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Phonological Rhetoric of Submission in the Qur'an: A Stylistic Analysis of the Fifteen Sajdah Verses

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Abstract

This study examines how the sound system in the verses of sajdah functions not only as beauty, but as a rhetorical device that reinforces the meaning of submission (*sujūd*). Departing from the Leech–Short stylistic framework and the concept of foregrounding, this study formulates the idea of "the phonological rhetoric of submission" to formalize the role of assonance, alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm as strategies that evoke emotions and encourage worship practice. The study employs manual IPA-based phonetic transcription and foregrounding analysis across fifteen sajdah verses. This study maps the sound pattern and its rhetorical function, then validates the results through triangulation of meanings to be linguistically and theologically aligned. The findings show a consistent and meaningful sound configuration: back/long vowels (/u/, /ā/) present a soft resonance that emphasizes solemn nuances; a series of emphatic consonants (/r/,/q/,/ṭ/) denote divine imperatives; The parallelism of rhyme and rhythm builds musical coherence and spiritual upliftment. This framework advances Qur'anic stylistics by operationalizing phonology as a rhetorical mechanism rather than an aesthetic byproduct. Theoretically, this study offers a framework of "the phonological rhetoric of submission" in the stylistics of the Qur'an; methodologically, integrating foregrounding analysis with interpretation validation; practically, it opens the direction of the Qur'an's pedagogy based on prosody that associates sound markers with the understanding of sajdah verses.

Keywords: Phonological rhetoric; Qur'anic stylistics; Sajdah verses

خلاصة

تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية عمل النظام الصوتي في آيات السجدة لا بوصفه جمالًا فحسب، بل بوصفه أيضًا أداةً بلاغية تُعزّز معنى الخضوع (السجود). وانطلاقًا من إطار ليتش–شورت الأسلوبي ومفهوم البروز (foregrounding)، تُبلور هذه الدراسة فكرة «البلاغة الفونولوجية للخضوع» لتقنين دور التوافق الصوتي (assonance)

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والجناس الاستهلالي (alliteration) والقافية والإيقاع بوصفها استراتيجيات تُثير الانفعالات وتدفع إلى ممارسة العبادة. وتعتمد الدراسة على التفريغ الصوتي اليدوي القائم على الأبجدية الصوتية الدولية (IPA) وتحليل البروز عبر خمس عشرة آيةً من آيات السجدة. وتقوم هذه الدراسة برسم خريطة لأنماط الصوت ووظائفها البلاغية، ثم تُثبّت النتائج عبر تثليث المعنى لضمان اتساقها لغويًا ولاهوتيًا. وتُظهر النتائج تهيئةً صوتيةً متّسقة وذات دلالة: فالحركات الخلفية/الطويلة (//u، ā//) تُحدث رنينًا لطيفًا يُبرز دلالات الخشوع والوقار؛ وسلسلة من الصوامت المفخّمة (//r، /q/، /ṭ//) تُشير إلى الأوامر الإلهية؛ كما يبني التوازي في القافية والإيقاع تماسكًا موسيقيًا وسموًّا روحيًا. ويُسهم هذا الإطار في تطوير أسلوبيات القرآن الكريم عبر تشغيل الفونولوجيا بوصفها آليةً بلاغية لا مجرد أثرٍ جمالي. وعلى المستوى النظري، يقدّم البحث إطار «البلاغة الفونولوجية للخضوع» ضمن أسلوبيات القرآن؛ وعلى المستوى المنهجي، يدمج تحليل البروز مع تثبيت التأويل؛ وعلى المستوى التطبيقي، يفتح مسارًا لتربيةٍ قرآنية قائمة على العَروض/الإيقاع تربط العلامات الصوتية بفهم آيات السجدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البلاغة الصوتية; الأسلوب القرآني; آيات السجدة

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana sistem bunyi dalam ayat-ayat sajdah berfungsi bukan hanya sebagai keindahan, tetapi juga sebagai perangkat retoris yang memperkuat makna kepasrahan (sujūd). Berangkat dari kerangka stilistika Leech–Short dan konsep foregrounding, penelitian ini merumuskan gagasan "retorika fonologis kepasrahan" untuk memformalkan peran asonansi, aliterasi, rima, dan ritme sebagai strategi yang membangkitkan emosi dan mendorong praktik ibadah. Penelitian ini menggunakan transkripsi fonetik manual berbasis IPA dan analisis foregrounding pada lima belas ayat sajdah. Penelitian ini memetakan pola bunyi beserta fungsi retorisnya, lalu memvalidasi hasilnya melalui triangulasi makna agar selaras secara linguistik dan teologis. Temuan menunjukkan konfigurasi bunyi yang konsisten dan bermakna: vokal belakang/panjang (/u/, /ā/) menghadirkan resonansi lembut yang menegaskan nuansa kekhusyukan; rangkaian konsonan tafkhīm/tegas (/r/, /q/, /ṭ/) menandai imperatif ilahi; paralelisme rima dan ritme membangun koherensi musikal dan pengangkatan spiritual. Kerangka ini memajukan stilistika Al-Qur'an dengan mengoperasionalisasikan fonologi sebagai mekanisme retoris, bukan sekadar produk sampingan estetika. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini menawarkan kerangka "retorika fonologis kepasrahan" dalam stilistika Al-Qur'an; secara metodologis, mengintegrasikan analisis foregrounding dengan validasi interpretasi; secara

praktis, membuka arah pedagogi Al-Qur'an berbasis prosodi yang mengaitkan penanda bunyi dengan pemahaman ayat-ayat sajdah.

Kata kunci: Retorika fonologis; Gaya Al-Qur'an; ayat-ayat Sajdah

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A. Introduction

The Qur'an is seen as the pinnacle of Arabic beauty, combining the power of meaning with the subtlety of sound[1]. Each verse not only conveys a theological message but also displays a phonetic harmony that forms an aesthetic and spiritual appeal. In Arabic linguistics, this dimension of sound is an important part of the *uslūb* al-Qur'an, that is, the linguistic style that characterizes the Qur'an's miracles[2]. One part of the Qur'an that combines the power of meaning with the musicality of sound is the verses of sajdah, which command the reader to prostrate themselves. The phenomenon of prostration arising from the harmony of sound and meaning makes these verses interesting to study stylistically, as they reveal the unique relationship between phonological structure, emotional effect, and rhetorical message.

The verses of the sajdah are scattered in fifteen locations in the Qur'an and are marked with a special symbol (۩). Of these, ten locations are agreed upon by most scholars, while the other five are still under debate[3]. Each verse displays a distinctive sound pattern and rhythm, both through fawāṣil (the final sound of the verse), the repetition of letters, and the vowel balance that combines with the meaning of the command to prostrate[4]. In some surahs, such as Al-Sajdah, Al-Inshiqāq, and An-Najm,

[1] Dr Omar Abdullah Al-HajEid et al., "An Investigation of Rhythm in the Subject Matters of the Holy Quran," *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT)*, ahead of print, January 2, 2022, https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.

[2] Islah Gusmian and Mustaffa Abdullah, "The Qur'an: Its Orality and Interpretation," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim Society* 7, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.22515/islimus.v7i1.5748.

[3] Syaikh Abdurrahman Al-Juzairi, *Al-Fiqh Ala Al-Mazahib Al-Arba'ah*, 6 2 (Maktabah Al-Sofa, 2003); Muhd Thoriq Asshiddiq Bin Che Ahmad et al., "Sujud Tilawah: A Research on the Participants of Talaqqi Al-Quran Bersanad at Unishams," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 14, no. 10 (2024): Pages 2449-2461, https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i10/23371.

[4] Nicolas Habibi, "Phonetic Cohesion in the Rhyme Structure of the Qur'an: A Phonological Analysis of Sound Patterns in Surah Al-Inshiqaq," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 9, no. 1 (2025): 165–78, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v9i1.12726; Ziana Walidah et al., "Stylistic Analysis in Surah Al-

the harmony between sound and meaning results in an emotional atmosphere that leads the reader to a profound spiritual experience[5]. According to Ilmi (2019), prostration is the culmination of mahabbah (love), isyq (longing), and syauq (desire to get closer to Allah), so these verses can be understood as a form of rhetorical communication between God and servants through language that is aesthetic and transcendental[6].

Several international studies have highlighted phonological phenomena in the Qur'an. One of them is a study entitled "Phonological Phenomena in the Al-Mujadila Juz: A Stylistic Approach," which reviews acoustic aspects such as rhythm, sound repetition, and fasālah, and their relationship to meaning[7]. Another study, "Phonetic Effect on the Semantic and Interpretive Understanding of Al-Baqarah," examines how phonetic elements and harmony in Surah Al-Baqarah affect the Qur'an's semantic meaning and interpretation[8]. Both studies have not explicitly integrated the theoretical framework of phonological stylistics, so their sound analysis tends to be impressionistic. Furthermore, no study has been found that specifically utilizes the verses of the sajdah as a single corpus for phonological-rhetorical analysis by integrating phonological stylistic theory and the concept of foregrounding.

The stylistic study of the Qur'an in Indonesia has so far focused more on semantic and syntactic aspects, while the phonological dimension has received relatively little attention. Gunarti's (2020)[9] research on Surah Ash-Shams, Habibi (2025)[10] highlights phonetic cohesion in Surah Al-Inshiqāq, and Rahma (2022)[11] in his analysis of Surah Al-Buruj. As affirmed by Christiansen (2020) and Al-Shloul et al. (2025), the sounds

Najm," *Izdihar : Journal of Arabic Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature* 3, no. 2 (2020): 129–46, https://doi.org/10.22219/jiz.v3i2.11624.

[5] Sarah Risha, "Aesthetic Education in the Quran," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation* 4, no. 4 (2023): 221–27.

[6] M Ilmi M, "Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sajdah Dalam Kitab 'Arais Al-Bayan Fi Haqaiq Al-Qur'an Karya Ruzbihan Al-Baqli Al-Syirazi (522 H/1128 M - 606 H/1209 M)" (Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2019).

[7] Abdullah Al-Anbar and Asma Baker Al-Zabat, "Phonological Phenomena in the Al-Mujadila Juz: A Stylistic Approach," *Zarqa Journal for Research and Studies in Humanities* 25, no. 1 (2025): 43–57, https://doi.org/10.12816/0062179.

[8] Hanaa M Al-Shloul et al., "Phonetic Effect on the Semantic and Interpretive Understanding of Al-Baqarah Chapter in the Holy Quran," *Forum for Linguistic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025), https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i2.7816.

[9] Tri Tami Gunarti, "Fonologi Al-Qur'an Pada Surah Asy-Syamsy Analisis Keserasian Bunyi Pada Sajak Dan Efek Yang Ditimbulkannya," *Al Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2020): 272–80.

[10] Habibi, "Phonetic Cohesion in the Rhyme Structure of the Qur'an."

[11] Raisya Miftakhul Rahma, "Sounds in Fawasil Verses and Its Relation to Meaning: Phonetic Studies of the Qur'an in Q.S al-Buruj," *AQWAL Journal of Qur'an and Hadis Studies* 3, no. 2 (2022): 124–39, https://doi.org/10.28918/aqwal.v3i2.6414.

in the Qur'an serve a rhetorical function, creating an emotional atmosphere and amplifying the divine message[12]. Despite growing interest in Qur'anic phonology, no study has systematically analyzed sajdah verses as a unified corpus using IPA-based stylistic foregrounding to explain sound as a rhetorical mechanism of submission.

The integration of the Leech–Short stylistic framework with the uslūb tradition is not only compatible but epistemologically complementary. On the one hand, foregrounding explains how the sound features of alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and rhythm are operationalized as verifiable linguistic evidence; Leech and Short (2013) emphasize the role of "foregrounded features" as triggers for meaning and integration of levels of stylistic analysis[13]. On the other hand, uslūb provides a normative-aesthetic horizon (*balāghah*) that links sound harmony with the rhetorical purpose of revelation. The foregrounding framework (Mukařovský, 2015) is the "violation of the scheme" of the standard linguistic background to create aesthetic effects and strengthens the theoretical justification that the prominence of Qur'anic sound patterns is a valid stylistic device[14]. At the methodological level, verified Arabic–IPA mappings compiled from the full corpus of Qur'anic vowels provide the technical basis for precise manual phonetic analysis, allowing uslūb categories of musicality and harmony to be linked to segmental evidence in a replicable manner[15]. Furthermore, Abdul-Raof's work on Qur'anic stylistics confirms that phonetic behavior/sound context directly influences the stylistic patterns and rhetorical functions of the text and supports the claim of *uslūb*'s complementarity with modern stylistic procedures[16].

Based on the phonological stylistic theory of Leech & Short (2013), this study seeks to show that the beauty of sounds in sajdah verses is not only an aesthetic aspect but also serves a rhetorical function that shapes meaning[17]. In particular, this study aims to: (1) identify distinctive phonological patterns in sajdah verses; (2) analyze the rhetorical structure that arises from the sound pattern and how the sound pattern

[12] Johanne Louise Christiansen, "God Loves Not the Wrongdoers (Ẓālimūn): Formulaic Repetition as a Rhetorical Strategy in the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2020): 92–132, https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2020.0413; Al-Shloul et al., "Phonetic Effect on the Semantic and Interpretive Understanding of Al-Baqarah Chapter in the Holy Quran."

[13] Geoffrey N. Leech and Mick Short, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, Second edition, English Language Series (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013).

[14] Jan Mukařovský, "Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts (Excerpts)," *Art in Translation* 7, no. 2 (2015): 282–303, https://doi.org/10.1080/17561310.2015.1049476.

[15] Clare Brierley et al., "A Verified Arabic-IPA Mapping for Arabic Transcription Technology, Informed by Quranic Recitation, Traditional Arabic Linguistics, and Modern Phonetics," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 61, no. 1 (2016): 157–86, https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/fgv035.

[16] Hussein Abdul-Rouf, *Qur'anic Stylistics: A Linguistic Analysis*, 1st ed., vol. 32 (Lincom Europa, 2004).

[17] Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*.

reinforces the meaning of prostration rhetorically; and (3) explain the phonological foregrounding mechanism as a stylistic strategy that builds an emotional and spiritual effect on the reader.

Theoretically, this study introduces the framework of the "phonological rhetoric of submission" in Qur'anic stylistics, namely the conceptualization of how sound patterns in the form of assonance, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, and vowel length. This framework functions as a rhetorical device that marks, modulates, and intensifies the meaning of *sujūd* in the verses of sajdah, by synergizing the categories of *uslūb* and the principle of phonological foregrounding. Methodologically, this study integrates manual phonetic analysis based on IPA transcription guidelines with *tafsīr*-based validation as triangulation, so that the protocol for mapping the rhetorical function of sound patterns becomes more systematic, precise, and replicable. Practically, these findings lead to prosody-based Qur'anic pedagogy: a design of recitation exercises that emphasize assonance-rhyme-rhythm patterns as a support for meaning, a performative evaluation instrument that links prosodic quality with semantic-theological understanding, and the development of teaching materials that connect sound indicators with the rhetorical messages of the verses of sajdah.

B. Research Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to determine the phonetic transcription of the verses of sajdah in the Qur'an. The qualitative stylistic approach allows researchers to trace sound patterns and explain how these elements form aesthetic effects and rhetorical meanings [18]. Previous research analyzing QS Al-Baqarah [2]:2 found segmental repetition of the rounded back vowels /u/ and /ā/ as in the words fīhi, hudā, and lil-muttaqīn, which are transcribed using IPA notation as [iː], [aː], and [uː]. These repetition patterns were identified through manual phonetic analysis following IPA transcription guidelines and contribute to the vocal harmony that emphasizes the serenity and certainty of the meaning of Divine guidance[19]. This research focuses on phonological foregrounding analysis, the prominence of certain sound elements that produce a force effect and strengthen the message. This principle refers to the stylistic theories put forward by Leech and Short (2013) and Mukařovský (2015), which hold

[18] Arda Arikan, "Doing Stylistic Analysis: Some Fundamental Techniques," 2015, 126–30, http://aves.akdeniz.edu.tr/YayinGoster.aspx?ID=2744&NO=119; Ronald Carter, "Methodologies for Stylistic Analysis: Practices and Pedagogies," in *Language and Style*, ed. Dan Mcintyre and Beatrix Busse (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

[19] Al-Shloul et al., "Phonetic Effect on the Semantic and Interpretive Understanding of Al-Baqarah Chapter in the Holy Quran."

that phonological features are part of style because they function to create an emotional and rhetorical effect on the reader[20].

The research corpus consists of 15 sajdah verses in the Qur'an, which contain commands or gestures of prostration. The fifteen verses of the sajdah are found in Surah Al-A'rāf [7]:206, Ar-Ra'd [13]:15, An-Naḥl [16]:50, Al-Isrāʾ [17]:109, Maryam [19]:58, Al-Ḥajj [22]:18 and 77, Al-Furqān [25]:60, An-Naml [27]:26, As-Sajdah [32]:15, Ṣād [38]:24, Fuṣṣilat [41]:38, An-Najm [53]:62, Al-Inshiqāq [84]:21, and Al-'Alaq [96]:19. All verses are taken from the standard mushaf of the Medina edition (*Uthmānī*) in order to maintain the uniformity of the text. This study focuses on the primary texts widely agreed upon by scholars and does not discuss variations in *qirāʾāt,* so that phonological analysis can be carried out consistently and in a directed manner.

The analysis is carried out through several stages. First, phonetic transcription and transliteration are carried out for each verse of Sajdah using the international Arabic system to facilitate the identification of sound patterns. Second, an analysis of phonological patterns was carried out, including alliteration, assonance, rhyme, letter repetition, and vocal harmony, which together formed the verse's rhythm. Third, a structural-rhetorical analysis was conducted to examine how these sound patterns strengthen the meaning and spiritual message of the verses, especially those related to the command to prostrate.

To ensure analytical rigour, the study used an operational definition to determine dominant sound patterns. A phonological feature was categorized as dominant when its recurrence exceeded other segmental patterns within the verse and produced perceptible auditory prominence supported by phonemic frequency observation. Accordingly, a verse was classified as dominated by assonance, alliteration, rhyme, or rhythm when one phonemic pattern recurred consistently and generated a strong rhetorical effect. This method combined phonemic frequency observation with auditory–textual interpretation, ensuring that the analysis remained systematic, replicable, and context-sensitive.

Furthermore, phonological foregrounding analysis was employed to identify sound elements that stand out stylistically and function to affirm the atmosphere of submission, solemnity, and spiritual communication between humans and God. The results of the analysis were tested through interpretive triangulation by comparing the findings on sound and rhetorical structures with classical interpretations to ensure consistency in meaning and theological context.

Validity is strengthened through triangulation of text sources, namely by comparing the analysis results against various standard *mushafs* and authoritative interpretations to ensure the suitability of the meaning and linguistic context. Reliability

[20] Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*; Mukařovský, "Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts (Excerpts)."

is maintained through intra researcher validation, in which the researcher double-checks the analysis results at different times to minimize perceptual bias and interpretive errors. This approach aligns with the principle of validity in qualitative research, as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), which emphasizes process transparency, logical consistency, and precision in the extraction of meaning[21].

C. Results and Discussion

A phonological–stylistic survey of the fifteen sajdah (prostration) verses shows a regular integration of sound patterning with textual emphasis. Assonance is the most frequent feature (6/15, 40.0%), followed by alliteration (4/15, 27%), rhythm (3/15, 20.0%), and rhyme (2/15, 13%). See Table 1.

Table 1. The frequency of Phonological Patterns in the Fifteen Sajdah Verses

Phonological Pattern	Number of Verse	Percentage (%)
Assonance (vowel repetition)	6	40%
Alliteration (consonant repetition)	4	27%
Rhythm (syllable duration)	3	20%
Rhyme (final sound similarity)	2	13 %
Total	**15**	**100%**

Dominant assonance typically involves high back rounded /u/ together with long /ā/ (and, where present, /ū/ and /ī/). Alliteration is concentrated in coronal (/r, l, ṭ/) and uvular (/q/) onsets. Rhyme arises mainly from long vowels at verse endings, and rhythm appears in parallel moraic patterns and repeated verbal endings (-ūna/-ūn).

1. Assonance

The analysis shows that six of the fifteen sajdah verses display dominant assonance, marked by repeated high back rounded vowels (/u/) and long low vowels (/ā/). These repetitions lengthen sonority and create smooth, continuous contours across verse boundaries, forming measurable vowel uniformity and prosodic cohesion.

[21] Matthew B. Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 1994).

Table 2. Dominant Assonance Patterns and Phonetic Cues in the Fifteen Sajdah Verses

Surah & Verses	Verse Quotes	Dominant Sound Pattern	Phonetic/Prosidic Cues
Al-A'rāf [7]:206	وَيُسَبِّحُونَهُ وَلَهُ يَسْجُدُونَ	Vowel repetition /u/	Multiple high-back /u/ tokens with extended sonority and internal rhythmic regularity.
Al-Ḥajj [22]:18	يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ...	Vowel repetition /a/ and /u/	Alternation of open /a/ and back /u/ in successive syllables
Al-Furqān [25]:60	وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اسْجُدُوا لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ قَالُوا وَمَا الرَّحْمَٰنُ...	Long vowel repetition /ā/ and /u/	Lengthened vowels in prominent lexical items.
Ash-Sajdah [32]:15	خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَسَبَّحُوا	Repeats /u/ and /ā/	Sequential back vowels across adjacent words.
Fuṣṣilat [41]:38	فَإِنِ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فَالَّذِينَ عِندَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُونَ لَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْأَمُونَ	The long vowels /ā/ and /i/ appear repeatedly	Alternation of low and high vowels.
An-Najm [53]:62	فَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ وَاعْبُدُوا	Long vowel repetition /ū/	Prolonged /ū/ in final position.

Across these six verses, long and back vowels recur in key lexical items, especially in sequences such as *yusabbiḥūna, lahu,* and *yasjudūn*, giving the verses similar vowel sequences and syllable timing.

2. Alliteration

Four of the fifteen sajdah verses show dominant alliteration, characterized by recurrent coronal trills and laterals (/r/, /l/), emphatic alveolar stops (/ṭ/), and the uvular stop (/q/). These consonants appear repeatedly in onset positions.

Table 3. Consonantal Repetition and Articulatory Features in the Sajdah Verses

Surah & Verses	Verse Quotes	Dominant Sound Pattern	Phonetic/Prosidic Cues
An-Naml [27]:26	اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ	Repetition of the first consonants /l/ and /ʔ/	Lateral and glottal onsets repeated across successive words.
Ṣād [38]:24	فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ	Consonant repetitions /r/	Multiple alveolar trills in proximity.
Al-Inshiqāq [84]:21	وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ	The consonant /q/, /r/, /l/	Alternation of uvular /q/ with alveolar /r, l/.
Al-Alaq [96]:19	كَلَّا لَا تُطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ	Consonant repetitions *(/ṭ/ and /q/)*	Emphatic alveolar and uvular stops repeated at clause-initial or medial positions.

In these verses, clusters of trills and stop recur within short spans of text, producing clearly patterned consonantal onsets.

3. Rhythm

Three of the fifteen *sajdah* verses exhibit rhythmic dominance, observable through syllabic parallelism, vowel length patterning, and consistent tempo variation. Alternation between short (CV) and long (CVV) syllables produce measurable timing regularity and balanced pacing across clauses.

Table 4. Rhythmic Structures and Syllabic Patterns in the Sajdah Verses

Surah & Verses	Verse Quotes	Dominant Rhythmic Feature	Phonetic / Prosodic Cues
Ar-Ra'd [13]:15	وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَظِلَالُهُم بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ	Alternation of long and short syllables, gradual tempo	Regular alternation between CV and CVV syllable types.
An-Naḥl [16]:50	يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُم مِّن فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ	Parallel structure of three verbs ending in length /ūn/	Repetition of final long vowels /ū/ in verb endings.

Al-Ḥajj [22]:77	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ...	Sequential imperatives with uniform stress pattern	Similar CV(C)V shapes and stress placement in successive imperatives.

Across these three verses, alternation of short and long syllables and recurring verb endings (-ūna/-ūn) yield regular timing patterns within the recited text.

4. Rhyme

Two of the fifteen sajdah verses display dominant rhyme, characterized by terminal repetition of long vowels (/ā/, /ū/) at the ends of syntactic or prosodic units. These repeated long vowels produce measurable sound similarity across verse boundaries, yielding phonological cohesion and rhythmic closure.

Table 5. Rhyme Patterns and Prosodic Closure in the Sajdah Verses

Surah & Verses	Verse Quotes	Dominant Sound Pattern	Phonetic / Prosodic Cues
Al-Isrāʾ [17]:109	وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ يَبْكُونَ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ خُشُوعًا	Final long vowels /ū – ā/	Recurrent long vowels in final position of successive clauses
Maryam [19]:58	إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَٰنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا	Final rhyme on –ā	Clause-final long /ā/ repeated in the closing segment of the verse

In these verses, long vowels in final position recur across syntactic units, creating similar segmental endings.

The analysis of the fifteen sajdah verses demonstrates that the Qur'anic phonological system functions not merely as formal beauty but as a rhetorical mechanism that organizes the reader's auditory and spiritual perception. Within the framework of stylistic phonology[22], sound operates as a form of foregrounding, meaning patterned prominence that heightens meaning through rhythm and resonance[23]. Across the corpus, recurring vocal balance, consonantal intensity, rhyme, and rhythm form a coherent phonological structure that embodies the themes of submission and divine authority. In this sense, the phonological dimension of the Qur'an emerges not as ornamentation but as a persuasive linguistic strategy that unites

[22] Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*; Mukařovský, "Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts (Excerpts)."

[23] Shigeto Kawahara, "Sound Symbolism and Theoretical Phonology," *Language and Linguistics Compass* 14, no. 8 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12372.

aesthetic form and theological message, in line with classical conceptions of *iʿjāz lughawī*.

1. Phonological Foregrounding and Submission

At the level of vowels, the dominance of long and rounded segments such as /ū/ and /ā/ across the sajdah corpus creates a global contour of softness and continuity that is closely associated with semantic fields of humility, obedience, and spiritual repose. Building experimental work that links back vowels and longer durations with gentleness and reduced aggression [24], the repeated occurrence of such vowels in sajdah contexts may be seen as a systematic resource for shaping an affectively "low-pressure" soundscape that is compatible with sujūd. Rather than functioning as isolated sound effects in individual verses (e.g. *yusabbiḥūna lahu yasjudūn* in Al-Aʿrāf [7]:206 or *kharrū sujjadan wa sabbaḥū* in As-Sajdah [32]:15), these recurrent vowel patterns establish a prosodic schema in which resonance, lengthening, and harmonic sequencing support states of attentiveness and yielding.

This analysis corroborates classical *tafsīr* readings, such as *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, that depict sajdah verses as scenes of unhindered submission, while specifying the phonetic resources through which such states are sonically staged. Habibi (2025) and Ahmad & Ghafar (2025) similarly describe how recurring vowels and rhythmic softness work as vehicles of "phonetic persuasion," in which theological meaning is internalized through sound[25]. At the same time, empirical and computational work on Qur'anic recitation, *tajwīd*, and phonology shows that patterns of repetition, duration, and prosodic regularity are central to how the Qur'an is segmented, learned, and emotionally experienced. Studies on the relationship between phonology, phonetics, and tajwīd, for instance, highlight how categories such as *madd*, *qalqalah*, and syllable structure shape meaning and aesthetic reception in recitation[26]. Research on Qur'anic *al-nabr* (accentuation) likewise argues that phonological prominence in scriptural

[24] John J. Ohala, "The Marriage of Phonetics and Phonology," *Acoustical Science and Technology* 26, no. 5 (2005): 418–22, https://doi.org/10.1250/ast.26.418; David M. Sidhu and Penny M. Pexman, "Five Mechanisms of Sound Symbolic Association," *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 25, no. 5 (2018): 1619–43, https://doi.org/10.3758/s13423-017-1361-1.

[25] Habibi, "Phonetic Cohesion in the Rhyme Structure of the Qur'an"; Hishomudin Ahmad and Norfarhana Ahmad Ghafar, "Stylistic Variation and Linguistic Strategies in Quranic Discourse: A Rhetorical, Phonetic, and Translational Analysis," *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCE (IJRISS)* IX, no. IV (2025), https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.

[26] Yuslina Mohamed et al., "Relationship Between Phonology, Phonetics, and Tajweed: A Literature Review:," paper presented at 4th International Conference on Sustainable Innovation 2020–Social, Humanity, and Education (ICoSIHESS 2020), Yogyakarta, Indonesia, *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Sustainable Innovation 2020–Social, Humanity, and Education (ICoSIHESS 2020)*, Atlantis Press, 2021, https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210120.153.

recitation is inseparable from rhetorical emphasis and interpretive depth[27]. Within the classical notion of *iʿjāz lughawī*, these converging findings suggest that sajdah phonology participates in a linguistic miracle where sound moves the heart before it reaches the intellect, making auditory foregrounding an integral component of submission rhetoric.

2. Articulatory Intensity and Divine Authority

Complementing this prosodic softness is a pattern of articulatory intensity built from coronal and uvular consonants such as /r/, /ṭ/, and /q/. Across the Sajdah Corpus, these segments tend to cluster in contexts of divine address, imperatives, and eschatological warning, producing bursts of articulatory pressure and sharp acoustic onsets. This pattern resonates with Burton-Roberts and Poole's (2006) observation that consonant clusters and stress peaks increase perceptual salience and command attention [28]. In the sajdah verses, such salience is systematically associated with the lexical field of divine authority and obligation, so that the very "roughness" and force of the segments contribute to an auditory impression of command [29].

Within the principle of performative rhetoric, these consonant configurations can be viewed as embodied enactments of *qudrah* (power) in which sound does not simply describe but performs the command it carries. Sopian, Ali, and Latifah (2022) similarly note, in other sacred discourses, that strong phonemes often iconically represent divine might, while softer vowels restore equilibrium and receptivity [30]. In the Sajdah verses, alternation between articulatory tension (strong consonants) and acoustic release (elongated vowels) mirrors the movement from divine command to human surrender, so that the phonological system performs a rhetorical dialectic of strength and submission in the very act of recitation. Sholahudin and Sopian (2025) read this dual movement as an eschatological rhetoric in which sound embodies both awe and tranquility; the present findings specify how this rhetoric is realized in recurring patterns of consonantal pressure, vowel lengthening, and prosodic resolution[31].

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[27] Azizul Hassan and Mohd Faiz Mohd Yasin, "Al-Nabr: Analisis of Quranic Recitation through Spectrographic Method," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 11, no. 12 (2021): Pages 1024-1033, https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i12/11859.

[28] Noel Burton-Roberts and Geoffrey Poole, "Syntax vs. Phonology: A Representational Approach to Stylistic Fronting and Verb-Second in Icelandic," *Lingua* 116, no. 5 (2006): 562–600, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2004.08.012.

[29] Christiansen, "*God Loves Not the Wrongdoers* (*Ẓālimūn*)."

[30] Asep Sopian et al., "Stylistics Literature in Qashidah Burdah by Imam Abu Abdillah Bin Sa'id Al-Bushiry," *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra* 22, no. 1 (2022): 143–56, https://doi.org/10.17509/bs_jpbsp.v22i1.47661.

[31] Shofwan Sholahudin and Asep Sopian, "Stylistic Analysis of the Eschatological Narrative in the Qur'an," *Aphorisme: Journal of Arabic Language, Literature, and Education* 6, no. 1 (2025): 218–34, https://doi.org/10.37680/aphorisme.v6i1.7389.

3. Rhyme, Rhythm, and the Experience of Transcendence

Rhyme and rhythm in the Sajdah verses likewise function as mechanisms of cohesion and transcendence rather than as decorative embellishments. Recurrent long terminal vowels (/ā/, /ū/) and patterned verb endings (-ūna / -ūn) generate closure, predictability, and formal balance across clauses and verses, as seen, for example, in Maryam [19]:58, Al-Isrāʾ [17]:109, and An-Naḥl [16]:50. These observations are consistent with broader scholarship on Qur'anic rhyme and rhythm, which treats verse endings, clausula patterns, and *sajʿ* as central organizing principles of Qur'anic discourse[32]. In this perspective, sajdah verses represent one region of a larger prosodic system in which terminal sound patterns link semantic units and frame their reception.

From the standpoint of empirical poetics, work on poetic phonology and affect has examined how phonological recurrence, including rhyme, alliteration, and assonance, interacts with positioning and stress to condition emotional responses in reading and listening[33]. While findings are nuanced and sometimes critical of strong claims about phono-emotional iconicity, they confirm that non-mandatory phonological features are psychologically salient and can modulate affective processing[34]. McGlone and Tofighbakhsh (2000) further demonstrate that rhyme aligned with stress patterns enhances perceived truth and memorability without altering propositional content. In the Sajdah corpus, commands, descriptions of fear and humility, and depictions of weeping and prostration are consistently embedded in prosodic frames that make them easier to process, remember, and re-experience[35]. Rhyme and rhythm therefore operate performatively, transforming sound into an embodied experience of obedience and transcendence, where acoustic harmony becomes a linguistic manifestation of spiritual order.

4. Phonological Interaction between Soft and Hard: The Dialectic of *Raḥmah* and *Qudrah*

One of the distinctive phonological features of the sajdah corpus is the systematic interplay between soft long vowels (/ū/, /ā/) and strong consonants (/q/, /ṭ/, /r/). This interaction constructs a symbolic balance between divine compassion (*raḥmah*) and power (*qudrah*), which can be described as a form of "phonological

[32] Devin J. Stewart, *Qur'anic Prosody* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).

[33] Maria Kraxenberger and Winfried Menninghaus, "Emotional Effects of Poetic Phonology, Word Positioning and Dominant Stress Peaks in Poetry Reading," *Scientific Study of Literature* 6, no. 2 (2016): 298–313, https://doi.org/10.1075/ssol.6.2.06kra.

[34] Maria Kraxenberger and Winfried Menninghaus, "Mimological Reveries? Disconfirming the Hypothesis of Phono-Emotional Iconicity in Poetry," *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (November 2016), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01779.

[35] Matthew S. McGlone and Jessica Tofighbakhsh, "Birds of a Feather Flock Conjointly (?): Rhyme as Reason in Aphorisms," *Psychological Science* 11, no. 5 (2000): 424–28, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00282.

pairing" in which opposing acoustic qualities index emotional polarity. While Yeibo & Alabrabra (2011) develop a similar idea for symbolic relations between sound and meaning in poetic discourse, the sajdah data suggest a specifically theological calibration: forceful consonants foreground divine majesty and command, while elongated vowels index receptive devotion and inward softness[36]. In expressions such as *wasjud wa iqtarib* (Al-ʿAlaq [96]:19) and *kharrū sujjadan wa sabbaḥū* (As-Sajdah [32]:15), the transition from emphatic onset to prolonged resonance shifts auditory tension into melodic resolution, reflecting the spiritual movement from command to surrender.

Sholahudin and Sopian (2025) interpret this dual movement as part of a broader eschatological rhetoric, in which the Qur'an sonically enacts both fear and hope. The present study refines that insight by mapping specific phonological variables, vowel quality and length, consonant place and manner, and prosodic patterning onto theological functions[37]. In doing so, it aligns with contemporary discussions of *iʿjāz al-bayānī* that emphasize how the miracle of the Qur'an is instantiated not only in syntax and semantics but also in prosodic and phonological structure[38]. At the same time, the findings converge with cognitive-poetic work on phonological foregrounding, which argues that recurrent sound patterns are central to how readers and listeners construct emotional and thematic coherence in literary texts[39].

Beyond the Sajdah corpus, this model demonstrates how phonological foregrounding can function as a universal rhetorical mechanism in sacred discourse, positioning sound as an agent of meaning rather than a stylistic residue. The Qur'an's prosodic system, documented in detail in studies of verse endings, *tajwīd* rules, and *al-nabr*, provides a particularly clear case in which patterned sound is both the medium and message of revelation[40]. Methodologically, the present study shows that systematic mapping of assonance, alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm across a defined corpus can bridge classical exegesis with contemporary stylistic phonology and computational approaches to sacred texts. In dialogue with Habibi (2025), Ahmad & Ghafar (2025), and Gusmian & Abdullah (2023), the analysis extends existing work by quantifying how recurring phoneme types of clusters around theological functions and rhetorical

[36] Ebi Yeibo and Tamunotonye Alabrabra, "Sound and Stylistic Meaning in Helon Habila's Measuring Time," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 1, no. 9 (2011): 1062–68, https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.1.9.1062-1068.

[37] Sholahudin and Sopian, "Stylistic Analysis of the Eschatological Narrative in the Qur'an."

[38] Gusmian and Abdullah, "The Qur'an: Its Orality and Interpretation."

[39] Reuven Tsur, *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive?: The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception* (Duke University Press, 1992).

[40] Ridhoul Wahidi and Thonthowi Thonthowi, "Phonology of the Qur'an: Al-Nabr and Its Practice in the Qur'an," *Taqaddumi: Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies* 5, no. 1 (2025): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.12928/taqaddumi.v5i1.12644.

moves[41]. For Qur'anic studies, this suggests that phonology is not ancillary to interpretation but constitutes a primary site where revelation is embodied, heard, and affectively anchored. For stylistics more broadly, the findings support an expanded view of sound as a structured, theory-relevant dimension of meaning in religious texts, inviting comparative research on phonological foregrounding across scripts, traditions, and liturgical practices.

D. Conclusion

This study set out from the premise that the beauty of Qur'anic sound in the sajdah verses is not merely ornamental but participates in shaping the reader's spiritual experience. Addressing a gap in previous research that has focused largely on semantic–syntactic dimensions while under-operationalizing phonology as rhetorical strategy, it integrated the Leech–Short stylistic framework with the classical *uslūb* tradition. The analysis identified four recurrent sound patterns, which assonance, alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm, that work together to construct a "rhetoric of submission," in which long back vowels index gentle surrender, emphatic consonants index divine imperative, and prosodic regularity supports cohesion and elevation. This study repositions Qur'anic phonology from aesthetic appreciation to rhetorical theory.

Theoretically, the study proposes the "phonological rhetoric of submission" as a framework in Qur'anic stylistics that formalizes sound–meaning relations as a structured strategy of prostration and obedience. Methodologically, it combines foregrounding analysis with interpretation-based validation, offering a more systematic and replicable mapping of the rhetorical functions of sound patterns. Practically, the findings point toward a prosody-based Qur'anic pedagogy in which recitation exercises, evaluative rubrics, and teaching materials explicitly connect phonological indicators to the meanings of sajdah verses. The implications extend beyond this corpus by suggesting that measurable prosodic features can enrich recitation curricula and *tafsīr* studies as a bridge between sound form and theological understanding. Future research may include acoustic–instrumental measurements to test correlations between sound and rhetorical effect, comparative analyses across *qirāʾāt* and *tilāwah* styles to map prosodic variability, and psycholinguistic experiments on how Qur'anic prosody shapes attention, processing fluency, and affective engagement. While the present study is limited by its focus on standardized *muṣḥaf* representations and does not fully engage variation across readings, its core contribution lies in formalizing sound as an instrument of meaning that drives the experience of submission in the text of revelation.

[41] Habibi, "Phonetic Cohesion in the Rhyme Structure of the Qur'an"; Ahmad and Ghafar, "Stylistic Variation and Linguistic Strategies in Quranic Discourse: A Rhetorical, Phonetic, and Translational Analysis"; Gusmian and Abdullah, "The Qur'an: Its Orality and Interpretation."

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