اللغة والبـلاغة عنـد الإمام الشافعي

Language and Rhetoric of Imam Shafi'i

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Abstract

Imam Shafi'i is considered the founder of the Principles of Jurisprudence - the Philosophy of Islamic Thought, and the pioneer in this field of knowledge. In his book *TabaQaat Al Shafi'i,* AlSubki states that Shafi'i laid the stepping stones of this science which later has become the basic source on which all people agreed, and branches of this discipline have emerged. His language has been featured by unique prgmalinguistic traits that have prevailed among authors and researchers of Arabic language and rhetoric since the second Hijri century.

This paper addresses the major linguistic concepts of Shafi'i and his semantico-structural endeavor that has enriched the Arabic rhetoric and style. Two basic pivots will be highlighted in this paper; the linguistic traits and the semantic contributions in Shafi'i's language. Specifically, some issues will be accounted for including: properties of his language, semantic significance, types of semantics, significance, hyponymy, Antonym, synonymy, metaphor, identification of the term.

Who is Imam Al Shafi'i?

He is Mohammad Ibn Idrees Ibn Al'Abbas Al Shafi'i, born in Gaza, Palestine, in 150 Hijri to a father who travelled from Makkah to Gaza where he died. His pregnant wife delivered her son Mohammad in Gaza and returned back to Makkah after two years where the young boy memorized the holy Qur'an at the age of seven. The boy was so intelligent that he kept by heart Imam Malek's famous Book ' Al-MouTaa'. Shafi'i travelled to Yemen then to Iraq in 184H and had access to Iraqi knowledge of Islam. In 199H, he left for Egypt to give 'fatwa' until he died and was buried there in 204H.

The concept of language

Before giving an account for the concept of language that Shafi'i established 13 centuries ago, one has to overview the first trials in modern western linguistics so as to give evidence on the impact of Arabs in general and Shafi'i in particular on contemporary linguistics and rhetoric. The first linguist who is considered the basic founder of linguistics in the 20th century, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and whose contribution to this field of study has paved the road for all linguists in English and other languages during the past century is to be compared to Shafi'i . Harris (1988) states that de Saussure considers language not "peripheral to our grasp of the world we live in, but as central to it", and vocabulary is a collective product of "social interaction, essential instruments through which human beings constitute and articulate their world." This view of language has become influential to different discipline such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, philosophy, and anthropology. The same notion is one of the basic tenants in Shafi'i's views of Arabic language.

If de Saussure is pioneer in this field and is considered an authority and reference to all linguists in the late 19th and 20th centuries, Shafi'i is considered a leading fundamentalist in this discipline. His idea of language is derived from his concepts of the Arabic language. This idea does not address language in the abstract, but deals with it in a specific and concrete framework. This has been later labeled as "the jurisprudence of language". Shafi'i's views have led to the conclusion that all languages have general properties that include the following traits:

١.   Language is so broad and infinite that it is beyond the capacity of any human belonging to any speech community to grasp it all. Moreover, the ability of the average person to master or have full command of it all is impossible. People belonging to the same language community complement one another in preserving language as a whole. In this respect Shafi'i says that he has found that Arabic is "the broadest tongue that encompasses the most lexical items to the point that no human can comprehend its meanings except a prophet." This very idea is later referred to by Noam Chomsky in the late 1950s.

٢.   Language is performed and used in disparity among its speakers. Each speaker has his stock of it, his intellectual abilities, past

experience, and culture. Each individual in the speech community has as much of the language adequate enough that he can share to communicate with his group. The total sum of the parts is the language of the group. As humans who posses knowledge of language, Shafi'i says that people are classified into two types, one that possesses the most of it and misses some, and another that collects less than that who has more." In this respect the terms of competence and performance and infinity of language have emerged in recent linguistics. Chomsky states that "Competence refers to a speaker's knowledge of his <u>language</u> as manifest in his ability to produce and to understand a theoretically infinite number of sentences most of which he may have never seen or heard before. Performance refers to the specific utterances, including grammatical mistakes and non-linguistic features like hesitations, accompanying the use of language. (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3).

٣. Language is more general and more comprehensive than all other sciences and scholars in all disciplines. Shafi'i says that "Arabic language is more comprehensive than the knowledge scholars possess in all disciplines". This indicates that mastery of language opens gates to having command of all other sciences.

٤. Language allows mixture from other languages and speakers may code-switch and borrow from other tongues. Shafi'i states that there are similarities of lexical items in different languages, and he does not denounce the fact that Arabic may borrow from Persian or any other non-Arabic tongue on condition that this does not conflict with the original tongue, i.e., Arabic. He acknowledges the possibility of the existence of similar words between different languages spaced in time and place; because of the humility of random language or learning. One way of creating new words is to borrow or take from other languages. English has been taking words from : Latin. Greek, French, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese. Some Arabic words such as Algebra, cipher, Alchemy, Alcohol, Sugar, Cotton, Jar, Lemon, and Musk have been borrowed into English long ago.

٥. Shafi'i emphasizes the importance of the Arabic language of the Qur'an, and the features that distinguish it and make it superior to other languages. He does not deny the existence of other languages, and realizes that there are aspects of difference and convergence between them because of spatial and temporal reasons. He also asserts that the diversity of

languages is divine and the origin of all tongues is from the creator. i.e., Allah. Shafi'i says: " ignorance of people is due to leaving their Arabic language, and their inclination to Aristotle's tongue." There is the faculty of language acquisition that al humans possess and is installed in our brains by the creator, i.e., Allah.

٦.   Language becomes universal if it is sacred, i.e., revealed from God to prophets in holy books. This can be achieved when people of this language contribute creatively to the different social, political, cultural and even spiritual aspects of life. Native speakers of a particular language can disseminate it through their literature, arts, and religion to other speech communities. Shafi'i says " the nation that came down with its tongue (the Qur'an) must work to spread its religion, and disseminate its tongue, customs and literature to other nations."

٧.   By addressing the characteristics of the Arabic language, Shafi'i displays the issues of generic versus specific language, denotative versus connotative meaning, significance of terminology, semantics, hyponymy, metaphor, and the role of context in the detection and identification of significance. Al these terms are now studied by western linguists gaining credit of innovating them and ignoring the Arab philosophers and linguists.

The concept of significance and semantics

Linguists of Arabic started their research on semantics prior to syntax and grammar in chronological order. They have considered semantic significance as a necessity for the legislative prosecution that assists in spreading Islamic concepts in a way that can keep pace with the development and growth of all times and generations. This has led to the mixture between linguistic and legislative terms, which, in turn, resulted in mutual understanding and communication among generations of Arab and non-Arab communities that converted to Islam. Shafi'I is the first to consider semantics not only from a structural view but from a sociocultural aspect as well. To him semantics and understanding meaning is dynamic and is highly determined by context.

Shafi'i ideas on the relationship between word and meaning

Shafi'i asserts that meaning precedes the word (lexeme), and eventually it governs the situation and determines meaning movement. If movement of meaning is identical with the word, the relationship is said to be "*identical or matching*", and if the movement of meaning encounters part of the word, the relationship is said to be "embedded or included", and if the movement is *parallel*, the relationship is said to be a relation of "*adherence.*" Shafi'i looks at meaning as being dynamic and free from its lexeme , opposite to Socrates' claims that meaning and lexis are two faces of the same coin.

Shafi'i gives examples from the Holy Book on the divisions of semantic meaning to illustrate the meaning of words from its common meaning into its juridical one which is different from its basic meaning known to the original speakers of the language. This applies to religious terms such as **prayer, fasting, Hajj (pilgrimage), Zakat (paying alms)**, which were used to mean **prayer, constipation, intention and growth,** respectively. These words acquired religious meanings and concepts related to customs and practices until they have become terms of its distinctive meaning in Arabic among Muslim speakers.

Moreover, Shafi'i and the fundamentalists who followed him have tended to identify different semantic uses in the Qur'an and the Sunnah with the language used in the community. This includes:

١.	the common lexeme that refers to the generic
٢.	the common lexeme that means the generic and part of the specific
٣.	the common lexeme that means the specific
٤.	Customization
٥.	Synonymy

These types are exemplified below from the Glorious Qur'an.

١)	**A common lexeme that refers to the generic**

In this type, Shafi'i provides the following examples from the Holy Book:

a.   Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is, over all things, Disposer of affairs. [Az-Zmmar: 62]

b.   It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth [Ibrahim: 32]

c.   And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision [Hood: 6].

Shafi'i says that "this is common/generic that has no specific meaning. "Everything: a sky, an earth, a spirit, or a tree is created by Allah; and He knows its place of dwelling and place of storage. All is in a clear register. Thus, he deals with this common or unique noun as "the main lexeme", i.e., " a word that sticks to its concrete significance, such as land and sky, man and the trees and the sun and the moon ... etc., all these words have agreed on their clear macroscopic borders in all languages.

The common word in language that includes "multiple lexemes" does not contain actions, and does not fall in the abstract, such as existence, intelligence and freedom ... etc., they are general meanings. '*Existence*', as a lexeme, is not multiple, neither is *intelligence* or *freedom* because they are gestalt that combines its parts. Thus, the common denotes an infinite meaning such as " Indeed, *mankind* is in loss" [Al-`Aṣr: 3], so the lexeme "*mankind*" includes all individual meanings and concepts.

The previous definition is closer to the logical form than to the linguistic one which denotes one dictionary meaning. Shafi'i specifies common lexemes in the following grammatical and morphological words:

a)   Definite plural with 'the' /ʔl/ such as "*Men, women*."

b)   Indefinite plural such as " And they will say, "Why do we not see *men* whom we used to count among the worst? [Ṣād: 62]

c)   Singular nouns with 'the' /ʔl/ such as " *the thief*, the male and the female" [Al-Mā'idah: 38].

d)   Gender nouns with 'the' /ʔl/ such as " *the animal*"

e)   Conditional nouns such as "who, what" as in "*He who* cultivated an arid land is his"

f)   Embedded conditional such as "*when, where*" as in "*when you come over, I'll be generous with you*"

g)   Indefinite nouns in negative contexts such as "*nobody* visited me/ *no man* is at home/ don't hit *anybody*/ *no bequest* to an heir.

h)   General Assurance words: "*All, all*."

The previous examples show that the significance of a lexeme is associated with grammatical and morphological patterns in a context. In Arabic, for example, a lexeme is accompanied with certain tools such as definite/indefinite/negation articles to indicate the features of commonality. Thus, we can come up with the fact that the Shafi'i generally resorts to common lexis to indicate the intended meaning after adding certain grammatical and morphological patterns. In western linguistics, this has been introduced in semantics as the process of *derivation*.

٢) <u>A common lexeme that means the generic and part of the specific</u>

Shafi'i gives examples from the Qur'an to illustrate this type. Consider the following verses:

a) "the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, "Our Lord, take us out of this city of <u>oppressive people</u>" [An-Nisā':75]

b) " when they came to <u>the people of a town</u>, they asked its people for food, but they refused to offer them hospitality"[Al-Kahf:77]

The lexeme **'*people'*** of the village in the two verses above is a common noun that denotes a specific kind of people (indefinite but specific). Linguists and semanticians considered this one type of metaphor where the common generic noun is used to indicate and mean the specific and definite.

٣) <u>A common lexeme that means the specific</u>

Shafi'i gives examples from the Qur'an to illustrate this type. Consider the following verses:

"O ***mankind***, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is ***the most righteous of you.***" [Al-Ĥujurāt:13]

Mankind is male and female and it is ***nations*** and ***tribes***; this is generic, but ***the most righteous of you*** is specific and definite. Thus we see that the boundaries between the generic and the specific are not clear when the definition of the term is private and particular. Minute details of meaning have been accounted for since Shafi'i and his followers.

٤) <u>Customization</u>

Shafi'i gives examples from the Qur'an to illustrate this type. Consider the following verses:

a) "Those to whom hypocrites said, "Indeed, *the people* have gathered against you, so fear them."['Āli `Imrān: 173]

b) "O *people*, an example is presented, so listen to it" [Al-Ĥaj: 73]

c) " Then depart from the place from where [all] *the people* depart and ask forgiveness of Allah . Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." [Al-Baqarah:199]

d) "But if you do not - and you will never be able to - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is *men* and stones, prepared for the disbelievers." [Al-Baqarah:24]

The lexeme *people* in the four verses above is generic, but it denotes a specific group with quantitative and qualitative features depending on its context. In (a), the first lexeme 'people' denotes *four persons*, whereas linguistically it refers to *three or all*. The second lexeme denotes the *hypocrites*, a specific kind of people. In (b), it refers to *all people*, in (c), it refers to *the number who witness pilgrimage* and 'Arafa day, and finally in(d), it refers to *some people* , *the disbelievers.*

Linguists have identified the terms of customization with specific tools including the following:

١) *the exception*, as in "except when it is an immediate *transaction* which you conduct among yourselves.[Al-Baqarah: 282].

٢) *adjective*, as in the Hadith that the Prophet - peace be upon him - says in the topic of charity "one in each fort gazing sheep."

٣) *condition*, as stated in the "legal provisions": "Who says to his wife: You are divorced if you enter the house, he stopped the divorce case of entry of the house."

Thus we have seen that the allocation of a different role in determining some legitimacies and conditions, hence identifying this term has become necessary.

٥) **Synonymy**

Shafi'i gives examples from the Qur'an to illustrate this type. Consider the following verses:

a) "And ask them about the town that was by the sea - when they transgressed in [the matter of] the sabbath - when their fish came to them openly on their sabbath day,."[Al-'A`rāf: 163]

b) "And how many a city which was unjust have We shattered and produced after it another people. [Al-'Anbyā': 11]

c)   "And ask the city in which we were and the caravan in which we came - and indeed, we are truthful," [Yusuf: 82]

In the two verses (a) and (b), the word **_village_** in context indicates the people of the village; because the village is not an actor/agent who commits any immoral and unjust aggression on Saturday or on any other times. In (c), the village means the people in the and the people of the caravan. In the above examples, metaphor has played an important role in the transmission of meaning, and context here has become very specific.

The role of interpretation in reaching significance

Shafi'i has linked interpretation with text, code, and logic. Logic has a major impact on discrimination, and awareness of differences, and clarifying the interpretation of the means of knowledge. He combines phonological form with logical form in the interpretation of discourse. Interpretation is to get the significance of a word and exclude other possible alternatives depending on the context, participants and setting in which it occurs. This can be achieved under the following conditions:

• Interpretation should be in agreement with the development of language, custom and intentions of the speech community it is used in.
• There must be evidence that the term carries the intended meaning (pragmatic interpretation)
• Interpretation should be explicit not implicit.
• The interpreter should be eligible to do the job

Diligence in legislation is equivalent to analogy in Shafi'i's semantic interpretation. Shafi'i identifies four aspects responsible for arriving at meaning: 1) the actor/agent/addressor/doer of the action, 2) the action or predicate that shows the intended meaning, 3) the topic or the object that is interpreted or defined, and 4) the addressee/receiver/hearer/reader. This has been recently referred to by Firth in the so called "context of situation" which refers to the pragmatic aspects of meaning. It comprises the following:

١) Relevant features of the participants, persons, personalities (their verbal and non=verbal actions0
٢) Relevant objects
٣) Effect of the verbal actions

Shafi'i and Modern Linguistics

Shafi'i and Modern Linguistics have considered four different contexts that have prevailed in the 20th century by modern linguists; linguistic, emotional, situational, and cultural. First, a *linguistic context* is the use of a word and its relation with neighbouring words in a sentence. The word /'3ain/ عين in Arabic, for example, may have different contextual meanings. It is polysemic and may mean:1) eye we see with , 2) spring of water, 3) a spy, 4) a rich and eminent person, 5) a magic door eye.

Second, an *Emotional context* is a specific emotional context that specifies the emotional degree of the action. Some lexemes may have different emotive meanings depending on the boundaries of the lexeme. The words استغلال واستثمار 'exploitation' and 'investment' have two different connotative meanings; one negative and the other positive. The word كلب 'dog' may have different meanings depending on the emotional context it is used in. it is *a doll* (for a child), *fear* when barking (for a young girl), *unclean and dirty object* (for a man's ablution before he wants to pray), or *happiness* (for a hunter getting a prey). There is also the degree of emotion and the phonological representation of the lexemes that adds to the emotional context.

Third, a *situational context* deals with the setting (spatial and temporal) in which discourse takes place. Each setting requires certain discourse that fits the situation. This has to consider the participants, place and time as well as the functions it aims to achieve. This is highly basic in the works of Malinowski, Firth and Halliday and the theory of 'context of situation'. In the theory of meaning, a syntactic approach is considered when accounting for "the meaning of a linguistic sign to be a function of its relation to other linguistic signs in its context, and a pragmatic approach is adopted when meaning is defined as a function of its situational context." In short, Malinowski viewed language in its primitive function and original form as essentially pragmatic in nature, as 'a mode of behaviour, an indispensable elements of concerted human action. On the other hand, Firth focuses on the relational and the situational modes and aspects of context. His semantic concept covers all other branches or levels of linguistic description. According to him, meaning combines "the whole complex of functions which a linguistic form may have" and contextual relations at all levels, phonology, grammar, or lexicography, are manifestations of meaning.

Finally, a ***cultural context*** is different from the situational context in that it relies on the social context which can be part of the situational context. First, the cultural context imposes using certain lexemes in certain cultural contexts, for example, the word **'wife'** in English is referred to by many Arabic words such as: (مدام-زوجة) in Modern Standard Arabic, مَرَه in some colloquial Arabic dialects,   العيال ـ حريم ـ حرمة   by a religious person, and   أم فلان as a nick name. Second, the cultural context determines the meaning of a lexeme when used generically. For example: the word الصَرف in Arabic has different meanings in different disciplines. Among linguists it means '***morphology***', ' ***drainage***' among people of agriculture, ***'expenditure and money exchange'*** in economics. Third, the problem of equivalence in translation is mainly due to cultural differences and contexts of source languages and target languages. Political, social, and social implications and connotations of lexemes are of prime importance in this context. Finally, the association of some lexemes with some ethnic, political, religious, and social groupings adds to the cultural context and use of words.

Adrienne Lehrer defines the semantic field as a set of words (or <u>lexemes</u>) related in meaning. Linguist Adrienne Lehrer has defined semantic field more specifically as "a set of lexemes which cover a certain <u>conceptual domain</u> and which bear certain specifiable relations to one another" (1985). Moreover, Halliday (1985) and Halliday et al (1994/2004) take Firth's theory as basic to modern systemic functional grammar (SFG) that focuses on creating a systemic functional description of language, but as Halliday has pointed out, it is meaningless to consider the linguistic "code" and linguistic "behaviour" as two separate things.

To describe context, Firth has three central concepts of Field Tenor and Mode. Field tends to be realized by ideational meanings and means what is going on - the social processes and the domains of meaning created in the realization of these social processes. Tenor is who's taking part. the social roles and relations of those taking part in the interaction and the interactional roles and relations created in the realization of these social roles and relations. It tends to be realized by interpersonal meanings. Finally, Mode is what role the semiotic system is playing in context - its relative distance to those involved according to medium (spoken, written language, images, actions etc.) and channel (face-to-face, forms of technological mediation etc.), its complementarity with other social processes, and its rhetorical contribution (didactic, instructive, persuasive, and so on). It tends to be realized by textual meanings. The same concepts have been accounted for by

Imam Shafi'i 13 centuries before Malinowski, Firth, or Halliday, but Arab linguists have failed to document this in their literature to the west. This brings about the necessity of Arab scholars to disseminate the knowledge of language by Arab and Muslim linguists and philosophers through translating their works into different languages of the world.

Conclusion

Imam Shafi'i has preceded modern and contemporary linguists and rhetoricians in his views of language and its significance, and the relation between form and function paying full attention to physical and linguistic and cultural contexts. He is author of religious books and literary works that show the universality and sublimity of Arabic. His concern is mainly on meaning and its representation, besides the semantic and pragmatic representation of lexemes in contexts.

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