Human Values in the Structure of the Arabic Language: A Descriptive Analytical Study

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Abstract: This study aims at discovering the relationship between the structure of the Arabic language and the traits, characteristics, ethics and values of the Arabs which are originally connected to the Islamic religion. The study is built on the assumption that there is large harmony between the structure of the Arabic language on one hand and the human characteristics which Islam came to affirm on the other. The reflections of these values are clearly present in the Arabic language as if to say that the structure of the Arabic language is in harmony with these human values just as the Islamic Shariah does. This is why God chooses this language to carry the message of this true religion, which is the religion of pure human instinct. This study also reaches another conclusion which is that the Arabic language has characteristics that are non-present in any other language in the world.

Keywords: Arabic Language – Human Values – Islam – Language Features

1. Introduction: The idea of this study came as a result of interacting with the Arabic language in the fields of research. It was then affirmed in lecture rooms, as well as, personal contemplation. Many remarkable signs and indications were sensed that are consistent with the human values we believe in. Therefore, the study proposes that the structure of the Arabic language goes line in line with high
human values, which are the same values of the Islamic Shariah. Therefore, God Almighty chose this language to carry the message of this true religion.

It can be said that interacting with the Arabic language has no limits, whether on the spiritual or sensual levels. It is also not limited to any special era as its meanings can be felt by anyone who digs deep in them. He, who interacts with the Arabic language gains taste sophistication, beauty, and softness and he, who does not feel this while dealing with this language surely lacks one of the talents of human feeling. This study has been conducted in an attempt to highlight such significant features the researcher examines through interacting with the Arabic language in various settings and for different purposes.

2. Features of the Arabic Language: Language in general is closer to a person than the clothes he wears. Should a person change the style of his clothes, no one would see this as a negative thing. However, should he change his way of speech, even from a certain dialect to another, some people would see this as strange and they may even disapprove of it. There is no doubt that a person interacts with his style of clothing in a sensual manner. The same applies to the Arabic language, which is even more adhesive to the people who speak it due to its special feature of being the carrier of the Islamic religion, and therefore, as the researcher will attempt to show, it has always been and still is unique to its speakers.

Muslim scholars have always been keen on interacting with the Arabic language as well as speaking it. They regarded talking in a foreign language for those who know how to speak Arabic as a cause of hypocrisy. Ibn Jinni, a renowned scholar of the Arabic language used to seek refuge of God from memorizing the Arabic language without thought, contemplation or interaction. Numerous and unlimited indications point to the unique and special status and features of the Arabic language. The following sections shed light on the features of the Arabic language at various levels:

2.1 At the Islamic Shariah Level: God Almighty undertook to preserve the Arabic language when he undertook to preserve the Holy Quran as the Arabic language is the container of the Holy Quran and

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the Quran cannot be preserved without the Arabic language. While the Quran has been rendered into other languages, no other language can truly capture the essence and eloquence of the Quran like Arabic. Thus, this language has taken its special status among other human languages and is special in its strength, superiority and eternity. It is an honored and glorified language which extends its glory to the Muslim nation which carries the Quran and defends it with all it has. All of these meanings lead to a feeling of the importance, beauty and depth of this language. However, some try to degrade this language and fail to accept its dignity, superiority and status. Some Muslim scholars indicated that the Arabic language cannot be mastered except by a prophet. Al Soyouti stressed the importance of this language saying that learning the Arabic language is part of the Islamic religion as without it the Quran and the tradition of the prophet, Mohammed cannot be understood. Other contemporary researchers even argued that the Arabic language is the origin of all other human languages. This all indicates the status of the Arabic language.

This all is consistent with the fact that God chose the Arabic language as a container for the concluding heavenly messages. This was indicated by the Arabs who said: they were denied food but were given speech. God chose the best of people, Mohammed, to be his messenger and the most sacred of all places, Mecca, as a place for his message. He also sent the Quran in the best of times, the holy month of Ramadan. Therefore, it is no surprise that he chose the best of languages to carry the Holy Quran. This proves that the choice of the Arabic language came as a result of its graciousness and superiority.

2.2 At the Civilizational Level: The Arabic language came to life as a rich and strong language supplying each era with its required material as if it is the most recent outcome of civilization before civilization even began. It goes back to more than one thousand five hundred years, which is something non-present in any other language. All other languages have changed with time to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to connect between the old and the new. The oldest Arabic text goes back to 328 AD and is a witness of the originality of this language and its continuity until this day. For example, the language of the ancient Arab poet, Umro’ al Qais who
died in 545 AD\textsuperscript{15} is very similar to that of the recent Egyptian poet Ahmed Shawqi who died in 1932 AD\textsuperscript{16}. A poem written by Umro’ al Qais can be fully understood except for some words despite that he died more than a thousand five hundred years ago\textsuperscript{17}. However, an English speaker reading the works of Shakespeare who died in 1616 AD\textsuperscript{18} may only understand a few words\textsuperscript{19} despite the fact that Shakespeare died four centuries ago only.

This opinion about the Arabic language was not limited to Arab or Muslim scholars. Ernest Renan, for example, expressed his admiration and surprise of the Arabic language. He said:” Of the strangest things and most difficult to discover its secret is the spread of the Arabic language. This language emerged in the most complete, subtle and rich of forms and has not been majorly altered until our present day. It emerged firm and solid and no more than fifty years had passed after Muslims reached Andalusia when the priests of churches had to translate their prayers into Arabic so that Christians could understand them”\textsuperscript{20} Ernest Renan continues by saying: “Of the strangest of surprises is that this national language sprung and reached perfection in the middle of a desert and among a people of travellers. This language surpassed other languages in its many words, precise meanings and beautiful structure. Since it emerged, it has been complete and has not changed substantially at all. Throughout its life it has never known childhood or old age and all we know of it is its unparalleled victories. We cannot grasp this language which emerged to researchers as complete and non-gradual. It preserved its entity and remained pure at all times”\textsuperscript{21}. The Arabic language was able with all competence to absorb the most famous of human civilizations such as the Persian, Greek, Syriac and Hindi civilizations. It accepted all of these civilizations and transmitted their ideas in a clear Arabic tongue. It was also able to absorb the sciences of this age throughout the past century and until now\textsuperscript{22}.

This surprising survival of the Arabic language may have been one of the most important indications of its civilizational uniqueness\textsuperscript{23} throughout more than a thousand five hundred years. In the modern era, we have also witnessed its resilience and survival as the official language and scientific and cultural language of all Arab countries
despite the poor political conditions in the Arab World. Meanwhile many other countries of the world disposed of their original languages and switched to the language of the colonizer, victor or prevalent controller of these times$^{24}$. Such examples are many African, Southern American and other countries of this world.

The scientific objectivity of the testimonies of these scholars can be confirmed by other more detailed testimonies of the most special of sciences of the Arabic language such as the science of grammar. For example, the renowned scientist ‘De Boer’ writes in his book named “History of Philosophy in Islam”: “the Science of Arabic Grammar is a great result of the Arabic mind due to its accuracy of observation and high activity. It is a great heritage which is a cause of appreciation and Arabs have the right to be proud of it$^{25}$”.

2.3 At the Structural Level: An inspector can also detect the specialness of the Arabic language’s structure, words, width, conduct flexibility and completeness. This language is able to provide all with their requirements and is precise and flexible and owns the tools and mechanisms which enable one man alone to exert the same effort of many men in other languages$^{26}$.

This language is characterized by its vitality and strength. For example, it is a derivational language and not a paste$^{27}$ one. Whereas derivational features are present in some other languages, they are different than those of the Arabic language. For example, Mr. Masenion mentioned that the derivation of nouns in the Arabic language are clear$^{28}$, whereas it is vague in the French language$^{29}$.

Beautiful and amusing interaction with Arabic is by all means possible. Arabic never begins with a consonant and always begins with a vowel. This gives it its activity as it begins its journey fresh and full of energy and vitality. On the contrary, the English language starts with a consonant. This may be perceived as a weak and dull start which reflects laziness in the rest of the journey and an inability to reflect the meanings and messages intended.

One of the distinguished features of the Arab language is its use of the dual. No other language is known to include as rich and powerful presence duality. Moreover, most languages totally lack the dual form. It is as if the Arabic language protects the most important pair in
human life which is the man and the woman, totally as Islam does. This pair creates the family which is endangered in our modern times and perceived as something of the past.

It is worth mentioning that the significance of the duality is highlighted by the use of the Arabic letter (aleph) or “a” as a sign for it in some cases. This is different from other signs for other parts of speech in Arabic such as the original sign and the one for plurals. Therefore, the dual is exceptional and special in this sense also as the male and female partners are the origins of human life. Therefore, the special dual word in Arabic refers to the special dual human beings.

When observing the writing level, it is noticed that Arabic writing is connected, joined and related, whereas, in the English language for example, writing is disconnected. This reflects the disintegration taking place in European and Western societies. Therefore, the structure of the Arabic language at the writing level also reflects the inter-related structure of the Arab society.

One can discover these signs even in numbers. For example, the number five in Arabic is considered by Arabs as a sign of completeness. If five men held hands, they would form a circle. A circle is a symbol of completeness because its beginning meets with its end. Arabs write the number five as a circle and this coincides with several issues when observing closely. A human hand has five fingers his foot has five toes and even his neck has five bones. This all agrees with the five prayers in Islam and the five pillars of Islam too.

It can be said clearly that there are those who deny all of the above-mentioned and even those who deny the Arab mind of any beauty at all. This was indicated by the orientalist, Edwin Hall, who mentioned that the Western mind cannot bear or absorb the Arabic structures or images.

3. The Moral and Value Structure of the Arabic Language: The Arabic language is not favored to us out of pride but because of its scientific traits according to scientific standards. No language is favored according to these standards for religious or racial reasons. This chapter will include an attempt to mention some of the signs of scholars dealing with the connection between the structure of the Arabic language and human values.
3.1 The Relationship between Form and Content: It must be agreed that language is an important thing to human life. It confirms the identity of every individual and is a reflection of any nation’s thoughts, meanings and facts. For Arabs, it is especially critical as it is the language of the Holy Quran. Therefore, the second Muslim Khalifa, Omar Ibn Al Khattab, expressed his anger at some Muslims’ incorrect Arabic. He considered this weakness as worse than poor use of archery. He passed by some people who could not aim properly and he criticized them. So, they replied with poor Arabic and he became even angrier and said: “Your poor speech has made me sadder than your poor aiming”\(^\text{32}\). Also, the first Khalifa, Abu Bakr, gave large significance to good language and structure by saying: “I would prefer to read and fall on the ground than to read incorrectly”\(^\text{33}\).

One of the most important writings which represent a connection between values and the Arabic language is Omar Ibn Al Khattab’s letter to one of the companions of the Prophet named Abu Mousa. Omar said: Teach people the Arabic language as it increases the power of the mind and strengthens nobility\(^\text{34}\). This saying is probably one of the clearest direct indicators of this study and is proof of the ability to connect between the structure of the Arabic language and virtuous human values.

The relationship between form and content can be noticed in the position of our scholars towards words translated into Arabic and their fear for the Arabic language of alteration due to imported words. They fear that Arabic could lose its characteristics, nature and personality\(^\text{35}\).

Human beings by nature use suitable containers for different purposes. They use noble containers for noble purposes. For example the noblest containers are used by royalty. Therefore, would it be surprised that God prepared the noblest container- Arabic language- for his noble Book and final message. This noble language is used to transmit this sacred and honorable Book, the Holy Quran. Also, the subtleness of the Prophet Mohammed agrees with the subtleness and flexibility of the Arabic language.

3.2 The Ancient Position: The people of the early times were aware of the effect of the environment and social surroundings on language and the changes that could happen to it. It goes without saying that
language cannot be disconnected from the environment of the people using it, their characteristics, morals, values and traits. This applies to meaning and word form. Some of those people realized the connection between language and values. This is implied in the saying of the Ummayad Khalifa, Abdul Malik Ibn Marwan who said: “Good language is beautiful to the slavish man and incorrect language is despicable to the noble man”\(^{36}\). This is evidence that establishing correct Arab language structure is a cause for completeness of nobility.

Also, ancient Arabs regarded that meaning could not be full without beautiful utterance. Ibn Jinni considered that the beautification, respect and polishing of words was not meant for the words themselves only but was to serve and honor meaning. This was the same as refining and honoring a container or cup used to pour valuable drink. Ibn Jinni also stressed the high value of Arabic language by saying that: “if non-Arabs felt the subtleness of the language of the Arabs and its ambiguity, delicacy and accurateness they would have denounced their own languages and not only preferred them”\(^{37}\).

### 3.3 The Contemporary Position:

It cannot be seen incorrect or strange for any human being to belong to and love his language. On the contrary, it is seen strange for someone who belongs to his language, nation or religion to be described as biased. These are natural characteristics for humans as it is natural that one’s language gives a feeling of belonging to the society who speaks it.\(^{38}\) Also, these characteristics could contribute to the strength and seriousness of scientific research as an individual who belongs to something that is special to him is capable of studying and exploring. Therefore, is denouncing one’s self and identity part of scientific research? And must a person claim to be neutral so as not to be described as non-subjective\(^{39}\)?

The flaw here is to consider principles of scientific research on a methodology that does not conform to and is not affected by emotions and the heat of one’s belonging. A researcher is not required to renounce his belonging and emotions or discard his identity. He is only required to abide to the ways and methods of scientific research without being affected by emotional motivations. Some indications of
the understanding of human values in language and its structure were stated by some researchers. For example, the contemporary Egyptian literate, Mahmoud Abbas Al Aqqad said: “Scholars of language do not know a language of a people which reflects those people’s traits and the characteristics of their countries through their words and utterances as is the Arab society is apparent through its vocabulary material both in its realistic and metaphorical forms”\(^{40}\).

Mustafa Sadiq Al Rafe’I said: “The preciseness of the language composition indicates the preciseness of talents of its speakers. Its depth indicates the depth of the soul and the people’s tendency to think and explore reasons and causes. Its many derivatives prove its love of freedom. The spirit of slavery is narrow and confined to few words”\(^{41}\). He goes on to say that: “Language is the image of the presence of a nation with its thoughts, meanings and realities. This presence is special and has its own characteristics. Language is national in thought and binds to the nation through its images of thought and manners of deriving meaning from material”\(^{42}\).

Dr. Murad Kamel says: “Language is a reflection of the human conscience. It defines the image of the people who speak it.”\(^{43}\). Mohammed Mubarak also said: “There is a lineage between the characteristics of the Arabic language and the Arabs themselves.”\(^{44}\). Scholars wrote about some of the values in the structure of the Arabic language such as the indication to the idea of rest between the first and third letters of an Arabic word. Any Arabic word should originally consist of three letters: a letter to begin with, a letter to end with and a letter as a mediator between them. The middle letter was needed because the first letter must be a vowel and the last must be a consonant. Therefore, rest was needed between the two contrary cases.

Others called clearly for the need of studies that explore the secrets of the language. For example, Dr. Yehya Jabr said: “This language is in critical need of vertical studies that investigate in its depths. Horizontal superficial studies should not continue except to the certain required amount.”\(^{45}\) While carrying out this study and trying to touch on the structure of the Arabic language, the researcher tries not to mix his feeling of identity and belonging to the needs of this study. He vows to commit to the principles of scientific research in his mission.
However, he would like to hint to the presence of some who doubt others with no proof. For example, Holman said: “the Arab mentality is one of gathering and not one of compounding. This is evident in the many uses of the conjunction letter “waw” by an Arab writer whereas, European languages use the full stop. This reveals an arrogant and prejudicial view against Arabs.

This represents evil and confusion. All evil lies in deception, lying, forgery and looking down on people or insulting them with no right. It also lies in assuming scientific realities with no proof or evidence. This all reveals prejudice only.

4. Structure Significance: This stage of the study reaches the essence of the idea meant to be highlighted by the researcher- the Arab language’s reflection of human values and virtues- which witness the high status, dignity and importance of this language. We as contemporary Arabs, give great attention to the words and utterances just as our ancestors did. The Arabs of the past were interested in the discipline of their words and the accuracy of their meanings as words are the containers of meaning.

It must be mentioned that disregarding the social aspect while studying language is a deviation from the scientific study of language. This was stressed by many researchers and scholars. In this chapter, light is shed on what seems as the reflection of values and virtues by the structure of the Arabic language.

4.1 Letters, Vowels and Consonants: It is natural that Arabic grammar is full of different opinions and schools which continuously deal with all aspects of the language and highlight its greatness and wide horizons. This indicates the richness of this grammar which is more like a garden full of flowers of all colors. It resembles a king’s gardens and palaces which reflect the greatness of their owner whereas, a humble garden and simple huts also reflect the simplicity of their owner.

It may seem strange to some when writing about the values present in the structure of the Arabic language as this language seems to carry meanings only. However, a simple study shows the extent to which these values are reflected by this language or are in harmony with it at least. Many scholars showed their interest in the variety of letter signs.
The lightness and alteration of letter signs were mentioned since the early ages. Ibn Fares, a past scholar, mentioned that Arabic language does not combine two consonants, whereas, in other languages two or even three consonants can be combined.

Letter signs in general beautify the Arabic language. They are like the movement of flowers, leaves, fruits and twigs with the soft wind. In English, however, immobility and solidity are noticed. For example, in Arabic, the word "المدرسة" [almadrasah] which means “school” in English can carry three different letter signs at the end of it according to its place in the sentence. However, in English, the letter “L” at the end of the word “school” is the same no matter where its place in the sentence is. The various letter signs at the end of Arabic words reflect function and give the words life.

It should also be mentioned that letters in Arabic generate words and that letters are both masculine and feminine. Birth of words from letters resembles birth of newborn humans from a man and a woman. Also, men and women do not give birth without combining together and becoming one in one family. It is as if each is the other half of the other. Letters represent this in the most beautiful and delicate of ways.

The letters which originate in speech from the human throat are all present in the Arabic language but non-present in many other languages. For example, these letters are not present at all in the English language, which is something worthy of mentioning. This characteristic probably also signifies the distinction of the precious Arabic language especially when noting that these letters, when spoken, are the closest to the pharynx and therefore closest to the heart and soul.

The Arabic letter "ﺽ" or “Dh” is not found in any other language at all except Arabic. This is probably evidence of a delicate conformity. Just as the Arab nation is special among all nations, its language is special in having a letter which no other language of the world can use.

The letter "ﺃ" or “a” is not an original letter in the Arabic language. It is therefore not found in the original structure of any Arabic word. Whenever it is present, its origin is either "ﻭ" or "ﻱ" (“o” or “e”). The reason for this is that this letter is always a consonant, which implies death, and does not conform to the source of life. Therefore, no dead
object should have the right to contribute in the structure of this outflowing, active and motional language which has been always flying in the skies of this wide universe.

The number of letters of some other languages may have succeeded those of Arabic. However, they are not as distinct in their origins of speech as the letters of other languages are usually different forms of the same letter. Therefore, Arabic is distinct in having letters that are non-present in other languages such as "ﺽ"، "ﻅ"، "ﻉ"، "ﻕ"، "ﺡ"، "ﻁ". These letters can sometimes be found in other languages but are ambiguous and hesitant. The Arabic language also does not contain letters formed of two connected or joint letters. Arabic sounds are also characterized by being stable and consistent. This resembles the religion of the Arabs in being stable and undistorted. Islam is the only religion that has been saved from distortion. The Arabic language is as Subhi Al Saleh said: "fixed in origin, known in lineage".

4.2 Utterances and Words: Words have a large importance in the Islamic civilization. The Prophet, Mohammed, is known as saying: “the best form of jihad is a word of truth said to an unjust leader.” Words are living beings that grow and develop within a language that forms a live world with its own movement, colors, smells, tastes and music.

When studying Arabic word routes, it is found that they can produce many derivatives. An example is the word "كتب" or “write” which can produce around 16 other words. Therefore, the Arabic language is a fertile one and this indicates the large conformity between the nature of the Arabic language and the philosophy of the Quran which used Arabic to deliver its message. The prophet of the Quran stated clearly by saying: “Marry the fertile and friendly woman as I will be proud of your large number among other nations”.

Regarding roots in the English language, for example the word: “write” one cannot obtain the same number of other words and derivatives from it. To obtain the word “book” one would have to use a totally new root, unlike Arabic. The same applies to the words “office” and “library”. The words book, office and library are all derived from the word [kataba] ("write") in Arabic. It can be said that the same applies to the social level. In the Islamic society, the extended family is
a coherent one where a person stays in touch with both his paternal and maternal cousins, not to mention his brothers and sisters.

It is also not found strange for men and women to contribute together in peace and war as both of the words "سلم" [silm] or "سلام" [salam] and "حرب" [harb] or "war" can be used as masculine or feminine words in Arabic. This indicates that sacrifice and dignity apply to both men and women in Islam. Therefore, the first martyr in Islam was a woman. This proves the conformity between language and Islamic values.

It can also be assumed that the Arabic language respects people in a way that may not be found in other languages. For example, when addressing others, Arabic uses different words for different genders duals and plurals, whereas, the English language uses the same word "You" to address people of any gender or number. In Arabic, the feminine cannot be addressed in the masculine form and vice versa. It is as if Arabic addresses people according to their status, just as Islam does.

4.3 Linguistic Structure: The Arabic language is characterized generally by its high level of delicacy to the extent that people of the past described it as being a form of magic. Therefore, a search for some of this magic which reflects the values and virtues present in the structure of Arabic should be conducted.

It is clear that at the level of the plural words in Arabic, they are able to act in a way that singular words cannot. This conforms to the fact that groups and united individuals are able to perform better than dispersed individuals. This agrees with the general philosophy of Islam which unites and does not separate.

The conjunction letter "و" or "and" appears in the Arabic language to add words or sentences to each other. In English, the word "and" appears at the end of a sentence or before the final added word. This indicates the strong connections between Arabic structures and reflects the strong social relationships in the Arab world throughout the history of the Arab people.

Conclusion

Light has been cast on some indications in this study which, as the researcher believes, prove the conformity between the structure of the
Arabic language and the high human values and virtues. Every human being is in great need to know his language and interact with it so as to love and be close to it. Our endeavor in this study was not built on pride or prejudice. The indications found led to certain results. This can be claimed as the correct logic of scientific research and should be respected in the form of accepting proved facts and visions and not renouncing them.

It should be said that we must not be afraid of being accused as biased when trying to highlight our beliefs or hypotheses which are supported with logical scientific evidence. The Arabic language is supported by much proof of its superiority as it is the language of the Holy Quran and was chosen as a container for God’s precious Book. God defied all people to come up with a book that resembles the Quran and affirmed that this is impossible. Therefore, this all proves the preciousness of the Arabic language and its role for Arabs and Muslims.

It is found strange that some people call for scientific research to be distanced from the effects of faith. However, the adopters of this method know deeply that the Arabic language was never to survive without the Islamic faith. Without Islam, Arabic would have become extinct just as other languages did or would have been changed into another language disconnected from the original one, just as all other languages of the world. All that was intended in this study was to pave the way for study of the Arabic language in relation to human values. This was so because of the values and virtues noticed in this language. However, it can be said that the journey set out through this study is still in its beginnings.

**List of References**


7- See Al Tha’alibi. *Jurisprudence of Language and Secret of Arabic*. (pp. 7,8).
11- See Taheyya Ismail. Metaphysics of Language and History, p.15. This issue in particular is in need of evidence and proof.
21- Ibid
23- Comparison between languages has certain laws and is not subject to emotions. See Taheyyah Ismail. Metaphysics of Language and History, p.19.
24- Al Rafe’i. Inspiration of the Pen. Vol. 3(29).
28- See Mohammed MuhyiddinAbdelhamid. Dorous fi al tasreef, p.23.
30- See Taheyyah Ismail. Metaphysics of Language and History, p.29.
31- See Abbas Mahmoud Al Aqqad. Poetic Language, p.42.
41- Al Rafe’i. Inspiration of the Pen. Vol.3 (28).
42- Ibid
43- This was mentioned in the introduction of his book, the Arabic Language is a Living Being. See Jirjizidan. Arabic Language is a Living Being, p.11.
46- See Mohammed Mandour. Literature and its Arts, p.66; Azmi Salman. The Right to Have the Lead, p.23.
47- See IssaBarhouma. Language and Gender, Language Excavations in Masculinity and Femininity, p.17.
49- See Abbas Mahmoud Al Aqqad. Poetic Language, pp. 8, 9.
50- See Ahmed Matloub. Language Studies, p.27.