



**Bahadir PIRMUHAMEDOV<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>Senior Lecturer, International Islamic  
Academy of Uzbekistan (IIAU)  
E-mail: [bahodir2674@gmail.com](mailto:bahodir2674@gmail.com)

## PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN THE WORK RABI'U-L-ABRAR

**Abstract.** *This study is of significant theoretical and practical importance not only for Arabic linguistics and literary studies, but also for further research in comparative-historical linguistics, translation studies, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural communication. In particular, it contributes to addressing the problem of accurate interpretation of phraseological units in the high-quality translation of religious and didactic texts. The article classifies the phraseological units found in the work into four semantic groups (human-related concepts, the universe, time and space, and abstract notions), systematizes them according to positive and negative semantic orientation, and reveals their lexical-grammatical structure as well as their pragmatic functions.*

**Keywords:** *phraseological units, Rabi' al-Abrar, al-Zamakhshari, semantic classification, positive and negative meaning, classical Arabic linguistics, translation theory.*

## INTRODUCTION

Phraseological units are considered one of the most complex and subtle elements constituting the lexical-semantic and cultural-cognitive layers of any language system. They possess semantic integrity and convey meanings that are far broader and deeper than the simple sum of the individual meanings of their constituent words. In modern cognitive and cultural linguistics, phraseological expressions are regarded as key indicators of a language's national and cultural specificity. Their study plays an important role in addressing pressing issues in linguistics, translation studies, pragmatics, and discourse analysis.

In the classical heritage of the Arabic language, phraseological units occupy a distinctive place. In the works of linguists such as Ibn Manẓūr, al-Jawhārī, al-Zamakhsharī, and

al-Zabidi, these units were extensively analyzed under terms such as *mathal* (proverb), *isti'arah* (metaphor), *majaz* (figurative expression), and *tashbih* (simile). However, in medieval Arabic linguistics, the semantic and structural classification of phraseological units, their systematic analysis according to positive and negative semantic orientation, as well as their cognitive-discursive features, have not been sufficiently studied. This gap becomes particularly evident in the case of al-Zamakhshari's (1075–1144) renowned work *Rabi' al-Abrar* (Zamakhshari, 1998, 12).

## MAIN PART

Phraseological units are stable figurative expressions that possess semantic integrity and are formed through the fixed combination of two or more words prior to the speech process; they are introduced into discourse as ready-made units.

The study and analysis of phraseological units as they occur in prose texts contribute to a deeper understanding and perception of the text. This important component of language reflects its culture; therefore, studying any language in isolation from its culture – focusing solely on its lexicological and syntactic aspects – constitutes a methodological error. The culture of a language represents the intellectual heritage of the society that speaks it. Neglecting phraseological units, which are an essential and inseparable part of language and a reflection of its culture, amounts to disregarding the principles of translation theory. A translator does not translate words as isolated units, but rather interprets them within their linguistic environment and cultural context.

The study of phraseological units in religious texts, regardless of whether they appear in hadiths or other types of religious discourse, facilitates a deeper comprehension of the information conveyed therein.

Classical Arab linguists also devoted considerable attention to the study of phraseological units. In their era, such expressions were commonly referred to by the term *mathal* (proverb). Explanatory dictionaries written in the classical period and widely known at the time – such as *Lisan al-‘Arab* (Ibn Manẓur, d. 1312 CE) (Ibn Manẓur, 2003, p. 8), *Taj al-lughah wa shiḥaḥ al-‘Arabiyyah* (Isma‘il ibn Ḥammad al-Jawhari, d. 1003 CE) (al-Jawhari, 1990, p. 15), and *Taj al-‘arus min jawahir al-qamus* (Murtada al-Zabidi, d. 1790 CE) (al-Zabidi, 1994, p. 22) – not only define words but also encompass a large number of phraseological units. Books classified according to Arabic proverbs, as well

as the diwans of poets, also serve as important sources of phraseological expressions. In general, all works devoted to Arabic linguistics and literary studies, in one form or another, function as repositories of phraseological units.

On this basis, such works can be divided into two categories. The first category includes works in which phraseological units are presented in a general manner. These are writings devoted to language, literature, and rhetoric. In such works, authors sometimes dedicate specific chapters to phraseological units or provide examples within various thematic contexts. Representative examples include *Iṣḥāḥ al-mantiq* by Ibn al-Sikkit (d. 858 CE) (Ibn al-Sikkit, 1993, p. 30), *Adab al-katib* by Ibn Qutaybah (Ibn Qutaybah, 1986, p. 14), and *Al-Ṣaḥibī fī fiqh al-lughah* by Ibn Faris (d. 1004 CE) (Ibn Faris, 1997, p. 18).

In the second category of works, authors focus primarily on expressions and idiomatic constructions. Their aim is, on the one hand, to provide writers and poets with subtle rhetorical expressions, and on the other, to teach learners of Arabic refined idiomatic usages and familiarize them with the nuances of the language. Examples of such works include *Kitāb al-alfaz al-ashbah wa al-naẓa'ir* by al-Hamadhani (d. 939 CE) (al-Hamadhani, 1987, p. 10), *Jawahir al-alfaz* by Qudamah ibn Ja'far (d. 948 CE) (Qudamah ibn Ja'far, 1981, p. 12), and *Mutakhayyar al-alfaz* by Ibn Faris (Ibn Faris, 1997, p. 25).

During the course of the research, more than 160 phraseological units were identified in *Rabi' al-Abrar*. The phraseological expressions found in the work can be classified into four semantic groups: those related to human beings, the universe, time and space, and finally abstract concepts. Semantic analysis reveals that there are common connections or shared meanings among phraseological units; that is, they may be analyzed from perspectives such as color, disease, war, social relations, and human qualities, or – linguistically – according to the structural composition of words and expressions.

In this study, it was deemed appropriate to analyze the phraseological units found in the work by dividing them into two main categories: phraseological units expressing positive meaning and those expressing negative meaning.

### Phraseological Units with Positive Meaning

#### 1. بسط يدك

كتب الواقدي إلى المأمون رقعة فيها غلبة الدين عليه، وقّع في ظهرها: أنت رجل فيك خلّتان: السخاء والحياء. فأما السخاء فهو الذي أطلق ما في يدك، وأما الحياء فقد بلغ بك ما أنت عليه، وقد أمرنا لك بمائة ألف درهم، فإن كنا أصبنا إرادتك فازدد في بسط يدك، وإن كنا لم نصب إرادتك فجنائيتك على نفسك...

Al-Waqidi wrote a note to the Caliph al-Ma'mun complaining that his debts had increased. After reading it, the caliph wrote the following response on the back of the paper: You are a man who combines two qualities: generosity and modesty. Because of your generosity, you have given away what you possessed, and because of your modesty, you have reached your present state. We have ordered that you be given one hundred thousand dirhams. If we have fulfilled your intention, then increase your open-handedness; and if we have not fulfilled your intention, then the money is yours – spend it as you wish.

The expression *بسط يدك* is explained in Arabic explanatory dictionaries as an idiom denoting generosity. It is also used in the form *مبسوط اليد*, and corresponds to the Uzbek expression “qo‘li ochiq” (“open-handed”). In addition, the phrase *بسيط اليدين* is also employed to describe a generous and open-handed person.

## 2. تُحَنِّكُهُمُ الْأَحْدَاثُ

يقال: هم الأحداث لم تُحَنِّكُهُمُ الْأَحْدَاثُ...

It is said: They are youths whom events have not yet made experienced.

According to al-Jawhari, the word *الأحداث* appearing at the beginning of the sentence means “young” or “youth” (al-Jawhari, 1003, p. 45). For example, the expression *رجل حدث* signifies *شاب*, that is, “a young man.” Words derived from the root *حدث* are also expressed using *سن* (“age” or “year”), as in *حديث السن* (“young in age”).

In the same sense as *تُحَنِّكُهُمُ الْأَحْدَاثُ*, the expression *يُحَنِّكُهُمُ السَّن* (“years make them experienced”) is also used. In his work *Asas al-Balaghah*, al-Zamakhshari describes the expressions *حَنَكْتُهُ السَّن* and *حَنَكْتُهُ الْأُمُور* as metaphorical, explaining that a person described by such expressions is likened to a bridled, well-trained, and experienced horse (al-Zamakhshari, 2006, p. 50). Murtaḍa al-Zabidi, in *Taj al-‘Arus*, defines *حَنَكْتُهُ السَّن* as “tempered by years and experience,” and refers to a person possessing this quality as *مُحَنَّكٌ* or *مُحَنَّكٌ*, meaning “experienced.”

## 3. ذَلِكَ الْفَحْلُ لَا يُفْرَعُ أَنْفُهُ

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) wrote to al-Najashi asking him to act as an intermediary in proposing marriage to Umm Ḥabibah Ramlah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan. Al-Najashi sent a woman who served among his wives to convey the glad tidings to her. Addressing the people publicly, al-Najashi said: “O people, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has sent to me requesting that I marry Umm Ḥabibah,

the daughter of Abu Sufyan, to him. I have accepted what the Messenger of Allah has requested and conveyed my response through Sharḥabil ibn Ḥasanah.”

When Abu Sufyan heard this, he said: “ذَلِكَ الْفَحْلُ لَا يُفْرَغُ أَنْفُهُ.”

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) wrote to al-Najashi requesting him to propose on his behalf to Umm Ḥabibah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan. Al-Najashi sent a woman who attended to his wives to deliver the good news. Speaking before the people, al-Najashi said: “O people, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has sent to me asking that I arrange his marriage to Umm Ḥabibah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan. I accepted the request of the Messenger of Allah and sent my response through Sharḥabil ibn Ḥasanah.”

Upon hearing this, Abu Sufyan remarked: “A noble and honorable man is not refused.”

This phraseological unit is well known among Arabs and can be analyzed by dividing it into two components. In his work *Tahdhib al-Lughah*, al-Azhari explains it as follows: the word فحل denotes a person who is powerful, capable, and honorable. If such a man proposes marriage to a woman from a respected family of a tribe, he is not rejected. The expression لَا يُفْرَغُ أَنْفُهُ, when translated literally, means “his nose is not struck.” However, this idiom has a specific historical origin. As explained in *Lisan al-‘Arab* (al-Azhari, 2001, p. 60), when a person brings a thoroughbred male camel to another person who owns a female camel for breeding purposes, if the female camel is not of good lineage, the male camel is driven away by striking it on the nose. Thus, the idiom came to signify a person of such noble status that rejection is inconceivable.

#### 4. تَكَلَّتْكَ أُمُّكَ

It is narrated from Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas that he asked the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him): “What do you think of a man who fiercely defends his people and fights to protect his companions – will his share (in battle) be equal to that of others?” The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) replied: “تَكَلَّتْكَ أُمُّكَ يَا ابْنَ أُمِّ سَعْدٍ! وَهَلْ تَرْزُقُونَ؟” وَتَنْصَرُونَ إِلَّا بِضُعَفَائِكُمْ؟

This expression may be rendered as: “May your mother lose you, O son of the mother of Sa‘d! Are you not provided for and granted victory except through your weak ones?”

The phrase تَكَلَّتْكَ أُمُّكَ is a conventional Arabic idiomatic expression frequently used not in its literal sense of a curse, but rather as a rhetorical device for emphasis, reproach, or strong emotional engagement. In classical Arabic usage – particularly in prophetic

traditions – it often serves as a form of admonition or affectionate rebuke without the intention of invoking harm.

## CONCLUSION

The phraseological units found in Rabi‘ al-Abrar reveal the semantic and cultural dimensions of the Arabic language. Phraseological expressions serve as a primary means of conveying subtle meanings that cannot be expressed through the individual meanings of words alone, thereby enriching translation theory.

The study demonstrates that al-Zamakhshari vividly expressed human traits, social relations, and societal values through the use of phraseological units. Phraseological expressions with positive connotations reflect values such as generosity, experience, respect, and social prestige. These units are not merely linguistic phenomena; rather, they constitute cultural evidence that embodies the historical worldview and moral standards of Arab society. Therefore, the study of phraseological units is of great significance for Arabic linguistics, translation theory, and intercultural communication.

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