

Semantics of The word "Nas" in The Verse 24 of The Surah Al-Baqarah based on Izutsu's Semantic Field Theory

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Abstract

Semantic analysis of words is a linguistic outlook that emphasizes on the meaning of words in the context of discourse. One modern theory in the word semantic analysis is Izutsu's Semantic Field Theory. On the basis of the aforesaid theory, this study has a purpose to uncover the main meaning of the word "Nas" in the text of the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah that introduces it as the firewood of Hell, yet, it has been translating as "people" by translators. To this objective, this research attempts to examine the semantic field of the word "Nas" through a descriptive-analytical method within the context of the Quranic discourses. The data collection of this research consisted of the 11 verses of Quran related to the word "Nas". The findings indicated that the word "Nas" in the verses of Quran does not represent "people". But, it refers to those persons who have forgotten Allah, and ignored their belief in monotheism. The word "Nas" is a proper noun which means "the forgetful" derived from /næsiwoon/ (a deficient verb) in Arabic. So, the main meaning of the word "Nas" does not equate to the common word "people", but rather implies specific individuals of people.

Keywords: Izutsu, Nas, people, semantic field theory.

Introduction

One of the most important branches of linguistics is the field of semantics. In general, investigating the relationship between the word and the meaning is called semantics. In this regard, Folk believes that the semantic relations of the context of the text constitute the important aspect of the meaning in semantics [1].

In short, the history of semantics dates back to the 1970s, before that, language was completely dominated by the field of semiotics. Semiotics was looking for the clear and obvious meanings, and the semiologist searched for the meanings and after finding them, presented them, but this approach alone was not enough. The present semantics is an evolved form of the past semiotics. Semantics is derived from the Greek noun "sema" which means "sign" and the verb "semaino" which means "to mark and give meaning" [3]. The school of semantics was formed from the 1970s onwards by Algirdas Greimas (1917-1992), a French semanticist and the father of semantics. He believed that in order to get rid of the symbolic impasse, one should break the impasse of sign-centered meaning language and go beyond the sign to the symbolic relations and see what happens behind the signs to reach the meaning [2]. In the field of semantics, there are different approaches, here, three basic approaches can be pointed to find out the origin of the theory of semantic fields [4]: Essentialist approach, Contextual approach, and Functional approach.

- *Essentialist approach*: This approach considers meaning as a defined category and package that is related to words and reality. In this approach, every meaning has a core or essence that is unchangeable.
- *Contextual and interpretive approach*: This approach is exactly the opposite of the first approach and believes that there is basically no fixed meaning. According to this approach, many words have cultural and social loads, and the meaning of a word changes from one socio-cultural context to another.
- *Functional approach*: This approach believes that meaning does not exist as a fixed essence or core; rather, meaning is related to the linguistic field, and basically to the special functions of each word and each phrase in that language itself.

The Semantic Field Theory (hereafter SFT) is considered as a functional approach of the language which emphasizes that meaning of a word even a phrase is hidden in the context of the spoken or written discourse. Hence, meaning should not be sought outside of the discourse, but it should be functionally found within the discourse through the linguistic components like lexicon, morphemes, and the cohesive relationships between the words, phrases, or sentences. In this regard, according to Fairclough, every linguistic event is a discourse order that is formed only in the situational context of language, and every linguistic event is a social event and has a social function [5]. However, the formation of discourse order is impossible without continuity and semantic coherence; this coherence is a set of textual relations that connect an element of a sentence to the elements of previous sentences through lexical, grammatical or semantic relations [6].

Generally speaking, this is the mechanism of the discourse connectors which manifest the meaning of the covert (deep) and overt (surface) formats of language. However, these formats always play the main roles in the direction of conveying and inducing messages and making them believable for the audiences. In this regard, the Quranic discourse which was revealed at the peak of eloquence and eloquence can be considered as one of the dominant and powerful discourses in the construction of form and meaning that has the elements of the lexical and semantic coherences in the best possible ways [7].

This research holds theoretical importance by providing insights into the semantic structure through Izutsu's SFT, it challenges the existing translations of the word "Nas" as "people", and offers a more nuanced understanding of the intended meaning of that word within the Quranic discourse. Whereby, the statement of the problem of the present research laid on unequal equivalent of the word "people" for the Quranic word "Nas". As seen, all the verses of the Quran, as well as the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah, which introduces "Nas" as the firewood of Hell, the Quran translators have translated it as "people". While, the word "people" is a common noun, and it includes every individuals (from children and adults, the young or the old, men and women to the believers, and disbelievers). In addition, referring to many verses of the Quran that have the argumentative structure with the word "Nas", it can be understood that the Quranic word "Nas" is a proper noun and refers to specific group of people not all of them. By examining the semantic fields of the Quranic word "Nas", this study attempted to uncover its intended meaning within the context of the verses through Izutsu's SFT. To this end, the main question addressed in this research is: What is the true meaning of the word "Nas" in the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah, contradicting its translation as "people" and aligning with Izutsu's Semantic Field Theory?

Moreover, the findings of the present research may provide valuable insights on the SFT for the linguistic researchers, translators and teachers of the Quran to search and find real meanings of the words beyond the text itself in order to comprehend the content conceptually within the text.

It is worth mentioning that although the Quran translators have used the equivalent of "people" for the words /anam/, /anas/ and /onas/, the subject of this study is the semantics of the word "Nas" in the context of the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah. More explanation, the word /anam/ in the verse 10 of the Surah Ar-Rahman refers to all creatures that benefit from the earth, and the word /anas/ and /onas/ are also the plural form of the word "Nas", which are not the subjects of the analysis of this research.

Theoretical Framework

Professor Toshihiko Izutsu is a Japanese linguist, philosopher, Islamic scholar, and Quran scholar (1914-1993). He translated the Quran into Japanese and has two Quranic works entitled "God and Man in the Quran" and "Ethical-Religious Concepts in the Quran". Izutsu tried to study the semantics of the key words of the Quran, and by discovering the semantic connection of the words in a wide semantic network, to achieve a harmonious system of the Quran. Through explanation of the meaning of the words and concepts of the Quran discourse, he wanted to make the Holy Quran speak in its own language and be a translator of its own conditions and concepts [8]. Izutsu believes that the Quran put ancient Arabic words in a new semantic system and by conquering the Arabic language, it has changed the way of thinking of the Arabs. According to Izutsu, the semantic structure of words from one culture to another, from one language to another, and even within a language, from one dialect to another, or from one subculture to another (even with similar words) is different. He believed that the semantic structure of the Quranic language is different from the semantic structure of the Arabic language before the appearance of Islam. In this regard, Izutsu used the term "Semantic Worldview" or "Linguistic Worldview". This means that the formation of the semantic construction of the Quran language is based on the view of the Creator of the Universe, but the semantic construction of the Arabic language before Islam is based on the cultural view of a people on the world around them [4].

Commentators consider Izutsu's method of semantics to be the interpretation of "Quran to Quran", but Izutsu sought to express the meaning of a word through the synonyms and antonyms of a word by mentioning several steps. According to Izutsu, the semantics of the Quran precedes the interpretation of the Quran, in other words, the semantics of the Quran must be obtained before the interpretation [9]. In this regard, [10] said that Izutsu presented eight principles for the SFT in order to analyze the meanings of Quranic words:

- Finding meaning of the word from the context;
- Applying the substitution relationship in the same textual context;
- Paying attention to the association of the words in the context of the text;
- Constructing the meaning of a word from its opposite;
- Constructing the meaning of a word from its negative form;
- Using semantic relations of focal, key, and secondary words in textual context;
- Discovering the semantic relationship through synonyms;
- Revealing other aspects of vocabulary in non-religious context.

According to the SFT, each word has a separate semantic field. Izutsu said vocabulary is not a single-layer building; rather, they are composed of key, focal, and secondary layers (words) that are placed across each other and have overlapping borders with each other [8]. These layers are made linguistically using groups of key words that Izutsu called "semantic fields" [11]. A brief description of the key, focal, and secondary words quoted by [4] is given below:

- *Key words*: The words that have a high frequency, but do not have the centrality of focal words;
- *Focal words*: The words that not only have a high frequency but are also the focus of many other words and other words are constantly present in relation to those words (such as the word Allah and faith in the Quran);
- *Secondary words*: The words that have a weak presence in terms of repetition and are on the sidelines and only help the meaning of other words.

Methodology

This research adopted a descriptive-analytical method to investigate the semantic structure of the word "Nas" using three of the eight principles of Izutsu's Semantic Field Theory: *Textual context*, *Substitution relationship*, *Semantic field of words* (*key*, *focal*, *secondary*). The purpose was to uncover the intended meaning of the word "Nas" in the discourse of the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah.

Also, the materials and the data collection of this research were based on three Arabic dictionaries (Al-Ain, Al-Munjed, and Al-Moured), the eleven verses of the Holy Quran, and English translation of the Quran translated by Ali Quli Qarai [12]. In addition, based on SFT, three semantic fields at the vocabulary level were depicted in order to examine and analyze the word "Nas" semantically.

Data Analysis and Findings

This section consists of the two parts: parts A, and B. In part A, the meanings of the word "Nas" were given from the lexical point of view extracted from three Arabic dictionaries: "*Kitab Al-Ain*, *Al-Munjed* and *Al-Moured*". In part B, by extracting ten verses along with the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah (totally 11 verses) which contain the word "Nas" were analyzed semantically. Also, three semantic fields were formed at the lexical and discourse level based on the three principles of Izutsu's SFT: [textual context, substitution relationship, semantic field of words (*key*, *focal*, *secondary*)].

A. Meaning of the Word "Nas" in three Arabic Dictionaries

- *Kitab Al-Ayn*: It is the first Arabic language dictionary (175 lunar year) and one of the earliest known dictionaries of any language. It was organized in the eighth century by al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi. According to the arrangement of this dictionary, the letter "N" is in the eighth volume. In the alphabetical order of this dictionary, the word "Nas" was not seen as an independent word with an independent meaning. But, in the meaning of the word "/flan/ (so and so)" the word /nas/ is given. It should be noted that the word /nas/ is present in the most examples of this dictionary which means "people".
- *Al-Munjed*: It is one of the most famous Arabic-to-Arabic dictionary [13] which was written by Louis Maalouf in the 20th century. In the investigation based on alphabetical order, the word "Nas" was not found in this dictionary. However, in the meaning of the word "Onas", the word "Nas" is given (only once) which reads as follows: Onas: People (and sometimes /o/ is removed, /nas/).
- *Al-Mawrid Al-Marai*: It is one of the illustrated English-Arabic and Arabic-English dictionaries [14] which was written by Ruhi Al-Baalbaki. He has defined the word "Nas" as follows: Nas: Human, people, human beings, worlds.

Since, the word "Nas" was not found in the alphabetical order of the Al-Ain, and Al-Munjed dictionaries, one of the presuppositions is that the construction of the word "Nas" does not belong to the Arabic language; rather, it is one of the Quranic words — the Holy Quran is older than Al-Ain dictionary. But, the Al-Mawrid dictionary has centered the meaning of the word "Nas" on the four semantic groups of "people, human, human beings, and worlds". Accordingly, it is necessary to search for its meaning, form, and construction within the context of the discourse of the verses of the Quran.

B. Analyzing the Meaning of the Word "Nas" in the Discourse of the Verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah and Other verses Based on Izutsu's SFT

Surah Al-Baqarah consists of 286 verses, it is the largest surah of the Quran, and in the order of revelation, it is the eighty-seventh surah, and in terms of the arrangement of the surahs. The Surah Al-Baqarah is the second surah of the Holy Quran which was revealed to the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) in Madinah. The word "Nas" is mentioned 241 times in the discourse of the Quran, 20 of which are used with the discourse structure "Ya Ayuh An-Nas".

In the following section, the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah and other verses related to the word "Nas" are given with the translation of Ali Quli Qarai. In this article, for the ease access, the word "Nas" in the verses of the Quran and the words "people / humans / mankind" in English translation were underlined.

The verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah says:

١- [...] فَأْتُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ...

1- [...beware the Fire whose fuel will be humans and stones, prepared for the faithless].

The discourse process of the above verse has a relevant semantic coherence with the previous verses. The syntactic features of the verse expresses the punishment of sinful group of people in Hell, who will be used as fuel for the fire of Hell. According to the verses six to 23 of the Surah Al-Baqarah (see Appendix), these points found out: **a)** Nas are those who say we believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment, while they are not the believers; **b)** They want to deceive Allah and the believers while they are deceiving themselves; **c)** They always tell lies, and there is a painful punishment for them; **d)** They are those who corrupt the earth; **e)** they spend time with the devils; **f)** They are those who bought misguidance instead of guidance and because of this they are deaf, dumb, and blind, and they do not return from misguidance to guidance.

It should be noted that the verse 11 of the Surah Al-Hajj with semantic consistency with the verses six to 23 of the Surah Al-Baqarah says:

٢- [وَمِنَ النَّاسِ ... ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ ...].

2- [And among the people are those who worship Allah on the (very) fringe: if good fortune befalls him, he is content with it; but if an ordeal visits him he makes a turnabout, to become a loser in the world and the Hereafter. That is manifest loss (22: 11)].

Based on the co-occurrence principle of the words, in examining the lexical and discourse relationships between the verses six to 23 and 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah, the following semantic field was formed for the Quranic word "Nas". Figure 1 shows the word "Nas" as the focal word, and the words "misguided, deceitful, corrupters, and liars" are placed as key words in the first semantic field.

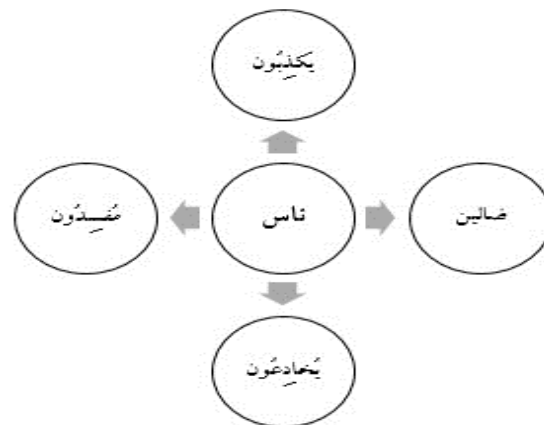


Figure (1) the first semantic field of the Quranic word "Nas" based on the co-occurrence principle of the words (Al-Baqarah, verses 6-24)

Also, the following verses have similar contents to the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah:

The verse 6 of the Surah At-Tahrim says:

٣- [يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا...].

3- [O you who have faith! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel will be people and stones, ... (At-Tahrim, 66: 6)].

The verse 13 of the Surah As-Sajdah says:

٤- [لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ...].

4- [... but My word became due (against the faithless): 'Surely I will fill hell with all the (guilty) jinn and humans (As-Sajdah, 32: 13)].

Likewise, from the second to the fifth verses of the Surah Al-Baqarah (see Appendix), a certain category of people, "the Pious", as believers has been introduced. In fact, firstly, those verses describe the special characteristics of the pious through some key words such as "believers, givers, and felicitous". Then, from the sixth to the 24th verses of the Surah Al-Baqarah, another category, "Nas", as disbelievers with key words of "misguided, liars, corruptors, deceivers" has been introduced. And finally, the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah declares the verdict of "Nas" in the clear layers of discourse as the firewood of Hell. Therefore, it can be seen that the opening verses of the Surah Al-Baqarah clearly introduce two certain categories of people: 1) The pious (believers), and 2) Nas (disbelievers). In this regard, the verse two of the Surah At-Taghabun refers to those two categories [*He is the one who created you, a group of you are unbelievers and a group of you are believers and...*]. As, throughout the verses of the Quran, we mostly face two audiences: [Ya Iha al-Mu'menun" (*O you who believe*)], and [Ya Iha al-Nas" (*O Nas*)].

According to the SFT, the meaning of a word can be also obtained through the relationship of the substitution and companion words. In fact, the semantic relations that are established between the substitute and companion words have semantic implications themselves. Therefore, by accompany the word "Nas" with the words "Nar" (fire), "Hajara" (stone idols that were and are worshiped), and "Hell", it can be understood the word "Nas" in the aforementioned three verses (24 Al-Baqarah, 6 At-Tahrim, and 13 As-Sajdah), refers to those people who are not in the category of the believers. As it was said before, Izutsu believed different components for vocabulary, and divided vocabulary as a broad field into three specific layers (key, focal, secondary). He considered each word as a part of a larger whole which he called it as the field of semantics. Regarding the semantics of the words of the Quran, Izutsu believed that the meaning of the words of the Quran should be uncovered in the discourse of the Quran itself.

Consequently, based on the SFT, the word "human" may be the focal word in the verses two to 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah, and also, /muttaqeen/ (the pious), and /nas/ may be the key words for the word "human". Therefore, based on the principle of semantic contrast, the meaning of the word "Nas" can be revealed in the contrast with the meaning of the word "Muttaqeen". Below, Figure 2 shows the second semantic field of the word human (muttaqeen and nas), as well as the semantic fields of /muttaqeen/ and /nas/ separately, according to the verses two to 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah.



Figure (2) the second semantic field of the words "Human", "Nas", and "Muttaqeen" according to the verses two to 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah

It should be noted that in the semantics of the Quran, as [11] believed that the meaning is born from the opposition words, that is, in the semantic system of the Quran, the concepts of the words gain their meanings in the opposition of each other. Izutsu continued if the semantic system of the Quran is shown in a circle; within this system, there are many concepts that gain meaning in the opposition of each other. The following verses show the contrast between the /muttaqeen/ and the /nas/ groups. The verse 138 of the Surah Al-Imran says:

٥- [هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَ مَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ]

5- [This is an explanation for mankind, and a guidance and advice for the Godwary (Al-Imran, 3: 138)].

The verse 20 of the Surah Al-Jathiyah says:

٦- [هَذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَ هُدًى وَ رَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ]

6- [These are eye-openers for mankind, and guidance and mercy for a people who have certainty (Al-Jathiyah, 45: 20)].

Likewise, based on the theory of "Izutsu's semantic field", there are different ratios within semantic fields, so, language and meaning are not just a set of words; rather, words are associated with a set of relationships. The relations established between the words themselves have semantic implications. For example, in the above verse 138 of the Surah Al-Imran, the relation of "this" (i.e. Quran) to "Nas" in the textual context of this verse is only as an expression (Nas merely hears this Quran expressions) which have no effect on their belief and strengthening of their faith, but the relation of "this" (i.e. Quran) to the pious is not only a guidance (increases their faith) but also an admonition and a beacon for their religious life in the world and Hereafter. In fact, the basis of the revelation of the Quran and its relationship with human is to strengthen their faith, but; it has a neutral effect on "Nas" (according to the above verses).

In this regard, the verse 11 of the Surah Ad-Dukhan, referring to the Day of Judgment, says about "Nas":

٧- [يَغْشَى النَّاسَ هَذَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ]

7- [Enveloping the people. [They will cry out:] 'This is a painful punishment (Ad-Dukhan, 44: 11)].

However, the verse 89 of the Surah An-Naml says [the righteous are safe from the fear of the Day of Judgment (An-Naml, 27: 89)].

In the analysis of the verse 11 of the Surah Ad-Dukhan, it can be said that the word "torment" is the explanation of the punishment for the disbelievers, deniers, and overall the misguided persons. In the overt and covert layers of the context, the word "torment" along with the word "Nas" implies that the word "Nas" does not refer to "people" which is a general word. Because, within the context of the meaning of the word "people", both believers and disbelievers can be imagined. Apart from that, referring to the verses of the Quran, the linguistic function of the word "torment" has a semantic relationship with the words "disbelievers, criminals, wrongdoers, corruptors, etc.", which are introduced "Nas" (regarding the verses 6 to 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah).

In the following, the authors of this article, in order to obtain the meaning of the word "Nas", attempted to investigate how the process of the construction of this Quranic word was formed. So, they observed the discourse structures of the verses that included words from the derivatives of "Naswa/Nasi" (to forget). Like the verse 19 of the Surah Al-Hashr which says:

٨- [وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ]

8- [Do not be like those who forget Allah, so He makes them forget their own souls. It is they who are the transgressors (Al-Hashr, 59: 19)].

Also, the verse 14 of the Surah As-Sajdah says:

۹- [فَذُوقُوا بِمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا أَنَا نَسِينَاكُمْ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ ...]

9- [So taste *the punishment+ for your having forgotten the encounter of this day of yours (As-Sajdah, 32: 14).]

And, the verse 44 of the Surah Al-Baqarah says:

۱۰- [أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَ ...]

10- [Will you bid others to piety and forget yourselves, while you recite the Book? Do you not exercise your reason? (Al-Baqarah, 2: 44)].

In connection with, Izutsu believed that Arabic is a language that, in terms of basic words, has an amazing ability to derive new words from the same root [11]. In Figure 3 (the third semantic field), the word "Nas" is the focal word, and words derived from "Naswa" are the key words (in Figure 3, the words are adopted from the verses of the entire Quran).

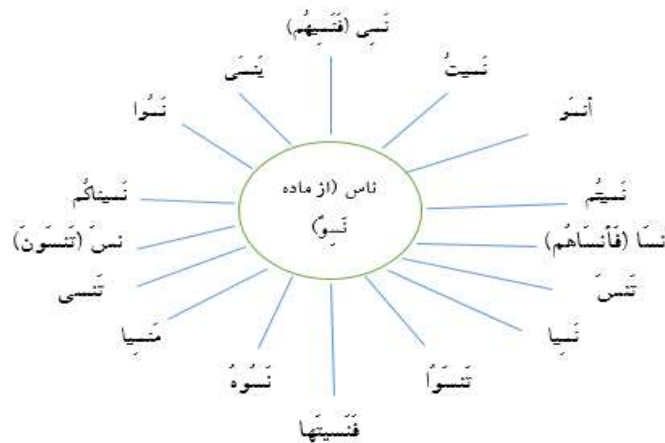


Figure (3) the third semantic field of the Quranic word "Nas" generated from /næsiwoon/ [(Al-Baqarah, 2: 44, & 237; At-Tobeh, 9: 67; Al-Kahf, 18: 63; Maryam, 19: 23; Ta-Ha, 20: 52 & 126; Al-Muminun, 23:110; Al-Qasas, 28: 77; As-Sajdah, 32: 14; Al-Mujadilah, 58: 6; Al-Hashr, 59:19; & Al-Ala, 87: 6)]

Generally, in Arabic morphology, deficient verbs refers to irregular verbs whose final radical is [واو] or [ياء]. Such verbs are termed /naqis verbs/ (الفعل الناقص) (single الفعل الناقص) and the rules that govern their conjugation are termed تعليل or إعلال, which lead to the morphophonemic changes through some steps of a particular pattern. Table I indicates the process of changing three examples of deficient verbs (نَسِوُ، رَضِوُ، رَمِوُ) into subject nouns in Arabic.

Table 1-forming subject noun from deficient verb in Arabic

Deficient Verbs	Step One	Step Two	Step Three	Step Four	Subject Noun
نَسِوُ to forget	نَاسِوُ	ناسِی	ناسِین	ناسن	ناس forgetter
رَضِوُ to accept	رَاضِوُ	راضِی	راضِین	راضن	راض accepter
رَمِوُ to throw	رَامِوُ	رامِین	رامن	-	رام thrower

As shown in Table 1, "Nas" (forgetter) is a subject noun which derived from the deficient infinitive /næsiwoon/ that means to forget. Considering Table 1, and the semantic field of "Nas" in Figure (3), it can be concluded that the Quranic word "Nas" refers to those people who have forgotten Allah and His covenant in believing in the Oneness of Him, hence, Allah called them "Nas" which means "forgetter". Therefore, it can be noted that Nas (i.e. disbelievers) is one of the two divided groups of people. Whilst, the other group of people, i.e. the believers, are those who never forget Allah, they are faithful to their covenant with Allah (in faith in the Oneness of Him), they have piety, and Allah has called them "the pious". Now, the important question here is: What is this covenant between human and Allah?

On this subject, the verse 172 of the Surah Al-A'raf answers the above question, this verse says: [When your Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, heir descendants and made them bear witness over themselves, He said to them, 'Am I not your Lord?' They said, 'Yes indeed! We bear witness.' This, lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Indeed we were unaware of this, (Al-A'raf, 7: 172)].

Also, the verse 77 of the Surah Al-Imran say: [There shall be no share in the Hereafter for those who sell Allah's **covenant** and their oaths for a paltry gain, and on the Day of Resurrection Allah will not speak to them nor will He [so much as] look at them, nor will He purify them, and there is a painful punishment for them (Al-Imran, 5: 77)].

And, the verse 8 of the Surah Al-Hadid say: [Why should you not have faith in Allah when the Apostle invites you to have faith in your Lord, and He has certainly made a **covenant** with you, if you are [genuinely] faithful? (Al-Hadid, 57: 8)].

The important point here is that, if people were a single community in terms of pious in Allah, there would be no need for Allah to send messengers for the human guidance. According to the verses of the Quran, the pious believe in Allah with certainty, and the remembrance of Allah (the Book of Allah) is a mercy for them and it is like a sermon (the light of the path for their religion in the world and the Hereafter). But "Nas" constantly needs the guidance due to the differences in belief in the Oneness of Allah, Resurrection, and Prophethood. Consequently, the word "people" is a general noun and implies everyone, both the believers and disbelievers. Therefore, this word (people) cannot be an accurate meaning and a correct equivalent for the Quranic word "Nas". In addition, the verses of the Holy Quran has introduced "Nas" as the proper noun not general.

In examining the discursive order of the verses of the Quran, the present research concluded that the function and the meaning of the word "Nas" (as one group of people) is completely different from the function and the meaning of the word "pious" (as another group of people). In related to, the verse 2 of the Surah An-Nasr reveals this difference, as it says:

۱۱- و رَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا ...]

11- [and you see the people entering Allah's religion in throngs, (An-Nasr, 110: 2)].

One of the presuppositions of the meaning of the content of the above verse indicates an event when the group of people (i.e. "Nas", those who forget Allah), finally, believe and enter the religion of Allah. While, the "pious" are within the religion of Allah.

Conclusions

The current research sought to investigate the true meaning of the word "Nas" in the discourse of the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah, based on Izutsu's SFT. To this end, three semantic fields related to the Quranic word "Nas" were depicted in order to answer to the proposed question of this study. The findings of this study revealed that the word "Nas" is a proper noun, and it does not refer to "people" not only in the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah but also other verses of the Quran. Because, the word "people" is a common noun and has its own functional meaning; and its only synonym can be considered "nation". In other words, the word "people" refers to everyone in a society from the religious dimension (believers and disbelievers), to the social dimension (woman, man, child, teenager, young, old, rural, urban, etc.), and the occupation dimension (doctor, engineer, athlete, farmer, etc.), also the political dimension (government and rulers), and so on.

This research in examining the semantics of the Quranic word "Nas" aligning with Izutsu's SFT came to the conclusion that semantic fields can dynamically provide the means of studying textual and intertextual meanings through creating semantic connections. Likewise, it can supply the ease of obtaining meaning in the covert layers of the words from within the context of the language. Meanwhile, the researchers of this study concluded that "semantics" is a science which looks for the most suitable equivalent for the word in the translation of the text through the examination of different semantic components. In this regard, Izutsu's SFT can contribute the translators to better perform their task in translation (especially the translation of Holy Books).

Finally, the authors of this research achieved not only the meaning of the word "Nas" but also its construction. As a matter of fact, through the application of Izutsu's SFT, this research concluded that the word "Nas" in the verse 24 of the Surah Al-Baqarah does not refer to "people" as commonly translated. Instead, it implies those individuals who have forgotten Allah and His covenant, indicating a state of neglect in their belief in His Oneness (due to the differences in belief in the Monotheism, Resurrection, and Prophethood). The findings of this study indicated that the word "Nas" means "the forgetful"—it is a subject noun derived from the deficient verb, i.e. /nəsiwoon/, of the single three-lettered verb (infinitive) in Arabic language, which signifies to "to forget". Therefore, the intended meaning of "Nas" in the verses containing this word does not equate to "people", which implies everyone in the world, but rather signifies a specific group of individuals, those who do not believe in Allah, consider the divine verses and Holy Books to be lies, and are among the wrongdoers and astrayers.

List of Symbols

SFT: Semantic Field Theory

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Appendix

The verses from two to 24 of the Surah Al-Baqrah (translated by Ali Quli Qarai)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.

﴿١﴾

Alif, Lam, Mim. (1)

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢﴾

This is the Book, there is no doubt in it, a guidance to the Godwary, (2)

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾

who believe in the Unseen, maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them; (3)

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾

and who believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you, and are certain of the Hereafter. (4)

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

Those follow their Lord's guidance and it is they who are the felicitous. (5)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذِرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْتَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾

As for the faithless, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith. (6)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذِرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْتَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾

Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight, and there is a great punishment for them. (7)

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾

Among the people are those who say, 'We have faith in Allah and the Last Day,' but they have no faith. (8)

يُحَادِثُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يُخَذِّعُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

They seek to deceive Allah and those who have faith, yet they deceive no one but themselves, but they are not aware. (9)

﴿١٠﴾ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ يَمَّا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

There is a sickness in their hearts; then Allah increased their sickness, and there is a painful punishment for them because of the lies they used to tell. (10)

﴿١١﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾

When they are told, 'Do not cause corruption on the earth,' they say, 'We are only reformers!' (11)

﴿١٢﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

Behold! They are themselves the agents of corruption, but they are not aware. (12)

﴿١٣﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

And when they are told, 'Believe like the people who have believed,' they say, 'Shall we believe like the fools who have believed?' Behold! They are themselves the fools, but they do not know. (13)

﴿١٤﴾ وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

When they meet the faithful, they say, 'We believe,' but when they are alone with their devils, they say, 'We are with you; we were only deriding them. (14)

﴿١٥﴾ اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

It is Allah who derides them, and leaves them bewildered in their rebellion. (15)

﴿١٦﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهَدْيِ ۖ فَمَا ربحَتْ بِحَرْمَتِهِمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

They are the ones who bought error for guidance, so their trade did not profit them, nor were they guided. (16)

﴿١٧﴾ مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

Their parable is that of one who lighted a torch, and when it had lit up all around him, Allah took away their light, and left them sightless in a manifold darkness. (17)

﴿١٨﴾ صُمُّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not come back. (18)

﴿١٩﴾ أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَنُقُرٌّ يُجْعَلُونَ ۚ أَصَابَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

Or that of a rainstorm from the sky, wherein is darkness, thunder and lightning: they put their fingers in their ears due to the thunderclaps, apprehensive of death; and Allah besieges the faithless. (19)

﴿٢٠﴾ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ ۖ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَنْبَارِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

The lightning almost snatches away their sight: whenever it shines for them, they walk in it, and when the darkness falls upon them, they stand. Had Allah willed, He would have taken away their hearing and sight. Indeed Allah has power over all things. (20)

﴿٢١﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

O mankind! Worship your Lord, who created you and those who were before you, so that you may be Godwary (21)

﴿٢٢﴾ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً ۖ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

—He who made the earth a place of repose for you, and the sky a canopy, and He sends down water from the sky and with it brings forth crops for your sustenance. So do not set up equals to Allah, while you know. (22)

﴿٢٣﴾ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

And if you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our servant, then bring a surah like it, and invoke your helpers besides Allah, if you are truthful. (23)

﴿٢٤﴾ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْزَنُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۖ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

But if you do not—and you will not—then beware the Fire whose fuel will be humans and stones, prepared for the faithless. (24)