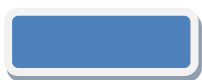


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## Abstract

Iconicity, the controversial topic over which a lot of ink has been spilt, still manages to occupy the pages of researchers willing to further investigate this inherently interdisciplinary phenomenon. This research is one of many attempts testifying to the claim that iconicity is one possible answer to the notoriously elusive question of the relation between language and reality. For that reason, the endeavor of the ongoing study is to provide linguistically textual evidence for the existence of iconicity as a phonosymbolic process in the

discourse of Muslim's most glorious book, the Quran. The visual, auditory, and tactile dimensions of iconicity on the imagic level take readers on a hypnotic journey through the 88 verses of Saad surah. The paper uses the concept *phonological iconicity* as a blanket term for a broad range of phenomena, including what has been referred to as *sound-symbolism, mimetics, ideophones, phonesthemes, and onomatopoeia*. Hence crossing the borders of *morphological iconicity*, whenever the necessity for the interaction between morphological and

phonological or phonetic processes is at hand. Keeping in mind that these different phenomena, while varying in amount and degree, all have in common some non-arbitrary, iconic mapping between form and meaning. As the finest work of classical Arabic literature, the holy Quran presents a marvelous start for a linguistic study of the appearance, form, and representation of phonological iconicity in Arabic language. Fischer and Nanny's (1999) *imagic iconicity* is adopted to facilitate the assessment of phonological iconicity in Saad surah. The apprehension for iconicity principles heads off from phonemes to morphemes and finally to visual, tactile, and rhythmical features. In providing a comprehensive overview of the presence of imagic iconicity in Saad surah, the study challenges the naïve restriction of iconicity to mere onomatopoeia, as well as testifying to the semiotic foundations of iconicity in Quranic language.

### 1. Preamble

For well over a millennium, the debatable topic of iconicity still continues to challenge the received view that language is fundamentally arbitrary in nature. As a dogma of linguistics for generations of scholars, the principle of arbitrariness is firmly dismissive of the iconic form-meaning mappings regarding them as negligible in

quantity and linguistically inferior in quality. In the upcoming pages surveying iconicity, it will become clear that attempting to divorce iconicity from language is an inevitable matter.

The term iconicity is derived from the word 'icon', meaning an image that more or less reflects a situation, concept, or object in the real world. The *icon* is one of Peirce's three basic kinds of signs in his theory of semiosis, the other two being *index* and *symbol*. Language and reality are two vital aspects linked together by the realm of iconicity. It is this similarity relation which brings out the best of both worlds and stands in opposition to the notion of arbitrariness. Its invasion of the linguistic market has left an emblematic mark on the language map of form-meaning correspondence. According to Nanny and Fischer (1999: xv), "There seems to be an innate iconic streak in us that makes us somehow feel or believe that there is a direct link between a word or name (the 'signifier') and the object or concept (the 'signified') it stands for."

Now although each time iconicity is discussed it sheds new skin, it continues to build up its holistic meaning step after another. History seems to record this fact starting from Plato and Aristotle and ending with modern day research led by

Haiman, Bybee, and Givon. In fact, records show that Morris (1946) was responsible for coining the term iconicity to designate the measure of similarity between the icon and the object to which it refers. One thing for sure is that iconicity, although not by the same terminology, has left its mark across the long history of linguistic scholarship. In due course, the different terms, including ‘motivation’ and ‘sound symbolism’ all contributed to the rise of iconicity in the linguistic community.

## 2. Foundational Work

The road to unravelling the first thread in iconicity history is both lengthy and bumpy. Therefore, it is wisest to give a brief outline of iconicity throughout the journey of its linguistic nourishment. For starters, the oldest documented discussion about iconicity and its role in constructing words is Plato’s *Cratylus* dialogue. In the dialogue, Socrates is asked whether names belong to their objects “naturally” or “conventionally.” Though Socrates admits that convention and usage play a role in the creation of names, he confesses that he prefers the view “that names should be as much like things as possible” (1997: 433–435). Moreover, the Islamic era was fond of visible iconicity particularly in Islamic calligraphy, where the intimate relationship between the Muslim faith and the written text

makes calligraphy the most quintessentially of all Islamic arts. Whereas in poetry, iconicity was submerged under the mask of onomatopoeia. Tracing clues of iconicity is apparent in the work of great Abbasid poets such as Asmai and his poem “The Song of the Bulbul (bird)”.

However, this view did not prevail for long in linguistic thought, namely due to Saussure (1959). In his foundational work *A Course in General Linguistics*, which was originally published in 1916, Saussure develops an explicit model of signs. Saussure’s main claim is that the relationship between the signifier, or the form of a sign, and the signified, its meaning, is arbitrary (1959). This marked the rise of the first principle of language, the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, which was later designated in Hockett’s “design features of language” (1960). But it was Peirce 1931-1958 who established the foundations of iconicity in his theory of semiotics. According to the different modes of relationship between form and meaning, Peirce classified signs into icons: signs whose forms resemble or imitate their meanings, indices: signs whose forms are connected in some way to their meanings by contiguity, and symbols: signs whose forms do not resemble their meaning. Peirce’s

system further allocates three subtypes of icons: images, diagrams and metaphors.

Notably, it was Jakobson (1965) who used Peirce's classification of signs to broaden the horizon of iconicity from a phonological level to a morphosyntactic level of research. Jakobson's article "*Quest for the Essence of Language*" paved the way for a linguistic coated iconicity. Moreover, the works of Haiman (1985), Bybee (1985), and Givon (1985) surely spiced up matters and introduced some of the most fundamental classifications of iconicity, securing its role on all levels including linguistic cognition.

### 3. Research Questions

The practical side of this paper is keen on probing around for answers to the following basic but nonetheless essential questions:

- i. What is iconically imagic about Quranic discourse on the sound and visual level?
- ii. How is imagic iconicity processed in Saad surah, using a morphophonemic analysis, to enhance the aesthetic appeal of verses?

### 4. Research Significance

Findings emerging from this study may be of great value both theoretically and practically. This is due to the fact that the thesis attempts to present a general framework of how iconicity is processed phonologically on the imagic level in Quranic discourse to achieve the approximate meaning. It is also nominated to be of importance to Quran learners, pragmaticians, discourse analysts, and cognitive linguists who are mindful in such aspects of linguistics. Taking into consideration the bold observation that iconicity will continue to attract the attention of linguists, philosophers, semioticians and literary scholars alike.

### 5. Imagic Iconicity

As the simple and more direct type, imagic iconicity is well known as onomatopoeia and involves similarity based on simple qualities. It is basically a direct one to one relation between the sign or signifier (usually a morphologically unstructured one) and the signified (the concept in the real world). The example presented by Fischer and Nanny (1999: xxii) draws a clearer picture of the direct likeness in sound/word-shape:

Signifier	miaow
↕	↕

Signified                                      sound made by cat

A well acknowledged and documented fraction of iconicity at the lexical and phonological level is the iconicity of onomatopoeia. Typically, the sounds imitated in onomatopoeia are either animal sounds (meow) or sounds made by objects in motion or upon impact on other objects (whoosh, bang). At times, words may exhibit a unique type of iconic mapping known as phonesthesia. In phonesthemes, a similarity of form is correlated with a similarity of meaning. As for instance, in English, words ending in -ack (whack, crack) denote forceful, punctuated contact, while words beginning with gl- (glow, glitter) denote a meaning related to light of low intensity.

However primary imagic iconicity may seem, it continues to play a substantial role in language and particularly in literature. The imagic relation may be of an oral, aural (acoustic) or tactile type, or they may be of a visual type. The latter kind is especially prominent in playful and highly creative language use, for instance in poetry and advertising (Fischer and Nanny, 1999: xxii-xxiii). In one of many studies in the book, Max Nanny addresses visual iconicity and distinguishes between transparent, translucent and subliminal letter-

icons. The study investigates how single alphabetic letters ('I', 'C' and especially 'O'), which have always been seen to be merely conventional or 'symbolic' signs, have sometimes been used by mainstream authors since Shakespeare as imagic icons of objects (pillar, crescent, earth, sun, moon, star, eye, opening) or of concepts such as perfection and circularity.

## 6. Analysis

### a) Onomatopoeic Principle

Without doubt, expressing meaning via the sounds of the Quranic texts is by no means a coincidental happening, but in fact a mirroring of realistic experiences. For that reason, auditory iconicity is no stranger to the holy verses of the Quran. Therewith, regardless of whether the onomatopoeic words are lexical or non-lexical in structure they are surely direct phonological iconicity. The imitation of sounds by complying with phonotactic rules is clearly exhibited in: v3- فَنَادَوْا وَلَاتَ حِينَ مَنَاصٍ (and they cried out when it was no longer the time for escape!)

Here, the disbelievers sound a contrite cry. The way the Quran uses the word *wa laata* produces a panic-stricken feeling. The fused knot shaped Arabic letters لا (ل+أ) are indicators of the anguished no-cry. The three voiced sounds followed by a fourth voiceless reflect the loud heavy cry followed by the softness of silence as their cry

comes to a final plosive end, /t/. Besides, the /l/ sound in (وَلَاتَ) is a dark /l/, which confirms that the idiom (وَلَاتَ (حِينَ مَنَاصٍ) is a direct mapping of linguistic sound to non-linguistic sound. Hence, the darkness of /l/ is iconic of the distress accompanied by the cry, while keeping in accordance with Arabic phonotactic rules.

With a deeper examination, readers can certainly see why the first letter in the surah, and the inspiration behind its title, (ص) is a non-lexical case of direct phonological iconicity. Moreover, the fact that this spirant sound has been liberated from any diacritics makes it a pure case of onomatopoeia. Clearly, the relationship between the (base) letter (ص) and the meaning it conveys is evident from the letter's qualities - in terms of its sound, weight and other distinctive features. According to the etymology of Arabic letters (see Appendix D), it is one of the heaviest letters of the language; it is a heavy, thick, full-mouth letter. As a full letter, the tongue rises to the top of the mouth and embraces the palate during its pronunciation. The resulting feeling of intensity is a reminder and reflection of the extreme severity and mysterious meanings this letter embeds.

### **b) Sonority Sequencing Principle**

As a phonotactic principle, the SSP is present in the structure of numerous Quranic syllables. Keeping in mind that Arabic is one of those languages which possess syllables that violate the SSP. To begin with, the ranking of phones by amplitude is distinctly observed in the phonestheme (ص). When written in

Arabic capital letters (ص، ا، د), the phonetic transcription /sɑ:d/ distinctly shows the peak of sonority in the mid syllable long /ɑ:/ vowel, which is the most sonorous phone. It also abides to the sonority outline of CVC syllable cluster.

The occasionally reoccurring letter 'ha' (هـ، ا، هـ), as in (أَهْلَكْنَا), is capitalized as (هـ، ا، هـ). The long vowel in the middle is the sonority peak that rises to a feeling of emergency and fear. Even by looking at its pyramid shape, the letter 'ha' gives an impression of a deep, dark, mysterious letter. This is true since when pronounced, it comes from the deepest inside of one's self and heart, from deep inside the throat.

A clear violation to the SSP in Saad surah is the repeated holy name *Allah*, transcribed /'ælə/, /'ɑ:lə/, and /əl'la:/. With the unique syllable structure VCV, the word initiates and ends with strong sonority, i.e. both the onset and coda are much louder sounds, while the center of the syllable is in fact not the peak. According to the following sonority scale, from highest to lowest, the alveolar lateral /l/ may also be regarded among the more sonorous sound types.

[ɑ] > [e o] > [i u j w] > [r] > [l] > [m n ŋ] > [z v ð] > [f θ s] > [b d g] > [p t k]

Evidently, the singularity and uniqueness of Allah's name in Arabic (الله) is iconic in more than one way. In terms of the SSP, the entire syllable structure (onset, peak, and coda) is of high sonorous value, thus acting as an exception to the general rule of sonority hierarchy, which states that more



sonorous elements are internal (i.e., close to the syllable nucleus) and less sonorant elements are external. Over and above, all three sounds are voiced, which means greater vibration in the vocal cords. The unmistakable fact that Allah (SWT) is the unique, omnipotent, and only deity is reflected iconically in

the sonorous greatness of His holy name.

### c) Phonesthemes

For sure, the Arabs have a rich alphabet, with many letters sounding similar to each other. One has to study the art of Advanced Tajweed (recital) to appreciate the differences between the different letters.

د      ج      ب      ط      ق  
*daal   jeem   baa   tah   qaaf*

The five *qalqalah* letters in Arabic are perfect phonesthemes that unquestionably carry the meanings of shaking, disturbance and echo. They represent a perspicuous state of iconicity due to their unstable phonological nature, which puts them in a state of negative vibes, while keeping in mind that each one is unique in its own different way. This pattern is detected in the double (ق) in (وَشَقَّاقِ), since the place of articulation of the letter itself is not accurate giving it an extra meaning of dispersed and shaky nature. The unsettled (ق) is again encountered in v7 (أَخْتَلَقُ) where an iconic ground may be attested between content and form. Hence, these are hints to the presence of a deep correlation between phonology and psychology. What may be felt or experienced is not universal, of course, but it is far too common to ignore. Keeping in mind that although certain phonesthemes have a unique

meaning, it has been noticed that the same set with different permutations has an underlying connotation that is common to all permutations.

Other cases of ‘*sound suggestiveness*’ (in Bolinger’s terms, 1965) include the leading presence of the spirant fortis fricative (ص), which is definitely a sign of its greatness and endurance. Since the use of the fricative (ص) in the surah is employed effectively and conveys extra meaning, it is safe to say then that the iconic ground is motivated. According to the etymology table (see appendix B), Saad is known to carry the meaning of homogeneity and consistency. The covert treasure of meaning waiting to be discovered in this single phoneme phonestheme is proudly one of the luminaries guiding the light into the events and stories to be told in the surah. Saad (ص) is the 18th letter in the Arabic alphabet. Even though it is unique to Arabic language, it resembles the

voiceless /s/ sound in English but with velarization. As the title of the surah, (ص) has come to be mentioned 29 times throughout the 88 verses. The repeated use of this fricative sound does not necessarily determine the meaning of the words, rather it merely conveys extra meaning by supporting the meaning of the sign. Therefore, it is simply reflecting the meaning that is already there at the level of the utterance form. This is what is meant by secondary iconicity in language (see 2.4.2. Primary and Secondary Iconicity).

The other *qalqalah* letter worth observing is *jeem* (ج). This complex sound is undoubtedly rendered as iconic due to its complex articulatory nature. Its counterpart in English is the affricate sound /dʒ/, which is a combination of the plosive /d/ and fricative /ʒ/. Hence, its presence in the paradoxical words (جَنَّاتٍ) and (جَهَنَّمَ) is exophoric of the nature of these two places. Both heaven and hell are still a mystery to Man, they represent the hereafter, a place we

know little about and cannot describe in detail due to lack of experience. This complexity in reality is all reflected in this single unique sound which absorbs its vibe from its most intricate distinctive features.

One more prominent phonestheme that has incessantly surfaced in the first half of Saad surah, particularly at the end of most verses, is the submorphemic sound cluster (-اب). It begins with the upright first Arabic letter (أ) and ends with the second alphabet letter, the supine (ب). This case of phonaesthetic iconicity renders a “sensation of largeness” particularly in positive words, while the feeling of darkness circulates in negative words. Take for instance the asymmetrical pair: the temporary verb (أَنَابَ) and the progressive adjective (أَوَّابٌ), both of which reflect the same meaning except that the (و) in the latter is iconic of the continuity of repentance. Some of the many instances of its occurrence in words include:

	<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>
<b>Positive</b>	بِالْحَبَابِ الْمُخْرَابِ وَأَنَابِ	أَوَابِ الْوَهَابِ	الْأَلْبَابِ
<b>Negative</b>	عَذَابِ عِقَابِ كَذَابِ	عُجَابِ الْحِسَابِ	الْأَحْزَابِ
<b>Neutral</b>	مَّابِ الْخُطَابِ		الْأَسْبَابِ

Table 1: Distribution of (-اب) phonestheme

Whereas the second half of the surah noticeably exhibits the phonestheme (-ين) repeatedly, again mostly at the end of verses. These two spirant letters are in fact among the last letters of the Arabic alphabet, (ن) followed by two letters then the final

(ي). The fact that it is related to the meaning of “power and unity” is based on association with similar sound-meaning clusters in other words. Examples of the (-ين) sound cluster in some words include:

	<i>Adjectival Ns</i>	<i>Ns</i>	<i>Advs</i>
<b>Positive</b>	سَجِدِينَ الْمُخْلِصِينَ	طِبِينَ الَّذِينَ	
<b>Negative</b>	الْكَافِرِينَ الْمُنْكَافِرِينَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ		حِينَ
<b>Neutral</b>	الْعَالِينَ	أَجْمَعِينَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ	

Table 2: Distribution of (-ين) phonestheme

Likewise, the iconic qualities of initial consonant clusters are also worth looking at, such as for instance the (-ذْكَ) or vice versa (-كَذْ). The (ذْ) is a weak and soft letter. Therefore, in the positive sense it represents “humbleness and

submissiveness” internally. On the other hand, the negative words begin with (كْ), which is a weak and lighter in pronunciation, reflects the weakness of the disbelievers’ lies and allegations. The two letters (كْ)

and (ذ) are present at the beginning of the following words:

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>Positive</i>	الذَّكَرُ ذِكْرِي	ذِكْرٌ
<i>Negative</i>	كَذَابٌ	كَذَبَتْ
<i>Neutral</i>	وَأَذْكُرُ	

Table 3: Distribution of (-ذك-) and (-كذ-) phonesthemes

A possible connection between sound sequences and meaning may also be based on the qualitative aspects of sounds, namely in cases of *euphony* and *cacophony*. The former indicates those effects that are pleasant, rhythmical and harmonious, such as with nasal consonants (/m/, /n/) and the like (/l/, /r/, /y/). Whereas the latter consists of harsh, often discordant unpleasant sounds, which iconically help convey disorder through the combined effect of the meaning and the difficulty of pronunciation, such as with plosives (/p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/) and fricatives or affricates (/ʃ/, /tʃ/). Take, for instance, Solomon's confessions in v32 (إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبًّا (الْخَيْرِ) in contradistinction to Iblis's threatenings in v82 (فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَا غَوِيَنَّهُمْ (أَجْمَعِينَ). The aesthetic properties of the sounds used mirror the nature and characteristics of the speakers themselves.

#### d) Vowel Magnitude

It is a well-known aspect of phonological iconicity that often the letters of a word have qualities that reflect the way the letter is pronounced, and the meaning that the word conveys. If the letters are intense, for example, the meaning may have an aspect of intensity to it. According to Masuda (2002) this is a common instance of indirect phonological iconicity, generally known by the title "associative iconicity". The open back rounded vowel /ɑ:/ in (الْقُرْآن) /kɔ:r'ɑ:n/ is an indication of the largeness of the object it denotes. Moreover, the additional stretching effect of the *maddah* (مَدَّة), a tidal-like diacritic (ـَ), which can appear mostly on top of an *alif* (ا) and indicates a glottal stop /ʔ/ followed by a long /ɑ:/ indicating an extra-long vowel, gives a hint of the great glory and many virtues of this holy book. Hence, it stops

readers and allows them to think and ponder over its divine words.

The sacred name of Allah (الله) is a special case of iconicity at many levels, especially in terms of vowel magnitude. In order to pronounce the word *Allah* correctly, one has to focus on the second “l” (ل) in *Allah* (الله). When the word *Allah* is preceded by the vowel “a” (فَتْحَة) or the vowel “u” (ضَمَّة), then the *Lam* is pronounced in a distinct heavy manner, in Arabic known as *Tafkhīm* (تَفْخِيم). This heavy *Lam*, termed dark /l/ in English, is thus articulated with the entire body of the tongue rather than its tip alone. For example, v65 (وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ) which means: *and there is no God but Allah*. If, however, the preceding vowel is “i” (كَسْرَة), then the *Lam* in *Allah* is light, such as in the *Basmala* (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ). Hence, when saying “Bismillahi”, one should not pronounce the *Lam* with a heavy emphasis, but instead, just with the tip of the tongue. Thus, the difference between the two /l/ allophones is traced back to preceding vowel magnitude. The heavy or dark /l/ is iconic of Allah’s greatness, power, and majesty. Whereas, the light /l/ allophone mirrors Allah’s most famous and frequently used traits: “the Merciful” (الرَّحْمَن) and “the Compassionate” (الرَّحِيم).

The conceptualization of an iconic ground between sound and object is visible in the recurring word (الذِّكْر). The sukūn (سكون), a circle-shaped diacritic placed above a letter, which indicates that the consonant to which it is attached is not followed by a vowel, reflects the admonition and silent warnings that may come from reminding us of the stories of prophets. Moreover, at the kinesthetic level the syllable final (ر) sound may be associated with rapid movement such as continuous remembering and reminders.

#### e) Haplology, Malapropism, and Spoonerism

In phonetics, sound change in words, whether mistaken or intentional, is not something new but is in fact frequently encountered under different headings. To begin with, *haplology* is a type of dissimilation, where there is a sound change involving the loss of a syllable when it is next to a phonetically identical (or similar) syllable. One example from Saad surah is the word (قَطْنَا) in v16, where the word (قَط) is a reduction of (قَسَط) or (قَطْعَة). وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ لَنَا قَطْنَآ قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (They say: Our Lord! Hasten on for us our fate before the Day of Reckoning.)

The reverse process is known as *dittology*, where an accidental or conventionalized repetition of a syllable takes place, as is the case of

(نَشِطَط) in v22. Here, it is observed that the final consonant (ط) is doubled. Turning to *malapropism*, it refers to the use of an incorrect word in place of a word with a similar sound, and likewise, *spoonerism* is an error in speech in which corresponding consonants, vowels, or morphemes are switched between two words in a phrase. Since the language of the Quran is holy and divine, it does not use such tools for nonsensical or humorous effects. But may metaphorically play on words, to convey a deeper meaning or to be understood in more than one reading. Even more, it may be a way of iconically conveying meaning through highly sophisticated word pun. In v52, the word (أَتْرَابٌ) is a clever use of malapropism to refer to wives as companions in such terminology. Spoonerism is possibly a case in v38, where iconicity maintains the nature of disobedience in devils, despite their many duties with helping Prophet Solomon.

v52- وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَصِيرَاتٌ الْطَّرَفِ أَتْرَابٌ (And with them are those of modest gaze, companions.)

v38- وَءَاخَرِينَ مُفَرَّجِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ (And others linked together in chains,)

#### **f) Stress, Intonation, and Rhythm**

A. J. Arberry, a famous orientalist, comments on his personal experience with the rhythm of the Quran: "Whenever I hear the Quran chanted, it is as though I am

listening to Music, underneath the flowing melody there is sounding... insistent beat of a drum, it is like the beating of my heart" (1955). Truly, experiencing Quranic discourse with considerable detail is a mesmerizing and hypnotic sensation that allows one to detect the different phonological and rhythmic features of the text. Strangely, Arabs are closer to music than anything else. Why is that? It is since Arabic language is characterized by romance and elegance. Hence, iconicity is most visible through music and likewise, music beautifully embodies iconicity

The utilization of sounds in the Quran decidedly plays a rhetorical role. Sounds in the Quran are employed to increase the effect of its message. The Arabic language has many words for a single meaning, but yet the Quran selects and arranges the words to portray the intended meaning in addition to create sounds to conform to the image, scene and message the book conveys. This is not only done by selecting the right words but also arranging them in a specific way to develop sounds and rhythms. Just by touching upon a few simple examples, it can be seen why Pickthall (1930), a Western Islamic scholar noted for his English translation of the Quran, was lead to believe that the Quran had an

“inimitable symphony”, a cover term for “the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy.”

The usage of certain sounds in Saad surah plays a construal role coated by iconicity. The inimitable symphony present between the lines, as well as thrive of sounds from one word to another, stir cursory meaning in order to convey hidden, yet iconic, messages. In terms of assonance, there is an iconic ground between the increase of assonance in the sequence of verses and the growing momentum of events and stories in Saad surah. One example is noticed in verses 71 to 88, which tell the story of Iblis and his defiance to Allah’s orders. Comparably, in the case of alliteration, an iconic rendering of the smoothness of the whole story of the ewes is detected in v23 until v25.

As is clearly shown through these instances, sounds in the Quran are employed to increase the effect of meanings and messages. The Quran selects and arranges the words to create sounds that conform to the scene and image this holy book conveys. Selecting the right words and arranging them in a specific way surely hints at developing sounds and rhythms.

#### g) Visual Imagic Iconicity

What is fascinating about Arabic language is that even the shapes of the letters have a related connection

with their meanings. As the title of the surah, the Quranic initials (ص) may influence the structure and meaning of the surah itself through a perceived iconic relation between the two. Saad (ص), a letter which carries the etymological meaning of solid or full (i.e. *Siraat* is a path which is wide and fully straight), has a supine shape. From the perspective of iconicity, this clearly indicates the deep sorrow, anguish, and affliction correlated with the Prophet Mohammed and his family, particularly his grandson, Imam Hussein. The fullness and completeness motivated by the letter Saad may also represent the virtue of patience, which was clearly a symbol of Imam Hussein. The patience he exemplified in his last battle was the completion of his faith. For that reason, it is no wonder readers can certainly see why Quranic discourse is of unique nature conjuring up such powerful images destined to reside in one’s memory.

Notably, v5 ends with the noun (عُجَاب), a word debatable by the disbelievers of its Arabic origin. So why the choice of (عُجَاب) instead of (عجيب)? From the perspective of imagic iconicity, the former conveys a bigger size of astonishment and bewilderment just by looking at it. Likewise, the binominals (نار/طين) are clearly visually iconic. It is easy

to visualize the flames escalating and plunging back in the letters (ن، ا، ر) whose sonority peak /ɑ:/ is produced with continuous, non-turbulent airflow in the vocal tract. In addition, the shapes of the letters (ط، ن، ي) have a related connection with their meaning since all three are spirant letters. Their stumpy nature is identical to the flat and low shape of mud, from which humans have been created. With the high front vowel /i:/ at the sonority peak, it is obvious that Allah has preferred the element of *mud* over *fire* in his creation of humans.

A prominent example of endophoric iconicity at work is apparent in v65 (إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ), where there exists an intralinguistic resemblance between linguistic structures. Notice how the visual patterning of the three words (ten letters) is reflective of the oneness of Allah (1). All the letters are perpendicular in shape, hence denoting the zenith or the highest point of authority and power (Allah). Not a single letter in the word (اللَّهُ) is supine and one is supportive of the other, i.e., firmly grasped together. That is a true image of the glory of Allah (SWT).

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمَا مِنَّ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَجْدُ -v65  
الْقَهَّارُ

A further case to be considered is the iconic use of the visual length of the verses in Saad surah. This typographic aspect is analyzed in

order to assess the iconic functions of verse length, which varies from short (12 verses), to medium (71 verses), to long (5 verses). The visually long lines, as iconic images, are surely a reference to length, distance, and vastness. By contrast, visually short lines may function as an iconic image of smallness, narrowness, or contraction. If we analyze the contrast between short and long lines, it shows how they may function diagrammatically. Hence, the shorter may have a sense of hidden or shrunken meaning waiting to be discovered through deep contemplation, whereas the longer ones mirror the lengthy events or advice that needs time and patience in order to achieve.

#### **h) Tactile Imagic Iconicity**

At times, it may seem that certain sounds, morphemes, or even whole words have a psychological effect on readers. Otherwise referring to a correlation with sensory experience. This is particularly true in terms of Quranic discourse, which has no equivalent whatsoever. A special vibe is present in this unique language, which has a drawing of its own that has not been replicated until now. At times described as music and melody to the ear, hence, when recited, the Quran arouses a certain feeling, sensation, taste, aroma, vision, or even perception. Naturally, this is part of the



aesthetic, artistic, and creative use of Quranic language.

Truly, some sounds or words are light on the ear and tasteful in pronunciation, while others embed a sensation of heaviness and gloom. The antonyms (كفروا/امنوا), once analyzed in terms of their phonological features are clear indicators of iconicity on the scene. A plosive, velar, back /k/ is juxtaposed with the nasal, bilabial, front consonant /m/. Hence, the believers are ahead of the disbelievers who are destined to face a tragic end doomed in hell for eternity. The feeling of relief and happiness crosses one's mind when hearing (امنوا), while the reverse is aroused when hearing (كفروا). The sensation of pain and hatred is emitted and experienced simultaneously. Moreover, on the level of tactile imagic iconicity, there is a paradoxical difference between the (ر) and (ف) sound in (كفروا) and the (م) and (ن) sound in (امنوا). In terms of production and reception, the former liquid trill /r/ sound is phonologically suggestive of instability due to the shakiness of the tongue. Contrariwise, the latter nasal /m/ sound is firmly stabilized and resolute in terms of tongue movement. Hence, disbelievers are characterized as unwilling, hesitant, and reluctant, whereas the believers are known for their strong, firm, and

rooted belief in Allah and his messengers. This tactile analysis is iconic for two reasons, firstly since the observed similarity (iconic ground) adds extra meaning to the utterance, and secondly since the similarity determines the interpretation of the linguistic structure.

The qalqala letter (ط) in the word (طين) is iconic of human nature which is unstable and continuously changing. Hence, sounds too may emit sensations that may be hints to the actual meaning. Notice that the zealous and passionate reading of the first verse is again repeated in the final two verses as a motivator and reminder of the magnitude lessons one may inherit from reading the Quran and pondering over its words. Amazingly, v69 (مَا كَانَ لِي مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَأِ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ) is certainly a checkpoint. It embeds a sensation of serene divinity due to the prophet's declaration of evidence for his prophethood.

Another matter that needs to be highlighted is the fact that Arabic encompasses several special sounds that are rarely present in other languages. One such letter is *Dād* (ض), which is an extremely unusual sound exclusive to Arabic language only, for that reason it has been named the '*language of the dād*' by early Arab grammarians. Through one of those fortuities, *dād* (ض) is in

name and shape a variant of *ṣād* (ص) except for an additional diacritic dot. It may represent a pharyngealized voiced alveolar stop [dʕ], pharyngealized voiced dental stop [dʕʰ], or velarized voiced dental stop [dʕˤ]. Articulated between the first part of the side of the tongue and the adjoining molars, *ḍād* is pronounced emphatically with a plosive nature to it. Iconically, its strangeness is mirrored in the fact that it has been mentioned only 17 times altogether in the 88 verses of Saad surah, which is a scarce amount, in words such as (ضِعْثًا فَاضْرِبْ), (أَرْكُضْ), and (الْأَرْضِ). As one of the heaviest letters of the language, *ḍād* is a fat, thick, full-mouth letter, which emits the meaning of property and Earth. Hence, since it is perceived as an imagic similarity between linguistic form and extralinguistic reality, *ḍād* may be labelled as iconically motivated in Saad surah.

### i) Iconicity of Symmetry

Also included under the shelter of imagic iconicity is the visual depiction of linguistic symmetry. Nöth (2001: 23) states, “The most general model of iconicity in language is symmetry in its broader geometrical sense”. Accordingly, three main types of symmetry can be distinguished, namely *mirror symmetry*, *translative symmetry*, and *antisymmetry*. Nöth explains the three types briefly claiming, “mirror

symmetry, the symmetry which we find between lowercase **p** and **q**, translative symmetry, which is the symmetry of mere repetition (**p p p...**) and antisymmetry, which is a symmetry of two forms which differ with respect to one striking feature, as for example a black **p** and a white **p**, or a black **p** and a white **q**” (ibid). At the morphosyntactic level, iconicity of symmetry is swiftly illustrated in the verses of Saad surah. As the first type, mirror symmetry occurs in rhetorical figures such as *chiasmus*, the reversal of grammatical structures in successive phrases or clauses – but no repetition of words (Corbett & Connors, 1999: 74), or *anadiplosis*, the repetition of the last word of a preceding clause (Corbett, 1971). A case in point is v83 (قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَقُّ أَقُولُ). Whereas, parallelisms, reduplicative word formations, and mere repetitions are undoubtedly genuine instances of translative symmetry. There is repetition of (حُسْنٌ مَّأَبٍ) in v40 and v49, (أَنَابَ) in v24 and v34, as well as (إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ) in v17 and v30, any many more similar repetitions of verse endings.

Antisymmetry is apparent in the endings of the subsequent verses 5 (هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُّ) and 6 (هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ), as well as verses 49 (لَحُسْنٌ مَّأَبٍ) and 55 (لَشَرٌّ مَّأَبٍ). Furthermore, Iblis's words in v76 (خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَّارٍ) vs. (خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ) are regarded iconically

antisymmetrical. Noting that in all three examples the discrepancy is between positive and negative. Furthermore, antisymmetry is best illustrated by pairs of opposites, as for example heaven or hell ( جَنَّتِ ) and Job's sadness or

happiness clearly envisioned in v41 ( وَأَذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسْنِي ) (الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ ) and v43 ( وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ ) أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذَكَرَىٰ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ).

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## الملخص

حدود الايقونات الصوتية للتداخل مع الايقونات الصرفية كلما كانت هناك ضرورة للتفاعل بين العمليات الصرفية والصوتية. وبالرغم من درجات التفاوت والاختلاف بين هذه الضواهر إلا انها متشابهة بتقنيدها للاعتباطية. يقدم القرآن الكريم، باعتباره أرقى أعمال الأدب العربي الكلاسيكي، بداية رائعة لدراسة لغوية حول مظهر وشكل وتمثيل الأيقونات الصوتية في اللغة العربية. تستعين تحليلات الدراسة بنموذج ناني وفشر (1999) للايقونات التصويرية (imagic iconicity) وذلك لابرار خصائص الايقونات الصوتية في سورة ص المباركة. وتبدأ عملية استكشاف المبادئ الايقونات من الوحدة الصوتية الى الصرفية ختاماً بالسّمات البصرية واللمسية والإيقاعية. في تقديم لمحة شاملة عن مفهوم واهمية الايقونات التصويرية في سورة ص المباركة، تتحدى الدراسة التقيد الساذج للأيقونات إلى مجرد المحاكاة الصوتية، وكذلك الشهادة على الأسس السيميائية للأيقونات في اللغة القرآنية.

يتناول البحث الحالي موضوع الايقونات، والذي يعتبر من المواضيع الجدلية ذات الاهتمام الواسع في علم اللغة، والذي لا يزال قادراً على احتلال صفحات الباحثين الراغبين في إجراء مزيد من التحقيق في هذه الظاهرة المتداخلة بين التخصصات. هذا البحث هو واحد من العديد من المحاولات التي تؤيد فكرة كون الأيقونات هي إحدى الإجابات المحتملة للتساؤلات عن علاقة اللغة بالواقع. ولهذا السبب، فإن مسعى الدراسة الجارية هو تقديم أدلة نصية لغوية لوجود الايقونات كعملية لغوية في القرآن الكريم. ان ابعاد الايقونات على المستوى التصويري، من الناحية البصرية والسمعية واللمسية، متضمن في الايات الـ(88) من سورة ص. تستخدم الدراسة مفهوم الايقونات الصوتية كمصطلح شامل لمجموعة واسعة من الظواهر، بما في ذلك ما يُشار إليه بالرمز الصوتي (sound-) (symbolism)، والمحاكاة (mimetics)، والأيدئوفونات (ideophones)، والفونوسثيمات (phonesthemes)، والمحاكاة الصوتية (onomatopoeia). وبذلك تتعدى الدراسة