

Semiotic Communication Between Arab Conception and Western Theory

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Date of submission: 11/10/2024

Date of acceptance:04/02/2025

Date of publication:10/04/2025

Abstract:

Communication is a fundamental human necessity and a central concept that emerges through the articulation of intentions. It is through communication alone that an individual can achieve self-realization, interact with others, and meet their needs. Due to its significance, it has been a focal point in both Arab and Western literary studies, historically and in contemporary discourse. These studies emphasize elements that affect the communicative process, whether sustaining or disrupting it. As such, scholars have concentrated on analyzing the components of communication, its linguistic and non-linguistic signs, its structures and categories, the relationship that binds the interlocutors, the ongoing generation of meaning, and the issue of intentionality and its influence on the success or failure of the communicative process. In light of the reflections on communication, several critical literary questions arise: What is the essence of communication, what are its mechanisms, what factors contribute to its continuity or disruption, and how have classical Arab literary studies and modern Western theories interpreted this?

Key words: *Communication, linguistic sign, non-linguistic sign, continuity of meaning generation, intentionality, signifier, signified.*

Introduction

Since human beings are inherently social, influencing and being influenced by those around them, it becomes necessary for them to achieve self-realization through interaction. This involves attempting to convey their thoughts to others and understanding what lies within others' minds. This can only be achieved through an innate instinct, essential to human nature since the beginning of creation: communication. Thus, driven by the need to communicate, humans strive to employ available means of expression and invent new mechanisms for it. As Al-Razi states: "Man is created in such a way that he cannot independently fulfill all his needs, so he must communicate what is within his mind to others in order to seek their help."¹

It is a fundamental human necessity and a natural process present in various contexts, serving as the primary means to realize one's aspirations. The elevation of human life is contingent upon its continuity. In light of its profound significance and esteemed status, John Dewey proclaims

¹ Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. (1998). The great exegesis: Keys to the unseen (Vol. 1, p. 25). Al-Bahiyah Press.

that communication is the most remarkable aspect of human affairs². Thus, the act of communication has captured the attention of numerous ancient scholars and contemporary researchers alike, culminating in the development of theories that delve into communication and its intricacies.

What is meant by communication, and what are its underlying mechanisms?

I.Communication: Communication holds immense importance in human life, as through it, an individual can interact with others and meet their needs. A person's life is structured based on their relationships with others, which are established according to certain communicative and informational systems. Communication is an interaction between two or more parties, wherein the sender tries to convey their ideas to the receiver, aiming to influence and persuade them of the proposed argument. The receiver, who may either support or oppose the presented issue, plays a crucial role. In the communicative process, which is circular by nature, the sender becomes the receiver, and vice versa. The sender seeks to construct meaning, while the receiver aims to deconstruct it, attempting to decode the communicative signs to uncover their true meanings. Thus, the communicative process becomes an organized, circular, and interactive exchange. In this context, Mukhtar Muhammad Fouad Abu Khair defines communication as: "the mutual influence between the parties involved in the face-to-face interaction."³

The continuity and success of the communicative process requires the presence of six elements, as noted by Roman Jakobson. These elements include the constructor of the linguistic message (the sender) and its decoder (the receiver). For the latter to be able to decode and uncover the underlying meaning, the message must reference something, rely on a shared system between both parties of the communicative process, and be delivered through a communication channel.⁴

Our ancient scholars have exhibited a profound interest in communication, highlighting it as a central concept that manifests through the articulation and revelation of meanings and intentions. This is eloquently expressed by Al-Jahiz when he discusses the notion of clarity, stating: "Clarity is an encompassing term for anything that lifts the veil of meaning and tears aside the curtain that obscures the conscience, allowing the listener to grasp Its essence and penetrate its core, irrespective of the nature of the evidence presented. The crux and ultimate aim of both the communicator and the audience revolve around understanding. Whatever facilitates comprehension and elucidates the meaning is, in that context, clarity."⁵ A close examination of Al-Jahiz's definition reveals that he addresses the components of the communicative process, which pivots around two principal poles: **(The sender and the receiver)**, whose ultimate goal in establishing a communicative process is understanding and comprehension, can achieve this only through clarity—meaning transparency—and, consequently, influence and persuasion. **The essence and purpose of both the speaker and the listener revolve around the notions of understanding and being understood.** Here, Al-Jahiz has presciently recognized what modern studies in argumentation assert: that the primary function of language is to influence and persuade, rather than merely to convey information. The sender strives to articulate his message and ideas clearly in order to alter the listener's perspective and convince him of the presented argument, thereby "lifting the veil of meaning."

Communication can either be internal, where a person engages in dialogue with themselves, creating a self-reflective interaction, or external, where they communicate with others of their species. In these exchanges, both linguistic and non-linguistic symbols are employed.

What, then, is the essence of a sign, and what is meant by linguistic and non-linguistic signs?

²Shar, A. (2005). Models of communication in arts, educational media, and business administration (p. 28). Cairo: Al-Masriyah Press.

II.Communicative Signs and Their Types in Ancient Arab and Modern Western Thought:

God has endowed humans with intellectual capacities that enabled them to create a system of signs, both linguistic and non-linguistic, which made reflection, understanding, and the communication of ideas among fellow humans easier. Due to the significant role that signs and their systems play in human life, they have become central and received great attention in both Arab and Western studies, both in the past and present. Signs were considered a tangible, sensory phenomenon that points to an abstract, hidden truth.

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure affirmed that the sign we live by and use in our daily communications is the linguistic sign, which has a dual nature built on two components. The first is the signifier, a perceptible element that represents the spoken sound or auditory image produced by the speaker and received by the listener's ear. This process leaves a psychological effect, forming a mental image, the signified. These two elements, the signifier and the signified, are inseparable; the presence of one automatically calls for the presence of the other. De Saussure likened them to the two sides of a single coin. The association between them is what is called "signification" (dénotation), meaning that the linguistic sign (le signe linguistique) links not a reference to an external reality but a signifier to a signified.⁶

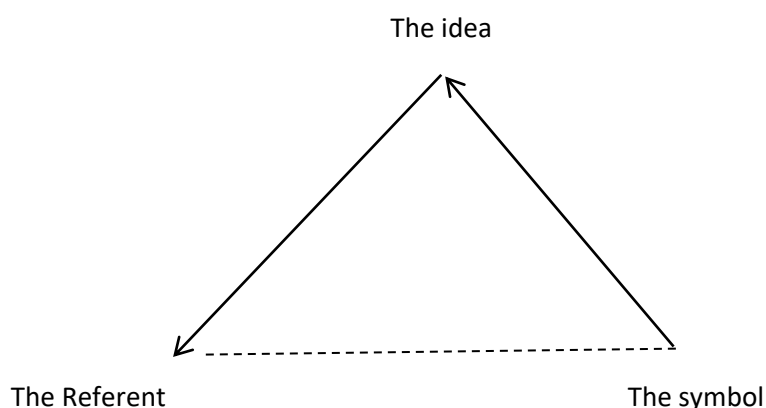
In contrast, the concept of the sign in Arab thought is closely related to the idea of signification, which refers to indicating and clarifying something through means such as symbols or signals. Signification involves making the unknown clear by referencing something known. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani explained this concept by stating: "Signification is what leads to the knowledge of something, like words indicating meanings, gestures, symbols, and writing, whether intended or not, such as seeing someone move and knowing they are alive"⁷. This highlights the components of signification or the sign, which consist of the word and the meaning. These meanings remain hidden in the mind until revealed through words. Meaning can only be realized through language and cannot be understood without it. Similarly, meanings are the reason for the existence of symbols; without the need to express inner thoughts and meanings, humans would not have created these symbols. Al-Jurjani added, "Signification is when knowing one thing leads to the knowledge of another; the first is the signifier, and the second is the signified."⁸ The term "state" in Al-Jurjani's definition refers to the system in which signs function, as signs have no value outside a recognized system within a linguistic community.

It is noted from the above that a sign consists of two components: the signifier and the signified, as pointed out by Ferdinand de Saussure, or the word and its meaning, as acknowledged by Arab scholars, including Ibn Sina. He stated, "Man has been endowed with a sensory capacity in which the images of external matters are imprinted... and these images are inscribed a second time in a stable manner, even when they are no longer present to the senses. The meaning of the signification of a word is that when it is imprinted in the imagination, the audible name evokes a meaning in the soul, allowing the soul to recognize that this sound corresponds to this concept. Whenever the senses bring something to the soul, it turns its attention to its meaning."⁹ Ibn Sina recognized, early on, the pathways to the success of the communicative and significative process, the centrality of linguistic signs, their effects on the psyche, and the strong connection between the word and its meaning, as well as their associative relationship. His statement serves as evidence of his keen insight and profound analysis of how language is produced and the activity of the human mind in reception and production. A closer reading of this concise and precise assertion reveals that God Almighty created humans and endowed them with a mental capacity that enables them to stabilize and imprint what they perceive from external matters. When a person perceives external phenomena, these are represented in their mind in the form of images or signified meanings. Subsequently, they attempt to translate these representations or perceptions into linguistic signs, whether spoken or written, through which they can convey these representations to their audience.

This notion is further supported by Al-Qartajani, who stated, "Everything that has an existence outside the mind, when it is perceived, generates an image in the mind corresponding to that perceived object. When one expresses that mental image resulting from perception, the word used reflects that mental image in the understanding of the listeners and their minds. Thus, the meaning has another existence through the signification of words. If it is necessary to establish written symbols representing words for those who are unable to hear them spoken, these written symbols then establish in the minds the forms of the words, thereby creating images of meanings. Hence, there is also an existence derived from the signification of the written symbols for the words they represent¹⁰. Thus, the auditory image of words signifies the written images and indicates the mental images, while the mental images signify the auditory images of words and refer to the external objects comprehended.

Upon closer examination of Ibn Sina's ancient assertions and de Saussure's modern theories, we discover a striking similarity between the two regarding the dual structure of the sign, represented by the two aspects of signification. This duality encompasses the word and its meaning, which corresponds to the Western studies' distinction between the signifier and the signified. On one hand, this emphasizes the connection between the word and its meaning; on the other, both Ibn Sina and de Saussure highlight the psychological dimension of the sign, manifested in the impact that the word exerts on the recipient's psyche (the signified meaning). This is illustrated in the mental image or cognitive representation that forms in the listener's mind upon receiving the word. Al-Razi further reinforced this duality by linking words to meanings rather than to external objects, asserting, "Words are not intended to denote external entities but rather to signify mental meanings."¹¹

This pertains to those who view the sign as having a binary structure. In contrast, those who acknowledge a triadic structure include Ogden and Richards, with their renowned semantic theory known as the theory of meaning. This referential theory presents a precise scientific perspective on the process of communication, emphasizing the independence of meaning from the constraints of the word. They argue that a word does not denote a single meaning but rather encompasses various meanings that vary depending on context and audience. Consequently, their communication sign is conceived as a triadic construct composed of a symbol, an idea, and a referent, illustrated as a triangle. They assert that "signification arises from a triangular relationship among the signifier, the signified, and the referent." The relationship between the symbol and the idea is continuous, as is the relationship between the idea and the referent;¹² however, the connection between the symbol and the referent is discontinuous, which can be represented in the following diagram:



So, what causes the disconnection and continuity?

Continuity signifies companionship and interconnectedness. When a drawn or spoken symbol is received by the audience, it immediately evokes an impression (an idea) within their minds. This idea instinctively prompts the recipient to associate it with a specific subject, depending on their

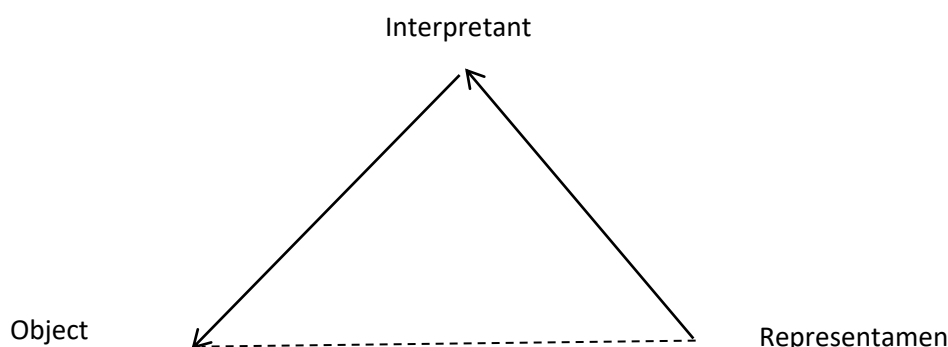
cognitive capacities. Should they fail to establish this connection, the communicative process falters, resulting in a lack of understanding. Therefore, the relationship remains continuous between the symbol and the idea, as well as between the idea and the referent.

Conversely, the disconnection arises from the fact that the symbol does not directly refer to the referent; there is no inherent relationship between them. The symbol first engages the mind, which then interprets it and assigns it a subject or referent. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), the founder of semiotics and a leading American philosopher, emphasized this process by stating that the sign is a triadic entity: it designates a second thing in order to reference a third. He concentrated on studying the sign and its semantic charges, as well as the continuously evolving meanings that arise from the interaction of three primary poles, which are:³

1-The first component (representamen) represents the realm of possibilities and sensations; it encompasses tangible experiences (auditory, visual, tactile, or olfactory). In other words, it constitutes the existential, perceptible aspect of the sign. This can be likened to the 'signifier' in Saussure's framework, and to the 'symbol' in the theories of Ogden and Richards.

2-The second component (object) is a fundamental element of the sign according to Peirce. It asserts that the representamen has an object, which can be categorized into two types. The first represents the active, dynamic aspect; that is, the entity to which the sign refers and seeks to depict. The second is the direct object, namely the idea to which the representamen points. This can be likened to the 'referent' in the components of the sign as outlined by Ogden and Richards.

3-The third component (Interpretant) embodies the realm of thought and is the necessary mediating element that connects the representamen to the object in the mind's effort to clarify and elucidate the representamen. Without this interpretant, such a connection would not exist, nor would there be understanding or effective communication. In Peirce's framework, the interpretant represents a new sign generated from the impression and effect left by the representamen in the mind of the sign's recipient. This can be likened to the 'signified' in Saussure's terms, and the 'idea' in the framework of Ogden and Richards. Thus, the sign, according to Peirce, is conceptualized in the following schematic representation:

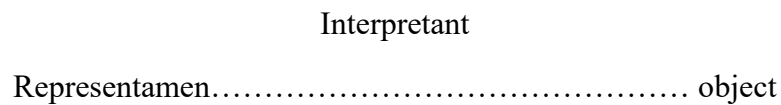


It is observed here that there is continuity between the sign (representamen) and the interpretant, as well as between the interpretant and the object. However, there is a break between the sign and the object, meaning that we cannot directly transition from the sign to the object without passing through the necessary mediating process (the interpretant).

This transitional movement occurs from the first component (representamen), which is characterized by ambiguity and lack of clarity, to the second component (object), where the

³Qassim, S. (Year). Semiotics around some concepts and dimensions. In S. Qassim (Ed.), *Sign Systems in Language, Literature, and Culture: An Introduction to Semiotics* (pp. 26-28). Cairo: Dar Al-Alam Al-Arabi.

sensations (the referent) are transformed from an indeterminate, unclear nature to a determinate, clear subject, relying on the third component (interpretant). This transitional process can be illustrated in the following diagram:



This transitional movement, embodying the true essence of the sign and affirming its vitality and evolution, is referred to as semiosis—indicating the continuous generative flow of meaning.

Before this, we find Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, who passed away in 505 AH, demonstrating his keen understanding of signification. He moves beyond merely highlighting the essence of signification to uncovering its core and substance while discussing things and their four levels. He states: "Know that the levels we intend are four: the existence of a thing in reality, then in the mind, then in words, and finally in writing. Writing signifies the word, and the word signifies the meaning that resides in the soul, which exemplifies existence in reality."⁴

Upon closer examination of Al-Ghazali's statement, we find it to be a profound description of a sound communicative process, articulated with precise linguistic expressions. It reveals the manner of perceiving reality and the process of producing and receiving language. In this statement, he elucidates the hierarchies of things.

What is meant by the hierarchy of things?

It is important for us, before understanding the meaning of the hierarchy of things, to first comprehend the meaning of "things."

It is widely recognized that "things" is the plural of "thing," and upon examining Arabic dictionaries, we find that a "thing" refers to that which must be known or revealed. It signifies everything that exists, whether it is tangible or abstract, real or mental. Therefore, the concept of the hierarchy of things refers to the arrangement and relationship between different entities. Here, we must note that al-Ghazali's use of the word "then" is neither arbitrary nor capricious; rather, it is intentional and purposeful. The term "then" denotes both order and succession. Ibn Hisham al-Ansari explains that this word is employed to indicate "arrangement and delay." Thus, "then" connects the ranks of things, signifying that, according to al-Ghazali's hierarchy, a thing first exists outside the mind, meaning it is present in reality. In other words, an individual may be unaware of it because it does not reside in their consciousness. Due to the need for communication, images of these real entities take shape in the mind, leaving impressions in the soul. To convey these impressions and concepts from one's mind to an audience, a medium is required—hence the use of words. However, when this audience is, for various reasons, distant or absent, another means of communication becomes necessary to convey the message without words; thus, writing emerges as a crucial tool.

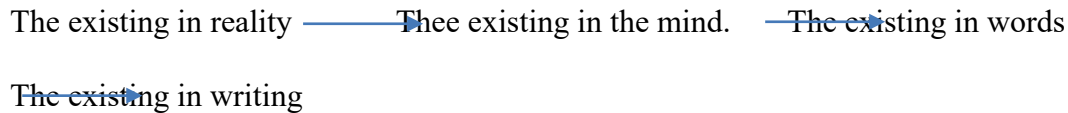
Thus, we conclude that:

⁴Al-Ghazali. (n.d.). *The Criterion of Knowledge* (2nd ed., S. Dounia, Ed., pp. 35-36). Cairo: Dar Al-Ma'arif.

⁵Ibn Hisham Al-Ansari. (2004). *Qatr Al-Nada* (p. 303). Lebanon: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah.

- The existence of entities in reality is signified by the existence of ideas in the mind, and conversely, the existence of ideas in the mind signifies the existence of entities in reality.
- The existence of ideas in the mind is represented by the existence of words, and the existence of words signifies the existence of ideas in the mind.
- The existence of words is represented by the existence of writing, and the existence of writing signifies the existence of words.

This can be represented according to the following diagram:



Thus, the sign used for communication, according to Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, has a threefold structure:

1. The existing in reality.
2. The existing in the mind.
3. The existing in words and writing, according to the context of communication, whether spoken or written, and the state of the recipient.

As for the relationship between the signifier and the signified, or between the word and its meaning, opinions on this relationship have varied. Ferdinand de Saussure argued that it is an arbitrary and random relationship, meaning there is no inherent connection between them; rather, it is a conventional and unmotivated one. This implies that the user of a linguistic sign—since he focused solely on linguistic signs—cannot know the meaning that sounds convey merely through their suggestion. His evidence for this claim is that mental images in humans are similar, but the way they are expressed (the signifiers) varies. This is why languages differ.¹⁷

Before Ferdinand de Saussure, Ibn Jinni (d. 392 AH) emphasized this arbitrary and conventional relationship while discussing language, describing it as an acquired mental capability represented by a system of arbitrary spoken symbols through which individuals in a community communicate. He stated, "Words have meanings that refer to what is in the minds rather than to what is in reality." This is why it is said that words signify meanings because the meanings are what the speaker intends; they are mental phenomena²⁰. This idea is further supported by Al-Suyuti (d. 911 AH), who remarked, "Names do not indicate their referents by their essence since there is no inherent connection between a name and what it designates. Thus, it is permissible for names to differ among nations, and they can be changed. A garment may be called one name in Arabic and another in a foreign language. If a garment were called a horse and a horse were called a garment, it would not be impossible, unlike rational indicators, which signify by their essence and cannot differ." Language, therefore, is social rather than individual; it exists in potential within the mind and is expressed by the speaker through an agreed-upon symbolic system, enabling understanding and communication, and thus sustaining the communicative process. Al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH) echoed this sentiment, stating, "What exists in reality and in the mind does not differ by country or nation, whereas words and writing are indicators by convention and agreement." The agreement occurs in what exists in reality and in the mind, while the difference lies in what exists in words and writing. This is affirmed by Al-Razi (d. 606 AH) in his work "Keys"²¹

Given that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is generally arbitrary, meaning the independence of the signified from the control of the signifier, Ogden and Richards emphasized in their book *The Meaning of Meaning* that the signifier does not point to a specific signified (meaning). Instead, the signifier transforms into a signified, and this latter (the signified) in turn becomes a second signifier searching for another signified, and so on. Charles Sanders Peirce also acknowledged this regarding the potential for signs to generate a continuous chain of signs with limitless meanings. It is important to clarify that the continuity of generation does not imply that different meanings arise from different recipients or contexts; rather, the intended meaning refers to the emergence of diverse interpretations within the same sign and the same recipient.

In ancient times, the Arabs were aware of the continuity of semantic generation, as exemplified by Al-Jurjani's insights regarding types of speech. He stated, "Speech falls into two categories: one type allows you to reach your goal solely through the significance of the word. For instance, if you intend to inform about Zayd by saying, 'Zayd has exited,' this directly conveys your point. The other type does not allow you to achieve your goal through the word alone; instead, the word points to a meaning suggested by its context in the language. You then find a second significance that leads you to the goal. This matter revolves around 'metonymy,' 'metaphor,' and 'representation.' Consider, for instance, the phrase 'He has much ash from the pot'; in this case, you cannot convey your intended meaning through the word alone, as the word indicates a meaning that is evident on the surface. However, the listener deduces a second meaning from this first meaning, which is your actual intention—namely, that the individual is hospitable."²² He further reinforced this in his book *Asrar al-Balaghah*, stating, "The listener does not derive this meaning from the word itself but understands it through the word's meaning."²³ This can be illustrated in the following diagram:

Plentiful ashes (Signifier 1) seeks a signified (1) → A place with abundant ashes (Signified 1) becomes a signifier (2) seeking a signified (2) → A place where much cooking occurs (Signified 2) becomes a signifier (3) seeking a signified (3) → A place with many guests (Signified 3) becomes a signifier (4) seeking a signified (4) → The owner of the place is generous (Signified 4).

This means that we obtain a set of meanings derived from a series of interpretations applied to a single sign, with the analysis being singular. The number of interpretations and transformations is linked to the recipient's level of understanding. If the recipient has a low level of comprehension, they may stop at the first interpretation (the surface meaning). If their comprehension is at an average level, they might reach the second or third interpretation. If they possess a high level of understanding, they will continue the series of interpretations and transformations. The signs that humans rely on in their daily communications, across various fields, vary between linguistic and non-linguistic. This distinction has been emphasized by modern studies through the field of semiotics, which emerged from two origins: an American one with the mathematician and logician Charles Sanders Peirce, who laid its foundations, and a European one with Ferdinand de Saussure, who focused solely on the linguistic sign as the primary means of communication. In his discussion about language, he stated, "If you can imagine a science that studies the life of signs within social life, a science that could be considered a branch of social psychology and, consequently, a branch of general psychology, you would call this science semiology. This science would inform us about all these signs and the laws governing them... and linguistics is merely a branch of this overarching science."²⁴

In modern times, de Saussure anticipated that individuals communicate through non-linguistic signs, and the communicative process can succeed through these means. For example, the sign language of the deaf and mute allows for successful communication without using linguistic signs.

Similarly, military signals and traffic signs are also non-linguistic yet facilitate communication effectively. Notably, our ancient Arab scholars acknowledged the diversity of communicative signs, both linguistic and non-linguistic. Al-Jahiz (160 AH – 255 AH) provides a precise example of this in his work *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin*, stating, "All types of indicators of meanings, whether verbal or non-verbal, fall into five categories that neither diminish nor increase: the first is the word, then the gesture, then the contract, then the writing, and finally the state known as 'nasbah.' The 'nasbah' is the indicative state that substitutes for these categories and does not fall short of these indicators. Each of these five has a distinct form that sets it apart from its counterparts, employing methods different from those of its siblings, revealing the essence of meanings in general and their truths in interpretation."²⁵

Here, Al-Jahiz emerges as a remarkable figure, demonstrating acute insight and keen perception. He recognized the various types of both linguistic and non-linguistic signs that individuals use to communicate, which now form the foundation of modern semiotic research. These categories can be summarized as follows:

The Word: (Linguistic Sign): This refers to verbal proficiency or oral linguistic production, representing an individual's ability to express what lies within their mind. It comprises the auditory vocal images emitted by a person with a sound speech apparatus, which are received by someone with a healthy auditory system. This sign is relied upon when the recipient is present during communication.

The Gesture: (Non-Linguistic Sign): Its medium consists of bodily members, such as raising a hand, smiling, or lifting the eyebrows... All of these are present signs that indicate something else that is not present.

The Token: (Non-Linguistic Sign): (Counting without words or writing): These are signs indicating numeration, such as knowing the days of the month from the lunar phases or determining the times of day from the positions of the sun and shadows... etc.

The Line or Writing: (Linguistic Sign): This refers to written linguistic production, representing written proficiency that is relied upon when the recipient is distant or absent during communication.

The Sign (Nasbha): (Non-Linguistic Sign): A sign that clearly indicates its meaning without the need for interpretation. Any individual who perceives it comprehends its meaning directly through reason and contemplation, such as the signs of God's blessings that signify His oneness, like the creation of humans, animals, and plants, and the raising of the sky without pillars. All of these serve as indicators that the Creator is one and unique.

The previous statement underscores the strong relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic signs. Often, non-linguistic signs can substitute for linguistic ones, and in many contexts, non-linguistic signs can be more expressive than linguistic signs. Al-Jahiz articulates this by saying: "Gestures and words are partners, and they serve as excellent aids for one another; how often gestures stand in for words, and how they can suffice without writing. Without gestures, people would fail to comprehend specific meanings and would remain utterly ignorant of this matter."²⁶

Although non-linguistic signs enable communication and expression of our inner thoughts, linguistic signs have taken precedence in various contexts of communication. This likely prompted Roland Barthes to refute Ferdinand de Saussure's theory, which posited that semiology is the origin and linguistics is a branch. Barthes argues that Saussure viewed semiology as foundational because it studies both non-linguistic and linguistic signs, making linguistics merely a subset. The reason

behind Barthes' challenge, asserting that linguistics is the primary discipline while semiology is a derivative, lies in the idea that one cannot fully comprehend non-linguistic signs without relying on linguistic signs. Thus, linguistic signs, and the science that focuses on them—linguistics—are fundamental.

Ancient Arabic scholarship acknowledged the significance of linguistic signs over their non-linguistic counterparts in the communication process. This is exemplified in the words of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, who noted, "The methods of communication are numerous, such as writing, gestures, clapping hands, and movements of various body parts; however, the easiest and most effective means of conveying what lies within the hearts and minds is through these words." According to the French school, represented by de Saussure, signs are categorized into: (index - sign - symbol). In contrast, the American school, represented by Peirce, classifies them into: (icon - index - symbol)²⁹. Upon examining the classifications proposed by ancient Arabic studies, we find the following:

- **Natural signification** refers to a relationship between the signifier and the signified that is inherently natural, characterized by imitation or resemblance. For instance, the chirping of birds is termed "zaghzaghah" because their sounds seem to replicate the phonetic qualities of the letters "z" and "q." Al-Tahanawi elaborates on this, stating, "Natural signification is that which the intellect perceives as a natural relationship between the signifier and the signified, enabling a transition from one to the other. This relationship is defined by the manifestation of a nature from various aspects, whether it pertains to the nature of the signifier, the meaning, or other elements. The occurrence of the sign occurs alongside that of the signified, as seen in expressions like 'ah ah' indicating coughing or the sounds made by animals when calling to one another. Thus, the connection between the signifier and the signified is inherently instinctive."³⁰

If we consider Peirce's classification, one of the categories he defines is the "icon," which refers to a sign that establishes a relationship of similarity or resemblance with what it denotes. Examples of icons include photographs and statues, as they reference their subjects through this relationship of likeness. Peirce asserts about the icon: "It is a sign that refers to its object by virtue of the properties or characteristics it possesses, whether the object exists or not."³¹

A concept similar to this is Saussure's notion of the "index," which is a sign that functions without intentional communication. For instance, a cloudy sky serves as a natural sign, not deliberately signaling to humans that rain is approaching. This type of sign typically corresponds to natural phenomena³². Louis Prieto defines the index as "an observable event that instantly reveals something about another, unmentioned event."³³

- **Rational indication:** refers to a type of sign where the relationship between the signifier and the subject it points to is one of necessary causality, deduced by reason. In other words, the existence of the signifier implies the existence of the subject. For instance, smoke signifies fire; when we see smoke, we logically conclude the presence of fire, with no other possibility. Al-Tahanawi defines it as: "Rational indication is when the mind perceives a natural relationship between the sign and the signified, one that compels the mind to move from one to the other. This natural relationship either involves the effect requiring the cause, like smoke indicating fire, or the cause necessitating the effect, like fire³⁴ requiring heat, or one effect implying another, like smoke suggesting heat." It is essentially a relationship between cause and effect, or influence and outcome.

From the perspective of the founder of semiotics, Peirce, the relationship between an indexical sign and its object is one of causal and necessary correlation. The index, as he defines it, is "a sign that refers to its object because it is genuinely affected by that object, establishing a real connection with it."³⁵

In contrast, the French school, represented by Saussure, attributes a natural quality to the symbol. For them, a symbol is a sign that refers to its object through a natural relationship. Saussure distinguished between a sign and a symbol, attributing the characteristic of arbitrariness to the sign and the characteristic of causal connection to the symbol.³⁶

• **The situational meaning** :refers to a sign that does not transition automatically from itself to its object; in other words, the relationship between the sign and its subject is purely conventional, established through mutual agreement within a social context. Without this convention, we would not recognize that a particular sign corresponds to a specific object. This type of signification is often associated with linguistic signs, such as the word "pen," whose connection to its referent is based solely on social consensus. Similarly, non-linguistic signs, like the red light at traffic signals, also demonstrate this relationship, as the red light signifies "stop" based on an arbitrary convention. As (Habbankah al-Maydani) notes, "conventional signification is the signification of something that people have mutually agreed upon to denote a specific meaning, which could be a symbol, a drawing, or a word. For instance, the signification of traffic signals and the illustrations found on road signs for drivers are examples of non-verbal conventional signification. On the other hand, verbal conventional signification is the relationship between words and meanings through linguistic convention, regardless of whether this relationship is literal or metaphorical, such as the expression 'lowering the wing' to signify humility³⁷".

Within the framework of the conventional relationship between a sign and its referent, the "symbol" aligns with the American school of thought. As Peirce explains, a symbol is "a sign that points to its object by virtue of a rule, which is the association of general ideas—a principle of habit, custom, or final logical interpretation."³⁸

Among the classifications of the French school, the sign (évidence) aligns with the concept of "conventional indication" in Arabic thought and with the "symbol" in Peirce's framework. According to Saussure, a sign refers to "those signs primarily established to transmit a message or convey information, such as traffic signals and linguistic markers."³⁹

The semiotic approaches that have delved into the intricacies of the communicative process and unveiled the meanings embedded in both linguistic and non-linguistic signs are vast and varied. Foremost among them are the semiotics of communication and the semiotics of meaning. If we delve into the approach of communication semiology, as advocated by prominent figures like (Buysens, Brito, Monan, Austin, and Martinet), we find that they assert the success and continuity of the communicative process depends on the intention of its creator (the sender). In this view, the sender deliberately uses linguistic and non-linguistic signs to influence and persuade the recipient. Thus, they argue that the semiological signs employed in the act of communication are intentional and purposeful. Accordingly, the sign is built upon three fundamental elements: the signifier, the signified, and the intentional function.⁴⁰

The sender's intentionality in initiating a communicative act, aimed at influencing the receiver and aligning them either in favor of or against the presented issue, was a topic explored by our early scholars, starting with (Ibn Jinni). He perceived language as the spoken expression crafted by the speaker (the sender), when they possess the intent to convey their thoughts and objectives to the recipient. In defining language, he states: "It is a series of sounds through which every people express their intentions."⁴¹

Ibn Khaldun does not deviate from this perspective, as he also highlights the intentionality of the language producer. On another note, he affirms that linguistic signs are the most capable and effective means for conveying intentions. In his definition of language, he states: "Language, in common parlance, is the speaker's expression of their intent, and that expression is a linguistic act.

It must therefore become an ingrained faculty in the organ responsible for it, which is the tongue. In every nation, the Arabic language possesses the finest and clearest capacity to articulate intentions."⁴²

In a creative and interrogative style, Al-Jurjani transitioned from the literal meaning to an oppositional one, striving to captivate his audience's attention and persuade them regarding the argument at hand (intentionality). This denial manifested in his questioning of the act in question: the neglect of the speaker's intent during the communicative process, for it is through this very intent that understanding and comprehension can occur. He queried, "How is it possible when the wise unanimously agree that understanding the intentions of people in their dialogues is an absolute necessity?"⁴³

On the other hand, the pioneers of the semiotics of meaning, such as Roland Barthes and his students, do not uphold the principle of intentionality during the communicative process. Their assertion is supported by the observation that successful communication can occur, resulting in understanding and comprehension, even in the absence of any deliberate intention. For instance, consider the actions of animals: when a cat emits an unusual meow, it immediately conveys to the listener that it is either hungry or in distress, prompting the listener to offer assistance, even though the cat had no intention of engaging in a communicative act with the recipient. Similarly, the evidence collected by an investigator to apprehend a criminal (such as a thief) possesses meaning devoid of any intent from the thief. Thus, according to their perspective, signs—whether linguistic or non-linguistic—are constructed from two fundamental components: the signifier and the signified.

The scholars of the Arab world, in ancient times, keenly grasped the issue of the *presence* or absence of intentionality and its relationship to the success or failure of the communicative act. Abu Hilal al-Askari (d. 400 AH), while explicating the meaning of signification (the sign), clarified that signs can convey meaning both with and without intent, provided they consist of a signifier that is linked to a commonly recognized signified: "They can be inferred whether their originator intended it or not; for instance, the actions of animals indicate their states without any intention behind them. Similarly, the traces left by a thief reveal his identity, even though he did not intend for that to happen. It is well known among linguists that we infer things from their effects, even if the agent of the effect did not intend it."⁶This perspective is corroborated by al-Raghib al-Isfahani (d. 502 AH), who asserted: "Signification is what leads one to knowledge of something, such as the signification of words to meanings, as well as the significations of gestures, symbols, and writing, regardless of whether this was done with intent by the signifier or not. For example, if one observes the movement of a person, they know he is alive; as stated, 'Nothing indicated to them his death except a creature of the earth'" (Saba 14).⁴⁵

Conclusion

What this research paper has addressed is merely a drop in the ocean and a small fraction of a much larger body of work. The contributions of our eminent scholars in the field of linguistics are vast and diverse, originating fundamentally from the study of the Holy Quran to grasp its depths. This foundation served as a catalyst for the study of the Arabic language and the understanding of its secrets.

When comparing it with modern Western studies, we find:

1. What the West has recently proposed in the field of linguistic studies closely resembles, in many respects, what has been presented in ancient Arabic linguistic studies. It seems as if

⁶Al-Akhbari, A. H. (1963). *The Differences in Language* (4th ed., p. 13). Beirut: Dar Al-Afaq Al-Jadida.

Western studies are a continuation and development of the ancient Arabic linguistic traditions.

2. The contributions of ancient Arab linguists represent a significant cultural heritage that modern Arab linguists must revive through thorough investigation, publication, and renewed dissemination.
3. The insights gained by ancient Arab linguists are incredibly rich and require modern Arab linguists to revisit and present them according to contemporary methodologies that align with current knowledge and discourse. As is well known, knowledge is cumulative, and ancient Arabic studies focused primarily on the Holy Quran and classical Arabic, without delving into other languages or making comparative analyses. Arabic is not the only means of communication.
4. Modern Arab linguists can build on the foundations laid by their predecessors, as what was produced emerged from a linguistic environment that greatly differs from our present context, and their language differs significantly from ours today.
5. The topics covered in ancient Arabic studies regarding communication, its means, influence, and persuasion are immensely rich, but they are scattered ideas throughout their texts. In contrast, Western studies have presented these topics in the form of organized theories structured in a systematic manner.

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