

PHONETIC VALUE IN THE WORK *DURRAT AL-GHAWWĀS FĪ AWHĀM AL-KHAWĀṢ*

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DOI: 10.2478/saec-2026-0009

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Abstract: The goal of this research project is to investigate phonetics in the context of Qāṣīm ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥarīrī’s major work, *Durrat al-Ghawwās fī Awhām al-Khawāṣ*. This very important Arabic work deals with the study of Arabic prosody and phonetic accuracy, but it also focuses on correctly pronouncing words. Additionally, this Arabic text addresses the phonetic errors that educated Arabic speakers and writers commonly make. Al-Ḥarīrī’s perspective of language is that language operates as a system (of sounds) that convey meaning through their organization. Consequently, in this article, we will analyse and investigate the phonetic features and sound-based distinctions found in al-Ḥarīrī’s work to demonstrate how he viewed sound and meaning. Additionally, the study compares in contrast al-Ḥarīrī’s findings regarding the relationship between sound and meaning with the findings of contemporary linguists, especially those who study how sounds interact semantically with language.

Keywords: *Phonetic Meaning; Arabic Prosody; Classical Arabic Linguistics; Semantic Analysis; Al-Ḥarīrī;*

Introduction

Phonetic meaning has long been viewed as a key aspect of Arabic language science because it reveals how closely the phonetic structure of a word relates to its semantic interpretation (i.e., how the meaning of a word relates to the sound of the word). Arab linguists recognized that meaning was not just due to the lexical and grammatical structures of words but also due to the qualities of the sounds produced when speaking, how the sounds are arranged, and how they are spoken

or performed. Because of this understanding, they developed many techniques to better understand how phonemes, syllables, vowel markings, stress, intonation, and pauses can affect a listener's understanding of a word's meaning and reduce ambiguity. Numerous works exist in this area, including *Durrat al-Ghawwās fī Awhām al-Khawāṣ* written by al-Ḥarīrī, which represent the most developed stage of phonetic meaning studies and combine descriptive detail with prescriptive or normative instruction. This section will define phonetic meaning, describe its origins in Arab Linguistics, and illustrate that all the manifestations of phonetics in both segmental (i.e., those at the level of a single phoneme) and suprasegmental (i.e., those above the segmental level) aspects of language provide evidence that sound carries meaning.

The Concept of Phonetic Meaning

Ibn Jinnī refers to it as a verbal meaning, Ibn-Jinni (1956, 98) which is derived from the nature of certain sounds that make up a word, known as the primary phonetic elements (Ibrahim 1980, 46). It is also realized through the manner of articulation accompanying the speech process and the manifestations of this performance (Okasha 2005 18-19). Some researchers believe that phonetic meaning results from changing the phonemes in their positions; that is, by using substitutive correspondences between words, where replacing one phoneme with another necessarily leads to a change in meaning.

Accordingly, phonetic meaning refers to what is suggested by the specific characteristics of certain sounds that make up a semantic unit, or the intonations that spoken language undergoes depending on the requirements of the discourse situation. In the Arab heritage, it manifests through scholars' exploration of the relationship between word and meaning and the issue of their appropriateness. One of the first to notice this correspondence was al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 175 AH), who said: *"The locust chirps a shrill sound, and the cicada chirps a different kind of shrillness. The door creaks, and every similar sound is a shrill noise if extended; if it involves softening and repetition in its articulation, it is intensified, as in saying: the cicada chirps in its own way."* (Al-Khalil ; Ibn-Jinni 1956)

Ibn Jinnī followed this approach, saying: *"Since verbs indicate meanings, they repeated the strongest ones and made them a sign of the strength of the meaning they convey, and they considered their segmentation in forms like 'ṣarṣar' and 'ḥaqḥaq' as evidence of their segmentation."* (Ibn-Jinni 1956).

Similarly, Ibn Fāris, in his books *al-Ṣāḥibī* and *Maqāyīs al-Lughā*, discussed some aspects of phonetic meaning. He pointed out the phenomenon of linguistic substitution ('ibdāl) and emphasized that it is a consistent rule among the Arabs, saying: *"Among the customs of the Arabs is the substitution of letters and the placement of some in the position of others. For example, they say: 'madḥahu' and 'madhhahu,' and 'faras rafal' and 'rafan,' which is very common and has been extensively written about by scholars."* (Faris 1997).

The study of this type of meaning was not limited to the Arabs. Many Western linguists who adopted this approach, such as Humboldt and Jespersen, also acknowledged it, with the latter referring to this phenomenon as the symbolism of words (Al-Nu‘aymi 1980).

Its Manifestations

There is no doubt that sound has a significant impact on conveying meaning, and the more accurately sounds are pronounced, the easier it is to understand the intended meaning without confusion or ambiguity. Accordingly, modern linguists have studied phonetic meaning from two perspectives:

Abstract sounds, which focus on the characteristics of the sounds and their points of articulation, including vowels and diacritical marks.

Shaped or fully articulated sounds, which focus on phenomena such as stress, intonation, pauses, and other prosodic features.

Segmental Phonemes

A. Phoneme Meaning (Sound): A sound is the smallest meaningful unit into which a sequence of expression can be divided, such as *kāf*, *tā’*, and *bā’* in the word “*kataba*”, which represent the primary sounds that make up the semantic unit. It has become clear that there is a natural correspondence in many words between the sound and the meaning carried by the word through its signification. Indeed, speakers distinguished between closely related meanings by changing one letter of a word to reflect the closeness of both the word and the meaning. For example, they distinguished between salty water, which is only drinkable in necessity (*sharūb*), and water that is normally drinkable (*sharīb*) (Ibn Binin 1985).

As for al-Durra’s study of this type of phonetic meaning, its forms are multiple, including:

Phonetic Substitution:

Phonetic substitution gives words specific meanings depending on the qualities carried by the sound. Regarding this phenomenon in language, al-Suyūfī says: “*Observe the marvelous correspondence of words to their meanings, and how the Arabs distinguished between these related words with similar meanings: they assigned the weakest, softest, quietest, easiest, and most whispered letters to what is lesser, smaller, or weaker in action or sound, and assigned the strongest, hardest, most prominent, and loudest letters to what is stronger in action and greater in perception.*” (Al-Suyuti, 53)

Examples of this include:

The Meaning of Tā’ and Dāl:

Al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516 AH) distinguished between the words “*al-qadd*” and “*al-qattī*”. Although both refer to cutting, *al-qadd* refers to cutting something

lengthwise, while *al-qatt* refers to cutting it crosswise (al-Hariri 2009, 19). This is because the letter *ṭā* is more constricted and faster in sound than *dāl*, making it suitable to imitate cutting across due to its closeness and breadth, whereas *dāl* conveys slowness, appropriate for cutting lengthwise (Hadi 2008, 35).

– **The Meaning of *Kāf* and *Jīm*:** It is mentioned in the Qur’ān: “*Indeed, the hypocrites are in the lowest depths of the Fire*” (al-Nisā’ 4:145). The Arabs referred to what is ascended as *daraj* (steps, degrees) and what is descended as *dark* (depths). This distinction may be due to the voiced quality of the letter *jīm*, which evokes a sense of elevation and loftiness, and the voiceless quality of *kāf*, which corresponds to humility and lowliness. From this comes the traditional saying: “*Paradise has daraj (degrees), and Hell has darkāt (depths)*”, highlighting the stark difference between the two states.

– **The Meaning of *Sīn* and *Shīn*:** Al-Ḥarīrī also distinguished between “*al-nahsh*” and “*al-nahs*”, assigning the first to denote actions performed with the molars and the second for actions performed with the front teeth. If we examine the articulation of *shīn*, we find that it is closer to the molars than the front teeth, unlike *sīn*, which modern linguists describe as dental. Doesn’t this reflect a kind of phonetic imitation of meaning? It seems that the Arabs chose the letter closest to the object referred to in order to convey meaning more precisely. The spreading characteristic of *shīn* further aided this, transferring the imitation from the teeth to the adjacent molars.

This is also seen in al-Ḥarīrī’s objection to someone who said: “*the misfortunes followed so-and-so*”, where he preferred it to be expressed as “*tataayu’at*”. His point was that “*followed*” (*tatābu*) applies to good deeds, whereas “*tataayu*” applies to evil or misdeeds.

Other examples in this category include the words “*al-maghṣ*” and “*al-maṣṣ*”.

B. Metathesis (Spatial Transposition): Metathesis is one of the changes that affect a sound. It is the process of swapping the positions of two sounds within a single word (Al-Shaib 2004, 462), through which the speaker aims to achieve phonetic harmony, ease of articulation, and economy of effort (Al-Shaib 2004, 110). According to some researchers, this reordering of sounds occurs because the original sequence is difficult to pronounce or perceive according to linguistic intuition (Brockelmann 1977, 462).

Examples of metathesis in *al-Durra* include the words “*taghashmar*” and “*taghashram*”. Upon closer examination, the second word contains a certain heaviness in pronunciation, resulting from the dissonance between its letters: the dental-labial voiceless *tā*, the pharyngeal voiced *ghayn*, the soft guttural voiceless *shīn*, and the voiced alveolar trill *rā*. This may have led some scholars to search for a sound that reduces the harshness of this dissonance, which is the *mīm* - a voiced, bilabial, intermediate sound - while keeping the other letters despite their dissonance. This can be seen as an artistic dissonance, imitating the sense of strength, intensity, and anger conveyed by the word (Al-Abd 1988, 19).

Other examples of metathesis include “ya’s” / “ayis” and “jadhb” / “jabdh”, which are widely cited in linguistic texts.

The Meaning of Vowel Marks (Harakah): The vowel marks referred to here are those that accompany the sounds of a word (vowel points), also known as the diacritical marks or vowelization. The Arabs relied on them in many contexts to distinguish between words that are otherwise identical and meanings that are closely related, due to their significant effect on conveying meaning, as explained by al-Ḥarīrī.

Distinguishing the Meaning of Derived Forms:

This is illustrated in al-Ḥarīrī’s distinction between the words “mirwāḥa” (on the pattern *mif‘ala*) and “marwāḥa” (on the pattern *maf‘ala*). The first denotes something that swings back and forth, while the second denotes a place with abundant wind.

Similarly, “ghasla” (on the pattern *fi‘la*, with a fatḥa on the ghayn) refers to a single instance of washing, whereas “al-ghasla” (on the pattern *fi‘la*, with a kasra on the ghayn) refers to the act or substance of washing.

Another example following this principle, where the vowel serves as a distinguishing feature, is “al-bishāra”:

- With a *kasra* on the *bā’*, it refers to that which one is informed of (good tidings).
- With a *ḍamma* on the *bā’*, it refers to a right or entitlement given.
- With a *fatḥa* on the *bā’*, it refers to beauty.

The forms of **al-bishāra** with *ḍamma*, *fatḥa*, or *kasra* on the *bā’* can also be grouped into what the Arabs historically called “triangular patterns”, where three words share the same morphological form and letters but differ in meaning due to the change in the vowel of the second root letter (*fā’*).

Al-Ḥarīrī did not limit himself to these words alone; he also elaborated on other meanings. For example, the word “as-sadād”: with a *fatḥa* on the *sīn*, it signifies intention in religion or the right path, while with a *kasra*, it means what is used for filling or plugging. Similarly, “al-‘arr”: with a *fatḥa*, it denotes scabies, while with a *ḍamma*, it refers to sores that appear on the lips and legs of camels.

If the vowel marks were omitted in these words, their meanings would become ambiguous and unified, losing the distinctions they convey.

Imitation of the Expressed Event: Al-Ḥarīrī mentions this type of meaning in the formation “fa‘lān” with *fatḥa* on the *fā’* and *‘ain*, which is specifically associated with movement and disturbance, as in words like *al-wakhdān*, *al-dhamlān*, *al-lam‘ān*, *al-ḍarbān*, etc. These words fall under phonetic imitation (onomatopoeia). Although they are difficult to explain, the sequence of fatḥas in their forms allows us to perceive the sense of disorder and instability they convey.

Variation in Attributes:

An example from al-Ḥarīrī is the use of “shu’m” when someone becomes ill-fated, and “sha’am aṣḥābihi” when misfortune affects their companions. Conversely, they say “yamin” when someone becomes fortunate, and “yaman aṣḥābihi” when their fortune extends to others. It seems that the *fatha* in these examples indicates the strength of the attribute’s attachment to its possessor, to the extent that it can extend or affect others.

Indicating the Abstract and the Material: Take the word “mīl”, pronounced with a *fatha* on the *yā’* versus with a *sukūn*. The first form denotes something abstract, such as inclination or tendency - for example: “*So-and-so was known for his inclination toward reading travel literature.*” The second form refers to something perceptible or material, as in: “*The wall clearly leans (mīlah).*”

A similar example is “al-wasat”: with a *sukūn* on the *sīn*, it functions as a spatial adverb replacing “*between*”, while with a *fatha*, it denotes a noun that is subject to grammatical case inflection.

Another example is the word “al-khalf”: when pronounced with a *sukūn* on the *lām*, it refers to the righteous, while with a *fatha*, it refers to the wicked. Isn’t it the vowel mark that shifts the meaning to its opposite?

Indicating Agency and Objectivity: The Qur’ān says: “*With a thousand angels in successive ranks*” (al-Muddaththir 74:31).

- Those who read the word with a *kasra* on the *dāl* intended it to mean “successive in number” - referring to those performing the action (agents).
- Those who read it with a *fatha* intended it to mean “accompanying others in support” - referring to those on whom the action is performed (patients or recipients).

Thus, the first form indicates the doer of the action, while the second indicates the one affected by the action.

A.2 Suprasegmental Phonemes

A. Syllable Meaning: The syllable is defined by Hassan as “expressions of an organized pattern of analytical units or chest pulses during speech, or syntactic units, or specific shapes and quantities.” It is larger than a phoneme and takes various forms (Ahmad 1991, 282).

Syllable Types in Arabic:

Linguists divide syllables into three basic types:

- Short syllable (C V), e.g., a *kasra*-marked *lām* (Muhammad 2008, 67).
- Medium open syllable (C V V), e.g., *lā*.
- Medium open syllable (C V C), e.g., *lan*.

- There are also **two syllables in pause position**:
- Long closed syllable with one consonant (C V V C), e.g., *bāb*.
- Long closed syllable with two consonants (C V C C), e.g., *fahd*.

Some linguists also add another type, the short closed syllable (V C), which they associate with the definite article “al-”.

This syllable differs from the phoneme in that it is a complex sound consisting of both a consonant and a vowel, and it plays a significant role in emphasizing the stress - whether in a word or in a sentence. In Durra, many examples appear in which differences in syllables lead to the attainment of varying meanings, among which we mention:

– **Determining the semantic value of a single syllable:** An example of this is the meaning of the letter *tā*’ in “ham fa’alta” and “ham kharajta,” where it indicates the addressee. In another context: “They say to a man who has neglected his matter and is now trying to correct it after the opportunity has passed: *as-sayf ḍayya’ta al-laban* (with *tā*’ pronounced with *fatha*).” The correct form is to address him with the *tā*’ pronounced with *kasra*, even if he is masculine, because it is a proverb - and proverbs are preserved in the original form in which they were composed and initially established. This proverb was originally formulated with the *tā*’ in *kasra* to address a female.

Isn’t the syllable itself what clarifies these meanings?

Similarly, the length or shortness of a syllable affects the meanings of words, such as *qatala* (he killed) and *qātil* (killer). The first word consists of (C V + C V + C V), while the second consists of (C V V + C V). Thus, the length of the syllable in *qātil* indicates the active participle and distinguishes it from the verb *qatala*, which is marked by the shorter syllable. Likewise, syllable length can indicate exaggeration in meaning, as in *ṣabūr* (very patient) and *shakūr* (very grateful), achieved by prolonging the vowel in an unusual way. Therefore, the syllable plays a role in highlighting semantic meaning.

B. The Meaning of Stress:

Stress refers to the force of breath with which a sound or syllable is pronounced, since sounds and syllables are articulated with varying degrees of intensity. Ibrahim Anis defines it as the intensity or loudness of a sound, which depends on the amount of air expelled from the lungs and has no relation to pitch or musical tone.

Accordingly, stress requires additional effort when pronouncing certain syllables compared to others. It is known by many terms, including: *hamza* (glottal accent), *uluww* (height), *irtafa’* (raising), *raf’* (elevation), prolongation of movements and support, *ishba’* (fullness), elongation, tension, and strengthening (Abd al-Jalil 1997, 113).

Stress is realized through the syllables that make up a semantic unit, whether independent or in composition. Based on this, it is divided into two types: the stress of the word, and the stress of the sentence.

Word Stress: It is also known as *morphological stress* or *form stress*. It occurs on one syllable of a word at varying degrees compared to the other syllables. This can be observed in the patterns of *Af'ālīl* (metrical forms) mentioned by Al-Hariri, such as *fā'il*, *fa'ūl*, *maf'āl*, *maf'al*, and so on.

The structure of *fā'il* has its stress on the first syllable, *fā* (C V V), to highlight the form's construction, and all words following this pattern also place stress on their first syllable corresponding to the *fā'* of *fā'il*, such as *qātil* (killer) and *dārib* (hitter). In the pattern *fa'ūl*, stress falls on the *'ayn* (the second consonant) in words like *shakūr* (very grateful) and *ṣabūr* (very patient) to indicate the intensive or exaggerated form.

Stress plays a major role in emphasizing a word's meaning and determining the function of each of its syllables. This is evident in Al-Hariri's objection to expressions like *kullā al-rajulayn kharajā* ("both men went out") and *kullatā al-mar'atayn ḥaḍaratā* ("both women attended"). In these words (*kharajā* and *ḥaḍaratā*), the *alif* indicates duality. Isn't it the stress that clarifies this *alif*? Without it, one would not be able to perceive it and question its proper pronunciation.

Another function of stress is to differentiate between the meanings of words, as in the case of *āwah* (an exclamation of pain). Al-Hariri criticizes those who pronounce it as *awwaha*, insisting that the middle syllable of the word should not be stressed. Rather, the stress should fall on the first syllable, pronounced as *'awh* with the *hā'* in *kasra*, *ḍamma*, or *fatha* - *kasra* being the most common.

Here, we can also infer another phonetic meaning: the significance of the *alif* (a glottal sound), which, through its deep articulation, conveys the intensity of internal pain.

Sentence Stress: Some call this *contextual* or *semantic stress*, which occurs on the sentence rather than on individual words and can fall on any syllable within the speech unit.

One of the functions of semantic stress is to clarify the meaning of sentences and indicate the intended sense in the absence of grammatical markers, as in the phrase: "*Bikam thawbuka maṣbūgh*" ("How much is your dyed garment?"). When pausing on it in a neutral tone, if no specific syllable is stressed, the listener may be confused about whether the question concerns the price of the garment itself or the price of the dye. However, if the syllable corresponding to the intended meaning is stressed, the listener immediately understands the speaker's intended question.

Stress also has the ability to emphasize certain key words in declarative or directive sentences. For example, in someone saying "*Iyyāk wa-l-asad*" ("Beware of the lion"), the stress falls on "*Iyyāk*" to highlight its meaning of warning. This does not apply universally to all sentences; in some cases, another word may be stressed to focus attention on it. For instance, if someone asks about the cause of a person's illness and you respond, "*Al-'aqrab las'atuhu*" ("The scorpion stung him"), the stress falls on "*al-'aqrab*" because a scorpion sting is venomous and dangerous. Merely mentioning it immediately conveys the danger. We also know that stings are not exclusive to scorpions - they can come from other creatures like bees - so if you said "*las'atuhu al-'aqrab*", your answer would be less impactful.

Another function of stress is to highlight certain particles in sentences, such as negation or interrogative markers. For example, if someone asks about a person and you answer, “*Ma ra ’aytuhu mundhu al-ams*” (“I have not seen him since yesterday”), the stress falls on the *mīm* of *ma* to emphasize the negation.

C. The Meaning of Intonation:

Intonation refers to the rise and fall of the voice during speech and is also called the “music of speech.” There are two types of variations in voice pitch (*voice*) that can be distinguished:

Tone: This operates at the word level, where differences in pitch serve a distinguishing function.

Intonation: This operates at the sentence level, where variations in pitch distinguish the structure or type of the sentence. For instance, the intonation that accompanies a declarative sentence is clearly different from that which accompanies an interrogative sentence.

Accordingly, both the speaker and the listener must understand the technique of intonation due to its importance in determining the intended meaning of the utterance on one hand, and its performative aesthetic value on the other. Intonation is crucial in revealing the speaker’s attitudes in ways that phonetic units alone cannot achieve. It serves two interrelated functions:

Linguistic: It allows the listener to discern the intended meaning, especially in cases of syntactic ambiguity.

Non-linguistic: It reflects the speaker’s emotions or feelings.

– Properties of Intonation:

The most important feature that distinguishes intonation from other phonetic phenomena is that it depends on spoken language rather than written text. However, linguists have introduced punctuation marks to indicate different tones, such as the question mark, exclamation mark, period, and so on. Intonation is also a phenomenon shared by most languages because it affects the meaning of a sentence without altering the phonemes.

Types of Tones:

There are two main types of tones, as indicated:

- **Falling Tone (*tolling tone*):**

It is called a falling tone because it descends at the end, as in declarative sentences found in *Durra*, such as:

“*Sāra fulān fulān*” (“So-and-so walked with so-and-so”)

“*Wa jā’a al-qawm bi-ajma ’ihim*” (“And the people came altogether”), and other similar sentences.

- **Rising Tone (*rising tone*):**

It is called a rising tone because it ascends at the end. For example, if the sentence “*Wa jā’a al-qawm bi-ajma ’ihim*” is intended as a question - asking whether the people came altogether - the intonation serves as a clue to this purpose, raising the falling tone of the declarative form to a rising tone:

“*Wa jā’a al-qawm bi-ajma’ihim?*”

Or if the sentence is intended to express astonishment - marveling at the people coming altogether - the rising tone indicates exclamation:

“*Wa jā’a al-qawm bi-ajma’ihim!*”

Another function of intonation is to clarify the intended meaning of expressive (directive) forms, as in the Qur’anic verse: (“Why do you not fear Allah?”), meaning here is not a question but rather a rebuke, emphasizing anger.

D. The Meaning of Pause:

Pause is a phenomenon among the performative contextual features linked to meaning. 68 It is defined as “*a stop in the flow of speech*” 69 and occurs only when the meaning and structure of the utterance are complete—that is, after the intended sense of the message has been established (Kamal 2000, 558).70

The terms *pause* (*waqf*), *silence* (*sakt*), and *cut* (*qat’*) are different words with similar meanings. For example, one can say, (Al-Harbi 2006) “*Kallamtuhum thumma awqaft*” (“I spoke to them and then paused”), meaning *I remained silent*. *Qat’* also means silence, specifically leaving off speech while being able to continue (Al-Zabidi 1994, 558).72

Mario Bai preferred to use the term *juncture* instead of *pause*, defining it as a light break between words or syllables in a speech sequence, signaling the end of one word or syllable and the beginning of the next, facilitating the transition from one word to another or one syllable to another. A juncture may be either open (*open juncture*) or closed (*closed juncture*).

The speaker may employ a pause for various purposes, but with a single goal: to prevent ambiguity or to clarify any vagueness that may arise from the continuous flow of speech (Al-Nayrabani 2008, 182). This is evident in the words of the poet:

“*Afadī alladhī nādamanī laylah ... rāḥan qad ṣubbat abarīquh*”

“*Sa’altu wardan fa-abā khadduhu ... wa ramatu rāḥan fa-abā rīquh*”

We notice that there is no difference between the two words *abarīquh* and *abā rīquh* from a performative perspective. However, in the first, the intention is “pots” (plural of *ibrīq*), while in the second, it refers to “saliva.” The pause in the second case gives it a meaning different from the first. Al-Hariri was attentive to this type of meaning that is realized through pause and cannot be understood without it.

An example of this is found in the expressions *kullamā* (“whenever”) and *kull mā* (“all that”). In the second expression, a pause must be observed after *kull* to avoid ambiguity, unlike the first. For instance, in the Qur’anic verse:

“*Kullamā awqadū nāran lil-ḥarb aṭfa’ahā Allāh*” *kullamā* is pronounced connectedly (without pause).

Similar cases include the words *innamā*, *inna mā*, *ayyimā*, *ayy mā*, and others, where the pause plays a decisive role in distinguishing meanings.

Pause may also work together with other elements to determine meaning, as mentioned by Al-Hariri in the expression “*fīma ragħobta?*” (“In what did you

desire?")), in which the *alif* is omitted when the phrase is intended as a question, and retained when there is a pause, as in our saying: "*ʔimā law fashila aḥadun minnā lā yajibu 'alayhi an yay'as*" ("As for if one of us fails, he should not despair"). This is one of the usages approved by scholars, and intonation also plays a role in supporting it.

Among the phenomena belonging to this field is their response to someone asking about a matter by beginning with the negative particle *lā*, then following it with a supplication for him, such as saying: "*lā 'āfāka Allāh*". The correct usage is to pause on the negative *lā* with a pause perceptible to the listener, and then proceed with the supplication, so that the statement does not turn into a supplication against him. Alternatively, one may separate the two with the conjunction *wa*- (and), saying: "*lā, wa 'āfāka Allāh*" ("No, and may God grant you well-being").

Conclusions

The conclusion drawn from the study of phonetic meaning in Arabic is that sound functions as an active and dynamic component in creating meaning rather than simply being a reservoir of meaning, as it would be considered in many Western languages. This includes all the ways in which phonemes work together to specify, increase, separate and/or reverse meanings (such as vowel pointing; metathesis; syllable structure); also include the effects of stress, intonation, and pauses on meaning (e.g., expressing disbelief by raising one's voice at the end of the phrase).

As seen clearly in the observations of Al-Ḥarīrī in his work *Durrat al-Ghawwās*, he possesses a significant understanding of the relationship between a phonetic feature and its semantic value based upon the perceived guessing of meaning by others (the development of literature), and he used this understanding to create literary works that were based upon Arabic scholarship traditions.

Al-Ḥarīrī's work is an example of how this interplay between the sounding of a word and its semantic value enables the expression of nuanced meanings that cannot be captured simply by using morphological or syntactic structures. Furthermore, this finding complements modern linguistic theories, which emphasize the ways that linguistic use demonstrates prosody and phonetic symbolism; thus, the study of phonetic meaning increases knowledge about classical Arabic linguistics and demonstrates that it remains relevant to modern semantic and phonological theories.

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