived from the Latin *signum*, meaning *mark*, *statue*, *signal*, or *evidence*, is emphasized[17], as having value not in itself but in its connection to a specific meaning. Through this strong association between *semiotics* and *meaning*, the reconsideration of how meaning is constructed has contributed to a *semantic approach* that encompasses both *linguistic* and *non-linguistic* dimensions, regardless of the sign's form.

3.Meta-Language of Greimas' Semiotic Square Towards the Architecture of the Semiotic Cube

From *Greimas'* perspective, discourse in the *semiotic square* is understood as a structure of signs and relations from which meanings emerge. This configuration, in its visible aspect, forms a structure of indicative signs whose value lies in the relationships among them—specifically *contradiction*, *opposition*, and *inclusion*. It is recognized as *structural semiotics* that reconfigures and constructs discourse according to *semio-semantic coherence*, following the logic of the discourse along with its events and elements. It can be represented in a schematic model:[18]

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[15] Umberto Eco, *The Sign: Analysis of the Concept and Its History*, trans. Saïd Benkrad, 2nd ed (Arab Cultural Center, Morocco, 2010), 107.

[16] Rachid Benmalek, *Dictionary of Semiotic Analysis of Texts* (Dar Al-Hikma, February 2000), 23.

[17] See: Umberto Eco, *The Sign: Analysis of the Concept and Its History*,321.

[18] A. J. Greimas and J. Courtés, *Semiotics: Dictionary of the Theory of Language*, (Paris: Classiques Hachette, 1986) vol 2, 34. "We cannot immediately assert (see: *Sémiotique I*) that the opposition between *being* and *seeming* contradicts the opposition between *non-being* and *non-seeming*. Rather, it must first be stated that each *metaterm* results from a *specification relationship* between the basic terms. These specification relationships themselves form part of a second-level system. For example, 'secret' is defined as a specification of 'being' and 'non-seeming'; 'illusion' as a specification of 'non-being' and 'non-seeming'; and 'truth' as a specification combining both 'being' and 'seeming'".
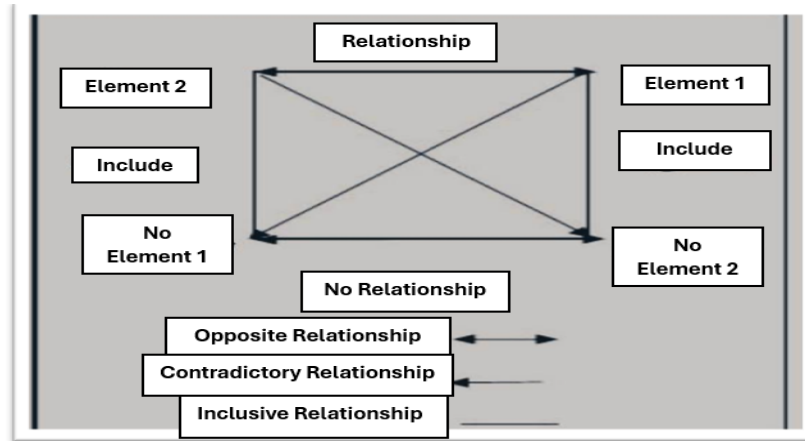
The *surface structure* of the *semiotic square* originates from *utterances*, which are the foundational structural elements—*linguistic signs* that determine meaning. These utterances are arranged in a manner that reveals their *relational dynamics.* The *semiotic square* outlines the essential relationships that govern *semantic units* and enables the generation of a general *semantic field*, assisting in illustrating the connections between units that produce the meanings conveyed by the text. *Semiotics* is often presented as "the science studying signs," but these signs are the basic material used by all beings to communicate with others, based on the communicative system established by what *Peirce* calls *semiosis* or the *semiotic generative process.*[19]

It becomes evident from the above that *Greimas' semiotic square* represents a *linguistic economy* that necessitates both *surface* and *in-depth readings* for a rich engagement with *symbols* and *meanings.* It serves as a *semiotic framework* of consistent and harmonized dualities, structured through hypothetical inferential relationships based on *opposition*, *negation*, and *implication.*

This *formative nature of language*, with its layered nuance, appears in the form of *symbolic phrases* or *signs*, requiring the reader to *capture* suggestions and cues that point to *psychological*, *social*, and *cultural* dimensions embedded within the discourse, including *meta-linguistic components.*

As part of its analytical procedures, this represents a new strategy in *semantic interpretation*, one that does not remain at the level of *surface form.* The *meta-linguistic function*[20], emerges from the search for contrasts between two distinct contexts—or more precisely, between two *worlds*: one that is present and visible on the surface, and another *imagined*, to which the *signs* allude.

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[19] Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation*, trans. Saeed Al-Ghanmi, 1st ed. (Amman: Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, 1994), 56.

[20] A. J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics: Method Research* (Paris: La Rousse, 1966), 211. "In the suppression of negative signs from the structure on which it is exercised, in other words, in a metalinguistic approach which is the denial of the negation, resulting in the appearance of the assertion".

These may be near or distant, yet not easily perceivable at first glance, and are conveyed through *metaphor*, *poetic* and *rhetorical imagery*, and other *symbolic devices*. From this standpoint, this leads to a form of *multicontextuality* within *semiotic practice*: one that is *natural* and *linguistic*, and another that is *metaphorical* and *meta-linguistic*.

These *metaphors* may appear linguistically straightforward, such as *puns* or *metaphoric expressions*, but operate through *comparison* between different *contexts*. They extend beyond the surface of language and instead signal a shift toward an alternate *semantic framework*. *Robert Scholes* (1911–1974) presents logical support for this perspective by incorporating *interpretation* into the *semiotic square*.[21]

When acknowledging the *contextual multiplicity* that emerges in the *semiotic analysis* of discourse, one compares the *interior* and *exterior dimensions* through *symbols* assigned to the corners of the *square*. The *imagination* central to literary works, in particular, is generated, as he observes, by *semiotic activity* within the space of the *absent*. Hence, "the *doubling of contexts* is the starting point of that type of *literariness* which defines *narrative imagination*, and this doubling enables the emergence of other *literary effects* based on the *contrasting features* between contexts evoked by a specific message".[22]

The idea of *contrasting features* is fundamental to the operational procedures of the *semiotic square*, as it provides a method for discovering *meaning* through *opposition* between *binary elements*. This aspect is essential for defining the *world of discourse* and its *contextual dimensions*. *Greimas* does not limit the analysis to *surface forms*; he persistently seeks a *deeper structure*, achieved through a process of *semio-semantic generation* involving *signs* and *meanings*.

It is clear that the concept of *relational binary elements* within the *semiotic square* is *dynamic*, interacting to reveal the *agents* and *actors* within *discourse*. This interaction spans *semantic fields* and *perspectives*, not limited to one *sign* in relation to another or one *meaning* juxtaposed against a second, but rather as an underlying *semio-semantic energy* active within the *discourse*.

The *surface structure* of *discourse components* forms a *meta-linguistic system*, opening the way to explore *symbolic condensation* and *semantic generation*. The aim is not to extract *signs* with fixed *semantic identities*, but rather those capable of leading into the *imagined realm*.

Greimas identifies the relationships among the three-dimensional semiotic counterparts as *opposition*, *contradiction*, and *solidarity*. When these dimensions are extended, the result is a diagram in the form of a *cube*. This specific point leads to a comparison between *Greimas' semiotic square* and *Ernő Rubik's magic cube*; the magic lies in the way it penetrates the *natural* and carries us toward the *unnatural*. *Language*, too, operates as a form of magic through its *symbols* and *creative capacity*.

The process in this case is more intricate and demanding. Rubik's Cube is a three-dimensional mechanical puzzle governed by continuous, sequential movements between its layers to achieve a correctly aligned face from a particular angle.[23] In the same way, the operation within *Greimas' square* involves repositioning

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[21] Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation*, 58.

[22] Rachid Benmalek, *Dictionary of Semiotic Analysis of Texts*, 45. He notes elsewhere: "The semiotic square represents the fundamental relationships to which semantic units are necessarily subject to generate a semantic world. The semiotic square helps us represent the relations between these units to produce the meanings presented by the text to the readers." *Dictionary of Semiotic Analysis of Texts*, 23.

[23] Salah Fadl, *Methodology of Contemporary Criticism*, 1st ed (Cairo: Merit Publishing and Information, 2002), 92–93 "The poem is not built of verses as a superficial view might suggest; rather, it is built from layers — levels into which a

elements to approach a deeper *semantic structure*, an imaginative *symbolic form*, and a *network of signs* that leads to another *network of signs*.

This constitutes a semiotic exercise in which each attempt leads to a new *structural configuration*, involving the ongoing reorganization of *signs* and *elements*, thereby continually introducing new *dimensions*. This representation remains relevant because with every act of *reading*, a new configuration is revealed. The process is both *transcendent* and *integrative*, blending the *procedural principles* established by *Greimas* with the *interpretative dimension* clarified by *Umberto Eco*.

Mundhir Ayachi begins his book *Semiotics* with a compelling definition of the discipline: *"Semiotics is a science in which the sign itself is read, and through which it is transformed into a language that reads the world around it".*[24]This definition implies that, as a system, *semiotics* is capable of constructing *phenomena*, and as a *language*, it transforms *phenomena* into *signs* that read their own structures, recreating what might be possible. There is no doubt that such *creativity* lies within the domain of the *interpreter*.

In this methodological phase is the *three-dimensional architecture*, which reflects a mode of meaning generation. According to *Peirce*, this process requires the participation of three components: the *sign*, its *object*, and its *interpreter*. In this model, the *object* extends beyond what the *sign* merely refers to; it embodies what the *sign* expresses or means. For *Peirce*, a *sign* is not simply something that stands for something else through a relation, but rather something that enables recognition of an additional element.[25]

In the context of meta-language, the idea is that meaning has shifted from one linguistic level to another, or more precisely, to an entirely different linguistic system. Within this framework, the analytical task becomes one of seeking meaning within a symbolic existence, necessitating the effort to establish connections between differing semiotic systems.

In other words, it is the process of transforming the symbol into meaning, a task that remains among the most complex and demanding. This semiotic framework operates through non-linguistic semantic systems, indicating that it functions primarily as a semio-semantic context. The analytical focus is no longer restricted to linguistic signs alone; rather, non-linguistic signs and symbols are also understood as functioning within semio-semantic systems.

4. Discourse Analysis According to the Semiotic Model: From the Semiotic Square to the Three-Dimensional Cube

The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said in a noble hadith:

"Shall I not guide you to something better in degree than prayer, fasting, and charity?" They said: "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said: "Reconciling relationships, for indeed the corruption of relationships is the shaver. I do not say it shaves hair, but it shaves the religion." Sahih al-Bukhari.

The speeches delivered by great figures, those of expertise and eloquence, present their audience with questions that compel them to read extensively and delve deeply into their meanings and

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literary work can be divided — that penetrate, intermingle, and interweave. It becomes clear that the semantic structure of a poem is the result of a combination of several layers: rhythmic, syntactic, expressive, and imaginative, culminating in the overarching symbolic level".

[24] *Semiotics and Semiological Studies*, 1.

[25] Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 47.

objectives. The speaker imbues his expressions with an eloquent touch, indicating that he possesses sound judgment and profound awareness. This is also true for the prophetic discourse, which is the second source of legislation after the Qurʾān. Despite its human nature, we recognize the extent of Prophet Muhammad's awareness in the strategies of constructing his discourse and its guiding content. He takes into account the particularities of the Arabic language and the state of his audience, thus reflecting his intention to achieve effective communication with the parties involved and elevate the communicative event and human behavior. This means that the prophetic discourse, with its language, carries clear objectives that direct minds towards embracing a religious vision, which Muslims incorporate into their lives. It is also a form of divine guidance delivered through the words of the Prophet.

In another formulation, *"Prophet Muhammad understood the essence of communication in language when he made his sayings more connected to perception than to artistic creativity, as if the artistic image in his speeches was a reflection of what exists in the external world"* .[26] One of his rhetorical methods was to address people in their own language first, then move beyond their perception to guide them toward religious principles that had to be manifested in reality, as they represented a direct conception of the teachings of the tolerant religion.Thus, prophetic discourse aimed to achieve clarity and explanation, rooted in the concept of clarity based on understanding and the conveyance of meaning. As *al-Jāḥiẓ* stated: *"Whatever reaches the intellects and clarifies the meaning, that is eloquence in that particular context".*[27]

It is important to distinguish between surface structure and deep structure, as the goal of analysis is to extract both. *"Since the deep structure expresses the 'meaning' in all languages, it reflects 'forms of human thought,' and we must understand how this structure transforms into speech on the 'surface'"* .[28] Operationally, we understand that discourse does not merely represent the verbal structure; rather, there is an underlying structure that reflects the thought or concept which brings the linguistic structure to the surface in the form of words, sentences, and stylistic expressions.Hence, we can conclude that:

✓ The surface structure represents the structure of speech.

✓ The deep structure represents the meaning.

Al-Āmidī (d. 631 AH) defined discourse as: *"The truth is that it is the word agreed upon, intended to convey meaning to one who is ready to understand it"*[29]. From this, we understand that discourse in language represents the uttered meaning, intended by the speaker to prepare the listener's mind for reception and comprehension. As stated in *Lisān al-ʿArab*: *"Discourse and addressing: the act of exchanging words. He addressed him with speech, and they communicated through discourse"* .[30] A careful examination of the Prophetic discourse reveals that its value lies in the cognitive and perceptual aspects that Prophet

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[26] Amel Nemissi, "Strategies of the Noble Prophetic Discourse Found in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*," *Lettres and Languages Guide* 1, no. 2 (2022): 53.

[27] ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, n.d.), vol. 1, 82.

[28] ʿAbduh al-Rājiḥī, *Al-Naḥw al-ʿArabī wa-al-Dars al-Ḥadīth (Baḥth fī al-Manhaj)* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1979), 125.

[29] Saif al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Āmidī, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, commentary by ʿAbd al-Razzāq ʿAfīfī (Riyadh: Muʾassasat al-Nūr, 1387 AH), vol. 1, 95

[30] Jamal al-Dīn Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, marginal notes by Naṣīb al-Yāzjī and a group of linguists, 3rd ed (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1414 AH), vol. 1, 361.

Muḥammad (PBUH) aimed to communicate to his audience through commands and prohibitions, using a style that avoids linguistic complexity and focuses on matters pertaining to self and societal reform. The reason why the discourse resonates with the listener is precisely what distinguishes this mode of speech in fulfilling the rhetorical objectives of clarification and explanation.

The Prophetic discourse can be considered a form of eloquence, as it contains both expressive words and noble meanings through which comprehension and understanding are achieved. *al-Jāḥiẓ* (d. 255 AH / 869 CE) stated: *"When the meaning is noble and the words are eloquent, and the discourse is naturally crafted, free from coercion, devoid of imbalance, and preserved from artificiality, it works in the heart like rain on fertile soil"* .[31] A reader of the *noble ḥadīth* observes the presence of these rhetorical characteristics, reflected through a semiotic selection of signs that make it like rain falling upon the earth, bringing it to life. This is due to a deep understanding of the characteristics of the Arabic language and the ways in which it is utilized.

If we were to describe the semiotics of the Prophetic discourse, it could be summarized in the following statement: *"Indeed, the Messenger of God (PBUH) was the most eloquent of the Arabs, yet he did not force his words, nor did he seek to embellish them, nor did he rely on any rhetorical devices. His speech did not exceed the necessary extent to convey the intended meaning, and in doing so, it was neither flawed nor forced; nor was it swayed by sudden changes, maintaining a consistent style, free from unusual patterns or complex methods, such that no one could find an angle from which to critique his words, whether rising or falling".*[32] It appears that the linguistic structure of his speech possesses distinctive features centered around eloquence (*balāgha*) and clarity (*bayān*). This involves a purification of words from any form of artificiality, ornamental excess, or rhetorical coercion. The Prophetic discourse focuses on the effective delivery of meaning in a manner that perfectly aligns the objective of the message with its expressive form.

Ṣādiq al-Rāfiʿī links syntactic structure to the triad of eloquence, reason, and emotion, stating: *"Its penetration into the secrets of eloquence and the manipulation of linguistic structures is not merely about the language and its elements, but rather about the harmony between the components of emotion and the components of reason, in their fullest expression in both realms. This is a domain that can only be accessed by one whose emotion, intellect, and eloquence transcend mere thought, embodying the fullest form of human truth that unites these three qualities: eloquence, reason, and emotion".*[33] This perspective reflects how the Prophetic discourse aimed to influence both the emotional and rational dimensions of the human self, utilizing language as a bridge to establish balance between them. Eloquence (*balāgha*), therefore, emerges as the medium through which emotion and cognition interact and harmonize.

Rhetoric scholars have explained that discourse is a mode of expression in which the speaker must carefully refine their approach to demonstrate the soundness of their opinion and the depth of their awareness. The speaker organizes their discourse with features that prepare the audience for reception, making it more conducive to understanding and more effective in raising awareness. It is through these rhetorical skills that expression becomes infused with craftsmanship, taking into account the audience's level of comprehension while directly signaling the intended purpose. For this reason, Ibn Khaldūn (d.

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[31] ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1423 AH), vol. 1, 87.

[32] Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfiʿī, *Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān wa-al-Balāgha al-Nabawiyya*, 8th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 2005), 194.

[33] Ibid., 186.

808 AH / 1406 CE) maintained that *"every type of speech has its own methods and exists in various forms"*.[34] The attention given to these methods by the Arabs was seen as a refined craft aimed at sharpening ideas and improving the fabric through which structures are woven—its foundation being the principle of deliberate selection.

Therefore, the process of semiotic analysis necessitates focusing on the semiotic markers that reflect the speaker's deliberate preference for certain signs or expressions over possible alternatives. This set of choices constitutes the unique structure of their discourse. Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) deliberately employed a distinctive linguistic sign in this ḥadīth, represented by the term *al-Ḥāliqah* ("the shaver"), to fulfill a rhetorical purpose by shifting it from its literal meaning to a figurative one. This semantic shift aims to clarify the intended message and to render the image more relatable to the listener, offering a vivid and realistic illustration of what a "shaver"—or by extension, a socially destructive individual—might do within the fabric of society.

This prophetic discourse draws attention to the importance of mending relationships and the imperative of strengthening social cohesion among individuals. Its message encompasses not only the personal dimension—through devotion to prayer, fasting, and charity—but also reinforces the ethical and social framework that Islam aspires to instill in every Muslim. Social ties are grounded in principles of unity, brotherhood, and reconciliation. As a discourse structured around a sequence of positive and negative dualities, it broadens one's perspective beyond individual interest, inviting engagement with semantic and communicative interactions with others. Accordingly, it serves as a compelling example of the transition from the semiotic square to the semiotic cube, reflecting the progression from binary oppositions to multi-dimensional semantic constructions.

Roman Jakobson gives us an idea of how a message containing symbols is received: "Message and code. If the listener receives a message in a language he knows, he correlates it with the code at hand and this code includes all the distinctive features to be manipulated, all their admissible combinations into bundles of concurrent features termed phonemes, and all the rules of concatenating phonemes into sequences -briefly, all the distinctive vehicles serving primarily to differentiate morphemes and whole words".[35]

Here, the positive semiotic element is "reform," which directs meaning toward the strengthening of communicative ties within the community. It functions as a safeguard against the pathways of resentment, hatred, and discord, working instead to foster resilient social bonds. Its negative semiotic counterpart is "corruption," which denotes the severing of these bonds and the widening of social divisions, leading to the disintegration of relationships and the spread of discord and animosity.

This highlights that an individual's value is not solely rooted in personal acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, and charity, but also within a comparative framework that incorporates the broader social dimension. This dimension brings the individual into the world of communal responsibility, calling for personal virtue alongside social reform.[36]

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[34] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), vol. 1, 571.

[35] Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1956), 5.

[36] *The Sign: Analysis of the Concept and Its History*, 34.
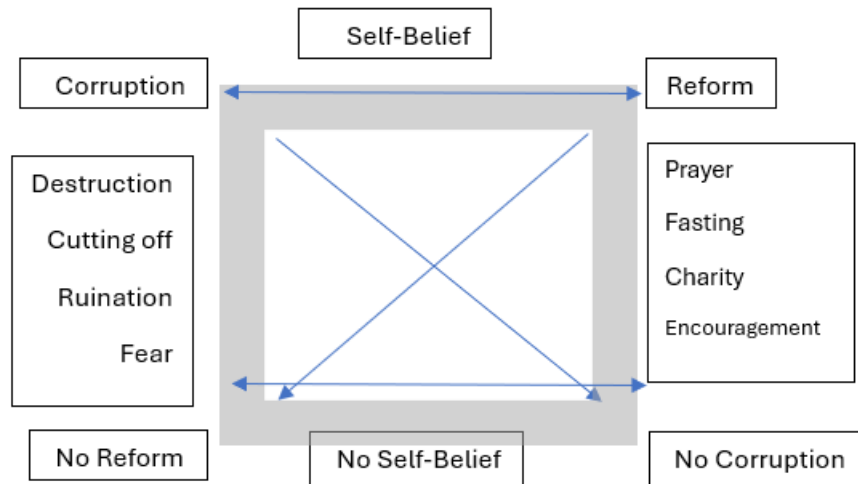
Accordingly, the surface-level configuration of the semiotic square presents a contrast between the concept of *reform*—depicted as superior even to individual acts of worship—and that of *corruption*, which undermines both the community and its ethical foundation. Within this linguistic framework, reform is constructed as a societal imperative, while the *hadīth* positions it as a foundational element for maintaining communal stability. Conversely, corruption is presented as a destructive force that threatens the coherence of the social fabriC.[37]

Thus, we observe the presence of opposing binary pairs; these linguistic signs immerse the reader in a realistic portrayal of the consequences of *corruption*. The shift from literal to figurative expression serves to enhance comprehension and ensure rhetorical impact. As stated: "The focus of the matter and the ultimate goal for both the speaker and the listener is comprehension and understanding. Whatever reaches the intellects and clarifies the meaning, that is eloquence in that context".[38] In this way, the *hadīth* emphasizes the necessity of deterring behaviors that contradict ethical values. Otherwise, an individual in society may resemble the ominous *shaver*, a figure who brings harm to his community. It can thus be concluded that the prophetic discourse "aimed to teach people that life is about ethics (...) by establishing good principles for interaction among individuals".[39]

A key aspect highlighted by the researcher Huda Ahmed Mohamed Zain is the psychological and social harmony that the *eloquence* of prophetic discourse aims to achieve. The carefully chosen *rhetorical cues* reflect the elevated nature of this human communication, carrying a message of profound significance in promoting internal equilibrium and social cohesion among its recipients. *Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)* employed various linguistic and rhetorical strategies designed to refine both behavior and language. The diversity in his speech was purposeful, taking into account the varying states of the listeners to ensure engagement through linguistic structures and forms, while also fostering comprehension of their deeper meanings and implications.[40]

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[37] Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 40.

[38] ʿAmr ibn Baḥr ibn Maḥbūb Abū ʿUthmān (al-Jāḥiẓ), *Al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn* (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1423 AH), vol 1, 82.

[39] Muḥammad Rifʿat Zanjabīr, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Sunnah*, 1st ed (Cairo: Dār al-Tawfīq, 2003), 114.

[40] *Balāghat al-Khitāb al-Nabawī wa-Atharuhā fī Taḥqīq al-Tawāfuq al-Nafsī wa-al-Ijtimāʿī*, *Journal of the Faculty of Arabic Language – Banī Jirjah* 19, no. 5 (2015): 4453–ff.

Al-Jāḥiẓ also referred to this ḥadīth due to the gravity of corruption, stating: "And he said: 'The disease of the previous nations has crept into you: envy and hatred. Hatred is the shaver, the shaver of religion, not the shaver of hair. By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I not inform you of something that, if you do it, you will love one another?' They said: 'Yes, O Messenger of God.' He said: 'Spread peace and maintain ties of kinship'". [41] This citation expands the interpretative space of the first ḥadīth by presenting positive contrasts. While envy and hatred dominate the initial state, their antithesis—love and affection—is achieved through spreading peace and preserving kinship. These elements function as semiotic signs that, through their realization, foster ethical behavior and societal unity.

With this model, we understand the contextual appropriateness of linguistic signs. The words are employed not merely for their literal meanings but to fulfill a rhetorical purpose. This is one of the distinctive advantages of the noble prophetic discourse, which lies in its embodiment of eloquence. Such eloquence is not limited to verbal form; rather, it aligns the words with the intended meanings. As *al-Jāḥiẓ* described the Prophet's speech (PBUH): "It is speech with few letters, but vast in meaning. It is free from artificiality and devoid of affectation. He employed elaboration when needed and resorted to brevity when appropriate. He avoided foreign or strange terms and refrained from vulgar expressions".[42]

Accordingly, the surface-level structure of the semiotic square reveals a contrast between *reform*, which is framed as transcending even individual acts of worship, and *corruption*, which undermines the community and its moral foundation. In this linguistic context, reform is presented as a societal imperative, while the ḥadīth establishes it as a cornerstone of communal stability. Conversely, corruption is depicted as a destructive force that threatens the cohesion of the social fabric.[43]

This highlights the deeper religious dimension of sincere worship. While prayer, fasting, and charity are essential pillars of Islam, the integrity of society is fundamentally tied to the Muslim's ethical conduct in interpersonal dealings—beyond personal acts of devotion. Without such ethical commitment, unchecked corruption would inevitably lead to harmful consequences that undermine the cohesion of the entire community.

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[41] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn* (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1423 AH), vol. 2, 17.

[42] Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfiʿī, *Tārīkh Ādāb al-ʿArab* (Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, n.d.), vol. 2, 186.

[43] Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 40.

The Symbolic Dimension of the Dualities in the Semiotic Square
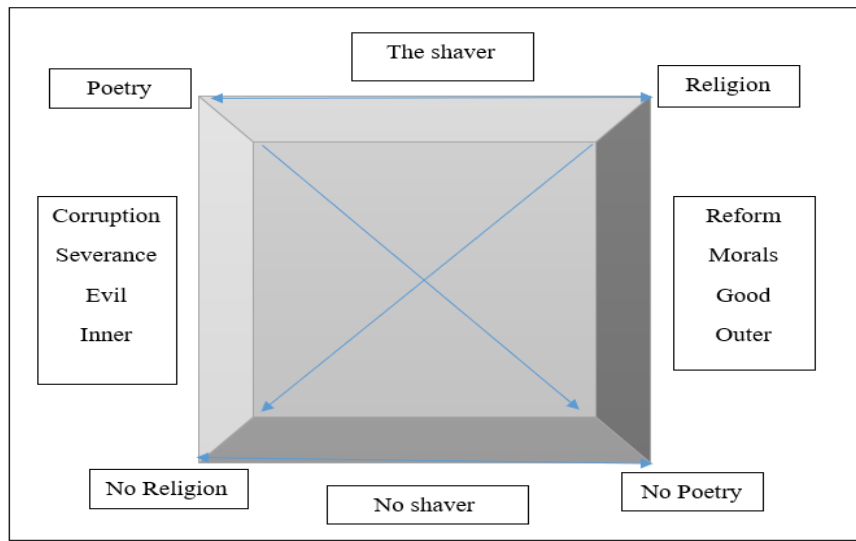
From the preceding analysis, the expression *"corruption is the shaver of religion"* emerges with layered significance. The term *"shaver"* transitions from its literal lexical meaning, *"I do not say it shaves the hair"*, to its metaphorical interpretation, *"but I say it shaves the religion."* In this transformation, the term assumes a symbolic role, enriching the discourse with deeper meanings as it transcends its oppositional foundation to enter an existential and symbolic context that encompasses both reform and corruption.

In *Maqāyīs al-Lugha*, the dictionary by Ibn Fāris (d. 395 AH / 1004 CE), it is stated: *"Ḥalaq" consists of three primary meanings: The first refers to the removal of hair from the head, after which something else is placed in its place. The second denotes a tool used for this purpose, typically round in shape. The third signifies elevation.*[44] Thus, the meaning of *ḥalaq* includes three lexical connotations: the act of shaving, the tool used for shaving, and the concept of elevation.

In *Tahdhīb al-Lughah*, the dictionary by al-Azharī (d. 370 AH / 980 CE), the term *al-ḥāliqah* is specifically defined as: *"Al-ḥāliqah is the custom that removes everything; people 'shave' one another when they kill each other. A woman who shaves her hair during a calamity is referred to as al-ḥāliqah and ḥilāq. It is used figuratively in Arabic as: 'To your mother is the shaving, and to your eye the weeping.' And al-ḥāliqah: death".*[45] The lexical meaning of the term *al-ḥāliqah* refers to negative concepts associated with removal, killing, calamity, and death—indicating that the context in which it was used deepens the connotation of *corruption.*

In this regard, *Ibn Manẓūr* (d. 711 AH / 1311 CE) adds further connotations, stating: *"Al-ḥāliq is the one who brings misfortune upon his people, as if he shaves them, meaning he strips them. It is narrated in a ḥadīth: 'The disease of the previous nations has crept into you, which is hatred, and it is al-ḥāliqah,' meaning that which causes destruction and eradicates religion just as a razor removes hair. Khālid ibn Janbah said: al-ḥāliqah is the*

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[44] Aḥmad ibn Fāris, *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lugha*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), vol 2, 98.

[45] Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-Lugha*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAwaḍ Murʿib, 1st ed (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2001), vol 4, 41.

severing of kinship, injustice, and bad speech. It is also said: 'A destructive force has fallen upon them that leaves nothing but destruction. Al-ḥāliqah: the custom that removes everything".[46]

In *Lisān al-ʿArab*, the scholar refers to the prophetic ḥadīth in his definition of *al-ḥāliq*, which signifies a person who brings harm to his people, as if he shaves them, due to the negative behaviors he exhibits. Here, *al-ḥāliq* moves beyond being a mere person who shaves hair to someone who negatively impacts society, stripping it of its values. The ḥadīth further conveys meanings associated with *al-ḥāliqah*, including hatred, destruction, eradication of religion, severing of kinship, injustice, and bad speech. Thus, this semiotic sign (*al-ḥaliqah*) forms a semantic field that encompasses various terms of corruption, spreading undesirable traits that eradicate religion as a razor removes hair.

Here, the *"shaver"* becomes a pivotal symbol around which visual and semantic scenes gather, extending toward a third dimension within the semiotic square. This rhetorical image, employed in the noble prophetic discourse, illustrates the gravity of corrupted human relationships. It presents a mental portrayal of corruption as a force that uproots social and human connections entirely—like a shaver that leaves no trace—thus generating new oppositional meanings, including:

• **Radical disconnection**: This refers to the absence of *compassion* and *communication* in the face of *social discord*, leading to a *rupture in the social fabric* that runs contrary to *ethical values* and the *principles of reform.*

• **Manifestation of evil**: The *imagery* of the *shaver* conveys a warning that *corrupted relationships* are not trivial or momentary disagreements. Instead, they resemble a *shaving act*, one that obliterates the core of *human connection*, standing in opposition to *virtue.*

• **Subtle degradation**: The *symbolic function* of the *shaver* also points to the gradual and insidious nature of the *corruption process*. Unlike a *sword* that delivers immediate destruction, the *shaver* operates incrementally, silently eroding social bonds. This *gradualism* underscores the severity of prolonged interpersonal conflicts. It also illustrates how individuals, when consumed by personal concerns and failing to engage in communal affairs or mediate conflicts, contribute indirectly to widening the rift of *corruption* and stifling the initial steps of *reform.*

Although acts such as *prayer*, *fasting*, and *charity* are overt expressions of faith, this discourse prioritizes the *inner act* of reconciling *interpersonal relationships*. Despite its internal nature, this act exerts a *profound and lasting impact.*

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[46] Jamal al-Dīn Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, marginal notes by Naṣīb al-Yāzjī and a group of linguists, 3rd ed (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1414 AH), vol. 10, 66.
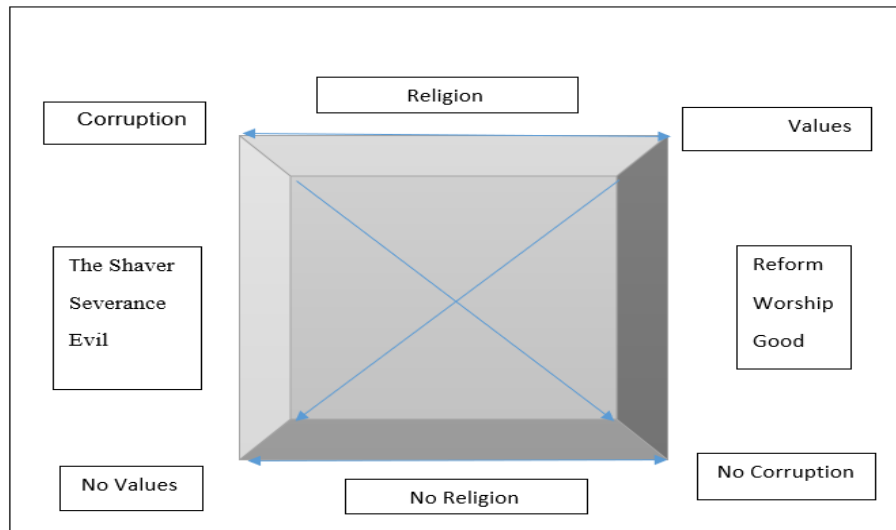
In this context, the symbolism of the *shaver* serves to emphasize the peril of *"corruption of relationships."* It becomes a metaphor that silently works to sever human ties at their root and erase their impact entirely. This elevates it to a central element in the analysis of binary oppositions, highlighting *reconciliation* as a superior moral value—one that transcends individual acts of worship. A cohesive society depends fundamentally on the integrity of relationships among its members.

Accordingly, the analysis applies a semiotic model that harmonizes religious doctrine with social values. It progresses from the dualities of the *semiotic square* to a more interpretative dimension, represented by the *semiotic cube*, thus providing a broader analytical framework that accommodates interaction among symbols, meanings, and contexts.

In this light, cultural and social dimensions act as catalysts in expanding the religious discourse on ethical behavior. This contextual shift enables the *semiotic square* to encompass meanings that extend beyond its binary scope. While the square organizes oppositional relationships, the *semiotic cube* introduces a vertical dimension that integrates cultural, social, and religious interpretations, thereby rendering semantic relationships more dynamic and multifaceted.

The symbolic expression anchoring this discourse is the term *"shaver."* In classical dictionaries, it is associated with the triliteral root *(H-L-Q)*, encompassing meanings tied to removal or eradication. Derived from *"halq,"* the term signifies the complete elimination of something from its base—such as in the expression *"shaving the hair,"* which denotes total removal. Within the noble *hadith,* the term is employed figuratively to suggest complete moral destruction, as in the phrase *"the shaver of morals,"* to denote their corruption and eradication. Hence, *"the shaver"* intensifies the negative connotation of corruption by symbolizing the cutting off of goodness at its roots, equating the *"corruption of relationships"* to a mechanism that annihilates the foundations of virtue.

The *religious element* serves as both a cultural and social catalyst, propelling the *semiotic square* to expand the religious viewpoint on ethical behavior. This shift in context leads to the exploration of additional meanings. While the *semiotic square* concentrates on dyadic relations, the *cube* introduces an additional dimension that facilitates the discourse analysis through the lenses of *social, cultural,* and *devotional* contexts, thereby enriching and broadening the scope of *semantic interactions.*

The *semiotic sign* does not simply appear in discourse arbitrarily, but functions to express and communicate, pointing to a specific context or establishing its own interpretive position. This selective

nature of the *sign* is what transforms discourse into a world of *meta-language*, reflected in the emotional dimensions conveyed by words. The *sign*, through the *semiotic process*, leads to a particular meaning; it belongs to a *system* within which it functions as a *referential unit.*

Conclusion

This study proceeded through a series of methodological and analytical stages, moving from the structure of the *semiotic square* to a three-dimensional configuration represented by the *semiotic cube*, which was constructed through the interrelationships among its constituent elements. From this analytical progression, several key insights emerge:

• The semiotic cube represents a novel strategy for semantic analysis. It does not merely dwell on surface-level forms but instead delves into the symbolic realm through the meta-linguistic function.

• This function brings to light the contrast between two distinct contexts, or, more precisely, between two worlds: the present, as it appears outwardly, and the imagined, which is evoked through signs and symbols. Through interpretation, the analysis advances toward the semiotic cube, pointing to a meta-linguistic dimension.

• This methodological stage becomes meaningful when it is understood that discourse, in its interior and exterior dimensions, consists of two inseparable facets that must be jointly considered in tracing the processes of semantic and interpretative development in semiotic discourse.

• There is no doubt that interpretation represents a hermeneutic opening, as it consistently returns the inquiry to its origin, not to conclude it, but to initiate a renewed understanding and uncover additional meaning. Semiotics, therefore, marks a methodological shift in the approach to both the surface and depth of discourse.

• This proposal elaborates on the "Semiotic Cube," a novel analytical model designed to delve into religious discourse. This model progresses from Algirdas Julien Greimas's binary semiotic square to a more intricate three-dimensional framework.

• By employing symbols, signification, and interpretation as methodological tools, the Semiotic Cube enhances textual context analysis and reveals the complex semantic interrelationships among various elements and perspectives.

• This advanced model not only extends the foundational semiotic square but also promotes a multidimensional analytical practice. Such an approach is designed to reflect the intricate symbolic complexity of the discourses it seeks to analyze, thereby enriching the interpretative process.

• The Semiotic Cube aims to provide a robust framework for interpreting such texts by allowing a deeper understanding of the anti-binary dynamics of reform versus corruption, the superficial versus the esoteric, and the individual versus the societal.

• As we delve deeper into the linguistic, religious, and social contexts of the hadith, the model adapts to these complexities, transforming the traditional semiotic square into a dynamic, multidimensional semiotic cube.

• This transformative approach enables scholars to unravel the layered meanings embedded within the text, moving beyond surface interpretations to uncover the profound, often concealed, significations.

• The semiotic cube, as a semiotic methodology that goes beyond Greimas' semiotic square in discourse analysis, can be seen as a more comprehensive semiotic approach that concerns signs, symbols, and context.

• Understanding discourse is accompanied by knowledge of other related systems, whether those related to linguistic levels or what the words refer to in the external world. Based on this methodological expansion, we can delve deeper into extracting the meanings and objectives of various discourses.

• This approach has proven its ability to uncover implicit and hidden meanings and move into the deep structure, encompassing the meaning within expanding contextual circles.

• The prophetic discourse is distinguished by its eloquence in utterance, as it aims to convey meaning through strategies that consider the context and the nature of the recipients. This principle aligns with the concept of selection, as we have seen how the word "al-Haliqah" represents the essence of the hadith. It gradually shifts the mind from its common perception—i.e., the shaving tool—to the religious concept of it as the "shaver" of faith. Thus, the choice of this word reflects a conscious use that aligns with both the social and religious context.

• The transition from the semiotic square to the semiotic cube helped examine the contextual multiplicity inherent in the prophetic discourse. We moved from the linguistic context, extracting apparent binary oppositions like reform and corruption, including associated sub-terms such as visible acts of worship: prayer, almsgiving, and fasting, which contrast with their opposites of ill intentions and societal decay.

• The social context emerged, as the hadith aims to spread values that promote cohesion and unity among its members. This was then connected to the religious context, as the concepts move toward establishing the notion of prophecy and divine guidance, and following the commands and prohibitions of the Prophet (PBUH).

• The semiotic movement of linguistic signs within the semiotic cube and its contextual dimensions was a methodological movement. We did not limit ourselves to a single semiotic square; rather, in every movement, more signs emerged, such as good versus evil, the individual versus the community, the apparent versus the hidden, the righteous versus the corrupt.

• This embodied the research's goal of using semiotic tools to delve into the structures of discourse, not stopping at surface-level reading or literal interpretation, but moving through a semiotic interpretive process based on context. We moved toward revealing other aspects provided by the deep structure, effortlessly and clearly. As we acquired additional contextual information, new signs emerged, revealing another level of meaning that deepens the interpretation further.

• This approach revealed the semiotic aspect of the noble prophetic discourse, as the deep structure reflected the concept of eloquence and powerful speech. As Al-Jahiz described in his book *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyin*, it is speech that conveys the meanings in the speaker's mind to the listener's intellect. Neither the words nor the meanings precede each other; both emerge in the well-structured form of prophetic discourse.

• The eloquence of prophetic discourse focuses on the influential thread in the process of speech crafting. It selects the style that achieves communication with the recipient. Through rhetoric and consideration of context, prophetic discourse fulfills its function of influencing and persuading. It can be described, from a rhetorical perspective, as a complex speech system with a unique and impactful style.

• This rhetoric, according to the semiotic approach, aids in uncovering further connotations and objectives. Thus, discourse becomes a system charged with additions.

Recommendations

– The scientific progress in the fields of linguistic, rhetorical, and religious studies calls for a reassessment of the strategies used to analyze religious discourse, with methodological adjustments to align the process with new perspectives on its nature. We should not remain stuck in the initial foundations, as this would limit studies to a single methodology. Instead, we must expand religious discourse to the horizons envisioned and acknowledged by scholars in their various research experiences.

– There is a need to establish new theories that give equal value to both traditional and contemporary studies. These theories should have a clear and applicable conceptual framework. In this way, religious discourse can be analyzed within its culture, while broadening scientific perspectives on it by adopting various approaches.

– It is essential to present religious discourse in the form of contemporary studies by adopting new strategies for analysis. The responsibility of researchers lies in re-reading the text for the purpose of production, highlighting the unique aspects of religious discourse at multiple levels—linguistic, rhetorical, and contextual. This leads to intellectual integration or a theory that interweaves multiple disciplines, supporting the dissemination of religious discourse using methods that reflect awareness and understanding of its essence, ensuring it adapts to the developments of modern times, without being confined to a particular era or thought.

– This research has attempted to offer a methodological proposal that can be employed by researchers in the field of discourse analysis. This proposal involves the semiotic cube, or what lies beyond the semiotic square, helping to create a modern shift aimed at offering a new understanding of the content and construction of religious discourse. Through methodological inquiry, we understand that religious discourse is not a static text, but rather an eloquent speech with precise employment and purposes.

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