

## Semantic Roles of the Subject in Arabic Triliteral Verbal Clauses

Muhammad Habibie Alfath,\* Muhamad Saiful Mukminin

Master of Linguistics, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [muhammadhabibiealfath@mail.ugm.ac.id](mailto:muhammadhabibiealfath@mail.ugm.ac.id)

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the semantic roles of subjects in Arabic triliteral verbs employing a grammatical semantic analysis framework. Unlike traditional assumptions, subjects in verbal clauses do not uniformly function as agents; instead, they manifest diverse semantic roles—including experiencer, patient, theme, and recipient—determined by the verb's specific vowel pattern. Adopting a qualitative methodology, primary data were extracted from *Auzānu al-Af'āl wa Ma'ānīhā* (Patterns of Verbs and Their Meanings) by Hasyim Taha Syalasy, a comprehensive reference on Arabic verbal morphology. Data collection utilized a documentation method, incorporating systematic observation and note-taking techniques to compile relevant verbal constructions. Subsequent analysis applied a distributional approach via immediate constituent analysis, facilitating precise classification of grammatical functions and semantic mappings. Key findings delineate semantic preferences across the six canonical vowel patterns of basic triliteral verbs: *fa'ala-yaf'ulu* and *fa'ala-yaf'alu* predominantly realize subjects as agents in transitive contexts; *fa'ala-yaf'ilu*, *fa'ila-yaf'alu*, and *fa'ila-yaf'ilu* exhibit experiencer or patient roles, often in psychological or perceptual predicates; while *fa'ula-yaf'ulu* consistently presents subjects as themes or experiencers within stative scenarios. These role assignments are modulated by factors such as verb transitivity, inherent lexical semantics, and the integration of embedded objects.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Based on the morphological derivational system of Arabic, the formation of a morpheme is divided into two types, namely the root morpheme and the pattern morpheme (Allothman & Alsalman, 2020; Devi & Elmula, 2023; Kaye, 2007; Luthfan & Hadi, 2019). The root morpheme takes the form of consonantal radicals that can form pattern morphemes. The root morpheme contains a specific vowel sequence pattern that serves as a template for classifying morphemes into particular categories. In verbs, the root morpheme consists of three to four root letters. Verbs with three root letters are referred to as *fi'l thulāthī mujarrad*, commonly known as basic trilateral verbs (Hadi, 2018, p. 200).

The vowel sequence patterns in basic trilateral verbs are divided into six types (Syalasyi, 1971, p. 21), namely *fa'ala-yaf'ulu*, *fa'ala-yaf'alu*, *fa'ala-yaf'ilu*, *fa'ila-yaf'alu*, *fa'ila-yaf'ilu*, and *fa'ula-yaf'ulu*. These basic trilateral verbs contain lexical meanings that can later be modified through verbal derivation into other meanings. In general, these verbs function as predicates in clauses.

The clause system in Arabic grammar, from a structural perspective, is divided into two main types, i.e., verbal clauses and nominal clauses (Hoyt, 2009; Sawaie, 2015). This classification is marked by the word categories that constitute each type of clause. A nominal clause is composed of at least two nominal categories, each functioning as *mubtada'* (nominal subject) and *khobar* (predicate) (Zahid, 2022). A verbal clause is composed of at least two word categories, namely a verb functioning as *fi'l* (predicate) and a noun functioning as *fā'il* (subject) (Kasher, 2025).

Van Valin (2004) states that within a clause, referred to as a proposition, there is a core structure and a periphery that determine the focus of the clause. The core structure consists of a combination of the nucleus (predicate) and the arguments (core elements other than the predicate). Its relevance to the Arabic clause model indicates that the *fi'l* in a verbal clause occupies the predicate function.

The element that fills the *fi'l* function in a verbal clause is referred to as the nucleus or predicate. Both terms are equally essential as core structures that must be present in a clause. Consider the verbal clause in example (1) below:

- |     |                      |                    |
|-----|----------------------|--------------------|
| (1) | <i>Ḥasuna</i>        | <i>ar-rajul-u</i>  |
|     | good.PRED.3.SG.PST.M | DEF-man.S.SG.M.NOM |
|     | ‘The man is good.’   |                    |

The predicate *ḥasuna* in example (1) above is referred to as *fi'l*, which belongs to the verb category. In example (1), the basic trilateral verb follows the vowel pattern *fa'ula-yaf'ulu* and has the subject *rajul*, which does not denote an agent who performs an action that generally brings about an event. Instead, *rajul* in example (1) functions as an experiencer, namely a subject that undergoes or experiences the state expressed by the verb. This case indicates that the subject does not always carry the meaning of an agent, but may assume other semantic roles depending on the lexical meaning generated by the basic trilateral verb.

To analyze these semantic roles, Van Valin (2004, p. 30) divides subject roles into two main classifications, namely actor and undergoer, by examining the verb as the core of a

clause. Semantically, verbs themselves are divided into two types, namely transitive and intransitive verbs, based on their requirement for an object to complete the meaning of a clause. The classification of subjects is also based on the clause's diathesis, in which the actor marks the subject in active constructions, while the undergoer marks the subject in passive constructions. Actors are further divided into three roles, i.e. agent, experiencer, and recipient. Undergoers are divided into five roles, i.e., experiencer, recipient, stimulus, theme, and patient. An agent is an entity that voluntarily performs an action with the capacity to act according to its own will. An experiencer is an entity that is aware of or undergoes the action or state described by the predicate. A recipient is an entity involved in an action that undergoes a change of state. A stimulus is an entity that is perceived or experienced through emotions received by the experiencer. A theme is an entity that is moved by an action without undergoing a fundamental change of state. A patient is an entity that is affected by an action.

Over the past decade, studies on the semantic functions of subjects in Arabic triliteral verbs have developed through increasingly multidisciplinary and more fine-grained perspectives. Boudelaa & Marslen-Wilson (2013) show that morphological roots and patterns play a crucial role in lexical processing and the realization of semantic roles. Laks (2011) empirically demonstrates a systematic interaction between root-pattern morphology and the distribution of subjects' thematic roles. Meguehout et al. (2017) develop a semantic role labeling system for Arabic that integrates morphological and syntactic features in identifying argument roles. Al-Kuran (2023) highlights the impact of VSO and SVO word-order alternations on subjects' semantic functions and syntactic agreement. Kász (2015) explores verb valency and semantic alternations in Modern Standard Arabic, emphasizing the role of argument structure. Mansour and Jalabneh (2010) apply generative theory to Qur'anic data, while Al-Shoaibi (2017) examines agreement asymmetries across word orders. Further studies address psychological verbs (Alghamdi, 2022), morphology-based lexical resources (Hawwari et al., 2013), cross-linguistic comparison (Hidayatillah et al., 2024), dialectal variation (Alshammari, 2023; Hallman, 2024), language acquisition (Al-Sulaihim et al., 2024), and digital discourse (Fitrianto & Hamid, 2024). Overall, these studies demonstrate that subjects' semantic roles in Arabic triliteral verbs emerge from the interaction of morphological patterns, argument structure, and word order.

Based on the issues outlined above, this study is focused on three main objectives. First, it aims to explain the patterns of basic triliteral verbs based on their vowel sequences. Second, it aims to explain the semantic roles of subjects associated with predicates categorized as basic triliteral verbs. Third, it aims to analyze the factors that influence the assignment of semantic roles to subjects. This research is important for understanding subjects based on their semantic roles as a result of differences in lexical meanings generated by basic triliteral verbs. Theoretically, this study bridges research on verb derivation and semantic valency within the development of grammatical semantics. It also contributes to a deeper understanding of Arabic grammar as studied in *naḥw*, which has traditionally focused mainly on grammatical functions and categories while often neglecting issues of meaning.

## 2. METHOD

This study is a qualitative study with a grammatical semantic analysis approach, designed to examine the relationships between grammatical functions to gain an in-depth understanding of the semantic roles of subjects in verbal predicates, particularly in the structure of Arabic trilateral verbs. The primary data for this study were sourced from *Auzānu al-Af'āl wa Ma'ānīhā* (Patterns of Verbs and Their Meanings) by Hasyim Taha Syalasyi (Syalasyi, 1971), a comprehensive reference on the Arabic verb pattern system. Supporting data and analysis were obtained from other relevant texts. Data collection was conducted using the documentation method with two strategies: the observation technique (reading and examining data sources) and the recording technique (noting relevant data), applied systematically to identify and collect trilateral verbs along with their usage contexts and the semantic roles of their subjects.

Data analysis was carried out using the distributional method through immediate constituent analysis, allowing the classification of grammatical functions of verbs based on the distribution and combination of their elements within sentence structures. A classification table was used as an instrument to map the data onto vowel sequence patterns in basic trilateral verbs, facilitating the identification of relationships between morphological forms and the semantic functions of subjects. The data were presented informally through word-by-word description with glossing according to the Leipzig Glossing Rules, enabling readers to understand the analysis in detail, from the morpho-phonological level to the semantic analysis of the subject's role in each verbal construction.

## 3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

To provide a clear overview of the data, the following table 1 presents the findings on the semantic roles of subjects in basic trilateral verbs:

Table 1. Semantic Roles of Subjects in Basic Trilateral Verbs Based on Vowel Sequence Patterns

| No. | Vowel Sequence Pattern | Semantic Role of Subject |
|-----|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1   | <i>Fa'ala-Yaf'ulu</i>  | Agent                    |
| 2   | <i>Fa'ala-Yaf'alu</i>  | Agent and Patient        |
| 3   | <i>Fa'ala-Yaf'ilu</i>  | Agent                    |
| 4   | <i>Fa'ila-Yaf'alu</i>  | Experiencer and Patient  |
| 5   | <i>Fa'ula-Yaf'ulu</i>  | Theme and Experiencer    |

Table 1 illustrates the relationship between the vowel sequence patterns of basic trilateral verbs in Arabic and the semantic roles of subjects in verbal clauses. Each vowel pattern determines the lexical meaning of the verb and the role that the subject may assume, whether as an agent, patient, experiencer, or theme. For instance, verbs with the *Fa'ala-Yaf'ulu* pattern assign the subject the role of agent, indicating that the subject actively performs the action. In the *Fa'ala-Yaf'alu* pattern, the subject may function as either agent or patient, depending on the context, while in *Fa'ala-Yaf'ilu*, the subject consistently acts as an agent. The *Fa'ila-Yaf'alu* pattern allows the subject to function as

an experiencer or patient, showing that the subject experiences or receives the action. Finally, in the *Fa'ala–Yaf'ulu* pattern, the subject may assume the role of theme or experiencer, representing an entity that is acted upon or experiences a state without performing the action actively. The results of this study are classified based on the vowel sequence patterns of basic trilateral verbs.

### **Semantic Role of the Subject in the Fa'ala–Yaf'ulu Vowel Pattern**

In basic trilateral verbs with the *Fa'ala–Yaf'ulu* vowel pattern, the semantic role of the subject is typically that of an agent. Consider the following examples:

- |      |  |  |  |
|------|--|--|--|
| (2)  | <i>Chasyada</i><br>collect.3SG.M.PST               | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        | <i>syai?-an</i><br>something.OBJ SG M-ACC INDF |
|      | ‘The man collected something.’                     |  |  |
| (3)  | <i>Chasyara</i><br>collect.3SG.M.PST               | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        | <i>an-nās-a</i><br>DEF-people.OBJ.PL.M-ACC     |
|      | ‘The man collected people.’                        |  |  |
| (4)  | <i>Jama'a</i><br>gather.3SG.M.PST                  | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        | <i>syai?-an</i><br>something.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF |
|      | ‘The man gathered something.’                      |  |  |
| (5)  | <i>Thalaba</i><br>request.3SG.M.PST                | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        | <i>syai?-an</i><br>something.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF |
|      | ‘The man requested something.’                     |  |  |
| (6)  | <i>Bathana</i><br>affect.belly.3SG.M.PST           | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        | <i>fulān-an</i><br>someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF   |
|      | ‘A man affected someone’s belly.’                  |  |  |
| (7)  | <i>'Asyara</i><br>take one-tenth.3SG.M.PST         | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        | <i>al-māl-a</i><br>DEF-wealth.OBJ.SG.M-ACC     |
|      | ‘A man took one-tenth of the wealth.’              |  |  |
| (8)  | <i>Tamara</i><br>feed date.3SG.M.PST               | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        | <i>fulān-an</i><br>someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF   |
|      | ‘A man fed someone dates.’                         |  |  |
| (9)  | <i>'Asha</i><br>hit with stick.3SG.M.PST           | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        | <i>fulān-an</i><br>someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF   |
|      | ‘A man struck someone with a stick.’               |  |  |
| (10) | <i>Sahama</i><br>shoot arrow.3SG.M.PST             | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        | <i>fulān-an</i><br>someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF   |
|      | ‘A man shot someone with an arrow.’                |  |  |
| (11) | <i>Jadara</i><br>build wall.3SG.M.PST              | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        |  |
|      | ‘A man built a wall.’                              |  |  |
| (12) | <i>Nahara</i><br>widen river.3SG.M.PST             | <i>ar-rajul-u</i><br>DEF-man.SG.M-NOM        |  |
|      | ‘A man widened the river.’                         |  |  |
| (13) | <i>Karam-tu</i><br>excel in generosity.1SG.M.PST-S | <i>fulān-an</i><br>someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF |  |
|      | ‘I excelled him in generosity.’                    |  |  |
| (14) | <i>Xasham-tu</i><br>defeat.1SG.M.PST-S             | <i>fulān-an</i><br>someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF |  |

- 'I defeated him.'
- (15) *Ghalab-tu*                      *fulān-an*  
 defeat.1SG.M.PST-S              someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'I defeated him.'
- (16) *Xamasa*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *al-māl-a*  
 take one-fifth.3SG.M.PST    DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              DEF-wealth.OBJ.SG.M-ACC  
 'A man took one-fifth of the wealth.'
- (17) *Kalaba-hu*                      *al-kalb-u*  
 bite.3SG.M.PST-him.OBJ.SG.M-ACC    DEF-dog.SG M-NOM  
 'A dog bit him.'

In these datasets, the subject in basic trilateral verbs with the *Fa'ala-Yaf'alu* vowel pattern functions as an agent. Generally, this role arises because verbs with this pattern require two arguments to complete their grammatical meaning. Exceptions are found in clauses (11) and (12), which do not require an object to establish the agent role in each clause. From a semantic perspective, according to Syalasyi (1971, p. 44), these verbs already encode a specific object, meaning that the target of the action is integrated into the verb itself.

### ***Semantic Role of the Subject in the Fa'ala-Yaf'alu Vowel Pattern***

In verbal clauses with verbs following the *Fa'ala-Yaf'alu* vowel pattern, the subject typically assumes the role of an agent, actively performing the action described by the verb. The following examples illustrate this agent role in context:

- (18) *Sa'ala*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *syai?-an*  
 request.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              something.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'The man requested something.'
- (19) *Mana'a*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *syai?-an*  
 prevent.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              something.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'The man prevented something.'
- (20) *Chabasa*                      'Aliyy-un                      *rajul-an*  
 imprison.3SG.M.PST              Ali.SG.M.DEF-NOM              man.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'Ali imprisoned a man.'
- (21) *Ra'asa*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *fulān-an*  
 hit on the head.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'A man hit someone on the head.'
- (22) *Fakhazha*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *fulān-an*  
 hit on the thigh.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'A man hit someone on the thigh.'
- (23) *Azhana*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *fulān-an*  
 hit on the ear.3SG.M.PST    DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'A man hit someone on the ear.'
- (24) *Lachama*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *fulān-an*  
 feed meat.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'A man fed someone meat.'
- (25) *Labana*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *fulān-an*  
 give milk.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'A man gave someone milk.'

- (26) *Syachama*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *fulān-an*  
 feed lard.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'A man fed someone lard.'
- (27) *Ramacha*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *fulān-an*  
 stab with a spear.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'A man stabbed someone with a spear.'
- (28) *Ba'ara ar-rajul-u*  
 dig well.3SG M PST      DEF-man.SG M-NOM  
 'A man dug a well.'
- (29) *Raba'a*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *al-māl-a*  
 take one-fourth.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              DEF-wealth.OBJ.SG.M-ACC  
 'A man took one-fourth of the wealth.'

In the data above (18-29), the subject in verbal clauses with the *Fa'ala-Yaf'alu* vowel pattern functions as the agent. This means the subject actively performs the action described by the transitive verb. In verbal clauses with verbs following the *Fa'ala-Yaf'alu* vowel pattern, the subject can also assume the role of a patient, meaning that it becomes the recipient or target of the action rather than performing it. The following examples illustrate this patient role in context:

- (30) *Dhana'at*                      *al-Māsiyat-u*  
 become many.3SG.F.PST      DEF-livestock.SG.F-NOM  
 'The livestock reproduced and became numerous.'
- (31) *Jazza*                      *an-Naxl-u*  
 be cut.3SG.M.PST              DEF-date-palm.SG.M-NOM  
 'The date palm was cut.'

In the data (30) and (31) above, the subject in verbal clauses with predicates in the *Fa'ala-Yaf'alu* vowel pattern functions as a patient. This patient role is not caused by the presence of an agent explicitly mentioned in the clause, but the lexical meaning of the verb itself makes the subject the target of the action.

### **Semantic Role of the Subject in the Fa'ala-Yaf'alu Vowel Pattern**

In verbal clauses with verbs following the *Fa'ala-Yaf'alu* vowel pattern, the subject can function as an agent, actively performing the action described by the verb. The following example illustrates this agent role in context:

- (32) *Jalada*                      *ar-rajul-u*                      *fulān-an*  
 hit on the skin.3SG.M.PST      DEF-man.SG.M-NOM              someone.OBJ.SG.M-ACC.INDF  
 'A man hit someone on the skin.'

In the data (32) above, the subject functioning as an agent in clauses with predicates in this vowel pattern is found only in this single example. This is influenced by the lexical meaning of the verb, which integrates with the theme similarly to examples (6) and (21)–(23), even though the basic trilateral verbs have a different vowel sequence pattern.

### **Semantic Role of the Subject in the Fa'ila-Yaf'alu Vowel Pattern**

In verbal clauses with verbs following the *Fa'ila-Yaf'alu* vowel pattern, the subject can function as an experiencer, meaning it undergoes or experiences the state described by the verb. The following examples illustrate this experiencer role in context:

- (33) *Arija*                      *rajul-un*

smell pleasant.3SG.M.PST man.SG.M-NOM.INDF

‘The man smells pleasant.’

- (34) *Chamisa* *rajul-un*  
 be enthusiastic.3SG.M.PST man.SG.M-NOM.INDF  
 ‘The man is enthusiastic.’

- (35) *Qaliqa* *rajul-un*  
 hesitate.3SG.M.PST man.SG.M-NOM.INDF  
 ‘The man hesitates.’

- (36) *Naziqa* *rajul-un*  
 be hurried.3SG.M.PST man.SG.M-NOM.INDF  
 ‘The man is in a hurry.’

- (37) *Xasyira* *ar-rajul-u*  
 greedy.3SG.M.PST DEF-man.SG.M-NOM  
 ‘The man is greedy.’

In these datasets, the subject functions as an experiencer, meaning it is the entity that experiences the state described by the verb. Semantically, the verbs in examples (33) to (37) also express qualities or states. Their classification as verbs is maintained because in Arabic, verb status is determined by function rather than syntactic category. In verbal clauses with verbs following the *Fa’ila–Yaf’alu* vowel pattern, the subject also can function as a patient, meaning it becomes the recipient or target of the action rather than performing it. The following example illustrates this patient role in context:

- (38) *Ra’ifa* *ar-rajul-u*  
 have a nosebleed.3SG.M.PST DEF-man.SG.M-NOM  
 ‘The man has a nosebleed.’

In the data (38) above, the subject in this fourth vowel pattern assumes the role of a patient. This is based on the lexical meaning of the verb, which prevents the subject from acting as an agent or experiencer, as the subject merely undergoes the state or action described.

### ***Semantic Role of the Subject in the Fa’ula–Yaf’ulu Vowel Pattern***

In verbal clauses with verbs following the *Fa’ula–Yaf’ulu* vowel pattern, the subject can function as a theme, meaning it represents the entity affected by or associated with a particular state or action. The following example illustrates this theme role in context:

- (39) *Charuma-t* *ash-shalāt-u* *‘alā* *al-mar?a-ti*  
 forbidden.3SG.PST-F DEF-prayer.SG.F-NOM PREP DEF-woman.SG-F.GEN  
 ‘Prayer is forbidden for women (during menstruation).’

In this data above, example (39) represents a clause with a theme subject. This occurs because the predicate is filled by a verb in this vowel pattern. The verb in example (39) describes a specific status, which the subject makes definite. In verbal clauses with verbs following the *Fa’ula–Yaf’ulu* vowel pattern, the subject also can function as an experiencer, meaning it is the entity that undergoes or experiences the state described by the verb. The following examples illustrate this experiencer role in context:

- (40) *Thahura-t* *al-mar?a-tu*  
 pure.3SG.PST-F DEF-woman.SG-F.NOM  
 ‘The woman is in a state of purity.’

- (41) *'Ajufa*                      *ar-rajul-u*  
 weak.3SG.M.PST              DEF-man.SG.M-NOM  
 'The man is in a state of weakness.'

In the data (40) and (41) above, each clause has a subject that is an entity experiencing a certain state. This is based on the predicate being a verb in this vowel pattern, which indicates a quality or state, although it is not categorized as an adjective.

This study shows that the semantic role of the subject in basic trilateral verbs in Arabic is strongly influenced by the vowel pattern (*ṣīghah*) of the verb. Each vowel pattern forms a specific tendency for the subject's role, such as agent, patient, experiencer, or theme. In the *Fa'ala-Yaf'ulu* pattern, most subjects function as agents because the verbs are transitive and require an object to complete their meaning. For example, verbs like *chasyada*, *thalaba*, and *lachama* demand an object, making the subject the performer of the action. However, in verbs such as *jadara* and *nahara*, the object is already integrated into the verb's meaning, so even when the clause does not explicitly show an object, the subject still functions as an agent. This indicates that, in addition to syntactic structure, the lexical meaning of the verb also determines the subject's role. Thus, the vowel pattern in trilateral verbs serves as a semantic indicator that helps predict the subject's role, particularly in action verbs.

The *Fa'ala-Yaf'alu* pattern exhibits two possible roles for the subject. First, as an agent, seen in transitive verbs such as *sa'ala*, *mana'a*, and *lachama*, where the subject performs an action on an object. Second, as a patient, observed in verbs that indicate a change of state or an event affecting the subject, such as *dhana'at* (becoming many) and *jazza* (being cut). This patient role does not arise from the clause structure but from the lexical meaning of the verb, which makes the subject the entity undergoing or experiencing the action. The *Fa'ala-Yaf'ilu* pattern is represented by only one example (*jalada*), which shows the subject as an agent because the object is already integrated into the verb's meaning, similar to the previous pattern. This phenomenon confirms that lexical meaning and object integration influence the subject's role, so not all transitive clauses must present an explicit object to define an agent. These findings align with Dowty's valency and semantic role theory and Syalasyi's analysis, which emphasize the close relationship between verb form and meaning.

In the *Fa'ila-Yaf'alu* pattern, the subject shows two tendencies. Some function as experiencers because the verbs usually express a state or quality, such as *arija* (having a pleasant smell), *chamisa* (being enthusiastic), and *qaliqa* (being hesitant). The subject experiences the condition expressed by the verb without performing an action. Others function as patients, as in verbs like *ra'ifa* (having a nosebleed), where the subject becomes the entity affected by the action or change of state. In the *Fa'ula-Yaf'ulu* pattern, the subject's role is also varied. The subject functions as a theme when the verb indicates a particular status or condition, as in *charuma*, where the subject occupies a state parameter. The subject functions as an experiencer in verbs expressing experienced conditions, such as *thahura* (being pure) and *'ajufa* (being weak). Thus, vowel patterns not only differentiate word forms but also predict the semantic role of the subject based

on the verb's lexical meaning and structure. These findings are important for Arabic language teaching, translation, and semantic analysis based on trilateral verb patterns.

The first factor that influences the semantic role of the subject in basic trilateral verbs is the transitivity of the verb, which refers to the verb's ability to require a certain number of arguments to form its grammatical meaning. Transitive verbs generally require an explicit object, so the subject almost always functions as an agent, the entity performing the action. The *Fa'ala-Yaf'ulu* and *Fa'ala-Yaf'alu* patterns often exhibit this transitive character, as seen in verbs like *chasyada*, *thalaba*, and *lachama*, which describe physical actions and therefore require an object. In contrast, intransitive verbs do not require the presence of an object, so the subject cannot function as an agent. When intransitive verbs express a state, quality, or internal process, the subject can function as an experiencer, patient, or theme. Examples of this can be seen in verbs like *arija*, *qaliqa*, or *ra'ifa*, which present only a single argument representing the entity experiencing a particular state. Thus, the transitivity structure serves as a key determinant of semantic roles, as it directly governs the relationship between the predicate and the subject in Arabic verbal clauses.

The second factor is the lexical meaning contained in the verb, as each verb has a semantic core that determines the relationship between the action and its participants. Verbs that express physical actions or activities performed consciously will position the subject as an agent, regardless of the vowel pattern used. This is evident in verbs such as *ramacha*, *mana'a*, and *ghalaba*, which involve direct actions, making the performer the agent. On the other hand, verbs that express qualities, psychological states, or internal conditions tend to make the subject an experiencer, as the subject only undergoes the state without performing it actively. This can be seen in verbs like *chamisa*, *naziqa*, or *'ajufa*, each of which indicates a mental or physical condition. Verbs that express a change of state result in the subject functioning as a patient, as in *dhana'at* or *jazza*, because the subject becomes the entity affected by the change. Thus, lexical meaning serves as a dominant factor that differentiates the subject's role, even when the vowel patterns appear uniform.

The third factor is the integration of the object's meaning into the verb, which occurs when the object targeted by the action is inherently embedded in the verb's meaning and therefore does not need to be explicitly mentioned in the clause. In Arabic, some verbs semantically presuppose a specific object, such as a body part or a particular entity, which does not require repetition within the sentence structure. Clear examples can be seen in verbs like *jalada* (affecting the skin), *ra'asa* (affecting the head), and *xamasa* (taking one-fifth). These verbs can appear without an explicit object, yet they semantically maintain an argument structure that positions the subject as an agent. This phenomenon also explains why some verbs appear superficially intransitive but still present the subject as an agent, because the object is implied through the verb's meaning. This integration of meaning ensures that the semantic relationship remains complete, even when the syntactic form appears simple. Thus, the integration of object meaning is an important factor that enriches the variation of subject roles in basic trilateral verbs and explains certain deviations from apparent transitivity patterns.

Building on previous studies, this research acknowledges that the semantic roles of subjects in Arabic trilateral verbs are shaped by interactions between morphology, syntax, and argument structure, as demonstrated by Boudelaa & Marslen-Wilson (2013), Laks (2011), and Kász (2015). However, earlier research tends to examine these factors in isolation, focusing either on root-pattern morphology, word order variation, or specific verb classes such as psychological verbs (Alghamdi, 2022). Computational and descriptive approaches, including semantic role labeling (Meguehout et al., 2017) and dialectal studies (Alshammari, 2023; Hallman, 2024), offer broad coverage but often overlook the interaction between vowel patterns and inherent verb semantics. Moreover, generative and acquisition-based studies emphasize structural representation rather than semantic motivation. In contrast, the present study contributes novelty by systematically linking vowel sequences of basic trilateral verbs with subject semantic roles through the combined effects of transitivity, lexical meaning, and object integration. This approach critically extends prior findings by demonstrating that vocalic patterns are not merely morphological markers but function as semantic cues shaping subject roles, thus addressing a gap in existing Arabic verb studies.

This study supports Dowty's (1991) semantic role theory, which posits that agents, patients, and experiencers can be predicted from the properties of verbs, and it reinforces the framework of Role and Reference Grammar (Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997), which emphasizes the relationship between morphology, syntax, and the thematic roles of subjects. The findings on vowel patterns in Arabic trilateral verbs also align with valency theory (Hale & Keyser, 1993), which states that the number and type of arguments determine the role of the subject. Furthermore, Syalasyi's (1971) concept of inherent objects explains why some verbs assign the subject as an agent even when the clause appears intransitive. This study is also relevant to Vendler's (1967) aspectual theory, as stative or property verbs tend to yield subjects as experiencers or themes. Thus, this research integrates lexical, syntactic, and semantic theories, demonstrating that vowel patterns not only distinguish word forms but also influence the realization of subjects' semantic roles, while opening opportunities for morpho-semantic analysis of derived verbs and Arabic dialects.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for the advancement of Arabic linguistic theory and its practical applications. Theoretically, this research substantiates the hypothesis that morphological patterns in Semitic languages transcend mere derivational mechanisms, functioning instead as a system that encodes semantically relevant information concerning argument roles. From a diachronic perspective, subjects in classical *naḥw* were exclusively categorized under the *raf'* (nominative) case applicable to nouns alone, without elucidating their classification, as classical *naḥw* analysis was predicated solely on morpho-syntax rather than grammatical semantics. This insight enriches comprehension of the morphology-semantics interface in languages featuring intricate root-and-pattern systems. Practically, the results prove beneficial for Arabic language pedagogy, enabling learners to systematically grasp the verbal system by correlating morphological patterns with distinct semantic roles of subjects. Moreover, this study holds potential for application in developing natural language processing

(NLP) technologies for Arabic, particularly in semantic role labeling tasks necessitating precise identification of argument roles. Further implications underscore the necessity for comparative studies with other Semitic languages to validate the generalizations of patterns identified herein.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is a strong correlation between the vowel patterns of basic trilateral verbs in Arabic and the realized semantic roles of their subjects. The six main vowel patterns (*fa'ala-yaf'ulu*, *fa'ala-yaf'alu*, *fa'ala-yaf'ilu*, *fa'ila-yaf'alu*, *fa'ila-yaf'ilu*, and *fa'ula-yaf'ulu*) exhibit different semantic preferences in determining subject roles. Subjects of transitive verbs with the *fa'ala-yaf'ulu* and *fa'ala-yaf'alu* patterns generally function as agents, whereas in the *fa'ila-yaf'alu* and *fa'ula-yaf'ulu* patterns, subjects tend to express more complex roles such as experiencer, stimulus, or theme. This classification makes a significant contribution to a deeper understanding of Arabic semantics, particularly in analyzing the systematic relationship between morphology and meaning. The applied distributional analysis demonstrates that this method is effective in identifying and classifying the semantic roles of subjects within the complex Arabic verbal system. The semantic role of the subject in basic trilateral verbs is influenced by the verb's transitivity, its inherent lexical meaning, and the integration of the object's meaning into the verb, which may eliminate the need for explicit object expression in the clause.

This study has several limitations. First, the data are limited to basic trilateral verbs, so the results cannot yet be generalized to derived verbs or more complex *mazid* verbs. Second, the research focuses on vowel patterns and the semantic roles of subjects, but it does not analyze variations across Arabic dialects or the use of verbs in modern texts extensively. Third, much of the analysis remains descriptive, without measuring the frequency or distribution of subject roles quantitatively within a large corpus. For future research, it is recommended to analyze derived verbs and more complex vowel patterns, including the influence of valency and word order on the semantic roles of subjects. Comparative studies between Arabic dialects, Classical Arabic, and Modern Standard Arabic are also important. Additionally, integrating quantitative and corpus-based methods could provide a broader understanding of patterns in the realization of subject roles.

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