

"THE REPLACEMENT OF ONE SOURCE WITH ANOTHER WHEN BOTH CONVEY A SIMILAR MEANING

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Abstract:

This section aims to address a possible misconception that may arise in understanding the meaning of the condition mentioned in its title. It is not intended to imply restriction or limitation, but rather to acknowledge a linguistic phenomenon that occurs. The substitution of one verbal noun (masdar) for another does not necessarily require the meanings to be identical; rather, it indicates the possibility of such substitution whenever there is a shared meaning between them, even if their meanings differ.

This expansion in usage is rooted in a fundamental principle within the structure of the Arabic language. Although language generally follows its established rules and foundations, it may occasionally deviate from them, leading to the use of a word in a sense other than its original one. However, this deviation does not constitute a complete departure, as semantic connections remain between the original and the employed meanings.

This semantic flexibility is attributed to the centrality of meaning within the linguistic framework. Eloquence is measured by it, grammatical parsing is based upon it, and the arrangement of words follows the order of meanings in the mind. Consequently, Arabs permitted a degree of interchangeability among words, provided the intended meaning was conveyed; thus, words are subordinate to meanings, not the reverse.

Grammarians have long upheld the primacy of meaning and have referred to it in numerous grammatical contexts. For example, Sibawayh, Al-Mubarrad, and others argued against the permissibility of using a temporal adverbial phrase (Time Adverbial) as a predicate of an inanimate subject, reasoning that temporal circumstances do not inherently convey the notion of stability in inanimate entities, making the occurrence of an inanimate subject "existing in time" meaningless.

Similarly, this principle extends to the substitution of one verbal noun for another when there is semantic compatibility. This form of linguistic expansion is most apparent in the category of the absolute object (**Absolute Object**), which is employed to emphasize the action, specify its type, or indicate its frequency—for example: "He struck a strike," "The prince struck," or "He struck him twice."

Sometimes, the role of the absolute object is assumed by words that are not originally verbal nouns but are nevertheless placed in the accusative case to function as absolute objects in place of a verbal noun, such as instrument nouns or the words "all" and "some" when attached to a verbal noun.

The rationale behind this is that the verb operates on what its indication signifies—it unquestionably operates on its verbal noun, as in the phrase "I stood a standing), to demonstrate the indication of the term. It also operates on expressions that share its meaning, even if they are not morphologically derived from the verb, provided there is a semantic or derivational connection that justifies the substitution.

A verbal noun not derived from the verb may substitute for the original verbal noun if it is synonymous in meaning or derived from another verb sharing the same root or pattern, as long as this does not cause ambiguity and supports correct comprehension.

This substitution is classified into two types:

- The first: a verbal noun that shares derivational origin with the verb but is not directly derived from it; rather, it is derived from a different verb.
- The second: a verbal noun synonymous with the verb in meaning, even if it does not share its derivation.

Such substitution occurs only after confirming clarity of meaning, which indicates that the Arabs valued meanings highly. Once meanings were secured, they showed flexibility in expressing them.

This linguistic practice has a rhetorical advantage, as it allows for the condensation of diverse meanings into concise expressions, grants style breadth and flexibility, and opens the door to multiple interpretations and readings.

Keywords: Substitution, Origin, Meaning, Verbal Noun, Structure, Derivation.

INTRODUCTION

Language is founded upon the duality of the signifier and the signified, which are intrinsically and inseparably linked. Neither can exist independently of the other, as each is dependent on the other. Meaning, as a mental image or the intention that the speaker seeks to convey to others, is expressed through words that have been established for this purpose; thus, the signifier is the instrument of meaning. Similarly, the signified, as a linguistic construction composed of sounds or letters, if not created to express a particular intention, is nothing but mere noise. Therefore, Arabic linguists have stipulated that speech must convey meaning; if it does not, it is not considered speech. Due to the primacy of meaning, linguists have permitted the substitution of some words for others or the replacement of one linguistic element with another, provided that the intended meaning is assured and ambiguity is avoided. No one should assume that such substitution and deviation from original linguistic usage imply any deficiency in the linguistic rules' capacity to encompass all forms of linguistic expression. Rather, these phenomena illustrate the vastness and richness of linguistic construction, whose roots nonetheless remain firmly grounded in these foundational principles. Moreover, these principles were originally established to preserve the integrity of the language and to define its boundaries.

The study of Arabic grammar has been a persistent desire within me, as any student of Arabic continuously seeks to delve deeply into this distinguished science, exploring its depths and complexities. This study, therefore, emerges in response to that desire and in pursuit of achieving certain scholarly objectives.

This research is built upon tracing a specific grammatical phenomenon in light of the differences that have emerged among grammatical schools of thought. I have endeavored to collect as many opinions and positions as possible, noting some even in the margins, in an effort to provide a comprehensive presentation.

The study adopts a methodology in addressing the points of grammatical dispute by presenting them as they are, without favouring or correcting one opinion over another. This approach stems from the conviction that correctness and error in grammatical matters are often relative rather than absolute, and that this science is based on *ijtihad* (scholarly exertion) and reasoning. Indeed, evidence on any given issue may be distributed among two or more schools of thought, with arguments sometimes favouring one side and sometimes strengthening the opposing view, which confirms the complex dialectical structure of Arabic grammar.

The study deliberately avoids delving deeply into the underlying causes of grammatical disputes, such as the intellectual foundations and references of each school, as such exploration might lead to bias or weaken opposing viewpoints. To maintain balance and objectivity, the study has chosen to refrain from this.

This study relies on a diverse range of sources, with a foundation in the classical foundational texts of grammar such as: *Sharh al-Radhi al-Astarabadi* on *Kafiyat Ibn al-Hajib*, *Sharh al-Mufasssal* by Ibn Yaish, *Sharh al-Tashil* by Ibn Malik, *Hum' al-Hawami'* by Al-Suyuti, *Irtishaf al-Darb*, and *Al-Tadhil* and *Al-Takmil* by Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi.

The study also draws upon other related sources connected to grammar, including books on Quranic parsing and meanings, tafsir works focusing on linguistic issues, Quranic readings, lexicons, rhetoric sources, and other references that provided valuable material.

Although the research path is generally straightforward, it was not without some challenges. The breadth and comprehensiveness of the topic, especially concerning substitution among verbal nouns within all areas of grammar, make comprehensive coverage a demanding task. Defining the phenomenon and diagnosing its precise features proved particularly difficult due to semantic shifts within linguistic structures and the possibility of multiple analytical and structural interpretations, which occasionally allow for viewing grammatical texts from differing perspectives.

From this standpoint, the study has proceeded along a rigorous scientific methodology, praying to God Almighty to make it beneficial and fruitful. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.

1. The Concept of the Verbal Noun (Masdar):

The verbal noun is a noun that inherently denotes a meaning linked to an agent or originating from it, whether literally, metaphorically, or with respect to an object (Al-Fakihi, n.d., p. 139). It is the noun of the event occurring through the verb, such as *ḍarb* (striking) or *ikrām* (honoring) (Ibn Hisham, n.d., p. 391). The intended meaning of the event is something associated with another, whether it originates from it—like striking or walking—or does not—such as length or shortness. The notion that it “runs on the verb” means it is inherently related to it as its root

(Radi al-Din al-Astarabadi, n.d., pp. 399–430). Its indication of origination is clear, as in *al-ḥadd li-awwālī* (“the limit of the first”), meaning it signifies by convention a meaning that is originated by or emanates from an agent, either literally or figuratively, or something affecting an object. The meaning is the event itself; for example, a literal agent: *Khārāja Zaydun farḥan* (Zayd went out rejoicing), a figurative agent: *Maridha Zaydun marāḍan* (Zayd was sick with illness), and something affecting an object is the verbal noun without an explicit agent (Al-Fakihi, n.d., p. 139). Verbal nouns are the nouns of verbs (Al-Mubarrad, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 102). The verbal noun is also called an act, event, or two events because verbal nouns represent acts and events emanating from their agents, literally or figuratively.

Due to the clarity of the verb’s meaning in the verbal noun, some scholars refrained from categorizing it strictly as verbal or nominal. Al-Mu’addib said: “The verbal noun is derived from the past verb and taken from it, yet it is neither a pure verb nor a pure noun. If it were a pure verb, it would lack tanwīn (nunation), and if it were a pure noun, it would be subject to dual, plural, and feminine forms. It remains unified in all cases.” (Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn Sa’id al-Mu’addib, n.d., p. 60). He attributed this view to Hisham ibn Mu’awiya al-Kufi. Thus, the verbal noun is considered to oscillate between nominal and verbal categories, as it possesses attributes of both. This structural ambiguity may be why grammarians refrained from explicitly defining its essence in conventional definitions, merely stating: “The verbal noun is derived...” without specifying whether it is a noun or verb. In its essence, the verbal noun is what the agent produces; therefore, it is regarded as the true object (*mashkul al-fail*), whereas the direct object (*maʿfūl bih*) is the locus of the verb, time is when the verb occurs, and place is the locus of the agent, direct object, and verb (Ibn Malik, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 150).

It is of two types: an explicit verbal noun (*maṣḍar ṣarīḥ*) that functions as the subject, as in the Almighty’s saying: “*If your water were to sink into the earth...*” (The Qur’an, n.d., al-Mulk:30), or as the object, as in “*This is the creation of Allah*” (The Qur’an, n.d., Luqman:11). The second type is the indefinite verbal noun, which occupies the same syntactic position as the explicit form. For example, its occurrence in the subject position appears in expressions such as: *It may be that Zayd will stand*; and in the object position as in “*And this Qur’an could not have been produced by anyone other than Allah*” (The Qur’an, n.d., Yunus:37). In such cases, from the two imperfect verbs (*yaqūm*, “stand,” and *yufṭarā*, “be fabricated”) together with the subordinating particle *an* introducing them, there emerges a nominal clause (the *ism mu’awwal*) interpreted as a subject.

2 – The verbal noun substituting for another verbal noun when they share the same meaning

To begin with, it is necessary to dispel a possible misunderstanding of the condition implied in the title of this section: the condition here is not restrictive but rather confirmatory. That is, the substitution of one verbal noun for another does not require them to be identical in meaning. Instead, it indicates the permissibility of such substitution if they are united by a common semantic content. Indeed, one verbal noun may substitute for another even if their meanings are not identical, as we shall explain in detail, God willing.

The general rule in linguistic phenomena, which language rarely departs from, is adherence to its established norms. However, language sometimes deviates from these norms, allowing certain elements to substitute for others and function in contexts other than their original ones. Such deviation is not an absolute break from the norm; rather, there remain inherent connections that point back to the original form. These connections are never entirely severed, and the departure from the norm is never excessive unless there is a justifying cause. Such departure may, in fact, yield a more refined meaning (Ibn Jinnī, n.d., Vol. 3, pp. 459–460). This is one of the manifestations of semantic breadth in Arabic, as Arabs were lenient in allowing words to take the place of others when they were certain that the intended meaning would be conveyed in both cases (Ibn Jinnī, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 468).

Nothing is more worthy than meaning to serve as the basis for such substitution. Meaning governs expression, for words follow meanings. Accordingly, the criterion of eloquence—namely, grammatical inflection—is determined by meaning rather than form, and inflection varies according to semantic differences (al-Anbārī, n.d.). The essence of word order lies in tracing the paths of meaning and arranging expressions according to the conceptual order in the mind (‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, n.d., p. 51). Because of the centrality of meaning, Arab grammarians used it as the ultimate reference point. Al-Mubarrad used to say: “This is a chapter that is rectified or corrupted only by meaning; whatever improves the meaning is sound, and whatever corrupts it is rejected” (al-Mubarrad, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 115). Al-Jāhīz similarly stated that meanings are unlimited and extend endlessly, whereas the names for those meanings are finite and restricted; words are always deficient in relation to meanings. Figurative usage in words thus arises to refine them, for the literal form may be cumbersome due to heaviness of meter, disharmony of structure, or difficulty of articulation. Meaning, however, is unaffected by such flaws (al-Suyūfī, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 361).

Grammarians relied on meaning as evidence in many syntactic issues. For example, Sibawayh, al-Mubarrad, and others held that it is impermissible to predicate a temporal adverbial (*ẓarf zamān*) of a concrete noun (*juththa*), justifying their position semantically. They explained that temporal adverbials do not contain concrete entities, for the idea of “being located” in time is meaningless. You may say: *Zayd is with you on Friday*—meaning, *Zayd was*

present with you on Friday. But if you say: *Zayd is Friday*, the statement is incoherent, for Friday neither contains nor is limited to Zayd or anyone else, rendering the expression purposeless (al-Samarra'ī, n.d., p. 159).

Similarly, a verbal noun may substitute for another if they share meaning. This substitution is particularly relevant to the *maf'ūl muṭlaq* (absolute object), which is the verbal noun used to reinforce its verb, or to specify its type or quantity, as in *ḍaraba ḍarban* (“he struck a striking”) or *ḍaraba al-amīru* (“the prince struck”), or *ḍaraba ḍarbatayn* (“he struck twice”) (Ibn Hishām, n.d., p. 249). It is a noun that denotes, in its original sense, an event or action performed by or issuing from an agent, and it is in the accusative case because the verb acts upon it (al-Zamakhsharī, n.d., p. 124).

The *maf'ūl muṭlaq* is the most explicit and essential of the object types because it is the very action brought about by the agent. Thus, if one says *ḍarabtu* (“I struck”), the meaning is *I caused a striking or I performed a striking*. This is the true direct object. In contrast, if one says *ḍarabtu Zaydan* (“I struck Zayd”), it is not correct to replace the object with *I performed Zayd*, for Zayd is not the act itself (Ibn Ya'īsh, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 216; Ibn al-Sarrāj, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 159–160, 124). The term “verbal noun” is broader than *maf'ūl muṭlaq*, for a verbal noun can function as an absolute object, a subject, a direct object, and more, whereas the *maf'ūl muṭlaq* can only be a verbal noun.

A verbal noun functions as an absolute object when it is governed by another verbal noun of the same form, by an adjective, or by a verb of the same root (Ibn al-Naẓīm, n.d., p. 190) or of the same meaning (al-Ṣabbān, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 163).

When verbal nouns occur with their verbs—whether the verbs are explicit or implicit—they are always in the accusative because they are treated as objects. It is called “absolute” because it receives the label *object* without qualification, and because attributing the object to it does not require a prepositional link, for it is the direct product of the agent's action. This is in contrast to other objects, which are named *objects* only insofar as the action is attached to them. The *maf'ūl bihi* is the locus of the action, the adverbial of time is the time during which the action occurs, the adverbial of place is the location for the subject and the object, the *maf'ūl li-ajlihi* (causal object) is the reason for the action, and the *maf'ūl ma'ahu* (accompaniment object) indicates accompaniment. These require prepositional qualification to function as objects, whereas the *maf'ūl muṭlaq* does not, as the verb inherently entails it both morphologically and semantically (Ibn al-Khashshāb, n.d., pp. 159–160; al-'Alīl, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 53; al-Ṣabbān, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 161). Thus, when one says *ḍarabtu ḍarban* (“I struck a striking”), the striking is the very action performed, whereas in *ḍarabtu Zaydan* (“I struck Zayd”), Zayd is not the action itself but the one upon whom the action is performed (Ibn Hishām, n.d., p. 250).

The classification of the object into these multiple categories—namely the absolute object (al-*maf'ūl al-muṭlaq*), the object of accompaniment (al-*maf'ūl ma'ahu*), the locative object (al-*maf'ūl fihi*), the purposive object (al-*maf'ūl lahu*), and the instrumental object (al-*maf'ūl bihi*)—is a Basran nomenclature. The Kufāns, however, maintain that the verb has only one true object, namely the direct object (al-*maf'ūl bihi*), while the remaining categories are, in their view, merely “object-like” (*mushabbah bi-l-maf'ūl*) and not genuine objects (Ibn Hishām, n.d., Vol. 7, p. 130; al-Tasriḥ, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 490).

Al-Raḍī explains Ibn al-Ḥāḍib's prioritization of the absolute object over other types of objects by arguing that it is the “true” object, one which is actually produced by the doer of the action. He justifies this primacy by stating: “It is by virtue of the occurrence of this object that the doer becomes the agent; for the ‘striking’ (*ḍarbiya*) in your statement *ḍaraba Zaydun ḍarban* (‘Zayd struck a strike’) is due to the occurrence of this verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) from him” (Rādī al-Dīn al-Astarabādī, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 295). This implies that agency is ascribed to Zayd here precisely because the act of striking emanated from him.

By contrast, the direct object, as in *ḍarabtu Zaydan* (“I struck Zayd”), and the locative object, as in *ḍarabtu qaddāmaka yawma al-jum'ati* (“I struck in front of you on Friday”), do not denote something brought into being by the agent of the given verb—nor does the object of accompaniment. As for the purposive object, although it does originate from the agent, its agency does not arise from the establishment of the object itself; for instance, in *zurtuka ṭama'an* (“I visited you out of hope”), the hope is not the reason for agency—it is the visit itself that constitutes the act.

A verbal noun cannot function as an absolute object unless it is modified or occupies a syntactic position equivalent to that of a modified term (Abu al-Qasim al-Suhayli, n.d., p. 275). Abu al-Qasim al-Suhayli rejects the idea that the absolute object is governed by the verbal form itself; rather, it is governed by the meaning inherent in the verb—namely the trilateral root *fa'ala* (“to do”). For example, in *ḍarabtu ḍarban* (“I struck a strike”), the act of striking (*ḍarb*) is not something “struck” but rather an action, and when one says *ḍarabtu* (“I struck”), the statement inherently contains the meaning *fa'altu* (“I did”). Since every act of striking is an act of doing, *ḍarban* is thus in the accusative as an absolute object governed by the implied *fa'altu* indicated by *ḍarabtu*.

In this interpretation, the governing element is the abstracted semantic content, not a case of syntactic implication (*taḍmīn*), as one might initially assume. Al-Suhayli's approach follows the broader grammatical principle of governing by meaning, as seen in Qur'anic examples such as *kitāba Allāhi 'alaykum* (“the Book of God is

prescribed for you”) (The Qur’an, n.d., al-Nisa’: 24). Here, *kitāba* is in the accusative as a verbal noun because the preceding statement *hurrimat ‘alaykum ummahātukum* (“your mothers are forbidden to you”) implies that this is written by God, as if saying: “God has prescribed a prescription for you.” Al-Qaysi records that the Kufans take it as an accusative of exhortation (*ighrā’*) (Anonymous, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 233), whereas al-Farrā’ maintains it is an accusative of specification as a verbal noun, comparing it to *kitāban min Allāhi ‘alaykum* (“a prescription from God upon you”). He adds that some grammarians interpret it as “upon you is God’s Book,” but the first interpretation is more correct, since the Arabs rarely say *Zaydan ‘alayka* or *Zaydan dūnaka* (Al-Farra’, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 201).

A similar analysis applies to the Qur’anic verse *wa-tarā al-jibāla taḥsabuhā jāmidatan wa-hiya tamurru marr al-saḥābi ṣun’a Allāhi* (“You see the mountains you think are solid, but they pass like the passing of clouds—[this is] the work of God”) (The Qur’an, n.d., al-Nahl: 88), where *ṣun’a* (“the work”) is in the accusative as a verbal noun because it follows a clause that carries the meaning of “He made.”

Several categories of expressions can occupy the syntactic position of the absolute object, including another verbal noun of similar meaning (a subject to be treated later in greater detail). More briefly, verbal nouns are generally of two kinds: the emphatic (*mu’akkid*) and the explanatory (*mubayyin*) (Al-Muradi, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 646). The explanatory type adds clarification to the meaning of its governing verb, for example, by specifying it with an adjective or a numeral; it is also called “specific” (*mukhtaṣṣ*) or “temporal” (*mu’aqqat*) (Ibn al-Sarraj, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 107; Ibn Hisham, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 490).

Occupying the position of the absolute object are also expressions that are not originally verbal nouns, but which are placed in the accusative to substitute for them—such as *kull* (“all”) and *ba’d* (“some”) when annexed to a verbal noun, and names of instruments (Muhyi al-Din ‘Abd al-Hamid, n.d., p. 304). For example, in the Qur’anic verse *wa-lā tamīlū kulla al-mayli* (“Do not incline with all the inclination”) (The Qur’an, n.d., al-Nisa’: 129), *kulla* is in the accusative as an absolute object substituting for the verbal noun *maylan*. Similarly, *wa-law taqawwla ‘alaynā ba’dā al-aqāwili* (“If he [the Prophet] had fabricated against Us some sayings”) (The Qur’an, n.d., al-Hāqqah: 44), where *ba’dā* is in the accusative substituting for a verbal noun.

Instrument nouns also serve this function, as in *ḍarabtu sawṭan* (“I struck with a whip”), where *sawṭan* is in the accusative as a substitute for the verbal noun, permissible because of the close connection between the verb and its instrument. The underlying form is *ḍarabtuḥu ḍarban bi-sawṭin* (“I struck him a strike with a whip”). This usage achieves both brevity and emphasis on the specific instrument used (Anonymous, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 263).

An adjective may also substitute for the verbal noun, as in *sayri aḥsana al-sayri* (“my walking, the best walking”), with the underlying form *sirtu al-sayra aḥsana al-sayri* (“I walked the walk, the best walk”), in which the noun (*al-sayra*) is omitted and its attribute (*aḥsana*) takes its place (Ibn Hisham, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 493). Ibn Hisham, however, disagrees with this interpretation in the case of *wa-kulā minhā raghadan* (“and eat from it [both] in ease and abundance”) (The Qur’an, n.d., al-Baqarah: 35), arguing that *raghadan* is not a case of an adjective substituting for a verbal noun (Ibn Hisham, n.d., p. 38).

According to al-Muradi, the original underlying form is *ḍarabtuḥu ḍarban sawṭan* (“I struck him a striking with a whip”), while in Sibawayh’s view *raghadan* is an adverbial (*ḥāl*), meaning “while eating in ease” (Ibn Malik, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 466–467; Ibn Hisham, n.d., p. 305).

A pronoun may also serve in place of the verbal noun, as in the verse:

hādhā Surāqatu lil-Qur’āni yadrusuhu / wa-l-mar’u ‘inda al-rishā in yalqahā dhību
 (“Here is Suraqa, studying the Qur’an; and a man, when near the rope, if he meets it—he is a wolf”).

That is, it means “studying the lesson,” and even if the verbal noun is explicitly stated, it serves only as an intensifier, as does its corresponding pronoun.

The demonstrative pronoun—as in *ḍarabtuḥu dhālika al-darb* (“I struck that strike”)—according to Ibn Malik is conditioned on the verbal noun being dependent on it (Ibn Malik, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 110). However, according to Sibawayh and the majority of grammarians, this is not a necessary condition; thus, they permit constructions like *zananta dhālika* (“I thought that”).

There are also words indicating a type or manner, such as *qa’ada al-qirfaṣā’* (“he sat in the squatting position”), where the original phrase is *qa’ada al-q’ada al-qirfaṣā’* (“he sat the sitting of squatting”), or a number as in the Qur’anic verse:

fa-ajludūhum thamānīna jaldatan

(“And flog them eighty lashes”) (The Qur’an, n.d., al-Nūr: 4)

where the original is *fa-ajludūhum jaldan thamānīna* (“flog them a flogging of eighty”).

Time or occasion is another category, illustrated by the poet al-A’shā’s verse:

Alam taghmid ‘aynāka laylat armadā / wa-‘ādaka mā ‘āda al-salīm al-mushaddadā
 (“Did your eyes not close on the night of Armadā? And the wound that the healthy one suffered did not return.”)
 (Al-A‘sha al-Kabir, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 343)

Here, the meaning is “the closing of the eyes on the night of Armadā,” with the verbal noun omitted and the time phrase standing in its place.

There are also interrogative *mā* forms, such as *mā ḍarabtu Zaydan* (“What kind of striking did I do to Zayd?”), meaning “Which kind of strike do I inflict on Zayd?” Likewise, conditional *mā* as in *mā shi‘ta faqum* (“Whatever you will, rise”) means “Any rising you will, rise,” and adverbial forms such as *yamūt al-kāfiru maytata su* (“The unbeliever dies a bad death”) (Ibn Hisham, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 493–497).

The emphatic verbal noun (al-maṣdar al-mu‘akkad) is one whose meaning is equivalent to that of its governing verb (Ibn al-Sarraj, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 107), thus expressing the event denoted by the verb without any addition (Ibn Hisham, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 490).

If one asks how this can be reconciled with the grammarians’ stipulation that emphasis requires identity of meaning between the emphatic and the emphasized, the answer lies in recognizing that the verbal noun refers purely to the event itself, whereas the verb also indicates the event along with its temporal aspect; therefore, their meanings are not identical. It is said that the purpose of emphasis here is not to convey every aspect of the verb’s meaning but rather to clarify the essential core and to confirm the actual occurrence of the event. For example, when you say *ḍarabtu Zaydan* (“I struck Zayd”), the listener might understand that you caused some harm. To make clear that you indeed struck him in reality, you say: *ḍarabtu Zaydan ḍarban* (“I struck Zayd a strike”), as if saying you actually caused a striking event (Al-Ashmuni, n.d., p. 206 [margin]).

The implication here is that the emphasis functions to exclude alternative interpretations. Since *ḍarb* is a generic noun encompassing various meanings, and the intended meaning here is specifically to inflict harm, the verb is thus confirmed in this particular sense. The fact that the emphatic verbal noun is absolute (muṭlaq) does not contradict this, as absoluteness refers to the nature of the absolute object in relation to the verb, indicating that the verb is unrestrictedly linked to it.

Regarding disagreement about what may substitute for the verbal noun in such constructions, it occurs in nominative forms like *qa ‘ada al-qirfaṣā* (“he sat the squatting position”) and *ishtamala al-ṣummā* (“he included the silence”). There are three main positions:

1. That it is in the accusative governed by the preceding verb because *al-qirfaṣā* is a type of sitting. Thus, when the verb *qa ‘ada* (“he sat”) operates on the generic sitting, it acts upon this specific kind, which is a subtype included under the genus. This is the view of Sibawayh. Among the Basrans, some hold that it is an adjective to an omitted verbal noun, understood as “the sitting of squatting,” so the governing agent applies to the adjective via the omitted noun. Ibn ‘Asfur rejected this because he found no evidence of using *al-qirfaṣā* and *al-ṣummā* as adjectives in their speech (Ibn Malik, n.d., Vol. 7, p. 145).
2. Some grammarians argue that it is governed by an omitted verb whose implied meaning is *taqarrafaṣa al-qirfaṣā* (“he squatted the squatting”), but this is considered an unnecessary complication because *taqarrafaṣa* would mean “he sat,” so if the verb *qa ‘ada* is present, it should be the one in effect since it is the original form of *taqarrafaṣa* (Anonymous, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 264–266; Al-Muqtasid, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 586). The fact that the verb governs the root concept and extends its governance to its parts is accepted, since the original form is the aggregate of those parts, as a matter of semantic extension (Al-‘Adudī, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 168).
3. As for the verbal noun itself, it can substitute the emphatic noun and must not be a proper noun. For example, one says *ughtasaltu ghuslan* (“I bathed a bathing”) or *wada‘tu wuḍū‘an* (“I performed ablution an ablution”); these are verbal nouns, not proper nouns, because they do not behave like verbs. However, a proper noun used as a verbal noun, such as *Ḥammād* (a personal name derived from the root ḥ-m-d, meaning “praise”), cannot be said as *ḥamadtu Ḥammād* intending emphasis, since the proper noun adds a layer of specificity beyond the meaning of the verb, thus it does not serve as a mere repetition or emphasis.

The verb, whether intransitive or transitive, always governs its verbal noun and causes it to be accusative because the verb’s indication is as much to the verbal noun as it is to time and place—since the verb inherently includes all these aspects. The verb causes the accusative case to be assigned only to what it denotes directly. Therefore, the verb works on its verbal noun without dispute, for example: *qumtu qiyāman* (“I stood a standing”) due to the strong indication of the verb to its verbal noun if that indication is lexical. Similarly, the verb can govern something similar in meaning even if it is not literally the verbal noun (Al-Zamakhshari, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 216; Ibn al-Khashshab, n.d., p. 160).

A verb can be associated with a word other than its verbal noun, provided it matches in meaning. This is an exception to the general rule, and it only occurs when the substituted verbal noun is either synonymous or

derivationally close to the original verbal noun, sharing meaning or morphological root, thus making it effectively equal in denotation or morphologically akin and therefore justifiably replaceable.

For this reason, some have said that the absolute object (*maf'ūl mutlaq*) is a surplus verbal noun imposed on it by a governing agent from its lexical or semantic root (Ibn Hisham, n.d., p. 225). This substitution occurs in two ways:

- **Morphological proximity:** The substituting verbal noun is derived from the verb's root or letters but is not the original verbal noun of the verb and is instead the verbal noun of another verb (Al-Muradi, n.d., pp. 646–648; Al-Zamakhshari, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 216–217). For example, in the Qur'anic verse:

wa-tabattala ilayhi tabtīlā

“And devotedly surrender to Him”) (The Qur'an, n.d., al-Muzzammil: 8)

the verbal noun *tabtīl* is not from the verb *tabattal* (which occurs in the verse), but from the verb *battal*. The verbal noun *tabtīl* is from *tafa'ala* form (Form II) (Al-Zamakhshari, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 217; Al-Mubarrad, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 202).

Al-Zubaidi states in the chapter on verbal nouns that “what is on *fa'ala* form, its verbal noun is on the *tafīl* pattern, and what is on *tafa'ala* form, its verbal noun is on the *tafa'ul* pattern.” These verbal noun patterns are common for augmented trilateral verbs (Al-Zubaidi, n.d., p. 90). Some augmented trilateral verbs align with the so-called “four daughters” (forms), while others do not; the form *fa'ala* and its verbal noun *tafīl* do not belong to the “four daughters” (Al-ʿAdudi, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 215).

These verbal nouns differ from the verbs themselves because, although the verbs may have different morphological patterns, they share the same root meaning (Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari, n.d., ed. Muhyi al-Din ʿAbd al-Hamid, p. 378; Al-Mubarrad, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 202). As Al-Mubarrad says, “They resemble each other in denotation” (Al-Mubarrad, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 204). Both belong to the same root, *b-t-l*—*batl* means “cutting off,” and *tabattal* means “to sever oneself from [worldly matters] to God.” The verbal noun *tabtīl* means “the act of severing,” and *tabtīl* was attributed to a worshipper who forsakes everything and devotes himself to worship (Ibn Manzur, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 221; Al-Khalil al-Farahidi, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 130; Al-Farabi, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 458). Thus, *tabtīl* was made the verbal noun of *tabattal* because the meanings align (Al-Nahhas, n.d., Vol. 5, p. 39). The word that substitutes for another in meaning is thus governed accordingly (Al-Sakkaki, n.d., p. 19).

This type of linguistic behaviour was customary for the Arabs: a verb may be accompanied by a verbal noun from a different verb pattern expressing a related but distinct meaning, provided there is no ambiguity, and the meaning is clearly understood. Therefore, the Qur'anic verse can be interpreted as: the verb *tabattal* (on the *tafa'ala* pattern) conveys meanings including “affliction” or “effort,” but in the verse, the lexically and contextually appropriate meaning is “devoted severance,” which entails effort and hardship in turning away from worldly desires to God (Al-Fartusi & Taha, n.d.).

Undoubtedly, interpreting the text as “severance to God and renunciation of worldly desires” involves a sense of effort or hardship, which is consistent with the *tafa'ala* pattern meanings. Adding this to the verb's core meaning, the verse thus urges patience and perseverance in enduring hardship and compelling oneself gradually to obey God until it becomes a habit. According to linguistic rules, one may say either *wa-tabattal ilayhi tabtīlan* (“and devote yourself to Him a devotedness”) or *batil nafsaka ilayhi tabtīlan* (“cut off yourself to Him a cutting off”). However, the verse only says *wa-tabattal ilayhi tabtīlan*, implying that the essential meaning is *tabattul* (devoted severance), and *tabtīl* is mentioned as a necessary concomitant but secondary aim (Al-Fakhr al-Razi, n.d., Vol. 11, pp. 30, 160).

It is also said that *tabtīlan* was chosen for rhyme and rhythm with the endings of other verses in the chapter. If the original verbal noun had been used, the phrase would be *tabtīlan* instead of *tabtīlan*, because the intended meaning is “God has severed you from the creatures, so you too sever yourself to Him” (Al-Tabrisi, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 158).

Ibn ʿAshur comments:

“*Tabattul* is the verbal noun of the intensified verb *batl* (which is a transitive verb, like *qat* [cutting]). The verbal noun *tabtīl* is used instead of *tabattul* to indicate the actual occurrence of severance—that is, separation implies cutting... The combination of *tabattal* and *tabtīlan* points to the willing acceptance of this severance by the soul.” (Ibn ʿAshur, n.d., Vol. 12, p. 229)

The essence of Ibn ʿAshur's statement is that *tabtīl* and *tabattul* are two degrees on the scale of turning to Allah, the Exalted. *Tabattul* is the higher degree—pure renunciation and severance to Allah—and through it, a person reaches the perfection of turning to God. To attain this level of severance, one must first pass through and overcome *tabtīl*.

An analogous example is the poet Al-Qutami's verse:

“The best course of action is what you anticipated,
 Not merely following after it.”

(Al-Qutami, n.d., p. 263)

Here, the poet emphasizes the verb *tatabbaʿa* (“you follow”) by adding *ittibāʿan* (“following”)—the latter is a verbal noun in the form *iftiʿāl* from the verb *ittabaʿa* (“to follow”). The logical verbal noun corresponding to *tatabbaʿa* would be *tatabuʿan*, but since *tatabbaʿa* and *ittabaʿa* share the same root meaning, each is reinforced by the verbal noun of the other (Al-Zamakhshari, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 217).

Scholars have differed regarding the accusative object (*nāṣib al-maṣḍar*) of a verbal noun that is morphologically related but not literally derived from the verb it accompanies (*mullāqī fī al-ishtiqāq*). Some assert that it is directly governed by the apparent verb itself, arguing that since the verbal noun is morphologically and semantically close, it can be governed by the verb as if it were its own verbal noun. This is the view of Al-Māzinī. They also argue that leaving the phrase without a covert subject is preferable to imposing a covert one unnecessarily.

Others hold that the accusative verbal noun is governed by an implied verb understood from the explicit verb, as if saying in the verse “*ittabiʿhu ittibāʿan*” (“follow him a following”) or “*wa-tabattal ilayhi batlan tabtīlan*” (“and devote yourself to Him a devotedness”), a view endorsed by Sibawayh, Al-Mubarrad, and Ibn Khurūf. Their proof is that most verbal nouns are governed by a verb from their own root, and the implied verb theory preserves regularity. Al-Akhfash permits both views. Ibn Jinni explains that if the verbal noun differs in meaning from the verb, it is governed by an implied verb; if not, by the explicit verb (Ibn Jinni, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 1354).

The other type is the **synonymous verbal noun**, which does not share the same morphological root but is close in meaning. For example, one says:

“*Indeed, I greatly like love*”

because *ʿajibani* (“it pleases me”) and *aḥbibtuhu* (“I love him”) are semantically equivalent.

The poet Ruʿbah ibn al-ʿAjjaj said:

“*He likes both heat and cold,*

And he loves the date palm, a love without desire.”

(Ruʿbah ibn al-ʿAjjaj, n.d., p. 172)

Here, *ḥubb* (“love”) is in the accusative as a verbal noun indicated by the meaning of *ʿajibahu* (“pleases him”).

Similarly, expressions like:

“*Indeed, I hate him with hatred*” or “*Indeed I detest him with detestation*”

use *bagħḍan* (hatred) as a verbal noun synonymous with *shanʿan* (detestation). *Shanʿ* is the verbal noun of *shanāʿa* (to detest), and *bagħḍan* substitutes for *shanʿan* because of their similarity in meaning (Ibn Jinni, n.d., p. 45).

Similarly, Imruʿ al-Qays said:

“*One day upon the hill I swore a solemn oath,*

And a covenant was concluded that was not to be broken.”

(Imruʿ al-Qays, n.d., p. 191)

Here, *ālat* (he swore) governs *ḥilfatan* (a covenant) as an absolute object, because *ḥilfatan* stands in for the verbal noun of *āl* (to swear), sharing the same meaning. Lexicons confirm that *āl* means to swear or take an oath (Ibn Manzur, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 129).

This is also an example of a synonymous verbal noun. Disagreement exists about its governing verb: some say it is governed by the synonymous verb explicitly mentioned, as with *khilfah* (covenant) governed by *ālat* (swore)—the view of Al-Māzinī, who argues that when the meaning matches, it is governed by that verb as it would be by the verb of its own root. The majority, however, hold that it is governed by an implied verb from the root of the verbal noun itself, since more often the verbal noun corresponds to the verb from its own root, and less often to a verb of a different root (Ibn Malik, n.d., pp. 466–467).

Some scholars have gone further in distinguishing the issue. They argue that if the verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) is intended for **emphasis**, the governing verb is a covert verb derived from the same root (i.e., from its own lexical root). But if the intention is to **specify the type or manner**, then the governing verb is the apparent (explicit) verb.

For example, in expressions like:

- “*I sat sitting (jalūsan)*”
- “*I stood standing (wqūfan)*”

the governing verb for the verbal noun is understood to be a covert form of the same root verb because this usage constitutes a form of **verbal emphasis**. Therefore, it must share the same root in both the verb and the verbal noun. However, in cases where the verbal noun clarifies the kind or manner—such as *ḥilfah* (covenant) in the poetic line cited earlier—if a verb of the same root is supplied, the governing verb is covert (implied), and if no verb is supplied, the verbal noun is governed by the overt verb.

This subtlety arises from the fact that some verbal nouns originally have no associated verb form, and some verbs have no corresponding verbal noun. This detailed distinction is attributed to Ibn Jinni (Ibn Jinni, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 1355). However, this somewhat contradicts Ibn Jinni’s explicit statement in *Al-Lumaʿ*, where he advocates for governing the verbal noun by the explicit verb (Ibn Jinni, n.d., p. 45).

Some grammarians allow either possibility: the verbal noun can be governed by the explicit verb or by a covert verb explaining the overt one. The explicit verb governing is often preferred for simplicity and avoiding unnecessary suppositions, while the covert verb theory aligns with the majority usage where the verbal noun is governed by a verb derived from its own root (Anonymous, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 407–408).

Ibn Malik preferred governing by the explicit verb and affirmed this as the correct approach for synonymous verbal nouns with identical roots, such as *ḥilfah* governed by *ālat* (“swore”), rather than by an implied *ḥalafat* (the verb of the root of the verbal noun). He argued that if governing a verbal noun always required a verb from its own root, then expressions like *ḥalaftu yamīnan* (“I swore an oath”) would be invalid since *ḥalaftu* has no verbal noun *yamīnan* derived from its root (Ibn al-Sarraj, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 111).

Moreover, Ibn Malik’s view aligns with the preferred position of Al-Rāḍī, who supported Al-Māzinī’s opinion that default is **not to suppose a covert verb unless necessity compels** (Rāḍī al-Dīn al-Astarabādī, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 303). The practice of substituting one verbal noun for another semantically related one arose only because the meaning was clearly understood. As Ibn Jinnī noted, speakers accepted the equivalence of meanings and allowed themselves latitude in phrasing once the meaning was firmly established (Ibn Jinnī, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 336).

This offers a great advantage: it enables the packing of diverse meanings into the shortest, most concise phrases. When the verbal noun’s meaning matches that of its verb, it functions merely as **emphatic repetition** of the verb (Ibn ‘Aqīl, n.d., p. 454).

Such substitution opens the door to multiple interpretations and possibilities, which is a hallmark of eloquence (*balāgha*). As stated: “*Know that if a matter is clearly such that it admits no other interpretation, then there is no point in embellishment. But embellishment and distinction become necessary when the apparent meaning can also admit another interpretation.*”

Because meanings can overlap, the Arabs tolerated such ambiguity as a means of broadening expressive flexibility—an essential tool for the extensive variety in their speech (Al-Suyūṭī, n.d., p. 124).

For the eloquent speaker, this flexibility in word choice and semantic overlap enriches the hearts of listeners and enhances beauty (Al-Suyūṭī, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 37–38). One benefit is that it multiplies the means or pathways to express one’s inner thoughts, allowing expansion in rhetorical and stylistic methods in poetry and prose.

Summary of Findings:

After thoroughly examining the phenomenon of substituting verbal nouns close in meaning within grammatical usage, and reviewing its stages, the study reached the following conclusions:

1. **Substitution among semantically close verbal nouns is an inherent linguistic phenomenon**, deeply rooted in Arabic expression, and firmly established in conventional grammar, especially in the domain of absolute object (*maf’ūl muṭlaq*).
2. **Meaning holds the primary role in guiding syntactic constructions**; many linguistic phenomena—such as substituting one verbal noun for another or using non-verbal-noun accusatives for absolute objects—are built upon preserving meaning and fulfilling it in context.
3. The Arabs did not rigidly adhere to morphological rules but rather allowed interchangeability of lexical items when the intended meaning was preserved, reflecting a high degree of linguistic flexibility and a capacity to express multiple nuanced meanings concisely.
4. The verbal noun (*al-masdar*) is divided into two main categories: the **emphatic masdar**, which is used to reinforce the meaning of the verb without adding any explanatory detail, as in the example “*ḍarabtu ḍarban*” (I struck a strike); and the **specifying masdar** (also known as the restricted or temporary masdar), which adds clarification to the verb in a particular respect, such as description or number.
5. Sometimes, words that are not explicit verbal nouns may function in place of the absolute object (*maf’ūl muṭlaq*), substituting for it in meaning and grammatical role. These include *kull* (“all”) and *ba‘ḍ* (“some”) when attached to the verbal noun, names of instruments, adjectives (descriptions), pronouns, demonstrative nouns, words indicating type or number, as well as the interrogative *mā* and the conditional *mā*.
6. The noun form of the verbal noun can replace the emphatic masdar, provided it is not a proper noun. For example, expressions such as “*‘iḥtasaltu ghuslan*” (I performed a washing) and “*tawaḍḍa’tu wuḍū’an*” (I performed ablution) illustrate this, since these nouns (*ghusl*, *wuḍū’*) are not derived from the verbal noun forms of their respective verbs but nonetheless fulfil their function.
7. However, it is impermissible to use a proper noun as an emphatic absolute object, as in the case of “*Ḥammād*” meaning “*ḥamdan*” (praise). This is because the proper noun introduces an excess meaning beyond the verb’s indication, thus negating the intended sense of repetition or intensification that the emphatic absolute object conveys.

Based on these findings, the researcher calls for further applied studies that examine cases of lexical substitution according to meaning, whether in Quranic texts or in Arabic poetry, to explore the capacity of the Arabic language for precise and flexible expression simultaneously.

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