



Jurnal Ulunnuha
P-ISSN : 2086-3721 E-ISSN: 2865-6050
Vol. 14 No.1/June 2025

<https://ejournal.uinib.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/ulunnuha/index>

DOI: 10.15548/ju.v13i1.9840

The Semiotic Structure of *Tafākhur* in the Qur'an: A Structuralist Perspective on Modern Flexing Phenomena

Izatul Muhidah Maulidiyah

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University

E-mail: izamaulidiyah23@gmail.com

Abstract:

The concept of thematic interpretation, as developed by al-Farmawi based on the Qur'anic text, provides a contextual framework for exploring flexible and evolving ideas. This article examines *tafākhur* as a key term in the Qur'an's deconstruction of the modern phenomenon of "flexing." The study approaches *tafākhur* through the lens of the philosophy of language, employing Ferdinand de Saussure's structural semiotics as its primary analytical framework. Through this lens, the article argues that the term *tafākhur*, when analyzed using Saussurean semiotics, reveals significant relevance to the contemporary notion of "flexing" a social behavior characterized by ostentatious displays of wealth, status, and achievement. The analysis identifies two levels of meaning embedded in *tafākhur*. At the first level, *tafākhur* functions as a signifier associated with a sense of pride experienced by the believers after the event of *Fathu Makkah*, with the signified being the abstract concept of pride itself. At the second level, *tafākhur* signifies pride rooted in material possessions and worldly achievements—such as wealth, career, social status, and personal abilities—reflecting a form of boasting tied to temporal, worldly attributes.

Keywords: *Ferdinand de Saussure, Flexing, Structural Semiotic, Tafākhur*

INTRODUCTION

The term *tafākhur* and its derivatives are often used to describe the concept of flexing from the perspective of the Qur'an.¹ They're a starting point for looking at modern issues based on the Quran. New terms aren't literally in the Quran or old interpretations. The researchers have to figure out the key words that are related.² Therefore, modern issues can be studied from the perspective of the Qur'an in a scientific and non-arbitrary manner. Interpretation of the term *tafākhur* and its derivatives is considered relevant to the concept of flexing. *Tafākhur* derives from the root word *fakhara*, which conveys the meaning of pride

¹ Mohammad Farhan Firdaus Al Asyari, "Budaya Flexing Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Studi Analisis Ma'na Cum Maghza)" (UIN Kiai Haj Achmad Siddiq Jember, 2024). Nur Shadiq Sandimula, Syarifuddin Syarifuddin, and Ridwan Jawal, "Meneropong Fenomena Flexing Dalam Al-Qur'an: Analisis Semantik QS. Al-Hadid [57]: 20," *Studia Quranika: Jurnal Studi Quran* 9, no. 1 (2024).

² Sebagaimana kajian terhadap konsep *hedonisme* dan *insecure* yang menggunakan kata kunci *tafākhur*, sebagai kata yang mampu ditemukan dalam al-Qur'an. Jurahman, "Hedonisme Dalam Al-Qur'an (Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsirnya Cetakan Kemenag RI)," 2022. Fika Natasya Umala, "Fenomena Insecure Dan Terapinya Dalam Al-Qur'an (Analisis Penyingkapan Term Khauf Dan Huzn Dalam Al-Qur'an)" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2022), Maulina Rahmayani, "Pandangan Mufasir Jawa Terhadap Kata Fakhur (Studi Analisis Tafsir Al-Ibriz Li Ma'rifah Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Az-z karya Bisri Musthofa (w. 1977 M) Dan Tafsir Al-Iklil f-Ma'an Al-Tanzil Karya Misbah Zainal Musthofa (w. 1994 M))" (Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an Jakarta, 2022). Layyinat Sifa, Muhammad Syachrofi, and Winarto, "Flexing Culture From The Qur'anic Perspective: Between Lifestyle And The," *Tajdid* 22, no. 2 (2023): 566–90.

in something external to oneself, such as one's position or wealth.³ Terminologically, the term *tafākhur* is the *masdar* form of the root word *tafākhara-yatafākharu*, meaning to compete, to boast of one's greatness. Based on the word *fakhara-yafkharu*, it means to glorify oneself, to boast of one's greatness.⁴ Such meaning is manifested in the Qur'an by presenting a correlation between words related to worldly matters. This article will examine in depth the concept of *tafākhur*, which continues to evolve along with the development of approaches to understanding the Qur'an.

Previous research has focused on the meaning of *fakhara* and its derivatives in three ways: First, the application of *fakhara* as a starting point for examining modern issues, as conducted by Ade Irma Yunita through the interpretation of verses considered to have conceptual relevance to the flexing of the term “lafaz *fakhara*,” based on the thoughts of Quraish Shihab.⁵ Based on verses that use the word “*fakhara*”, Fahri Ramadhan examines flexing in the Qur'an through the Al-Misbah interpretation.⁶ A review was also conducted by Apipah Novianti in examining the trend of flexing, departing from the same verse with a psychological approach.⁷ Second, studying the true meaning of *fakhara* in the verses of *fakhūr*. Mohd. Asro Amali studied the meaning of the verses of *fakhūr* in al-Sya'rawi's tafsir using Thosiko Izutsu's semantic approach.⁸ Next up is Istifadlatul Rahmah, who takes a direct approach to the Quranic text, trying to interpret the meaning of the verses by comparing them with the Prophet's hadiths.⁹

Third, Ferdinand de Saussure's structural semiotic approach in the study of the Qur'an. The application of Ferdinand de Saussure's modern linguistic ideas has been widely practiced, whether with the material objects of words, verses, chapters, or the correlation of words in the Qur'an. The third type of study that is related to this article is the first and second types. Research on the meaning of the word *kazb* conducted by Ahmad Midrar Sa'dina,¹⁰ al-Asnām oleh Fathul Yusri,¹¹ and *Tabarruj* by Faridah.¹² Meanwhile, a study of the verse has been conducted by Saniatul Hidayah on QS. al-

³ Rāghib al-Asfahāny, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ Al-Qur'an* (Damaskus: Dār al-Qalam, 2011).

⁴ Mahmud Yunus, *Kamus Arab-Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT. Mahmud Yunus Wadzurriyah, 2007).

⁵ Ade Irma Yunita, “Fenomena Flexing Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Studi Analisis Terhadap Kitab Tafsir Al-Mishbah)” (Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ) Jakarta, 2023).

⁶ F Ramadhan, “Trend Flexing Dalam Al-Qur'an (Studi Tafsir Tematik Dalam Tafsir Al-Mishbah)” (Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, 2022), [http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/eprint/17556/%0Ahttp://repository.uinsu.ac.id/17556/2/BAB I.pdf](http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/eprint/17556/%0Ahttp://repository.uinsu.ac.id/17556/2/BAB%20I.pdf).

⁷ Apipah Novianti, “Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Fakhara Dan Padanannya (Flexing) Dalam Al-Qur'an Dengan Pendekatan Psikologi” (Universitas Islam Negeri Sunung Gunung Djati, 2023).

⁸ Mohd. Asro Amali, “Fakhur Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Kajian Tafsir Tematik)” (UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim, 2022).

⁹ Istifadlatul Rahmah, “Ayat-Ayat Fakhūr Dalam Al-Qur'an (Analisis Semantik Perspektif Toshihiko Izutsu Dalam Tafsir Asy-Sya'rāwī)” (Institut Agama Islam Negeri Madura, 2023).

¹⁰ Ahmad Midrar, “Kazb Dalam Al-Qur'an : Analisis Linguistik Struktural Ferdinand De Saussure” 2, no. 3 (2023): 259–64.

¹¹ Fatihul Yusri, “Makna Al-Asnam Dalam Al-Qur'an Dengan Pendekatan Semiotika Ferdinand de Saussure” (UIN Kiai Achmad Siddiq Jember, 2022).

¹² Faridah, “Semiotika Tabarruj dalam Al-Qur'an: Penafsiran Qs. Al-Ahzāb [33]: 33 dan QS. An-Nūr [24]: 31 Perspektif Ferdinand De Saussure” (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2019).

Taubah (9): 123¹³ and Rianto Hasan on Qs. Al-A'raf (7);34.¹⁴ Different from the research I'm gonna do, my research will re-examine the word *fakḥara* and its derivatives as a basis for studying flexing as a modern issue through a structural framework of symbolic meaning, Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach through reading Qs. Al-Hadid (57);20 as the material object.

The structure forming the meaning of *tafāḥbur* in QS. al-Hadid/57:20 through Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach is the focus of this article. Based on this verse, it is argued that the verse has a context related to material possessions, so it is considered to have significance for the concept of flexing compared to other verses. The Ferdinand de Saussure semiotic approach is considered effective for analyzing the meaning of a symbol through various structural aspects related to language and historical development.¹⁵ By analyzing its constituent structures, it will hopefully be possible to construct a comprehensive interpretation of the meaning of the symbol "*tafāḥbur*." The previous arguments suggest that this research will contribute new insights into the interpretation of symbols, making it worthy of further study. A comprehensive interpretation of the symbol will lead to an effective and ideal interpretation, thereby establishing the relevance of the Qur'an to modern issues, specifically the phenomenon of flexing. This is because the Qur'an, as an open corpus, does not restrict any form of study of it, whether in the form of reading, interpretation, translation, or as a reference source.¹⁶

These studies employ qualitative methods with a literature review. Qualitative methods are used to interpret the meaning of *tafāḥbur* as Ferdinand de Saussure's structural semiotic approach serves as the basis for drawing conclusions.¹⁷ As for the data sources on this research, it uses primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources focus on the interpretation of *tafāḥbur* in Qs. Al-Hadid/57:20 and verses that are correlated with it, while secondary data sources in this study include language dictionaries, history books, and representative tafsir books in the interpretation of words; classical-contemporary. The extracted data will be analyzed using a content analysis scheme, with the analysis process involving measurement of meaning, word relationships, social conditions, or concepts that can produce a comprehensive, non-partial interpretation.¹⁸

¹³ Saniatul Hidayah, "Analisis Semiotik Ferdinand De Saussure Terhadap Q.S. Al-Taubah (9): 123," *Pappasang* 5, no. 1 (2023).

¹⁴ Rianto Hasan, "Keruntuhan Peradaban Suatu Masyarakat Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Implementasi Analisis Sintagmatik-Paradigmatik Ferdinand De Saussure Interpretasi QS. Al-A'raf[7]: 34)" 15, no. 1 (2019): 59–76.

¹⁵ Ziyadatul Fadhliyah, "Semiotika Ferdinand de Saussure Sebagai Metode Penafsiran Al-Qur'an: Kajian Teoritis," *Al-Afkar* 4, no. 1 (2021): 109–22, https://al-afkar.com/index.php/Afkar_Journal/issue/view/4.

¹⁶ Muallifah Muallifah, Khodijah Samosir, and Hasani Ahmad Said, "Metodologi Tafsir Modern - Kontemporer Di Indonesia," *Al Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 2 (2022): 302–14, <https://doi.org/10.58518/alfurqon.v5i2.1401>.

¹⁷ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: SAGE Publications, 1994).

¹⁸ Kimberly A. Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis: Guidebook* (California: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ferdinand de Saussure

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) was born in Geneva, Switzerland, into a family of academics in the scientific field.¹⁹ His introduction to linguistic studies came through his family's acquaintance with a family friend (Adolf Pictet), who later became Saussure's teacher. Saussure was still quite young when he met Pictet. In fact, by the age of fifteen, he had already studied a variety of languages, including Greek, French, German, English, and Latin. His mastery of various languages led him to discover a common language system through the comparisons he observed. He attempted to write about his discovery in an essay titled "Essay of Languages," which he gave to Pictet. In the essay, he concluded that all languages stem from a system of two or three basic consonants. The work was not directly responded to by Pictet, which led to the character assassination of his student who was beginning to learn Sanskrit; he merely smiled at the extreme reductionism.²⁰

Saussure did not simply accept the variety of languages he mastered and the linguistic studies he pursued. He carefully examined his studies with critical thinking and experienced anxiety about the linguistics he had learned. Saussure believed that his predecessors did not think critically about what they had done. Saussure contributed his thoughts to focus on the unconscious patterns and the unity of the system that shapes an individual and their observable behavior.²¹ The behavior of humans became the basis of Saussure's studies. The author introduced the science of signs, sign systems, and structuralism. He offered ideas about language as a sign system. As a sign system, it must be able to express ideas. These ideas were then systematically formulated by Saussure using the terms signifier and signified. Together, they form a sign.²² Sign meaning can be analyzed in terms of sign structure: *Langue-Parole*, *Syntactic-Paradigmatic*, *Synchronic-Diachronic*, until the concepts of sign-signified and signifier are manifested. This will be explained in the next section.

Officially, his field of study led him to a doctorate as a historical linguist at the young age of 21 in 1078 AD. At the age of 24, he was already teaching Sanskrit, a language he had studied with Pictet as a child. At the same time, he also taught Gothic, Old German, and Indo-European comparative linguistics at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* University in Paris until 1891. He then moved to Geneva to teach Sanskrit and comparative historical linguistics. Initially, Saussure was reluctant to teach general linguistics, but since the expert in the field (Joseph Wertheimer) had stopped teaching, he took on the task until the end of his life on February 22, 1913.²³

¹⁹ Jae Emerling, *Theory For Art History*, 2019.

²⁰ Jonathan Culler, *Saussure*, trans. Rochayah and Siti Suhayati, (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1996),

²¹ John Willey and Sons, "Ferdinand de Saussure," in *The International Encyclopedia of Linguistik Anthropology*, 2020, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118786093.iela0351>.

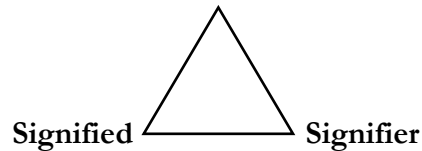
²² Culler, *Saussure*, trans. Rochayah and Siti Suhayati, (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1996),

²³ Kridalaksaka Harimurti, "Mongin-Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913): Bapak Linguistik Modern Dan Pelopor Strukturalisme," 1988.

Ferdinand de Saussure's Semiotics

Ferdinand's linguistic ideas position language as a sign.²⁴ In the case of language, the sign is not an end in itself, but rather something is represented, and the value of the sign is what it represents.²⁵ Saussure's concept considers that language exists as a sign of what it signifies. based on this understanding, Saussure constructed the concept of sign-signifier-signified. A sign is a combination of a signifier (the signifier/the signifier) and a signified (the signified/the signified). To understand language as a sign, it is necessary to distinguish the concept of language based on linguistic activity. Ferdinand classified it into three categories: *langage*, *langue*, and *parole*. *Langage* encompasses all linguistic activities, *langue* is the officially agreed-upon linguistic system, and because it is official, this aspect of *langue* can be used as an object of study, both synchronically and diachronically. Unlike *langue*, *parole* is an individual linguistic activity that is not based on social agreement.²⁶

Sign: combination of concepts and
sound-image



The synchronic-diachronic aspects of *langue* are components of language structure that can form signifiers in signs. Synchrony is an attempt to understand language use at a particular time with the aim of understanding its benefits. Diachrony, on the other hand, is the understanding of language through its development over time. Saussure analogizes the understanding of synchrony and diachrony with the concept of cutting a log and splitting it. Cutting the log allows one to examine its components in detail horizontally, while splitting the log reveals its components vertically.²⁷ Among these two aspects, Saussure emphasized the synchronic aspect, arguing that synchronic understanding would enable us to understand the benefits of language use at a particular point in time, while the diachronic aspect tended to examine historical aspects while ignoring their benefits.

The structure of language according to Saussure is also formed by linguistic relations, namely syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. Syntagmatic relations refer to the horizontal arrangement of language, which can simply be understood as grammatical concepts. If the language being studied is Arabic, then mastery of the Arabic grammatical system (*nahwu-shorof*) is necessary. If the language being studied is Indonesian, then mastery of the grammatical system of the Indonesian language (subject, predicate, object, and related elements) is required. Unlike syntagmatic relations, paradigmatic relations are determined

²⁴ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, vol. 11 (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM_PEMBETUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI.

²⁵ Bambang Mudjiyanto and Emilsyah Nur, "Semiotika Dalam Metode Penelitian Komunikasi Semiotics In Research Method of Communication" 16, no. 1 (2013): 73–82.

²⁶ Ngaji Filsafat Fahrudin Faiz, "Ngaji Filsafat:133 Ferdinand de Saussure-Semiologi" (Indonesia, 2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8fO0VXJfhQ>.

²⁷ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Kuliah Umum Linguistik* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2021).

randomly, and both synonyms and antonyms can be part of paradigmatic relations.²⁸ Fahrudin Faiz, in his study, states that paradigmatic is a linguistic relationship that arises in the mind when a sign is mentioned. He gives the example of mentioning a traffic light, which will trigger thoughts related to it, such as police, tickets, and stopping.²⁹

The application of structural semiotics in Islamic studies, particularly the Qur'an, is considered relevant to employ³⁰ without coercion. Such a framework of thought has actually been found in Islamic tradition itself. The process of determining the concept of sign-signifier-signified can be done in stages, not just one aspect of meaning, but as a whole. Fahrudin Faiz provides an example of understanding the sources of Islamic teachings that are then understood by its followers. The existence of various sects and groups with their own unique frameworks of thinking is a form of the concept of sign-signifier-signified. The Qur'an (source of teachings) has the position of a sign, while the signifier is the Qur'an itself, which forms the signified interpretation of the mufasssir, for example, the Shafi'i madhhab. The interpretations of the exegetes (Shafi'i madhhab) then become the sign at the second level, leading to the signified interpretations originating from the Shafi'i madhhab.³¹

Analyzing the Meaning of the Term *Tafakhur* in QS. Al-Hadid (57);20

According to Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach, the interpretation of signs consists of several linguistic aspects: linguistic relations (syntagmatic-paradigmatic), linguistic activity (langue: synchronic-diachronic), and sign-signifier-signified. The following is the analysis process in question:

Syntagmatic-Paradigmatic Analysis

An analysis of the phrase *tafakhur* using syntagmatic-paradigmatic analysis reveals its ability to uncover new dimensions of meaning in the context of modern phenomena. At the syntagmatic stage, the meaning of "*tafakhur*" is determined based on the correlative meaning of the term in relation to other terms within the context of the verse being discussed. In the paradigmatic analysis stage, the meaning of the term is determined based on the broader contextual discussion. Layered analysis with syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis allows the reading of the term *tafakhur* in the Qur'an to be reinterpreted as part of the ongoing cultural negotiation, namely that religious discussions intersect with social phenomena, including modern phenomena. Through these two stages of analysis, it will be possible to bridge the gap between classical texts and cultural performance.

Positioning Qs. Al-Hadid (57);20 as a linguistic structure, this verse has a linguistic structure that can be analyzed through a syntagmatic and paradigmatic framework. Ferdinand de Saussure's analysis of syntagmatic aspects emphasizes the following passage:

I'lamū annamā al-ḥayātu al-dunyā la'ibun wa lahwun wa zīnatun wa tafākhurun baynakum wa takāthurun fī al-amwālī wa al-awlād.

By focusing on the term *tafakhur*, the passage has a continuity of wording that affects its meaning. The term *tafakhur* has the position of *aṭaf* in the word *la'ib* as an attribute of the term *dun'yā*. The arrangement of words in the above phrase, when viewed from a syntagmatic perspective, forms a single unit in the nominative case. The phrase *al-ḥayāt al-Dun'yā* functions as the subject, followed by the predicate phrase *la'ib*. The term *lahwun*, *zīnat*, *tafakhur*, and

²⁸ Saussure.

²⁹ Ngaji Filsafat Fahrudin Faiz, "Ngaji Filsafat:133 Ferdinand de Saussure-Semiologi."

³⁰ Fadhliah, "Semiotika Ferdinand de Saussure Sebagai Metode Penafsiran Al-Qur'an: Kajian Teoritis."

³¹ Ngaji Filsafat Fahrudin Faiz, "Ngaji Filsafat:133 Ferdinand de Saussure-Semiologi."

takātsur are positioned as *athaf* with *ma'tuf 'alaih*. The ismiyah structure beginning with the term *annamā* does not change the grammatical structure. However, it does have an impact on the meaning. The presence of the term *annamā* has the function of *lī bashr*, a summary meaning “only.” This function applies to the subject, namely *al-hayāt al-du'nyā*. As for the term that accompany *al-hayāt al-du'nyā*, from *lahwun* to *takātsur*, they are only explanations, where the explanations in question only exist within the scope of *al-hayāt al-du'nyā*.

The paradigmatic aspect of the term *tafākbur* is found using secondary verses. The Qur'an mentions the term with the root term *fakbara* in three forms: *fakhūr*, *tafākbur*, and *fakhkhār*. The term *fakhūr* is repeated four times, namely in Q.S. An-Nisa (4): 36, Q.S. Hud (11): 10, Q.S. Luqman (31): 18, and Q.S. al-Hadid (57): 23. Meanwhile, the term *tafākbur* is mentioned once in al-Hadid (57): 20, and *fakhkhār* once in Surah ar-Rahman (55):14. From these verses, five of them consistently appear in the context of human attitudes towards their surroundings. However, the term *fakhkhār* in Qs. Ar-Rahman has a similar meaning, like pottery, black soil that is burned with fire until it makes a sound like someone who is boasting.³²

When analyzed from the perspective of the perpetrator of the attitude of *fakhūr*, all six verses are warnings to humans, even though each of them has a different discussion. Likewise, when viewed through the context of the discussion, all six explain how humans behave on earth (the world), as shown in the following simple table:

Name of Surah	Symbol	Correlation of Lafaz	Perpetrator	Context
Q.S. An-Nisa'(4): 36	<i>Fakhūr</i>	mukhtālan	Insān	In the World Context
Q.S. Hud (11): 10		fariḥun	min (insān)	In the World Context
Q.S. Luqman (31): 18		mukhtālin	Insān	Fī al-Ardl (kontesk dunia)
Q.S. al-Hadid (57): 23		mukhtālin, fariḥun	Insān	In the World Context
QS. al-Hadid (57): 20	<i>Tafākbur</i>	al-ḥayātu al-dunyā, takāthurun	Insān	In the World Context
Q.S. ar-Rahman (55):14	<i>Fakhkhār</i>	ṣalṣālīn	Insān	In the Context of the Creation of Humans

Langue Analysis (Synchronic-Diachronic)

Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic analysis can be achieved through a synchronic-diachronic analysis process. Since Saussure emphasized the synchronic aspect, this analysis will focus on that aspect, with a historical scope covering the revelation of Qs. Al-Hadid (57);20 during the prophetic period. The revelation of Qs. Al-Hadid verse 20 coincided with verse 21 (Madaniyyah surah) during the Madani society era, spanning from the fourth year of the Hijri calendar until the period following the conquest of Mecca. Literally, Sayyid Qutb mentions in his exegesis that Surah Al-Hadid has a focal point targeting the group of believers after the conquest of Mecca. Historically, after the conquest of Mecca, there were various groups residing in Medina or Mecca. The groups in question include: the Muhajirun and Ansar, the believers after the conquest of Mecca, and the hypocrites. The emphasis of the

³² al-Asfahāny, *Mufradāt Alfāz Al-Qur'an*.

message in Surah Al-Hadid (57):20 is directed toward the second group (those who believed after the conquest of Mecca) to help them attain the true essence of faith. Once they have reached that level, their worldly desires will fade away, replaced by the warmth of true faith.³³

Sayyid Qutb explains that the second group still has doubts and finds it difficult to sacrifice themselves in the way of Allah. This group often suffers from bearing the burden of beliefs related to themselves and their possessions, and is unstable when it comes to values related to worldly temptations and adornments. The call of this letter is focused on the second group to be able to emulate the attitude and faith of the first group. This psychological state leads to a personal understanding of pride in oneself when in a superior position in worldly matters. If we refer to the discussion in Surah Al-Hadid (57):20, the basic meaning of the term *tafākhur* is to boast and be proud of oneself, which is emphasized by the verse of the Qur'an that such a state is only found in the world, not to achieve His pleasure.

Since this research attempts to address modern issues, it is necessary to analyze diachronic aspects. In order to address modern issues in the Indonesian context, the author will use interpretive works originating from Indonesia. Tafsir AL-Azhar by HAMKA. With the pretext of interpretation using Indonesian Malay language, it was compiled in 30 juz for the first time. Interpretation with beautiful language nuances is a characteristic of this interpretation. The meaning of the term *tafākhur* is interpreted as being proud. Hamka provides this interpretation by referring to the *al-Kabir* exegesis by Fakhruddīn al-Rāzy. At the same time, he provides an explanation by quoting Ibn Abbas's opinion about unbelievers, where worldly matters fill their minds, both day and night, causing them to forget about the afterlife. They think about what is broken so that it can be repaired and become something to be proud of. Hamka then follows this explanation with a context specific to Indonesia, where pride is associated with career achievements, the ability and strength to handle complex tasks, and being mighty in war. He then notes that such pride is only found in the elderly who are able to receive a pension.³⁴

Apart from using al-Azhar's interpretation, researchers will also use al-Misbah's interpretation by Quraish Shibah, on the grounds that this interpretation uses the language of the Republic of Indonesia, so that it is able to represent the context of Indonesian society. Quraish Shihab in Al-Misbah interprets the term *tafākhur* as boasting. He provides an explanation by quoting the exegete 'Taba'tabā'i. The interpretation carried out has a substantive correlation with the interpretation conducted by Sayyid Qutb, as explained previously. While Sayyid Qutb does not provide a term for the group in question, 'Taba'tabā'i has provided terms for two groups of believers: *ash-Shiddiqīn* and *asy-Syuhadā*, two groups considered to be the best of mankind and certain to attain salvation. While Sayyid Qutb refers to the third group as *munafiqūn*, 'Taba'tabā'i refers to the third group as *mu'minūn* who commit various sins and acts of disobedience toward Allah. The tendency toward worldly matters is demonstrated by a boastful attitude. Such an attitude, as indicated by the Qur'an, leads to envy and jealousy.³⁵ To simplify, the following table analyzes the development of the meaning of *tafākhur*;

³³ Qutb.

³⁴ Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, vol. 9 (Singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD Singapura, 1994).

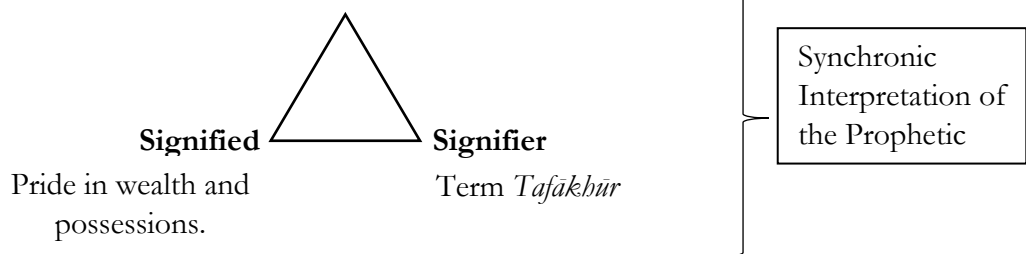
³⁵ Quraishy Syihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah; Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, vol. 14 (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2005); 37.

Exegesis/Period	The Meaning of Tafākhur	Social Context	Signified
Prophethood with reference to Sayyid Qutb's interpretation; fī Dzilālil Qur'ān	Proud	Classes during the time of the Prophet 1. Muhajirin and Anshor 2. Faith after the conquest of Mecca 3. Munafiqūn	Second Class (believers after the conquest of Mecca)
Al-Azhar	Proud of your career, job, and abilities	Modern (Indonesia)	Humans generally
Al-Misbah	Magnificent	Classes during the time of the Prophet 1. Al-Shādiqūn 2. As-Syuhadā 3. Believers but deniers	The Faithful Group, but Deniers

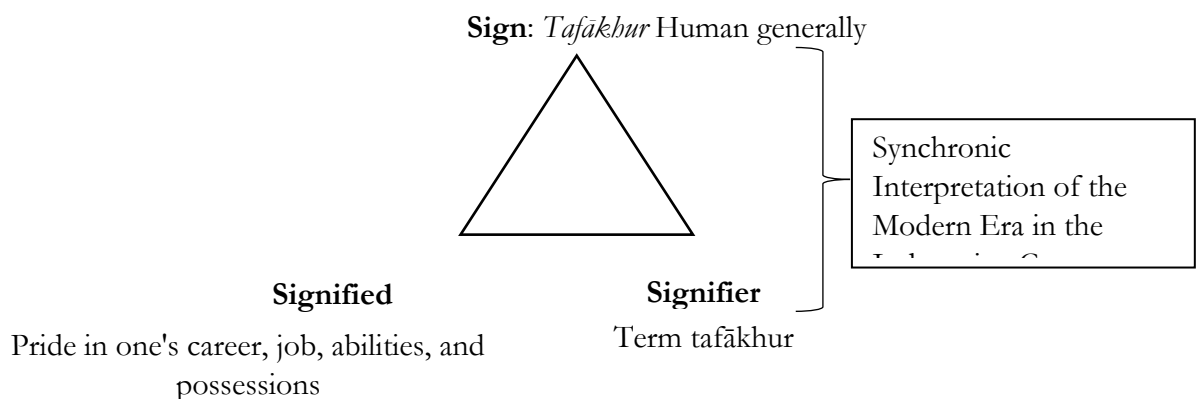
Analysis of Sign-Signified-Signifier

The term tafākhur becomes a sign of what is signified. The linguistic structures analyzed in the previous subchapter enable the concept of sign-signified-signifier to be constructed. Based on the prophetic period (the fourth year of the Hijra until the conquest of Mecca), the following concept can be constructed:

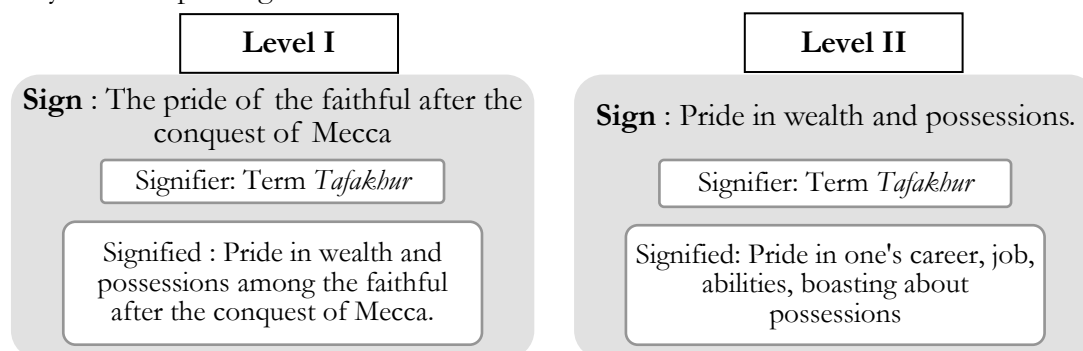
Sign: *Tafākhur* The class of believers after the conquest of Mecca



To analyze this concept in the Indonesian context, it is necessary to understand the synchronic aspects of Indonesia itself. The meaning will shift and evolve. The meaning of the sign "*tafākhur*" in the Indonesian context has evolved to mean "proud and Magnificent."



If analysed diachronically, these two constructions of sign-signifier-signified understanding will form a concept of levels or tiers. Ferdinand's semiology is able to construct the understanding that the signified can become a sign at the next level. So that the meaning of pride (signified I) then becomes Sign II with the signifier structure of the term *tafākhur* and the signified in the form of pride in achievements, careers, and abilities that result in a life of luxury. The simple diagram below illustrates this



The Relevance of *Tafākhur* to the Concept of Flexing

In attempting to understand the relevance of the term *tafākhur* to the phenomenon of flexing, it is necessary to understand both concepts. Terminologically, the term “flexing” originates from the English language and means “showing off.” This interpretation is reinforced by slang (colloquial) usage, as defined in the Cambridge Dictionary, where “flexing” refers to the behavior of someone who is excessively proud of their achievements. This sense of pride drives them to display it in various ways, with the aim of gaining attention and popularity from others.³⁶ Flexing is considered a modern term, especially among Gen Z.³⁷ In actuality, the term has been in use since the 1990s. At that time, the term flexing was popularized by the African American community in the United States as slang and a term for those who were courageous. The term flexing became popular again in 2014 through a song titled “No. Flex Zone” written and performed by Rae Sremmurd. The term flexing is used to refer to those who have a relaxed attitude, are not showy, and are different in their pretense. There is a gap between the linguistic meaning and the historical meaning of the term. This article will refer to the definition of flexing based on its linguistic aspect.

The interpretation of flexing based on economics leads to a consumerist mentality where individuals constantly use luxury goods as a form of validation of their financial status.³⁸ In general, someone who flexes is someone who pretends to be rich when in reality they are not. They falsify their actual social status in order to obtain a higher social status. People who flex tend not to care about the origin of their wealth, position, and lineage. Flexing behavior has a significant impact on the community,³⁹ social inequality and social

³⁶ <http://cambridge.dictionary.org/flex> diakses pada 6 juni 2024 pukul 17.12 WIB

³⁷ Aulia Firstiyanti, “Systematic Literature Review: The Existence of Flexing Culture As a Lifestyle for Today’S Indonesian Generation Z,” *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Dan Pendidikan* 2, no. 3 (2023): 72–79, <https://doi.org/10.56127/jushpen.v2i3.1127>.

³⁸ Deliarinov, *Perkembangan Pemikiran Ekonomi*, Cet. 1, (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada. 2010), hlm. 22.

³⁹ Abdul Rachman et al., “‘ Flexing ’ and Its Implications for Religious and Social Life Among Indonesian Muslim Millennials” 19, no. 2 (2024): 62–71.

classes.⁴⁰ The concept correlates with the mention of flexing in a song from 2014. The similarity lies in the aspect of “pretending.” Pretending to obtain social validation that differs from one's actual status. While in previous eras people pretended not to appear wealthy, in the current era people tend to pretend in order to gain social validation that is higher than their actual status.⁴¹

The meaning of the term *tafākbur* during the prophetic period, which was understood as pride in material possessions and wealth, specifically describing the attitude of the faithful after the conquest of Mecca, cannot be applied to the phenomenon of flexing in the modern era, especially in the Indonesian context. Similarly, when applied to the meaning of flexing in the 1990s, the understanding of flexing in the 1990s was used for those who had courage. This differs from the meaning of flexing in 2014, which is found in a song. There is no common ground in perspective, but there is a common understanding of “pretending.” This interpretation does not adequately represent both concepts, as their applications are contradictory. In 2014, “pretending” referred to feigning poverty to achieve a higher social status, whereas in the modern era (present day), the term “flexing” is used for those who pretend to be wealthier than they actually are to elevate themselves to a higher status, including achievements, careers, and accomplishments.

Subsequently, the interpretation of the term *tafākbur* by Indonesian exegetes has undergone developments in terms of both the text and its contextual scope. Hamka, with his background and life in the city center, is evident in his interpretation. The textual interpretation, which still uses the prophetic-era meaning of “pride,” has been expanded in terms of its contextual scope. He states that the pride referred to is pride in one's career until retirement, position, strength, and ability to carry out tasks that are considered difficult, whether they are community or state tasks, as well as bravery and courage to participate in war. Unlike the explanation in the al-Misbah commentary, which has evolved in meaning, Quraish Syihab explains that the meaning of *tafākbur* is to boast. Although the commentary was written in the modern era, the context referred to is based on the context of the prophetic era.⁴² It refers to the classification explained in the interpretation of *fi Dzilālil Qur'an*.⁴³ However, there is a point of difference between the groups mentioned in Qs. Al-Hadid (57);20, which refers to the third group, those who believe but deny committing sins against Allah SWT.

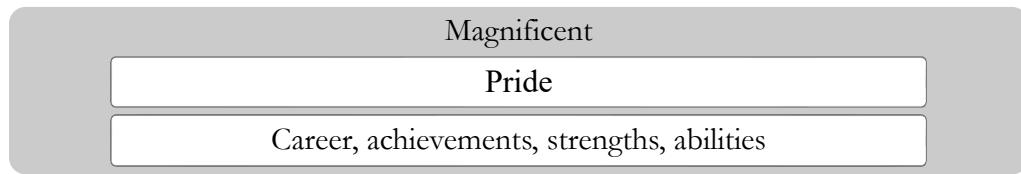
The meaning of *tafākbur* can be related to the phenomenon of flexing in the Indonesian context by using the interpretation of the text by Hamka in his tafsir al-Azhar and Quraish Shihab in his tafsir al-Misbah. The contextual interpretation can utilize the interpretation presented by Hamka. By employing the concepts of textual and contextual interpretation, the following understanding is constructed:

⁴⁰ Kamelia Sofia Ilham, “Flexing Dalam Perspektif Surat At-Takatsur Dan Internalisasinya Dalam Era Media Sosial” (UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2023).

⁴¹ Evayanti Yuliana Putri and Dien Vidia Rosa, “Flexing Sebagai Simulasi Mesin Hasrat Dan Fragmentasi Tubuh Generasi Z,” *Jurnal Socius: Journal of Sociology Research and Education* 11, no. 1 (2024): 14–24, <https://doi.org/10.24036/scs.v11i1.622>.

⁴² Syihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah; Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*.

⁴³ Qutb, “Tafsir Fi Dzilālil Qur'an.”



Being proud of what is part of oneself, one's career, achievements, and abilities will lead to a lavish lifestyle.⁴⁴ The concept can be applied to the phenomenon of flexing, especially in the Indonesian context. Flexing is a term used to describe people who tend to show off their possessions, achievements, and wealth to others with the aim of gaining recognition from them,⁴⁵ as a result of excessive pride in what one possesses. Flexing is usually done by someone who has advantages in many ways.⁴⁶ This understanding is closely related to the meaning of the term *tafākhur* as explained by two Indonesian exegetes, Hamka and Quraish Shihab, as described above.

The analysis of *tafākhur* as a sign within Ferdinand de Saussure's structural framework demonstrates that language is not merely a collection of independent symbols, but rather a social convention closely intertwined with its underlying structure, including its use within communities and society. Every sign cannot be separated from the social context of the society in which it is used. In the context of modern society in Indonesia, *tafākhur* is a social phenomenon of showing off one's possessions, achievements, and wealth to others with the aim of gaining recognition from them, as a result of excessive pride in what one possesses. This attitude is referred to by Pierre Bourdieu as a form of habitus, the formation of mental and social actions influenced by collective experience and the surrounding social structure.⁴⁷ In societies that place greater value on economic and symbolic capital, *tafākhur* becomes part of a strategy to gain prestige, influence, and status. In this context, *tafākhur* becomes a symbol representing power within the social and cultural sphere. The phenomenon of *tafākhur* is subject to criticism for its incompatibility with the values of humility. This indicates that the structure of meaning in *tafākhur* is not merely the result of semantic construction but stems from the social context.

KESIMPULAN

The similarity between the meaning of the term *tafākhur* and the phenomenon of flexing in the Indonesian context answers the author's background in conducting this research. Therefore, previous studies that used verses from *fakhr* to describe the phenomenon of flexing did not force the discussion of the Qur'an on modern issues. The term "*tafākhur*" in modern Indonesia is interpreted as a proud attitude toward what is part of one's self, career, achievements, and abilities, which can lead to a lifestyle of extravagance. Reading flexing through Ferdinand de Saussure's structural semantic framework, *tafākhur* as a linguistic sign has a meaning structure formed by social structure. This shows that language is not merely a set of symbols standing independently, but as a form of social convention

⁴⁴ Sebagaimana fenomena yang terjadi pada kalangan mahasiswa UNSI Samarinda Raka Rizq Ramadhan and Nanik Indarwati, "Flexing Melalui Instagram (Studi Pada Persepsi Mahasiswa Unsi Samarinda)," *Nubunwah : Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting* 2, no. 01 (2024): 1–17.

⁴⁵ Jawade Hafidz Arsyad, "Fenomena Flexing Di Media Sosial Dalam Aspek Hukum Pidana," *Jurnal Cakrawala Informasi* 2, no. 1 (2022): 10–28, <https://doi.org/10.54066/jci.v2i1.158>.

⁴⁶ Ketut Putu Oki Murjana and Ni Kadek Sinarwati, "Persepsi Mahasiswa Tentang Flexing Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Keputusan Investasi," *Jurnal Akuntansi Profesi* 13, no. 3 (2022): 837–44.

⁴⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1991).

closely correlated with its forming structure, including its use within communities and society.

The author acknowledges the limitations of the research that has been conducted. Therefore, it is hoped that it can be developed for future research. As the psychological aspects of a person are not included in this study, they are only mentioned briefly. Through this reading, further research will certainly be able to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the terms in the Qur'an. The comprehensiveness of the results of this study will provide broader implications.

REFERENCES

- al-Asfahāny, Rāghib. *Mufradāt Alfāẓ Al-Qur'an*. Damaskus: Dār al-Qalam, 2011.
- Amali, Mohd. Asro. "Fakhur Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Kajian Tafsir Tematik)." UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim, 2022.
- Arsyad, Jawade Hafidz. "Fenomena Flexing Di Media Sosial Dalam Aspek Hukum Pidana." *Jurnal Cakrawala Informasi* 2, no. 1 (2022): 10–28. <https://doi.org/10.54066/jci.v2i1.158>.
- Asyari, Mohammad Farhan Firdaus Al. "Budaya Flexing Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Studi Analisis Ma'na Cum Maghza)." UIN Kiai Haj Achmad Siddiq Jember, 2024.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: SAGE Publications, 1994.
- Culler, Jonathan. *Saussure*. Translated by Rochayah and Siti Suhayati. Vol. 11. Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1996. <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-59379-1%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-420070-8.00002-7%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ab.2015.03.024%0Ahttps://doi.org/10.1080/07352689.2018.1441103%0Ahttp://www.chile.bmw-motorrad.cl/sync/showroom/lam/es/>.
- Emerling, Jae. *Theory For Art History*, 2019.
- Fadhliyah, Ziyadatul. "Semiotika Ferdinand de Saussure Sebagai Metode Penafsiran Al-Qur'an: Kajian Teoritis." *Al-Afkar* 4, no. 1 (2021): 109–22. https://al-afkar.com/index.php/Afkar_Journal/issue/view/4.
- Faridah. "Semiotika Tabarruj dalam al-Qur'an: Penafsiran QS. Al-Ahzāb [33]: 33 dan QS. An-Nūr [24]: 31 Perspektif Ferdinand De Saussure." UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2019.
- Firstiyanti, Aulia. "Systematic Literature Review: The Existence of Flexing Culture As a Lifestyle for Today'S Indonesian Generation Z." *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Dan Pendidikan* 2, no. 3 (2023): 72–79. <https://doi.org/10.56127/jushpen.v2i3.1127>.
- Hamka. *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. Vol. 9. Singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD Singapura, 1994.
- Harimurti, Kridalaksaka. "Mongin-Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913): Bapak Linguistik Modern Dan Pelopor Strukturalisme," 1988.
- Hasan, Rianto. "Keruntuhan Peradaban Suatu Masyarakat Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an(Implementasi Analisis Sintagmatik-Paradigmatik Ferdinand De Saussure Interpretasi QS. Al-A'raf[7]: 34)" 15, no. 1 (2019): 59–76.

- Hidayah, Saniatul. "Analisis Semiotik Ferdinand De Saussure Terhadap Q.S. Al-Taubah (9): 123." *Pappasang* 5, no. 1 (2023).
- Ilham, Kamelia Sofia. "Flexing Dalam Perspektif Surat At-Takatsur Dan Internalisasinya Dalam Era Media Sosial." UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2023.
- Jurahman. "Hedonisme Dalam Al-Qur'an (Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsirnya Cetakan Kemenag RI)," 2022.
- Midrar, Ahmad. "Kaẓb Dalam Al -Qur ' an : Analisis Linguistik Struktural Ferdinand De Saussure" 2, no. 3 (2023): 259–64.
- Muallifah, Muallifah, Khodijah Samosir, and Hasani Ahmad Said. "Metodologi Tafsir Modern - Kontemporer Di Indonesia." *Al Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 2 (2022): 302–14. <https://doi.org/10.58518/alfurqon.v5i2.1401>.
- Mudjiyanto, Bambang, and Emilsyah Nur. "Semiotika Dalam Metode Penelitian Komunikasi Semiotics In Research Method of Communication" 16, no. 1 (2013): 73–82.
- Neuendorf, Kimberly A. *The Content Analysis: Guidebook*. California: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017.
- Ngaji Filsafat Fahrudin Faiz. "Ngaji Filsafat:133 Ferdinand de Saussure-Semiologi." Indonesia, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8fO0VXJfhQ>.
- Novianti, Apipah. "Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Fakhara Dan Padanannya (Flexing) Dalam Al-Qur'an Dengan Pendekatan Psikologi." Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, 2023.
- Pierre Bourdieu. *Language and Symbolic Power*. New York: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Putri, Evayanti Yuliana, and Dien Vidia Rosa. "Flexing Sebagai Simulasi Mesin Hasrat Dan Fragmentasi Tubuh Generasi Z." *Jurnal Socius: Journal of Sociology Research and Education* 11, no. 1 (2024): 14–24. <https://doi.org/10.24036/scs.v11i1.622>.
- Putu Oki Murjana, Ketut, and Ni Kadek Sinarwati. "Persepsi Mahasiswa Tentang Flexing Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Keputusan Investasi." *Jurnal Akuntansi Profesi* 13, no. 3 (2022): 837–44.
- Qutb, Sayyid. *Tafsir Fi ʿIlālil Qurʾān*, n.d.
- . "Tafsir Fi Dzilalil Qur'an," n.d.
- Rachman, Abdul, Bilaly Sangare, Didi Suardi, Nur Jamaludin, and Teguh Muhammad Rizky. "“ Flexing ’ and Its Implications for Religious and Social Life Among Indonesian Muslim Millennials” 19, no. 2 (2024): 62–71.
- Rahmah, Istifadlatul. "Ayat-Ayat Fakhūr Dalam Al-Qur'an (Analisis Semantik Perspektif Toshihiko Izutsu Dalam Tafsīr Asy-Sya'rāwī)." Institut Agama Islam Negeri Madura, 2023.
- Rahmayani, Maulina. "Pandangan Mufasir Jawa Terhadap Kata Fakhur (Studi Analisis Tafsir Al-Ibriz Li Ma'rifah Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Az̄z Karya Bisri Musthofa (w. 1977 M) Dan Tafsir Al-Iklil f̄Ma'an Al- Tanzil Karya Misbah Zainal Musthofa (w. 1994 M))." Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an Jakarta, 2022.

- Ramadhan, F. "Trend Flexing Dalam Al-Qur'an (Studi Tafsir Tematik Dalam Tafsir Al-Mishbah)." Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, 2022. [http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/id/eprint/17556%0Ahttp://repository.uinsu.ac.id/17556/2/BAB I.pdf](http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/id/eprint/17556%0Ahttp://repository.uinsu.ac.id/17556/2/BAB%20I.pdf).
- Ramadhan, Raka Rizq, and Nanik Indarwati. "Flexing Melalui Instagram (Studi Pada Persepsi Mahasiswa Unsi Samarinda)." *Nubunwah : Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting* 2, no. 01 (2024): 1–17.
- Sandimula, Nur Shadiq, Syarifuddin Syarifuddin, and Ridwan Jawal. "Meneropong Fenomena Flexing Dalam Al- Qur ' an : Analisis Semantik QS . Al- H Ad ī d [57]: 20." *Studia Quranika: Jurnal Studi Quran* 9, no. 1 (2024).
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in Geeral Linguistics*. Edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye. Vol. 11. New York: Philosophical Library, 1950. http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM_PEMBERTUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI.
- . *Kuliah Umum Linguistik*. Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2021.
- Sifa, Layyinat, Muhammad Syachrofi, and Winarto. "Flexing Culture From The Qur'anic Perspective: Between Lifestyle And The." *Tajdid* 22, no. 2 (2023): 566–90.
- Syihab, Quraissy. *Tafsir Al-Mishbah; Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*. Vol. 14. Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2005.
- Umala, Fika Natasya. "Fenomena Insecure Dan Terapinya Dalam Al-Qur'an (Analisis Penyingkapan Term Khauf Dan Huzn Dalam Al-Qur'an)." UIN Sunan Kaljaga, 2022.
- Willey, John, and Sons. "Ferdinand de Saussure." In *The International Encyclopedia of Linguistik Anthropology*, 2020. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118786093.iela0351>.
- Yunita, Ade Irma. "Fenomena Flexing Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Studi Analisis Terhadap Kitab Tafsir Al-Mishbah)." Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ) Jakarta, 2023.
- Yunus, Mahmud. *Kamus Arab-Indonesia*. Jakarta: PT. Mahmud Yunus Wadzurriyah, 2007.
- Yusri, Fatihul. "Makna Al-Asnam Dalam Al- Qur'an Dengan Pendekatan Semiotika Ferdinand de Saussure." UIN Kiai Achmad Siddiq Jember, 2022.



© 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>).