



## Investigating Linguistic Resilience in Islamic Oration: A Case Study through the Lens of Appraisal Theory

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### Abstract

While resilience is a well-developed construct in sociology and psychology, it is extremely under-researched in linguistics. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the linguistic portrayal of resilience in a historical speech by the granddaughter of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him), Zainab. A mythological hero of bravery and profound wisdom, Zainab's speech in Yazid's court is a singular act of resistance against a tyrant. Guided by Appraisal Theory—a Systemic Functional Linguistics approach—this study explores the linguistic dynamics of her discourse. The analysis reveals how Zainab employs evaluative language in a strategic manner to build a personal resilience following her family's horrific death. Specifically, the analysis identifies three key channels through which this resilience is built: negative judgement, positive appreciation, and strategic engagement, each of which is graded by graduation. Her rhetoric is finally shown to be an effective instrument that renegotiated the terms of power in the conflict, transforming a superficial military defeat into a profound divine and moral victory. This study contributes to the broader literature on resilience through its identification of the specific linguistic mechanisms by which it was manifested within the genre of resistance discourse.

**Keywords:** Resilience, Appraisal Theory, Karbala, Zainab, Islamic Rhetoric, Discourse Analysis

### Introduction

We, as human beings, may go through difficult times at certain stages of our lives which lead to encounter great amount of sadness and suffer for quite some time. Surviving this type of experience and managing not only passing the hard times but rise stronger with more self-promotion and persistence, is referred to psychologically as resilience. Southwick *et al.* (2014) describe it as the ability to cope with and overcome conflicts, trauma, or extreme tension. But can resilience be an outer observable phenomenon in addition to its psychological internal processes? Can it be manifested through individual's surviving appliances to reveal it through public or social mediums (piece of discourse, a speech, or an oration) for example?

There are not many events in history that convey such examples of admirable type of survival and persistency which involve essential means of reclaiming agency, shifting narratives, and resisting oppression. But Zainab's oration is one of its kind. It was given after the battle of Karbala in 680CE, an unforgettable event in Islamic history which ended by slaughtering of Prophet Mohammed's family, relatives, imprisoning the remaining women and children. On the top of those who got detained, Zainab, the granddaughter of Prophet Mohammed. A female who became an iconic figure in history for her latter actions. She is the symbol of courage and defiance in the history of great women. Her confrontation with Yazid (the Umayyad ruler) can be considered as intense as the battle field itself for what she had shown in terms of bravery and undeniable realities. The scene is reported in most of the early Islamic biographies like Al-Tabary (1990, Vol. 19, pp. 165-181) and Ibn Kathir (2000, Vol. 8, p. 221) <sup>[5]</sup> where a seemingly powerless woman who has left unwillingly all her slaughtered brothers and relatives behind on the sand of the battle, rises against the tyrant ruler (Yazid) who is proud of his military victory and gives a speech that will reverse the meaning of that tragedy.

The speech was not meant to plea for mercy or a request for their freedom, but rather, a strong condemnation of tyranny and a courageous statement of belief and insistency. The endless strength of that oration that crossed over all these centuries raises a significant question. How does a speaker or a writer put his inner resilience power into a piece of discourse that has been given in times of deep sadness and political instability? While the speech has been addressed in a number of studies from different perspectives (historical, theological, and rhetorical), there is a lack that can be identified in using a clear and systematic linguistic method to synthesize its message. The current investigation argues that Zainab's resilience is not a factor that can be assumed in her as an influential character only, but it is represented by particular linguistic strategies and resources. Her employment of these strategies grants her the ability to reposition the dynamics of power, manage to morally criticize the oppressor, and announce an outstanding religious and divine winning. Thus, Appraisal Theory, a framework in Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by Martin and White (2005) <sup>[7]</sup>, is activated in this examination as the primary analytical mechanism. This analysis method, allows for a clear categorizing of how the speech given by Zainab, reflects her (judgment, affect, and appreciation) which in turn responds to diverse opinions (engagement), and reinforcing their assertions (graduation) with a masterpiece rhetorical speech.

### Literature Review

The prominence of Zainab's oratory besides its Islamic value lies in its combination of history, religion, and oratorical skills. To maintain an effective account of this examination, a consideration of the existing literature is mandatory so as to identify where to fit this work within the existing knowledge. The battle of Karbala and its consequences, is a wound deep in one's heart and a central source of religious meaning in general and in Shia Islam in specific. Much of the academic discussion around Zainab's speech has developed out of this tradition. Historians verified the event, where exactly it took place, and it is an entry within many Islamic historical facts. Additionally, the early historians such as Al-Tabari (1990) and Ibn Kathir (2000) <sup>[5]</sup> provide significant background information and state that what opened the eyes of public opinion and disclosed wrongdoing by the Umayyad government found expression in this opposition. Later historians such as Syed Akbar Hyder (2006) <sup>[4]</sup> in *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* expanded upon this, remarking how Hussain and Zainab had become iconic symbols for resistance and sacrifice. It is only by Zainab's speech and that pivotal moment, Karbala ensures its remembrance. From a standpoint of religion, other scholars such as Mahmoud Ayoub (1978) <sup>[2]</sup> in *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* explored the spiritual prospective of an event in studying Karbala's event in relation to the suffering explained by a figure with a highly esteemed origin such as Zainab (pp. 136-140). Although such a collection is valuable for knowledge about the historical realities and their religious significance, it often fails to proceed further than content analyses that investigate what certain meaning is expressed in a certain collection of sentences.

Another direction that addressed resilience is in the terms of sociology and psychology. The concept is developed over time from a fixed personality trait to a recovery process in a particular stressful event (Masten, 2014) <sup>[8]</sup>. Southwick *et al.*

(2014) describe it as surviving with, tolerating, rebounding from adversity which tends to involve major components such as realistic optimism, strong morale foundation, and support from others. Nevertheless, the research is beginning to realize that resilience is not only an internal type process, but an external manifestation that can be revealed and exposed. Scholars are now investigating stories and discourse as resilience-building mechanisms in observing individuals' construction of stories about adversity evoking growth, power over one's life, and meaning (Gilligan, 2009) <sup>[3]</sup>. Such an alteration in resilience studies emphasizes an essential relationship in how individuals entail about their experience, contributes to their resilience. However, research tends only to focus on contemporary case scenarios or in therapy or not reaching further towards an analysis in similar regard for religious-historical records. The process of constructing resilience at a particular level in high-stress conditions remains unanalyzed.

A smaller but diverse group of researches which have examined the speech in rhetorical and literary terms, analyzed the speech in the classical Arabic style of eloquence (al-balagha), making remarks about its influential imagery, its emotional heat, and its effective use of rhetorical features such as antithesis and rhetorical question, for instance, (Jbaar, 2019; Qutbuddin, 2019) <sup>[6,9]</sup>. These researches establish the effectiveness of the speech, however they frequently do not account for a solid and systematic framework of describing how such effectiveness reflects the meaning of resilience.

Although Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in its variants with an appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005) <sup>[7]</sup> have come to dominate research into evaluative language in texts about conflict, political oration, and media releases, for their part, they are not yet regularly employed in research into historical religious orations. The features of this model support an analysis that looks beyond merely declaring the speech as powerful or not. They can identify precisely what it is in the language features—the construction or structuring of judgment, handling of dialogue, display of intensity—that creates the power behind this speech.

By surveying the three fields a clear link and a missing part can be identified. Historians and theologians have talked about what the speech is and why it matters—its events and its meaning. Resilience theorists have focused on the psychological processes and how we make sense of things. Rhetorical theorists have elucidated its impact, its power and expressiveness. Nonetheless, there is no complete picture that offers a project that asks how resilience is expressed or vocalized through specific language choices in this historical confrontation. The previous studies have missed the clear use of a linguistic model like Appraisal Theory to examine how the speech manufactures resilience. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap in the academic literature on this speech.

### The framework of Analysis

The analysis of Zainab's oration is set to discover how resilience can be reflected within an effective and durable piece of discourse. Taking into consideration the contextual and historical facts of this event, the study built on an integration of multiple approaches, primarily Appraisal Theory in grasping the discourse in addition to Speech Act Theory in order to classify the speech acts included in the speech and identify their illocutionary effect.

Appraisal Theory which is a framework inspired by and driven from Systemic Functional Linguistics provides the

analysis with means of discussing this particular genre of discourse as it goes beyond the mere descriptions of how is that rhetoric is effective or aesthetic to an attentive categorization of the attitude which people manage amongst themselves. Appraisal Theory consists of three main levels of analysis:

**1. Attitude:** This level is concerned with making judgments and expressing emotions. It is subdivided into three parts:

- Affect: How emotions are expressed or revealed (happiness, anger, or fear).

**Judgment:** Judgment is how decisions are made about the human behavior and how does it character in line with the standards of social esteem (capable, brave) and social sanction (ethical, honest).

**Appreciation:** Judgement of the value of the objects, artifacts, phenomena (beautiful, harmonious).

**2. Engagement:** It analyzes how the speakers position themselves relative to other opinions and position themselves in a dialogic manner. This level criticizes if the propositions are framed as monoglossic (single-voiced, presumptive truths) or heteroglossic (presupposing other voices by modality, projection, or concession).

**3. Graduation:** This is the domain which deals with increasing or decreasing the intensity and the concentration. It has a type of force employed in intensifying or moderating the attitude. For instance, (very cruel, partly concerned) and tightness such as sharpness or blurring of category limits, for instance, (a true leader, a tyrant).

**4. Analysis:** The speech opens by immediately establishing a theological framework that re-contextualizes the entire event from a military defeat to a spiritual assessment with pre-ordained outcomes.

#### Extract 1

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ صَدَقَ إِلَهُ الْجَمْعِينَ وَرَسُولُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ صَلَوَاتُ الْعَالَمِينَ رَبِّ لِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ "بِهَا كَانُوا وَاللَّهُ بَيَّاتٌ كَذَّبُوا أَنَّ السَّوَاءَ أَسَاؤُا الَّذِينَ عَاقِبَهُ كَانَ يَقُولُ: ثُمَّ كَذَلِكَ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ"

"All praise be to the Lord of the worlds! And blessings of Allah upon His Messenger and his entire progeny! How true has Allah, the Glorious, said: Then evil was the end of those who wrought evil, for they belied the Signs of Allah, and at them they used to mock "

This opening is an impressive use of engagement. It is heteroglossic, explicitly engaging with, and integrating the words of the Qur'an. By launching her address with this specific verse, Zainab performs a proactive judgment of propriety. She frames Yazid's actions not as a military achievement, but as the acts of those "who wrought evil" and whose end is predetermined to be evil. She immediately shifts the discourse from a political confrontation to a divine resolution, placing herself and her audience within a cosmic narrative where her ultimate victory is assured by divine legislative act.

In addition, Zainab directly addresses Yazid to systematically tear down his perception of victory and her supposed defeat, using rhetorical questions to expose his moral and cognitive failure.

#### Extract 2

نَسَاقُ السَّمَاءِ فَأَصْبَحْنَا أَفَاقِي وَالْأَرْضِ أَقْطَارَ عَلَيْنَا أَخَذْتَ حَيْثُ يَرِيدُ يَا أَظْنَنْتُ "كِرَامَةً بِكَ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَيْهِ هَوَانًا بِنَا أَنَّ الْأَسْرَاءَ نَسَاقُ كَمَا

"O Yazid! Now when you have locked the paths of the earth and the horizon of the heavens upon us, and driven us similar to the captives, do you presume that we are degraded in the eyes of Allah while you are endeared?"

This is another sentence in her speech that is also full of graduation and judgment. The imagery uses strong words to convey the degree of their bodily captivity. But this is then contrasted with the rhetorical question straight away. This question is a scornful judgment about Yazid's competence; it condemns him for elementary failure to discern spiritual reality. This contrast is the essence of her strict reinterpretation—bearing in mind worldly powerlessness while still asserting spiritual control.

Zainab goes on to a complete indictment, enumerating Yazid's personal violations with precise lexical precision to condemn his fall from moral standards. It has a significant role to play, where she pauses over the vulnerability of the captives.

#### Extract 3

اللَّهُ رَسُولَ بَنَاتِ سَوْفِكَ وَ إِمَاءِكَ وَ حَرَائِرِكَ تَحْدِيرُكَ الطَّلَقَاءِ ابْنِ يَا الْعَدْلُ أَمِنْ "بَلَدٍ مِنَ الْأَعْدَاءِ بِهِنَّ تَخْلُو أُنْدِيَّتَ وَجُوهَهُنَّ وَ سَتُورَهُنَّ هَتَكْتَ قَدْ (ص) سَبَايَا النَجِيدِ وَالْقَرِيبِ وَجُوهَهُنَّ يَتَصَفَّحُ الْمَنَاقِلَ وَالْمَنَاهِلَ يَسْتَشْرِفُهُنَّ أَهْلُ وَبَلَدٍ إِلَى خِمَاتِهِنَّ مِنْ لَا وَ وَلِيَّ رَجَالِهِنَّ مِنْ لَيْسَ مَعَهُنَّ الشَّرِيفُ وَالذَّنِيَّ وَ

"Is this the custom of justice, O son of the freed ones, that you sit your women-folk and maids behind the veils, while you captivate and parade the daughters of the Prophet of Allah? You snatch the veils off them and leave them open, while their enemies parade them from one town to another, and the inhabitants of every stream and town have a glimpse of them? And all intimate and non-intimate look at them, as also the mean and noblemen, when they do not have along with them their men or support?"

The rhetorical question is a direct judgment of propriety, challenging the moral foundation of his rule. The epithet "son of the freed ones" is a devastating act of judgment on his veracity and social standing. Her description of parading the women uses forceful verbs to amplify the brutality and profound hypocrisy. This forces the audience to confront the utter vulnerability and humiliation inflicted, making Yazid's actions appear not just far away from victorious but cowardly and grotesque, further judging his propriety.

A critical part of the speech, is her scornful rejection of Yazid's poetic boasts and her connection of his actions to his lineage's past enmity.

#### Extract 4

لَا يَرِيدُ يَا قَالُوا ثُمَّ فَرَحًا اسْتَهْلُوا وَلَا هَلُوا إِلَّا مُسْتَغْطِمٌ وَمُنَاقِمٌ غَيْرُ تَقُولُ ثُمَّ "وَبِمُخَصَّرَتِكَ الْجَنَّةُ تَنْكُثُهَا أَهْلُ شَبَابِ سَيِّدِ اللَّهِ عَبْدُ أَبِي ثَنَابَا عَلَى مُنْتَحِبِ أَشْجَلِ ذُرِّيَّةٍ دِمَاعَ بَارِاقَتِكَ الشَّافَةِ وَ اسْتَأْصَلْتَ الْقَرْحَةَ تَكَتْ قَدْ وَ ذَلِكَ تَقُولُ لَا كَيْفَ (ص) مُحَمَّدٌ"

"Then you turn towards the teeth of Abu 'Abd Allah (a), the Master of the youth of Paradise, and strike it with the stick of

your hand? Then why would you not say so? You have sent the wound to its bottom, and you have uprooted the origins by shedding the blood of the Progeny of Muhammad (s)"

This part is crucial. Her mocking tone is a sharp judgment of his propriety and capacity (as a leader who cannot control himself). By referencing the Battle of Badr, where Yazid's nonbeliever ancestors were defeated by the Prophet and his followers, she judges his veracity, showing his vengeance is not political but a personal, inherited hatred against Islam itself. This culminates in the powerful appreciation of Imam Hussain martyr, creating a stark moral contrast between the victim's infinite value and the perpetrator's petty vindictiveness.

At the speech's climax, Zainab shifts from describing past and present crimes to prophesy the future with absolute, unshakeable certainty.

#### Extract 5

وَحِينَا تُمِيتُ لَا وَ تَمُوتُ نَذِيرًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ قَوْلُ جُهْدِكَ نَاصِبٌ وَ سَعْيُكَ اسْعٍ وَ كَيْدُكَ فَكْدٌ  
وَ عِنْدَ إِلَّا أَيْتَامُكَ وَ قِنْدٌ إِلَّا رَأْيُكَ هَلْ عَارَهَا وَ عَنْكَ تَرْخُصٌ لَا وَ أَمْنًا تَذَرُكَ لَا وَ  
الظَّالِمِينَ عَلَى اللَّهِ لَعْنَةُ لَا يُنَادِي الْمُنَادِي يَوْمَ بَدَدٌ إِلَّا جَمْعُكَ

"Then you may lay whatever traps you have, and take thou whatever steps you desire, and endeavor as much as you want. By Allah! You shall never be able to wipe out our remembrance nor oust our inspiration from the midst, nor will you be able to wipe off the disgrace of this episode. Your opinion is erroneous, and your days less, while your group is scattered on the day when the caller will announce: Beware! (Now) Verily the curse of Allah is on the unjust"

The triplet of imperatives employs graduation through repetition to forcefully amplify her defiance. The oath (By Allah) maximizes the force of her monoglossic proclamation. The final warning is another heteroglossic engagement, this time with a future divine proclamation. She does not just state his failure; she prophesies it by invoking the Qur'anic curse upon the unjust, once again framing his end through divine scripture.

Having condemned Yazid and declared his ultimate failure, Zainab concludes by redirecting her discourse away from him entirely, appealing to the ultimate authority with praise.

#### Extract 6

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا خَتَمَ الَّذِي الْعَالَمِينَ رَبِّ لِلَّهِ ظَالِمَنَا . فَأَلْحَمْدُ مَنْ اتَّقَمَ وَ بَحَقْنَا لَنَا خُذْ اللَّهُمَّ  
الرَّحْمَةَ وَ الشَّهَادَةَ لِأَخْرِنَا وَ الْمَغْفِرَةَ بِالسَّعَادَةِ

"O Lord! Take away our rights from them and seek revenge from our oppressors. Praise be to the Lord of the worlds, Who ended felicity upon our beginning with forgiveness, and Who destined martyrdom for our conclusion with blessings"

This concluding invocation represents a pivotal shift in engagement. She disengages from Yazid and turns to a monoglossic communion with Allah. The final praise is an act of appreciation, evaluating their struggle not as a tragedy but as a destiny filled with (felicity) and (blessings). This demonstrates that the foundation of her resilience is a profound theological conviction that reframes suffering as redemption.

#### Discussion

The analysis section, situates Zainab's rhetorical speech as an intricate discursive object. Within her speech, she deliberately deconstructs Yazid's reasoning while simultaneously constructing a counter-narrative forces, guided by her deeply ingrained religious beliefs. According to the findings, her superior management of the three channels (attitude, involvement, and graduation) acts as a rehabilitative, positioning her in this context from the helpless female inmate to much stronger ground upon which to stand.

Second, Yazid's moral deficiencies and incapacities to govern fairly, justify Zainab's legal and ethical complaints against him in regard of his usurpation, and not on grounds of offense merely. Zainab's derogatory assessment of Yazid is followed closely by her genuine respect and admiration of the worth that her family possesses, shown through the presentation of the worthlessness of tyranny while positioning her martyred family members as chivalrous and figures who personify true belief and freedom. This is to her advantage in turning what is presented as a celebration of a victory of the armed forces into a moral and ethical court where she double-takes both the prosecutor and the judge.

Concurrently, her profundity in addressing the encounter is a focal point to this rhetoric approach. She does this by invoking heteroglossic rhetorical questions, a certain dialogic place where Yazid's claim is stated only to be stripped apart and embarrassed outright. But her most significant linguistic achievement is her stubborn adaptation into monoglossic statements, especially the prophetic and the direct invitations Allah, which form a very pivotal turning point in transiting her position in the same speech from being in the middle of a contest with a tyrant and an oppressor to wedded finally to the command of the divine law, the source of her own authority. Thus, her resistance is founded on existing knowledge beyond the present time and threatening power relations within that court, making her discursively and psychologically resistant to Yazid's exploitation. Together, all these strategies are strengthened through graduation, by the tripartite imperative sentences and the definite sworn statements she highlights the power of her words while the denial comes into play to magnify the intensity of her charges to become irrefutable reality.

The findings authenticate that resilience can be a physical linguistic product that is negotiated and enacted through discourse, rather than solely be an inner psychological state. This linguistic enactment is clearly demonstrated in Zainab's oration which reflects high level of resilience that she competently managed to develop through her linguistic techniques. She views her imprisonment as a clear evidence of an enduring memory left by Yazid's moral failing and her family murder. Hence, it can be established that resilience, which is originally a psychological term, can be constructed and negotiated through a measurable linguistic creation. The study contributes to the existing research on resilience in general and to the studies of Zainab's speech in particular.

#### Conclusion

The principal objective of the research was to ascertain how resilience as a psychologically constructed concept can be linguistically defined in the midst of one of the most critical historical wars. Aside from the religious and historical importance of the speech, the research outlines how language is utilized to ascertain the linguistic shape of resilience.

Zainab's strength is not a strategy of coping nor a real practical and thinking exercise of words solely. It is an ideal example of a complete establishment of moral superiority, power reconstruction, and achieving a long-term success even outside the battlefields. Zainab never downsizes the moral reputation of Yazid by judging him negatively, which turns his so-called victory into a tragic tale of moral defeat.

Second, through admirative praise, she restores her family's holy status as martyrs and the very symbol of Islam.

Zainab's mode of engagement is precisely witnessed in that she first engages and unpacks Yazid's ideology in the vocabulary of heteroglossic challenge before eventually transgressing beyond the discourse itself through monoglossic appeal to religious authority. Graduation enables Zainab's whole mind frame by verifying her utterances from some aspirations to prophetic conviction. Zainab's words are still so effective among millions of Muslims even today to prove that her words proved successful all these years. She made sure that the Karbala history would be dictated by her and not Yazid. She proved that armies could be conquered and bodies harmed, but a story with the truth and good words can never be overcome. Her memory continues to live and testify that the greatest weapon of resistance in the case of gross injustice is most often through the craft of the wisdom of words.

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