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Signaling the Linguistic Sound Among the Ancient and the Modern Speakers of Arabic

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Abstract

The concept of linguistic signaling is one of the modern linguistic concepts around which many linguistic studies have been conducted since De Saussure to the present day. In my research, I have shed light on the signification of the linguistic sound – apart from the linguistic structure - among the ancients and modernists and the examples and opinions they cited, which prove or deny the relationship between the two elements of the linguistic reference of these sounds. I come out with results which entirely prove the signification of the linguistic sound to the Arabic sounds and prove the relationship between its two elements.

Keywords: Signs, Signals, Signification, Signifier, Signified, Arbitrary.

Introduction

The concept of linguistic signal is one of the modern linguistic concepts around which many linguistic studies have been conducted since De Saussure to the present day. It is the linguistic unit consisting of a signifier which is the psychological perception of a heard word, and of a signified which is the meaning or the number of meanings related to the word.

In fact, every language consists of signals or signs that operate within a system with specific and complex rules at the same time. Indeed, the language signal cannot perform the task of communication only when it is found within a set of signals that determine the relationships between all the communicative function of the signal.

In my research, I have focused on the signaling of the linguistic sound- outside the linguistic structure - among the ancients and modernists, and what they mentioned as examples and opinions which prove or negate the relationship between the two elements of the linguistic reference of these sounds.

My research is divided into a preface and two sections. I will talk in the introduction about the concept of the linguistic signal in general and the relationship between its two elements. I will also make a survey of the opinions of ancient and modern linguists about this relationship.

The first section is going to be about the phonetic signaling among the ancients, while the second one is going to be about the phonetic signaling among the modernists. Therefore, I came out with results that prove the signaling the sounds of our Arabic language and the relationship between its two elements.

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Overview

The Concept of Linguistic Signaling

This concept has aroused the interest of many linguists since the appearance of De Saussure's definition (1916/1985), referred to by Zakaria (1983) as "Language is an organization of paradoxical signals". Language links the idea and the acoustic image but not between the object and its name. Besides, it does not mean the acoustic aspect of the sound but the psychological image of the sound, i.e. the impression and the effect it leaves in the senses. So the sound image is sensory (related to the senses), the linguistic sign is a psychological entity with two closely-connected aspects; the idea and the sound image, in the sense that each one denotes the other.

The linguistic sign is a combination of an audio image called the signifier and a perceptual meaning called the signified. The signifier is an acoustic phenomenon consisting of several successive sounds that form the physical aspect of the word, which means what the individual identifies with the senses directly. Therefore, the signifier is the acoustic image printed directly in the mind of the listener, which is, in other words, the psychological perception of the vocal word.

However, the signified is the concept that accompanies the signifier in the speech act. It is the image that occurs in the mind of the speaker or the listener when he uses or receives the linguistic signs. These two elements, signifier and signified, are inseparable. (De Saussure, 1916/1985: 84-86; Baraka, 1988).

De Saussure also mentioned two essential characteristics of the linguistic sign, which are at the core of my research. These aspects are as follows:

1- The arbitrary nature of the signal. De Saussure states that the arbitrary nature of the sign is not different from the arbitrary nature of the reference and the intrinsic importance of this principle for language. This is because language is the best representative of the signs system (De Saussure, 1916/1985:86). He also states elsewhere that the arbitrary nature of the sign is in fact the factor that prevents language from any attempt to change it (p.91). That is to say that the individual cannot change the sign after being stabilized in the linguistic community.

2- The written nature of the signifier.

Since the signifier is something audible (based on hearing), it appears to exist in a time space only. For that, we can derive these two attributes: (a) it represents a specific time period and (b) this period is measured in only one dimension in written form. So the acoustic signifier differs from the visual signifier in the sense that the latter may constitute a number of signs at different dimensions. While the acoustic sign has one dimension which is evident when we express the signifier in its written form. So the written form replaces its chronology aspect. Due to its auditory nature, the signifier describes the extent that can be measured only when written. (Zakaria, 1983: 182; De Saussure, 1916/1985: 89).

The two elements of signification are the signifier and the signified. The combination of these two elements leads to the creation of signification. Defining signification this way has been well-established and well-known since the earliest times. In fact, there is no disagreement between the linguistics regarding the polarity of signification, but the main problem lies in determining the nature of these two elements and the nature of their relationship (Al-Shayb, 1992: 440). In other words, language is a system of sound symbols, or as ibn Jani defined it, as sounds in which people use to express their purposes (Ibn Jani, 1955: 1/33). But what is not known is the

relationship of these sound symbols to the signifier. Indeed, The relationship between the signifier and the signified has always been a crucial topic that drew the attention of Indians, Greeks and others (Omar, 1993:18).

Plato, for instance, narrated in his conversations with his professor Socrates that he linked words with their meanings closely and made them a natural reason for understanding and perception. This way, however, the signification does cannot be blatant and the image cannot be recalled in mind only when pronounced. For this reason, these thinkers thought that the link between the word and its meaning is either natural or self-signalling. (Anis, 1963: 62-63).

On the other hand, Aristotle believes that the link between the word and its meaning is nothing more than a customary convention people agreed upon. (Omar, 1993:18).

Whereas linguists have gone somehow to prove the appropriateness between words and meanings (Al-Suyuti, 1985:1/47). In this concern, most of the Arab linguists tended to say that the natural connection between the word and its meaning thanks to advantages of Arabic they found, but not in the other languages. This led them to grasp the meaning of abstract voices (Abu Sharifa; Ghata; Lafi, 1989:22). This is also clear in Ibn Jinni's attempt to correlate between the two elements which constitute meaning. In this concern, he says, this is the case of letters (ك - ل - م) which in any order placed can still be meaningful. This is indicative of its strength and intensity (Omar, 1993:20). As for western linguists, most of them tend to reject the relationship between the word and its meaning. They deem that the absence of a relationship between them (an interpreted and justified relationship) makes it arbitrary. De Saussure is one of the linguists who believe in this idea, the fact that made him be considered as the founder of modern linguistics. For him, the linguistic relationship consists of two things: a mental perception (signified) and an auditory image (signifier). That is, language unity is a double entity. The new thing with De Saussure is that this double entity is psychological *per se* and none of its entities is physical.

These two elements are so conjoined that each of them necessarily summons the other and the relationship between them is arbitrary as Aristotle has decided before. It is arbitrary because because there is no natural bond between the signifier and the signified. De Saussure's insistence on the arbitrariness of signs led him to study the natural connection between the signifier and the signified.

De Susser separated what is material from what is psychological, making the signifier a psychological entity. The linguistic relationship for him does not combine anything to a name as previously thought, but it links a mental figment (signified) with an acoustic image. For example, if we take the word "tree", we find that it contains four elements:

1. Tree: The thing in the outside world.
2. Tree: The image of the thing in mind (signified)
3. Tree: acoustic image (signifier)
4. Tree: name, i.e, physical sound image.

The first and fourth elements, i.e. the object in the outside world and the physical sound image, are two physical elements that do not belong to the linguistic system. That is, the thing partakes of the science of botany, while the auditory and physical image belongs to the hearing physiology and phonology. These elements are not of interest to the linguistic, but what draws

his attention are the second and third elements only, i.e. the image of the thing in the mind i.e. the meaning and psychological effect of the sound i.e. the auditory image (signifier). What is meant by this is a mutual relationship between the acoustic image (signifier) and the mental perception, or idea which makes both of them correlate. This view of the meaning transforms it from a fixed idea to a dynamic functional idea, which is a psychological, logical and linguistic view at the same time. (Ashay'b, 1992: 442 - 443)

As for the opinion of the modern Arab scholars, some of them said that there is a strong link between the word and its meaning, which is a predominant idea. But most scholars in the last two decades denied the existence of a natural relationship between the word and its meaning, and considered that the relationship is customary and acquired. We cannot but mention here the opinion of the etymologists who have had a long history in this science and studied it in a way that went beyond their fellow linguists. In this concern, we cite the Al-Sameiri's opinion about the natural link between the signifier and the signified. He believes that this relation is positive and includes all the words of the language. This is contrary to what linguists said. The latter think that this may applied to some words of the only. Al-Sameiri believes in the idea that there is a natural link between words and meanings. Linguists and etymologists, however, think that there is not a natural link between the word and its meaning, whether language is an inspiration and revelation or a conceptualized system. (Hamouda, 1983: 175).

As a conclusion, the relationship between words and things is said to be a naming relationship. Yet it is being differed on the nature of this relationship, whether it is natural or conventional, and there were two opinions in this concern.

The first one assures that the relationship between words and things is a natural. This means that there is a self-signalling relationship between the word and its idea. In fact, words have specific meanings related to them their nature according Sameiri. He explained that the allocation of the name by the name of the name would be unlikely, and this view is the opinion of the Greek philosopher Plato.

The other view is that words have a conventional meaning resulting from agreement, consent or social contract between human beings. Thus, there is no natural link between the words and the things they refer to. This is Aristotle's view, which was accepted and then adopted and believed by almost all modern linguists (Al-Shayb, 1992:440).

Section One: The signaling of the linguistic sound among the ancients

Some ancient linguists pointed out that the sounds of some letters have to do with their significations. Some of these sounds may gain strength, weakness, elongation or fragmentation because they often make the sounds of letters on the attribute of the events expressed and they are corrected and emulated. That is what we appreciate and feel many times. That is more blatant in their saying: nibbling and gnawing (/kha'dhm /قضم/ka'dhm)

(kha'dhm /خضم/) is eating wet food wet like watermelons and bananas, while (ka'dhm /قضم/) is eating dry and solid food (Ibn Jinni, 1955: 2/162-163). Ibn Jinni also cited other examples with the letters (--del), (ت-ta), (ط-ta), (ر-ra), (ل-lam), and (ن-noun) when letter (ف-fa) is used next them in a word. Together they suggest weakness. He gives examples such as:

(الدالف Al-Dalf): The Weak Sheikh.

(التالف Attalif): For the damaged thing

(الذنف Daif): Patient

(النطف annotf): Weak

(الففور alfoutour): For weakness

(الفلطة Al-Falta): For the weakness of opinion

(الفطر alfadhr): slit which is to weaken

(الطفل attofl): The boy for his weakness

Al-Suyuti mentioned in his famous book many examples he took from Ibn-Jinni: "Look at the beauty of the words and how they suit their meanings and how the Arabs have missed these associated words that are converging in meanings, making the weakest letter hidden, easy the most important, the less errant, the most powerful, the most vocal and the most vocal (Suyuti, 1985:1-48/ Momdor, 1974: 66).

Ibn Jani mentioned many of these examples. It is clear from the words of Ibn Jani that the sounds have significations.

According to Ibn Jinni, there is a deliberate choice of sound to denote a different meaning as opposed to what the other sound does. This phenomenon, as he says, is not in a few words, but he mentioned many of them and said that there is more than that. He says: "If you see something like this that does not criticize you for what we have drawn and does not follow you on what we have said, then one of two things is either you have not enjoyed looking at it, and your thought is away from it, or because this language has origins and ancestors that may be hidden for us, or shorten its causes without us" (as Siboueh said) or because the former reached knowledge that did not reach the other.

Ibn Jani also said that if these examples may not have been intended to show the occasion between sound and meaning, that it came spontaneously, the answer is that this is a false judgement which nullifies the wisdom of the Arabs who were known for this..." (Ibn Jinni, 1955: 2/164-165).

Ibn Jinni's statement confirms the false opinion of those who say that there is no natural occasion between words and meaning. Therefore, the definition of language is that it is a number of voices people use to account for their purposes. Indeed, sounds are inherent in the human being, which have meanings in non-meaning, and that their expression determines the function of the language by exploring and reviving the world of meanings. Therefore, the meaning of a word is composed of agreed-upon letters (Hilal, 2011).

Abad Ibn Suleiman al-Samri, one of the most famous Arab intellectuals, said that "there a natural link between the word and its meaning". He was also known for his ability to appropriate words with their meanings, and if he was asked about the word, he would answer directly (Anis, 1963: 64).

The fact is that ibn Jani's opinion is worthy of consideration with its expansion and theoretical logic. It helps the learner to guess the meanings of ambiguous words by flipping the material of the word or looking at its sounds and bell. We say that the bell must be an echo of meaning and the word is described as a sound bell clipped in a system (Hilal, 2011).

It can also be used to analyze literary texts by studying the suggestions and dimensions of the word. Once we know what in the word, its uses and its significance, then this enriches the text

and helps the learner to grasp it. This is evident in our study of ancient Arabic literature, mainly in the pre-Islamic era, mainly in the poetry of Al-Shanfari, Zuhair, Amr al-Qais and others that may not be found in contemporary poetry. Apart from Ibn Jani, there were many persons like Ibn Feris, Albeirouni, Arrazi, and Ibn Elquaïem who expressed their deep admiration for Arabic (Abu Sharifa; et al, 1989:30).

One of the Greek philosophers who is interested in this subject is Plato. He has an opinion that agrees with what we are about to prove. He is in favor of the natural relationship between the signifier and the signified. While Socrates believes that some words have a natural connection with the meaning and others have no natural connection. But people created words to indicate the meanings they want and these words and their meanings are entrenched in the minds by repetition (Abu Sharifa; others, 1989, 1989 : 21-22).

Since the language is composed of words with connotations, this requires that the letter itself has a significance as the building structure of the word. But when it ceases to be a semantic character, it becomes a dead word with no life. If the part is dead and add it to another, we would have had a dead, lifeless structure (Islamboli, 2009).

The Second Topic: Signaling the Language Sound Among the Modernists

The sound is known as the ambassador of meaning. In fact, the linguistic communication is a meaning converted into a sound. So if we hear someone say 'I read a book', how do we know he said "Read" and not sell or buy? And how do you know he reads a book, not a story, a magazine, or a newspaper? The answer is simply that we know it because of the different sounds. Therefore, we should always remember that the sounds and their differences have only one function: to distinguish between the words spoken (Ibn Sina, 1955:60; Al-Shayb, 1992:41). Besides, verbal sounds are some sort of sounds. The sound is a natural phenomenon that we recognize and we do not know what it is and the difficulty of understanding the truth of the voice is caused by the fact that it does not have a material to compose it. Therefore, it is nothing because it has no mass and no weight, unseen and ephemeral (Gero, 1986: 155).

The character is a casual sound body that is distinguished from another voice in terms of sharpness and gravity (Ibn Sina, 1955:60). On how it occurs, Ibn Sina mentions that the sound is caused by the near-ripple air and pushed quickly and strongly. (Ibn Sina, 1955:57).

So speech sounds are produced in the same way natural sounds are produced. In general, the speech sound is produced by allowing the air stream ejected from the lungs to ring at some point along the throat, mouth and nose by controlling the current of the air and subject it to some kind of adjustment or narrowing resulting through the connection or approach of two or more speech members (Al-Shayb, 1992: 43).

The sound is nothing more than the raw material that is imposed on the language system to distinguish one language from another. So it is an external manifestation of the language but not a part of it (Al-Shayb, 1992:45). Mahmoud Fahmy Hijazi said that language is a system of sound codes and the value of any symbol lies in the agreement between the parties dealing with it. The issuance of these linguistic sound codes to perform specific meanings is intended by the speaker and the recipient understands that the parties agree to use these symbols to express the intended connotations (Hijazi, 1973:10).

Words are in fact nothing more than symbols of semantics, and every word is appropriate to express any meaning. The so-called "tree" can be labeled with any word that people agree upon

it. There is nothing not in the term "tree", which suggests its branches, roots, leaves and greenery (Anis, 1963:72).

Language symbols acquire their suggestive ability through use and the word is the least meaningful element of the language. There is no specific meaning to the sound of (si'in- س) (ra- ر), or any other sounds. When a person hears a foreign language that he does not know, he cannot first distinguish the different words he hears, he just hears a series of successive sounds. This phase is related to the circumstances of the use of each word and each phrase. S/He does not hear the sounds that make up the words and phrases devoid of context, but rather a certain phrases on certain occasions and thus each word and each phrase in the mind of the acquired language or its user is associated with a particular consent and certain circumstances. The meaning is only the result of the positions in which the linguistic symbol is used (Hijazi, 1973:15).

There is no relationship between the linguistic symbol and its meaning in the external reality, and the only relationship between the linguistic sound code and what it shows is the relationship of the symbol. That is to say, the word symbolizes something material or moral (Hijazi, 1973:15). Creating these words to account for what people have in mind has taken hundreds of years to be stabilized and more sublime than being mere signs like the street or telegraphic signs. Words are the light which leads human beings through the darkness of nothingness and meaninglessness. Human being have been distinguished from animals with words with which they use to think.

These words gained some holiness after they carried people to the finest morals and sciences produced by the human mind. They were also taken as a means of conveying divine revelation to the minds of mankind, and with them the holy books were written (Anis, 1963:74).

Language therefore consists of signals or signs that do not relate to the object to which any similar organic link indicates. It is rather composed of signals resulting from the life of the community language. These units are not based on natural links between an audio group and an idea or group of ideas that derive their entity from a convention that prevailed over time and in a certain environment (Zakaria, 1983: 183).

This relationship is the outcome of people's consent to use it, which of course takes place over a long period of time during which linguistic references are subject to many factors. Linguistic scientists agree with De Saussure that the linguistic signal consists of a combination of an acoustic image called signifier with a moral perception called meaning, the signified. The latter is a sound phenomenon consisting of several successive sounds that form the physical entity of the word. We mean here the physical form that human senses are directly aware of.

Therefore, the acoustic image is printed directly in the mind of the listener, which in other words is the psychological perception of the voice word.

The meaning is the concept that accompanies the process of speaking, which is the image that occurs in the mind of the speaker or listener when he uses or receives the language signal (Baraka, 1988:18).

Since the signifier does not derive its meaning and value from its acoustic environment, any voice or any group of voices can symbolize, for example, the animal (dog) provided that this voice or this group of voices is not linked to another meaning. Moreover, the link between the signifier and the signified is inseparable. When we say that the signal is an entity, we do not

mean that it is due to a free choice made by the speaker of the language. We refer to this as unreasoned. De Saussure insists on how or how to connect the signifier with its meaning (Zakaria, 1983: 182). Although some of his contemporaries, Penvenist, argue that the link between the signifier and the signified is not qualitative, which means that the link imposes itself on any speaker who responds to one of the two elements of the sign (Baraka, 1988:19).

Before applying De Saussure's view of the arbitrariness of the relationship between the signifier and its meaning to our language, we must first of all return to our Arabic linguistic heritage and what our modern linguists produced for us. Otherwise, the opinions of Ibn Jini, Khalil Bin Ahmed al-Hida, Ibn Faris and others about this relationship would fade away from our minds. Are not these sounds of letters just mere sounds of real phenomena and events that people use to talk about certain events? It is simply done by adding a voice to another that is consistent and compatible, then adding a letter to another to build a word that indicates exactly what is meant in reality. But if the human mind of the mind is not aware of its reality, the collection of one letter to another randomly does not give the word a realistic indication, it rather gives an abstract connotation that may or may not occur in reality. It may not be possible to combine two letters because they do not actually exist as a natural phenomenon or a finished (Islamboli, 2009).

If we look at the word (طقر / taq'ar)" for example, we find out that the letter "r" in the word does not exist in reality because the letter "Q" actually omitted it due to its sharp nature, so the word was (طق / taq) and it is not right to finish it with the letter "R". the same thing is with the word (سبقر/sab'qar), it is not right to add the letter "R" because there is no meaning in the sound of the letter of "R" at the end of the word. It is finished with severe and abrupt stop unlike the words (صقر/saqr/ eagle) and (بقر/baqar / cows), since letter (ر/r) partakes of the meaning of these two words. So, it is important to take into consideration this physiological aspect and try to respect this when connecting letters together to account for reality faithfully. Moreover, when words are heard, language becomes either an acoustic, functional, or a current image of reality. Henceforth, this reflects how letters are combined together to make words, and thus talk about reality (Islamboli, 2009). The author of this opinion seems to be in favour of what our old scholars, such as Ibn Jani, have said. As for me, this is what I have been trying to delineate all along my research. In fact, determining the signification of these sounds can only be studied and reconsidered in terms of their pronunciation and with their association with the reality it was issued used for.

Results

Language is made up of signs made up of signs which, according to some linguists, have a physical bond with the things they express. While others think that there is a natural bond between signs and the things they stand for. We are in turn inclined to believe in this natural bond which seems to have existent since the evolution of language. But because of the long time span and the development of language, we no longer feel this relationship.

Language is a set of signs that are relationally linked to each other and operate within a special system of defined rules. So the linguistic sign cannot perform the task of communication only within a set of signs which define the relationship between each other. It is also subject to a chronological factor, i.e., it is not possible to have two different signals at the same time, in the same place and in the same language message.

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