

# Nonverbal Signs in the Qur'an: Integrating Theology, Semiotics, and Communication Studies

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## Abstract

This study explores the concept of sign language in the Qur'an as a universal form of communication rooted in human nature. Unlike previous studies focusing on verbal ethics in Islamic communication, this research highlights nonverbal expressions silence, gestures, and visual signs as legitimate and sacred forms of *al-bayān* (articulation of meaning). Through a qualitative-descriptive library research approach, the study employs thematic Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr maudū'i*), nonverbal communication theory as articulated by Ray L. Birdwhistell, and theological semiotics to analyze verses depicting prophetic gestures: prophet Zakariyya's symbolic silence Surah Āli 'Imran verse 41; Surah Maryam verse 10, Maryam's gesture toward prophet 'Isa surah Maryam verse 26, prophet Musa's radiant hand Surah Ṭaha verse 22, and the regulation of voice and conduct in communication Surah al-Ḥujurat verses 2–3. Findings reveal that nonverbal communication in the Qur'an functions not merely as an alternative to speech but as a divinely sanctioned medium of spiritual awareness and worship. Silence becomes a means of purification and surrender, gestures become extensions of divine will, and light serves as a visual symbol of divine truth. Theologically, this study affirms that *al-bayān* represents a holistic system of meaning (*nizām al-ma'nā*), integrating verbal, paralinguistic, and nonverbal dimensions into a unified Qur'anic communication paradigm. The research contributes to Qur'anic communication studies by proposing a *tauḥīdī* framework in which silence, movement, and light operate as sacred languages of devotion and consciousness demonstrating that divine communication transcends speech and resonates within all dimensions of human expression.

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## INTRODUCTION

Scholarship on Islamic communication has traditionally exhibited a marked “verbal supremacy,” prioritizing the spoken and written word (*al-qawl and al-kitābah*) as the primary loci of meaning. While this logocentric approach aligns with the philological traditions of *tafsīr*, it often overlooks the complex dimensions of nonverbal communication that are integral to human interaction ([Pahruroji & Hyangsewu, 2023](#)). In the broader field of communication studies and semiotics, scholars such as Ray Birdwhistell have long established that nonverbal cues kinesics, proxemics, and paralinguistics carry significant communicative weight, often exceeding verbal language in conveying intent and affect ([Birdwhistell, 1952](#)). Similarly, semiotic theorists that meaning is constructed not only through linguistic signs but through a vast array of visual and somatic signifiers ([Behera, 2024](#)). However, within Qur'anic studies, the intersection of these modern communication theories with classical exegesis remains underexplored. This disconnect creates a theoretical gap: while the Qur'an explicitly employs nonverbal imagery, academic analysis rarely moves beyond traditional narrative description to engage with the semiotic mechanics of these signs.

The absence of an integrative linguistic–semiotic–theological approach has resulted in a limited understanding of the Qur'anic concept of *al-bayān* (articulation). Contemporary literature on the “linguistic turn” in Qur'anic studies has largely focused on rhetoric and syntax, neglecting the “semiotic turn” that accounts for bodily performance and silence as communicative acts

(Hawary, Banjarnaor, Ridwan, Syah, & Agustiar, 2025). This study addresses this gap by examining the tensions between normative-theological readings, which view prophetic gestures solely as miraculous events, and analytical-linguistic approaches, which interpret them as structured systems of meaning. By ignoring the nonverbal dimension, current scholarship misses a crucial aspect of Qur'anic anthropology: how the text constructs the human body as a medium of divine and social communication. Therefore, a re-evaluation of Qur'anic narratives through the lens of multimodal communication theory is necessary to understand how silence, gesture, and visual symbols operate within the text's *nizām al-ma'nā* (system of meaning).

The Qur'anic discourse offers rich empirical data for this inquiry, specifically through narratives that disrupt conventional verbal communication. The account of prophet Zakariyya (Surah Āli 'Imran verse 41; Surah Maryam verse 10, for instance, presents a scenario where speech is suspended in favor of gestural signalling (*ramz*) (Al-Sa'di, 2002). Similarly, the narrative of Maryam (Surah Maryam verse 26) utilizes silence as a defensive and declarative strategy (Jabir, 1989), while the visual sign of Prophet Musa's hand (Surah Ṭaha verse 22) functions as a non-linguistic authentication of truth (Al-Qusairi, n.d). Furthermore, the ethical injunctions in Surah al-Ḥujurat verses 2–3 regarding voice regulation suggest a conscious restructuring of paralinguistic conduct (Al-Tufi, 2005). Rather than viewing these merely as isolated historical anecdotes, this research posits them as paradigmatic cases of “nonverbal signs” distinct from the linguistic sign language of the deaf community that reveal the text's sophisticated engagement with somatic semiotics.

Analyzing these stories is very important for current discussions on how body language is used in religion. As Muslims today live in a world that relies heavily on visuals, it is essential to understand what the Quran actually teaches about nonverbal behavior and ethics (Sukmaningtyas et al., 2024). This study challenges the assumption that *al-bayān* is exclusively verbal, proposing instead that the Qur'an validates a “multimodal literacy.” This perspective aligns with recent trends in theological semiotics that seek to decipher how the sacred is mediated through human embodiment.

Consequently, this study aims to investigate the semiotics of nonverbal signs in the Qur'an, utilizing a framework that synthesizes thematic exegesis (*tafsīr maudū'ī*) with modern nonverbal communication theory. The analysis focuses on the semiotic functions of silence and gesture in the narratives of prophet Zakariyya (Al-Sa'di, 2002), Maryam (Jabir, 1989), and prophet Musa (Al-Qusairi, n.d.), as well as the behavioral ethics of al-Ḥujurat (Al-Tufi, 2005). The primary objective is to deconstruct how these nonverbal elements are encoded in the text and to determine their role in the Qur'anic communication paradigm. By doing so, the research intends to demonstrate that these signs are not merely supplementary to speech but are autonomous modes of signification that warrant rigorous academic scrutiny.

Recent scholarship has increasingly engaged with the semiotic dimensions of the Qur'an, though the primary focus has remained largely on facial expressions rather than a holistic view of body language. Yasser A. Goma explores this territory by analyzing facial expressions as paralinguistic cues of human destiny. His findings suggest that the Qur'anic depiction of faces on the Day of Judgment provides a precise understanding of inner feelings that verbal language may fail to convey, thereby establishing nonverbal cues as essential for expressing deep emotions and intentions (Goma, 2023). This focus on facial semiotics is echoed by Shifaa Mohammed Al-Azzawi, Ambigapathy Pandian, and Sawsan Kareem Al-Saaidi, who investigate body language in selected verses. Their work highlights that facial expressions serve as vital communication tools for revealing hidden emotions and psychological states (Al-Azzawi, Pandian, & Al-Saaidi, 2016). Similarly, Hasanuddin Chaer, Ahmad Sirulhaq, and Abdul Rasyad apply Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to examine facial expressions in both worldly and afterlife contexts (Chaer, Rasyad, & Sirulhaq, 2019).

A journal article authored by Lubis reveals that attitude and body language significantly influence audiences in the context of da'wah and communication as illustrated in the Qur'anic

narrative of Prophet Muhammad's interaction with the Quraysh leaders and the blind man, Umm Maktum, in Surah 'Abasa. The study highlights that Allah provided this event as a divine lesson, instructing the Prophet to avoid such nonverbal gestures that might convey unintended meanings (Lubis, 2018). Another relevant proceeding article authored by Othman et al. discusses olfactics the sense of smell as an element of nonverbal communication. Socially, olfactics contributes to identity formation and strengthens emotional and spiritual bonds, exemplified in the story of Prophet Yusuf and his father, Prophet Ya'qūb, who recognized each other through scent. The Qur'an further presents olfactory imagery as a spiritual reminder: pleasant fragrances symbolize paradise and divine reward, while unpleasant odors signify punishment and moral warning. Thus, olfactics in the Qur'an functions as a subtle yet powerful moral guide shaping human behavior through sensory and symbolic means (Othman, Ab Majid, & Yusof, 2024).

While their study confirms that these expressions function as meaningful signs, their scope is specifically limited to facial indicators. Consequently, while these existing studies successfully validate the presence of semiotic systems in the Qur'an, they tend to overlook other significant nonverbal modes such as the strategic silence, hand gestures, and kinesic codes of the prophets which this present study aims to address. This study fills the identified gap by proposing a semiotic-theological framework for analyzing nonverbal expressions in the Qur'an. Moving beyond studies limited to facial cues, this research establishes specific analytical categories: strategic silence, somatic gestures, and visual signs. By integrating thematic exegesis with semiotic theory, the study offers a structural analysis of *al-bayān*, demonstrating that silence and movement function as independent and coherent systems of meaning distinct from spoken language.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative library research method (Moleong, 2022), involving a multi-layered textual analysis. The primary data consists of Qur'anic verses depicting somatic and nonverbal behaviors in the narratives of prophet Zakariyya, Maryam, and prophet Musa. The unit of analysis encompasses specific narrative segments and lexical items describing body movements, silence, and visual signals. Data collection is conducted through a thematic inventory (*tafsīr maudū'i*), where verses are identified and coded based on explicit references to bodily actions and their communicative contexts (Kusroni & Zamzami, 2021).

To operationalize the analysis, the study integrates Ray L. Birdwhistell's framework of Social Kinesics with semiotic analysis. Drawing from Birdwhistell's distinction between physiological motion and communicative behavior, this research specifically applies the category of social kinesics to analyze gestures as forms of "social performance." In this context, body motion is examined not merely as physical action but as a structured mode of interaction that functions to initiate, maintain, or convey information within the narrative (Birdwhistell, 1952).

The process analysis was conducted in three steps. First, the selected verses were linguistically analyzed using classical and modern interpretations to understand their literal meaning (El-Hussari, 2022). Second, the coded gestures were classified using Ray L. Birdwhistell's Social Kinesics framework with semiotic analysis to determine their significance as to whether they point to specific events (indexes) or represent abstract concepts (symbols). Third, these signs were interpreted through a social kinesics lens to determine their communicative function within the text. Interpretive validity was ensured through data triangulation, comparing the semiotic findings with established exegetical literature to maintain consistency with Qur'anic linguistic conventions (Birdwhistell, 1952).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Convergence of Qur'anic Studies and Modern Communication Science

Before discussing research data, there are several basic concepts that need to be studied. Like other Islamic sciences, Islamic communication studies derive their foundational principles from the Qur'an and Hadith as their primary sources of reference. This epistemological paradigm is built

upon the integration between textual (revelatory) and contextual studies, encompassing analyses of the universe, human nature, and the history of civilization (Ritonga, 2008). The Qur'an itself contains rich indications of scientific methodology. Conceptual terms such as *al-nazar* (observation), *al-fikr* (rational reflection), and *al-qalb* (intuition) demonstrate that the Qur'an does not merely present doctrines but also provides a systematic framework for acquiring knowledge (Lubis, 2018).

The key concept at the center of this communicative architecture is *al-bayān*. In Surah Ar-Rahman verse 4, Allah is stated to have taught humanity *al-bayān*. This term does not merely signify "explanation" or "clarification" but refers to a more fundamental divine endowment: the capacity for articulated speech, understanding, and the articulation of meaning. It is this capacity that renders humanity unique, enabling the reception, comprehension, and transmission of the message of revelation. *Al-bayān* serves as the foundation for a meaningful human life, allowing for horizontal communication (interpersonal) to occur in the form of mutual admonition toward truth and patience (Latif & Hadi, 2016).

The findings of this study indicate that the concept of *al-bayān* in the Qur'an functions as a multi-channel communication system, validating Ray L. Birdwhistell's assertion that human interaction is never solely verbal. Although previous studies by Gomaa and Al-Azzawi successfully identified facial expressions as communicative cues in the Qur'an, their scope was mainly limited to psychological analysis of affect. This study advances this perspective by applying Birdwhistell's Social Kinesics framework to analyze somatic behavior not only as emotional expressions, but also as structured social phenomena. By examining the narratives of the prophet Zakariyya, Maryam, prophet Musa, and the ethics of speaking in Surah al-Hujurat, as explained below from the opinions of the *tafsīr* books. Then the data will be analyzed according to the research method procedures.

The narrative of prophet Zakariyya in the Qur'an is one of the richest in layers of linguistic, theological, and semiotic meaning. This story speaks not only of the miracle of the birth of prophet Yaḥya, which transcended biological law, but also contains a profound reflection on the nature of Divine communication and the transformation of human language within a spiritual context. When prophet Zakariyya requested a sign (*āyat*) from Allah after receiving the glad tidings of progeny, the request was not a manifestation of doubt regarding the Divine promise (Shihab, 2005).

The narrative of Maryam after the birth of prophet 'Isa is one of the most compelling episodes in Qur'anic communication studies. Following the miraculous birth under the date palm, Allah commanded her: "If you see any human, say: 'Indeed, I have vowed a fast (of silence) to the Most Merciful, so I shall not speak to any human this day'" (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2012). Following the birth of prophet 'Isa, Maryam was confronted with social hostility and moral accusations from the community that threatened her reputation. In response to this predicament, Allah commanded a unique communication strategy in Surah Maryam verse 26, where Maryam was to observe a vow of silence (*ṣawm*), and only use gestures (*isharat*) toward the infant prophet 'Isa when encountering anyone (Shihab, 2005).

The prophetic commissioning of prophet Musa in the Valley of *Ṭuwā* was not merely a spiritual event but also an event of symbolic communication between Allah and man. Allah did not only speak to prophet Musa but also revealed concrete visual signs so that the prophetic message would not cease at the linguistic level but could also be perceived and sensed. Among the nine miraculous signs of prophet Musa is the *yad al-bayḍa'* prophet Musa hand which turned luminous when he put it into his armpit, and then emerged shining bright white without blemish (Surah Ṭaha verse 22, Surah An-Naml verse 12, Surah Al-Qaṣaṣ verse 32). This sign became the *burhān* (undeniable proof) of prophet Musa messengership, especially since his message was to confront the most authoritarian regime of his time, Fir'aun (Dimyathi, 2023).

Surah al-Hujurat verses 2–3 marks one of the most subtle moments in Qur'anic communication regulation, where revelation no longer speaks about what is said, but how something is said. The prohibition against raising one's voice above the voice of the prophet (*lā tarfa'u aṣwātakum fauqa ṣawti al-nabiy*) and the command to lower the voice (*ghadd al-ṣawt*) are

not merely rules of social etiquette but are deeply rooted in spiritual consciousness (Yusuf & Ahmad, 2022). In the context of prophetic communication, the voice becomes a symbol of the encounter between divine authority and human response. Therefore, regulating the tone, intonation, and volume when addressing the prophet is not merely verbal courtesy, but an existential acknowledgment of the spiritual hierarchy of revelation.

This verse arose in the context of the prophet's companions, who, due to disputed issues, sometimes spoke loudly in his presence. The Qur'an was subsequently revealed to correct this behavior (Al-Qurtubi, 1964). The raising of the human voice before the prophet potentially negated the good deeds performed by the Companion. Thus, *ghadd al-ṣawt* functions as a paralinguistic regulation that affirms the sacred boundary between revelation and ordinary conversation. From a theological perspective, the violation of this etiquette is even threatened with *hubuṭ al-a'mal* (the nullification of good deeds) (Al-Thabari, 2001). This penalty appears extreme when viewed solely from social ethics but becomes spiritually logical, raising the voice before the Messenger means elevating the ego before the truth.

### **Semiotic and Strategic Dimensions of Silence: Analyzing the Term *Ramz* in the Story of Prophet Zakariyya**

The narrative of prophet Zakariyya (Surah Āli 'Imran verse 41; Surah Maryam verse 10) presents a fundamental shift in communicative modality. Unlike Lubis's study, which viewed nonverbal cues in Surah 'Abasa as corrective pedagogical tools, the prophet Zakariyya narrative establishes nonverbal behavior as a normative standard for spiritual communication (Lubis, 2018). Applying Birdwhistell's concept of Social Performance, prophet Zakariyya's silence is not a passive withdrawal but an active "kinesic regulation" of his community. When the verbal channel is divinely suspended, Zakariyya utilizes *ramz* (gestural signalling) to maintain social cohesion.

Within the framework of Social Kinesics, this change is referred to as a "channel shift" (Parapat, 2020). Prophet Zakariyya replaces spoken language with bodily gestures to lead the collective act of worship (*tasbīḥ*). This analysis indicates that, in Qur'anic discourse, body movement possesses a syntactic capacity to issue commands and structure social reality (Wu, 2025). The term *ramz* here functions as a high-context regulator, demonstrating that spiritual authority can be exercised entirely through bodily action, without relying on verbal language that may carry ambiguity.

Instead, it was an expression of the Prophet's humility (Khalil, 2025), seeking to mark that transcendental moment with a new form of consciousness. He had just witnessed special phenomenon in Maryam's sanctuary (*miḥrab*), where sustenance arrived without intermediary (*bighayri ḥisāb*), an empirical experience that stirred his conviction regarding the vastness of Allah's mercy (Ramli et al., 2017). Therefore, the request for a sign was a spiritualization of his gratitude and a desire to affirm his faith through a symbol of communication directly willed by God (Wirtz et al., 2014).

The silence prophet Zakariyya can be interpreted as a process of *tahdhib an-nafs* (self-purification) aimed at perfecting the reception of Divine revelation. By suspending worldly communication, prophet Zakariyya emptied his inner space of external noise, transforming every second of that silence into a space for active meditation filled with dhikr (remembrance of Allah) and *tasbīḥ* (holy glorification). This state served as a form of *'uzlah ruḥaniyyah*, a deliberate spiritual seclusion intended to deepen the connection with God (Al-Razi, 2000). However, within the framework of modern communication, this phenomenon can be understood as a form of "reductive communication" a strategy of simplifying the communication channel to enhance the meaning of the message received (Taubner et al., 2025). By eliminating words, silence becomes the clearest space for the articulation of meaning (Dehling, 2024).

Viewed through the lens of semiotics, prophet Zakariyya's silence can be positioned as a Supernatural Index. In semiotic theory, an index is a sign that bears a direct causal relationship with the reality it represents for example, smoke as an index of fire (Aklan, 2024). In this narrative,

prophet Zakariyya's silence becomes an index of Divine intervention, an undeniable sign that the process of a miracle is underway. It is not merely a symbolic sign but empirical evidence that the regular (verbal) communication system has been superseded by a divine (nonverbal) communication system (Филиппов, 2022). The *ramz* (signalling/symbol) utilized by prophet Zakariyya for interacting with the community serves as a form of substitute communication, a mechanism that maintains the balance between social engagement and spiritual awareness. The gestures thus become a dual-function symbol, simultaneously signifying obedience to God's will and demonstrating humanity's capacity to adapt to new spiritual conditions (Amsikan, 2025).

Theologically, this event affirms that human language has limits, and beyond those limits lies a domain of Divine communication that does not always rely on sound or speech (Adetou, 2024). The Qur'an itself teaches that silence can be a form of *al-bayān* (articulation of meaning) purer than words. Within the silence of prophet Zakariyya, the most authentic communication takes place communication without intermediary, without ego, and without rhetoric. At this juncture, language becomes an inner reflection, not merely a social tool (Turhan, 2023). By relinquishing the ability to speak, prophet Zakariyya actually draws closer to the source of meaning itself, namely Allah as *al-Mubīn* (The One Who Makes All Things Clear/The Manifestor).

This event can also be read as a form of *tanzīl al-ma'nā* (the descent of meaning) from the divine realm to the human realm through the mechanism of signs. Allah communicates not only with words but also through conditions, symbols, and experiences. Thus, this narrative becomes a spiritual case study on how God educates humanity through nonverbal signs (Ceyhan, 2018). The *ayah* in this story is not merely a "sign" in the sense of a miracle, but also an "*ayah*" in the linguistic sense a unit of meaning conveying a Divine message. Therefore, prophet Zakariyya's silence is a living *ayah*, an existential text demonstrating that the most sacred communication is often born from conscious stillness.

Ultimately, the story of prophet Zakariyya provides a profound lesson that in spiritual communication, silence does not signify an absence of meaning. Rather, it is precisely in the stillness that humanity learns to read the signs of God which cannot always be translated by words (Noll, 2023). Silence becomes a universal language between the servant and the Lord, a space where meaning flows soundlessly, and where faith finds its purest, most articulate form (Olague, 2022). Thus, this narrative affirms that Divine communication is not merely linguistic but also existential; it can manifest in word, in sign, and even in sacred silence.

### **The Dialectics of Hand Gesture and Speech: The Story of Maryam and Prophet 'Isa**

The analysis of Maryam's narrative (Surah Maryam verse 26) reveals a sophisticated use of "kinesic substitution." While Othman et al. focused on sensory signals like scent in the story of prophet Yusuf (Othman et al., 2024), Maryam's narrative employs body motion to navigate a hostile social interaction. By observing a vow of silence, Maryam engages in a deliberate refusal of the verbal channel. Instead, she employs a specific directional gesture (*isharah*) toward the infant prophet 'Isa.

Through the lens of Birdwhistell's theory (Birdwhistell, 1952), this gesture functions as an interactional pivot. Maryam uses body motion to delegate the role of the communicator from herself to the infant. This is a strategic manipulation of social performance rules: typically, an adult speaks for an infant, but here, the kinesic act reverses the structure, compelling the community to engage with the miraculous (Keevallik et al., 2023). This finding indicates that Qur'anic kinesics includes the power to restructure social hierarchies. The gesture is not merely an indication; it is an operational mechanism that transfers the burden of proof, validating that nonverbal acts can serve as definitive legal and social defenses.

From an exegetical (*tafsīr*) standpoint, this fast of silence constitutes a strategic Divine protective mechanism (defensive mechanism). Had Maryam attempted a verbal defense (*kalām*), her arguments would inevitably have been rejected, necessitating the transfer of the message of truth to an absolute, undeniable source of authority.

In the context of communication semiotics, Maryam's *isharat* (gestures) which are socially perceived as a weak form of communication function as a powerful narrative reversal. These gestures effectively shift the burden of proof and compel the audience to accept the answer from the object (the infant prophet 'Isa) which is miraculously transformed into a subject of communication (Dimitrova, 2013). A significant semiotic contrast is established between Maryam's silence (which is a Symbol of obedience and *ṣawm*) and the speech of the infant prophet 'Isa (which is an Icon of the miracle, directly representing the Power of Allah). This advanced nonverbal rhetoric transforms Maryam's absence of voice into the presence of an undeniable proof, as the core message (the prophethood of prophet 'Isa) is conveyed through a channel with infinite credibility (Izzati & Rohanda, 2025). This profoundly demonstrates that nonverbalism can become a superior and authoritative communication channel, especially when the credibility of the primary source (Maryam) is compromised by social prejudice.

From the perspective of Qur'anic semiotics, the act of Maryam to gesture (*isharah*) toward her infant is a sign function shift. In the social sign system, human adults are the subjects of communication, and infants are the objects. However, in this narrative, that structure is reversed. Maryam's socially weak gesture becomes the very trigger for a sign transfiguration, where the infant prophet 'Isa, who should possess no communicative competence, emerges as the authoritative subject speaking by the permission of Allah. This event demonstrates a semiotic inversion: human silence opens the space for Divine intervention through miraculous speech.

From the perspective of communication theory, Maryam's silence can be understood as strategic silence a meaningful and planned stillness. It does not signify the absence of a message but rather the management of meaning in an asymmetric situation where words no longer possess persuasive power (Le et al., 2018). By remaining silent, Maryam suspended human discourse and provided space for the Divine logos to speak through prophet 'Isa. Therefore, the communication in this narrative is both transcendental and hierarchical: humanity ceases to speak so that God may speak through a sign.

Theologically and existentially, this narrative affirms the dialectic relationship between *ṣamt* (silence) and *kalām* (speech). *Ṣamt* is not an emptiness but rather a vessel for the essential sound, *ṣawt al-ḥaqq* (the voice of truth). Maryam's silence is a symbol of *tazkiyah* (self-purification) and total submission to the Divine will, while prophet 'Isa's speech is the manifestation of the "Word of Allah" (*kalimatun minhu*). Thus, silence and speech are complementary as two sides of revelation: silence opens the space for contemplation, and speech affirms the truth.

Within the framework of *tauḥīdī* communication (communication centered on the Oneness of God), this narrative illustrates that the ultimate authority of meaning does not reside in humanity, but in Allah (Çoruh, 2022). Maryam serves as the mediator of silence, and prophet 'Isa serves as the mediator of speech, both submitting within a single Divine communication system that unites human stillness and the voice of God. Thus, the story of Maryam presents not only a theological miracle but also a model of superior nonverbal rhetoric a form of communication that reverses the hierarchy of voices, transforms silence into a proof (*dalīl*), and makes gestures the very language of faith.

### **Visual Authentication of the Message: The White Hand (*Yad al-Bayḍa'*) of Prophet Musa**

The visual phenomenon of prophet Musa's "White Hand" (Surah Ṭaha verse 22) extends the analysis from gesture to "somatic signaling." Unlike Chaer et al., who focused on the interpretive meaning of faces (Chaer et al., 2019), this study analyzes the hand as a functional artifact in political communication. In the confrontation with Fir'aun, the *Yad al-Bayḍa'* serves as a "visual regulator" of authority. The Qur'anic negation *min ḡhayri su'in* (without blemish) clarifies that this physiological change is a deliberate communicative act, not a biological accident.

Within Birdwhistell's framework, this represents a macro-kinesic signal a gross body motion designed to dominate the interactional field (Birdwhistell, 1952). The luminous hand functions to disrupt the verbal rhetoric of the Pharaonic court, establishing immediate visual dominance. This

analysis finds that the Qur'an utilizes high-visibility somatic signals to authenticate truth claims when verbal channels are compromised by power imbalances. Thus, *al-bayān* encompasses the capacity of the body to function as a visual evidence system, confirming that social relations in the Qur'an includes the mobilization of the body as a primary instrument for conveying the truth.

In the context of prophetic communication, such a visual sign plays a vital role in penetrating both the rational and emotional dimensions of humans simultaneously. It is not merely a message, but also an experience. The key phrase in the verse, *min ghayri su'in* (without blemish/defect), possesses a highly strategic semiotic significance. Allah explicitly negates all possibilities of negative interpretations that might arise from the phenomenon, such as the suspicion that Prophet Musa hand suffered from a skin disease or a physical abnormality. This negation is not merely a medical clarification but a semiotic strategy to preserve the purity of the Divine sign's meaning (Amrullah, 1990). Within the semiotic framework, this negation eradicates the myth of pathology and affirms the myth of purity. This means that the *yad al-bayda'* is not a physical symptom but a spiritual vehicle a pure icon pointing directly to the power and glory of Allah. Through this structure of negation, the Qur'an demonstrates that the Divine sign cannot be misinterpreted by empirical logic, it operates within the domain of transcendent meaning.

The miracle of *yad al-bayda'* represents a highly potent visual rhetoric. The luminous hand is a symbol of *qudrat* Allah (Divine Power) presented through the human body. In the theory of visual communication, direct and sensory signs like light possess a high degree of persuasion because they transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries (Somaini, 2023). When prophet Musa displayed the shining hand to Fir'aun, he was not speaking with a logical argument but with the language of experience a communication that penetrates consciousness without debate. This miracle functions as a "high-level nonverbal message" that affirms that the source of prophet Musa power is not from himself but from the God who sent him. In the context of ideological and political conflict, such as that between prophet Musa and Fir'aun, this form of communication is far more effective than verbal utterances, which can be twisted, rejected, or reduced by the ruler's rhetoric.

Prophet Musa hand is not merely a working tool but a medium for symbolic revelation a spiritual communication instrument. In Qur'anic terminology, this is a form of *ta'yīd* (divine support/reinforcement) from Allah to His messenger. Prophet Musa luminous hand signifies that prophethood is not only an intellectual function (the conveyance of the message) but also an existential function the presentation of the evidence of Divine power within the human body. Allah communicates with humanity through word and sign, through revelation and body, through sound and light.

When analyzed through the theory of communication semiotics, the *yad al-bayda'* can be understood as a theological icon, a sign possessing a direct relationship between its form and its meaning (Haase, 2022). The white light emanating from prophet Musa hand is an immediate (iconic) representation of purity, truth, and power. Unlike arbitrary symbols that require cultural convention, light holds a universal meaning that is comprehensible to all humanity, it signifies life, truth, and enlightenment. Thus, prophet Musa miracle functions as cross-cultural and cross-temporal communication, because its message can be understood without language "This light does not belong to man, but to God."

Furthermore, in the context of prophetic communication, this sign teaches that the transmission of the message (*risālah*) does not always depend on speech. Prophet Musa hand becomes a medium of revelation, and through it, the Qur'an teaches that Divine communication encompasses every aspect of human experience both verbal and nonverbal, cognitive and sensory. This also expands the meaning of the verse *'allamahul bayān* (Surah Ar-Rahman verse 4), that Allah taught humanity various ways to express meaning, including through visual signs and bodily gestures. Thus, the *yad al-bayda'* is not merely a miracle, but also an epistemological lesson on how Allah communicates the truth to humanity through the most universal media, light.

In conclusion, the narrative prophet Musa luminous hand demonstrates a profound integration between theology, semiotics, and communication theory. It shows that the human body can become

a medium for revelation, that light can serve as a Divine language, and that visual stillness can be more potent than a thousand words. In the modern world saturated with verbal and digital communication, this message remains relevant: true truth is not always spoken sometimes, it shines.

### **Paralinguistic Ethics and Spiritual Integrity: *Ghadd al-Ṣawt* (Lowering the Voice)**

Finally, the analysis of Surah al-Ḥujurat [49]:2–3 addresses the paralinguistic dimension, which Birdwhistell posits as inseparable from kinesic analysis. The *command ghadd al-sawt* (lowering the voice) regulates the suprasegmental features of speech volume and tone. In the context of Social Kinesics, vocal volume acts as a “status marker” within an interaction. High volume is coded in this verse as a violation of the interactional distance required between a believer and the prophet.

This analysis refines the general understanding of Islamic ethics by identifying the specific mechanism: “paralinguistic discipline.” The verse establishes that social hierarchy is maintained not just through words, but through the physical control of the vocal apparatus. A raised voice signals a disruption of the integrational aspect of communication the maintenance of the relationship (Miles et al., 2023). Consequently, the Qur'an mandates a specific paralinguistic performance to preserve the spiritual structure of the community. This confirms that the Qur'anic *nizām al-ma'nā* integrates the regulation of sound intensity as a critical component of social and spiritual propriety.

The paralinguistic dimension in this verse indicates that communication in Islam does not stop at propositional meaning (verbal semantics), but encompasses suprasegmental expressions: tone, rhythm, stress, and vocal intensity. In other words, the Qur'an regulates not only what is said but also how something is said. In modern communication science, this aspect is known as paralanguage the vocal elements that carry emotional and relational meaning beyond the words themselves (Cruz, 2023). In the Qur'anic context, *ghadd al-ṣawt* becomes a model for mindful spiritual communication where one adjusts their vocal expression with an awareness of the sacred presence.

Furthermore, the third verse of Surah Al-Ḥujurat contains a causal relationship that is semiotically highly compelling: “Indeed, those who lower their voices before the Messenger of Allah those are the ones whose hearts Allah has tested for piety” (Mustafa, n.d. ). In semiotic terminology, an index is a sign that has a direct causal relationship with the reality it represents. Here, the physical act of *ghadd al-ṣawt* is not just a symbol but a moral index of the inner state. Therefore, *ghadd al-ṣawt* is not merely polite behavior but empirical evidence of an internal spiritual process the testing of the heart (*imtiḥān al-qalb*). Allah does not only judge the content of the speech but also the manner in which the voice is emitted, because tone is a reflection of the heart. Thus, the Qur'an positions the ethics of voice as a barometer of piety.

From the perspective of communication psychology, control over vocal volume and tone indicates a level of self-regulation and situational awareness (James, 2017). In the context of spiritual interaction, this reflects *iḥsān*, which means speaking as if in the presence of Allah. When an individual is capable of lowering their voice before the Messenger of Allah, it signifies that they have subdued their ego. Therefore, *ghadd al-ṣawt* is a spiritual exercise in linguistic form an act of worship in acoustic manifestation.

Theologically, the Qur'an affirms that an individual's spiritual integrity can be measured by how they speak, not just the content of their speech. The subdued voice is a symbol of a sincere, ethical heart that understands the theological value that courtesy is a Divine command (Diny, 2023). This verse also carries broad contemporary implications. In the digital age, where “voice” has shifted to the form of text, posts, and loud public opinions, the principle of *ghadd al-ṣawt* remains relevant as an ethical principle of Qur'anic communication, speaking with awareness, restraining intensity, and preserving respect for the truth.

Thus, surah Al-Ḥujurat [49]:2–3 frames communication not merely as a social activity but as a rite of theological consciousness. It teaches that the paralinguistic dimensions tone, volume, and intonation are not just aesthetic elements but indicators of faith. In the concept of *tauḥīdī*

communication, regulating the voice means regulating the soul, for every utterance that leaves the tongue is an echo of the inner state. Therefore, *ghadd al-ṣawt* represents the highest form of communication, when spiritual serenity is audible in the softness of the voice.

### **Analysis of the Unity of the System of Meaning (*Nizām al-Ma'nā*) in the Concept of *Al-Bayān*: Integrating Verbal, Paralinguistic, and Nonverbal Elements in Divine Communication**

All the prophetic narratives recorded in the Qur'an demonstrate that *al-bayān* generally understood as "the ability to speak" in Surah Ar-Rahman verse 4 actually transcends conventional linguistic boundaries. *Al-Bayān* is not merely verbal utterance produced by the tongue and vocal cords, but a comprehensive communication system (*nizām al-ma'nā*) that encompasses all forms of meaning expression, sound, silence, motion, light, and even unspoken symbolic gestures. In this system, every manifestation of meaning constitutes part of a network of signs (*āyat*) that connect humanity to God. Thus, *al-bayān* is the representation of humanity's capacity to both read and express Divine signs, in both linguistic and phenomenological forms.

The narrative of Prophet Zakariyya in Surah Āli 'Imran verse 41 and Surah Maryam verse 10 demonstrates a transformation of communication from verbal to nonverbal. Prophet Zakariyya's *ramz* (gesturing) is not merely a substitute for speech, but a process of communication purification. His silence is not an absence of message, but a shift in the communication channel from the horizontal (human) to the vertical (Divine). The gesture becomes a vehicle for *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and the body becomes an instrument for conveying spiritual meaning. In this context, *ramz* functions as a form of *bayān tazkiyah* the expression of meaning born from spiritual stillness and total submission to Allah.

Differently, yet congruently, the narrative of Maryam in Surah Maryam verse 26 presents a transformative *bayān*, where silence becomes a divine communication strategy. When Maryam was commanded not to speak but only to gesture toward the infant prophet 'Isa, a shift in communicative authority occurred from a human vulnerable to misinterpretation toward a miracle speaking by the permission of Allah. From a semiotic perspective, Maryam's silence is a negative sign (absence signifier) that paradoxically produces the strongest meaning: the presence of prophet 'Isa's speech as the proof of truth. Therefore, *bayān* here is not in the form of a word but is direct evidence that pierces doubt. Communication becomes sacred because it transcends social mechanisms toward Divine intervention.

The narrative of Prophet Musa in Surah Ṭaha verse 22 presents the visual dimension of *al-bayān*. The *yad al-bayḍa'* (the white/luminous hand) is a form of *bayān baṣari* (visual communication) that transfers the meaning of Allah's power through the icon of light. The phrase *min ghayri su'in* (without blemish/defect) confirms that this sign is clean of semantic ambiguity, it cannot be interpreted as a disease, but must be understood as a *burhān* (undeniable proof), a theophanic evidence. Within the semiotic framework, the luminous hand is a pure icon of power and the purity of the message (*risālah*). Here, *bayān* takes a visual, rather than verbal, form, yet it perfectly conveys the message of *tauḥīd* (Divine Oneness).

Meanwhile, Surah al-Ḥujurāt verses 2–3 extends the meaning of *bayān* into the paralinguistic domain. The prohibition against raising one's voice before the Messenger of Allah and the command for *ghadd al-ṣawt* (lowering the voice) indicate that an individual's spiritual quality is reflected in how they manage the vocal aspects of communication. Volume, intonation, and rhythm become expressions of internal morality. *Bayān*, in this context, is not just about speaking correctly but about speaking with divine consciousness. Thus, *ghadd al-ṣawt* is a *bayān akhlaqi* the articulation of faith manifested in the tone of the voice.

These four narratives, when read thematically, demonstrate that *al-bayān* is a holistic communication system that transcends the boundaries of verbal and nonverbal categorization. Prophet Zakariyya's *ramz* is spiritual *bayān*, Maryam's *isharat* is miraculous (transcendental) *bayān*, Prophet Musa *yad al-bayḍa'* is visual (iconic) *bayān*, and the Prophet's *ghadd al-ṣawt* is ethical (moral) *bayān*. All four show that communication, from the Qur'anic perspective, is an act

of worship (*'ibādah*) that involves every dimension of the human being: the soul, the body, and the voice.

Thus, *al-bayān* is not merely a linguistic ability but a theological framework that unifies all expressions of meaning under a single *tawhīdī* orientation. This *nizām al-ma'nā* affirms that the body, silence, and light are texts as sacred as words, as long as they are all directed toward conveying the message of Divine Oneness. In this context, communication in Islam is no longer understood as a mere exchange of messages, but as a manifestation of worship (*'ibādah*) the way humanity speaks with God through its entire existence.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Qur'anic concept of *al-bayān* is not limited to spoken words but serves as an integrated system combining verbal and nonverbal communication. Using Ray L. Birdwhistell's "Social Kinesics" theory, this research identifies four clear functions of body language in the Qur'an: First, prophet Zakariyya's silence functions as a tool to regulate community worship; Second, Maryam's gesture serves to shift the speaker role to her infant; Third, prophet Musa's white hand acts as a visual proof of authority; and Fourth, the voice regulation in al-Hujurat functions as a marker of social respect. These findings show that in the Qur'an, body movements are structured actions used to manage social situations. This research offers a distinct contribution compared to previous studies that mostly focused on facial expressions and emotions. The novelty of this study lies in its "Kinesic Framework," which proves that somatic acts such as pointing, deliberate silence, or controlling voice volume carry the same weight as verbal commands. This shifts the academic view from seeing the Qur'an as merely a text of words to seeing it as a text that also governs bodily conduct, establishing the human body as a key instrument of truth. Future research is recommended to apply this method to other prophetic narratives to build a complete map of Qur'anic gestures. Furthermore, this approach suggests that nonverbal behavior in religious texts should be studied as a systematic code of conduct rather than just mystical symbolism. This opens new ways to understand how sacred texts regulate human behavior through the discipline of body and voice.

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