

Cloud Expression Categories in Arabic: A Morphosemantic Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze categories of expressions related to clouds in the Arabic language through a morphological-semantic approach, with the goal of explaining the relationship between morphological structure and lexical meaning in the semantic domain of clouds. This study employs a qualitative approach based on a literature review. Data were collected from major classical Arabic dictionaries, namely Majma' al-Ma'ani, Fiqh al-Lugha wa Sirr al-Arab, and Lisan al-Arab, supplemented by relevant scholarly literature. The analysis was conducted by identifying word roots, morphological patterns, and semantic features of each linguistic unit to develop a systematic morphological-semantic classification. The results identified 29 linguistic units representing the concept of clouds in Arabic. These linguistic units were classified into four main categories: the stages of cloud formation and development, cloud shapes and their structural characteristics, atmospheric density and coverage, and rain clouds along with their associated weather phenomena. The analysis also reveals that differences in morphological patterns result in systematic semantic differences, such that each linguistic unit can not only refer to cloud phenomena but also represent their developmental stages, shapes, locations, densities, and functions within the weather system. These results indicate that the Arabic lexical system reflects a close relationship between morphology and semantics in the description of natural phenomena and contributes to the development of the field of semantic morphology.

1. INTRODUCTION

Arabic is known to possess a highly productive and distinctive lexical system, which is built upon the dynamic relationship between word roots (*al-jidzr*) and morphological patterns (*al-wazn*). (Aprizal, 2025; Hakim et al., 2020; Nabilah, n.d.) Every trilateral or quadrilateral root in the Arabic language has the structural capacity to derive a vast number of word forms (Ayu Sekarsari et al., 2025) that are semantically interrelated through the process of derivation (*ishtiqaq*). (Ainur Rofiq Sofa & Holifatul Munawaroh, 2025; Contributors, n.d.; Luthfan & Hadi, 2019) This derivative morphological characteristic is the distinctive structural feature of the Semitic language family, (Mahmuda Mahmuda & Ainur Rofiq Sofa, 2025; Rofik, 2021) enabling it to generate highly detailed vocabulary to describe natural phenomena, (Ritonga et al., 2025) including meteorological phenomena such as clouds. The significance of this research lies in its effort to document this rich vocabulary, given that classical dictionaries record many different terms for clouds, such as *al-sahab*, *al-ghaim*, *al-mazn*, *al-rakaam*, *al-anan*, and *al-qa'za'*. Each of these terms has a distinct lexical meaning related to the cloud's shape, density, location, color, and even its water content. (الإفريقي, 1994) Understanding this uniqueness is highly crucial because the diversity of these lexemes is not a form of absolute, arbitrary synonymy, (Faisal et al., 2025; Syatroh et al., 2024) but rather an indication of a conceptual system that works systematically to link morphological forms with their semantic features (Musa & Rinaldy, 2025; Zulkepli & Mohd Zulkhairi Abd Hamid, 2021) in reflecting the ecological experience and cultural cognitive worldview of its speakers. Various previous studies have highlighted aspects relevant to this topic through a variety of theoretical approaches. In Qur'anic semantic studies, Izutsu (Izutsu, 1964) laid

an important theoretical foundation for the study of Qur'anic semantics through the semantic field approach. According to him, the meaning of a word cannot be understood in isolation; its meaning becomes clear only when it is placed within a network of relationships with other words that are part of a single conceptual system. Furthermore, Setiyadi (Setiyadi et al., 2025) has applied a specific morphosemantic approach in the Arabic language to analyze vocabulary related to expressions of sleep by linking triliteral roots, morphological patterns, and semantic classifications. In the realm of Arabic verb analysis, El Qorny (El-Qorny, 2016) also examined the productivity of variations in the forms of *fi'l* (verbs) and their meanings. Taken together, these studies confirm that both semantic field theory and morphosemantic analysis are effective for explaining lexical meaning in Arabic, yet they differ in analytical scope and have not been integrated into a unified framework for analysing an entire lexical field.

Nevertheless, these studies primarily focus either on isolated lexical items, verb morphology, or semantic description, without integrating morphological structure, semantic categorization, and cognitive conceptualization into a unified analytical framework for an entire lexical field. Existing semantic field studies generally classify lexical relations, whereas morphosemantic studies mainly explain the interaction between roots, morphological patterns, and lexical meanings. They do not provide a systematic model for analysing how an entire semantic domain is organized through the interaction of morphology and meaning. While the morphosemantic approach has proven effective in explaining the relationship between form and meaning in the Arabic language (Ramadhani, 2025; Zainurrakhmah, 2024), its application to vocabulary related to natural phenomena—as an integrated lexical domain—remains limited. Current research tends to focus on verbs (Lalu Muhammad Arifrabani & Muhsinin, 2023) and the semantic domain related to humans (Annafiri et al., 2023; Maksum & Tafiati, 2019). As a result, although classical dictionaries document a diverse range of lexical units related to clouds, no study has yet been conducted that systematically integrates morphological structure with semantic classification and cognitive interpretation of this lexical domain. This study goes beyond a mere inventory and classification of linguistic units in the Arabic language; it proposes an Integrated Morphosyntactic Lexical Framework (IMLF). Unlike previous research, which tended to separate morphological and semantic analysis, this framework combines three analytical elements: (1) the root and morphological pattern (*jidhr-wazan*), (2) semantic classification, and (3) cognitive aspects. This integration explains how lexical variation influences the expansion of meaning and perceptions of cloud phenomena, while also providing a framework that can be applied to other areas of lexicography related to natural phenomena. Based on this research gap, this article aims to investigate Arabic cloud expressions through a morphosemantic framework. Specifically, the study addresses three questions: (1) how cloud lexemes can be identified according to their roots and morphological patterns; (2) how these lexemes can be classified into semantic categories and cognitive dimensions; and (3) how morphological variation contributes to semantic extension within the lexical field of clouds. Beyond establishing a comprehensive morphosemantic classification, this study proposes an integrated analytical framework that explains the conceptual organization of Arabic cloud vocabulary and provides a transferable model for analysing other lexical fields of natural phenomena.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design. (Citriadin, 2020; Yakin, 2023) to investigate the classification of cloud expressions in Arabic from a morphosemantic perspective. (Alimin et al., 2026) This approach was selected because the research object consists of linguistic data documented in classical Arabic dictionaries and scholarly literature (Wiwin & Yudi, 2025). Therefore, the analysis was conducted through linguistic interpretation without involving experimental procedures or statistical measurements. A morphosemantic perspective was employed to

explain the relationship between the lexical root (*jidhr*), word-formation patterns (*wazan*), and the semantic development of each lexeme (Kamila, 2025) within the semantic field of clouds. Accordingly, this study not only inventories the lexical items but also elucidates the conceptual principles underlying the formation of lexical categories in Arabic.

Research location and data sources

The scope of the research includes authoritative works of Arabic lexicography, as well as scholarly literature that explains the lexical system of the Arabic language. Primary data were collected from three major Arabic dictionaries Mu'jam al-Ma'ānī, Fiqh al-Lughah wa Sirr al-'Arabiyyah, and Lisān al-'Arab which were purposively selected because they provide comprehensive etymological, morphological, and semantic descriptions of vocabulary related to clouds. The unit of analysis is lexical items referring to the concept of clouds along with their derived forms. Following the processes of identification and selection, twenty-nine lexical items satisfied the inclusion criteria and were retained for analysis. Secondary data were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, Arabic linguistics textbooks, and previous studies on morphology, semantics, lexicology, and morphosemantics. (Nur & Haniah, 2024) These materials were used to establish the theoretical framework, support the interpretation of linguistic data, and compare the present findings with those of earlier studies. Since this research adopted a library-based design, no human participants or research respondents were involved.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data was collected by analyzing three classical Arabic dictionaries (Akbar, 2024), Kitab al-'Ayn, Fiqh al-Lughah, and Lisan al-'Arab. The first step was to systematically identify all entries related to clouds. Only terms that explicitly refer to clouds, their characteristics, or related meteorological phenomena were included irrelevant meteorological terms were excluded, resulting in a corpus containing 29 linguistic units. For each linguistic unit, the linguistic form, root, morphological pattern (masdar), dictionary definition, and semantic description were recorded using a data classification form. The researcher was the primary instrument in this process, with the classification form serving as a tool for organizing the data. The data were analyzed descriptively through four sequential stages: data reduction, data display, morphosemantic classification, and conclusion drawing. For each linguistic unit, the researcher began by analyzing its root and inflectional patterns. The researcher then compared their meanings across the three dictionaries to identify semantic similarities and distinguish between different concepts. Next, the research findings were interpreted using semantic and cognitive semantic analysis to design an integrated morphological-semantic framework that links morphological structure, semantic categories, and cognitive aspects. This process yields four main categories: (1) cloud formation and growth, (2) cloud types and structural characteristics, (3) cloud density and atmospheric coverage, and (4) rain-producing clouds and associated weather phenomena. To ensure reliability, a comparison of sources was conducted, followed by discussions with colleagues specializing in Arabic linguistics to continuously verify the ability to interpret meaning.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Morphological Structure: The Relationship Between Word Roots and Derivational Patterns in Arabic Cloud Lexemes

Fiqh al-Lughah wa Sirr al-'Arabiyyah by al-Tha'ālībī is one of the thematic lexicographical works that organizes Arabic vocabulary according to semantic fields (Nissa et al., 2025), making it an important source for lexical semantic studies. Based on an analysis of the primary data contained in this work, the present study identified 29 lexemes referring to cloud-related phenomena in Arabic. This record shows that lexicography in Arabic discusses the concept of “cloud” in greater detail than

lexicography in Indonesian or English, because it describes the various characteristics of each term separately such as shape, density, color, position in the sky, stage of formation, and related weather patterns rather than simply using a single general word meaning “cloud.” Morphologically, the findings reveal that the variety of Arabic cloud-related lexemes is not random but arises from a systematic interplay between lexical roots (al-jidhr) whether trilateral or quadrilateral and morphological patterns (al-wazn) (Luthfan & Hadi, 2019; Maesaroh et al., 2026). Through the process of derivation, Arabic not only encodes “clouds” as a natural phenomenon but also integrates their physical characteristics, intensity levels, and atmospheric behavior directly into the morphological structure of each linguistic unit. This interaction reflects the deep connection between the morphological patterns of the Arabic language and the way atmospheric phenomena are described. To explain how these subtle semantic distinctions are preserved in early classical sources, the discussion below will examine the basic linguistic units related to clouds as recorded in *Lisan al-Arab*. The lexeme al-sahāb (السَّحَابُ) offers a clear example of how root and pattern work together to shape meaning. Built from the root s-h-b (carrying the sense of "pulling" or "dragging") combined with the fa'āl pattern, the word frames clouds not as fixed, static objects but as masses that are constantly in motion across the sky. This lends further support to the Semitic root-and-pattern system, where the root anchors the core meaning while the pattern layered onto it shapes how that meaning is extended and specified (Alkhairy et al., 2020; Ayu Sekarsari et al., 2025; Badiyev, 2026; Bobeck, 2025; Ritonga et al., 2025; 2026; أبو راوي & الساکر).

A comparable dynamic appears in al-mukfahirr (المُكْفِهِّرُ), a term denoting the most extreme degree of cloud thickness and darkness. Formed from the quadrilateral root k-f-h-r through the participial pattern muf'allil, this lexeme shows how more elaborate morphological structures can be used to intensify meaning—here, capturing heightened density, deeper color, and greater severity. Taken together, these two cases suggest that morphological patterns in Arabic do more than provide grammatical form: they act as meaningful markers that help distinguish fine conceptual shades within the semantic field of clouds (Badiyev, 2026)(Badiyev, 2026)

3.2 A Morphosemantic Classification of Cloud-Related Lexemes in Arabic

The second key finding shows that the twenty-nine Arabic cloud lexemes form a structured lexical system, rather than simply functioning as interchangeable synonyms. A closer look at their lexical roots, derivational patterns, and dictionary definitions shows that each term captures a distinct conceptual facet of clouds within Classical Arabic. These differences reflect variations in atmospheric development, physical form, density, and meteorological function. Table 1 lays out the morphological features of each lexeme—its lexical root (al-jidhr), derivational pattern (wazan), definition as found in *Lisān al-‘Arab*, and English gloss. This morphological and lexical data serves as the empirical basis for the morphosemantic classification and analysis that follows.

Table 1. Morphological and Lexical Characteristics of Arabic Cloud Lexemes in *Lisān al-‘Arab* (الإفريقي, 1994; الثعالبي, 2000)

No	Arabic Term	Root	Wazan	Word Meaning In <i>Lisān Al-‘arab</i>	English Translation
1	النَّشْءُ	ن-ش-أ	فَعْل	مَا ابْتَدَأَ مِنَ السَّحَابِ وَأَنْشَأَ فِي الْأُفُقِ وَأَوَّلُ مَا يَبْدُو مِنْهُ	A cloud in its earliest stage of formation, first appearing on the horizon
2	السَّحَابُ	س-ح-ب	فَعَال	جَمْعُ سَحَابٍ، وَتَمَيَّيَ بِذَلِكَ لِأَنَّهُ يَسْحَبُ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا أَوْ تَسْحَبُهُ الرِّيحُ فِي الْهَوَاءِ	The plural form of <i>sahābah</i> (cloud), so named because its parts draw one another together or because it is carried by the wind
3	الْعَمَامُ	ع-م-م	فَعَال	جَمْعُ عَمَامَةٍ، وَهُوَ السَّحَابُ الْأَبْيَضُ، وَتَمَيَّيَ عَمَامًا لِأَنَّهُ يَغْمُ السَّمَاءَ أَيْ يُغَطِّيْهَا وَيَحْجُبُ الصُّورَ	The plural form of <i>ghamāmah</i> (white cloud). It is called <i>ghamām</i> because it covers the sky, obscuring both the sky itself and the sunlight

4	العُقْرُ	ع-ق-ر	(غير محدد)	السَّحَابُ الَّذِي يَغْفِرُ أَيَّ يَقِفُ وَيَمْكُثُ فِي مَكَانِهِ لَا يَسِيرُ وَلَا تَرُدُّهُ الرِّيحُ	A cloud suspended in place, unaffected by the wind
5	العَرَّاصُ	ع-ر-ص	صيغة مبالغة	السَّحَابُ الَّذِي يَغْرِضُ فِي الْأَفْقِ وَيَضْطَرِبُ فِيهِ الرِّيحُ وَالرَّغْدُ وَيَتَحَرَّكُ بِشِدَّةٍ	A cloud stretching across the horizon, with active thunder and lightning within it, moving vigorously and turbulently
6	النَّمِرَةُ	ن-م-ر	فِعْلَة	السَّحَابَةُ الَّتِي فِيهَا مَرَاتٌ، أَيْ بَقَعَ بَيْضٌ وَسُودٌ تُشَبِّهُ لَوْنَ النَّمِرِ	A cloud characterized by mottled white and black patches, resembling a leopard's coat
7	الْقَزْعُ	ق-ز-ع	فَعْل	قَطَعَ مِنَ السَّحَابِ رَقِيقَةً مُتَفَرِّقَةً فِي السَّمَاءِ الصَّاحِيحَةِ	Thin and scattered fragments of clouds appearing in a clear sky
8	الكِرِّي	ك-ر-ف	اسم هيئة	السَّحَابُ الْكَثِيفُ الْمُلْتَفُّ بَعْضُهُ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ كَأَنَّهُ قِطْعُ الْقُطْنِ	Thick clouds that cluster and overlap with one another, resembling pieces of cotton
9	الْقَلْعُ	ق-ل-ع	اسم	السَّحَابُ الْأَبْيَضُ الْعَظِيمُ الَّذِي يَرْتَفِعُ كَأَنَّهُ الْقُصُورُ أَوْ الْجِبَالُ	Large white clouds that rise vertically, appearing as if they resemble palaces, fortresses, or mountains
10	كُثُورَةٌ	ك-ن-ه-ر	فَعْلُولَة	السَّحَابُ الْأَبْيَضُ الْعَلِيظُ الْمَرَاكِمُ قِطْعًا عَظَمًا	Extremely thick white clouds that form dense, compact masses in very large fragments
11	الطَّخَارِيرُ	ط-خ-ر	جمع	جَمَعَ طَخْرُورٍ، وَهِيَ قِطْعٌ صِغَارٌ مِنَ السَّحَابِ الرَّقِيقِ الْمَتَفَرِّقِ بَعْدَ الْمَطَرِ	Small clusters of thin clouds scattered across the sky after rainfall
12	مُكَلَّلَةٌ	ك-ل-ل	اسم مفعول	السَّحَابَةُ الَّتِي تُحِيطُ بِهَا قِطْعٌ أُخْرَى مِنَ السَّحَابِ كَأَنَّمَا تُكَلَّلُهَا (أَيْ تُصَيِّرُ لَهَا كَالْتَّاجِ)	A cloud surrounded by other cloud fragments, as if these clouds form a crown around it
13	المُكْنَفَرُ	ك-ف-ه-ر	مُفَعَّلِل	السَّحَابُ الْعَلِيظُ الْأَسْوَدُ الْمُرَكَّبُ بَعْضُهُ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ الَّذِي يُظْلِمُ لَهُ الْأَفُقُ	Extremely dense clouds with a deep black color, layered and overlapping with one another, causing the horizon to become completely dark
14	النَّشَاصُ	ن-ش-ص	فَعَال	السَّحَابُ الْأَبْيَضُ الْمُرْتَفِعُ فِي السَّمَاءِ شُحُوصًا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَبْسُطَهُ الرِّيحُ	White clouds that rise vertically and extend high in the sky before being blown away by the wind and dispersed evenly
15	الْقَرْدُ	ق-ر-د	فَعْل	السَّحَابُ الَّذِي تَقَرَّدُ، أَيْ صَارَ كَأَنَّهُ صُوفٌ مُتَجَعَّدٌ أَوْ قِطْعٌ صِغَارٌ مُتَلَبِّدَةٌ	Wavy or curly clouds, characterized by forms resembling curly sheep's wool or small clusters of clouds that merge together
16	الْعَمَاءُ	ع-م-ي	فَعَال	السَّحَابُ الْمُرْتَفِعُ الْكَثِيفُ الرَّقِيقُ الَّذِي يَحْجُبُ النَّظَرَ إِلَى مَا وَرَاءَهُ	High clouds that are thick yet have a smooth texture, obstructing the view of what lies behind them
17	الْعَمَائَةُ	ع-م-ي	فَعَالَة	السَّحَابُ الْمُظْلِمُ الْكَثِيفُ الَّذِي يَغْشَى الْأَفُقَ بِظُلْمَتِهِ	Thick, dark clouds that cover the horizon with their darkness
18	الرَّيَابُ	ر-ب-ب	فَعَال	السَّحَابُ الْأَبْيَضُ أَوْ الْمُنْخَطُ الدَّائِي مِنَ الْأَرْضِ يَسِيرُ قَبْلَ السَّحَابِ الْكَبِيرِ	White or storm clouds positioned very low near the earth's surface, moving ahead of larger clouds
19	الْعِقَارَةُ	ع-ق-ر	فَعَالَة	السَّحَابَةُ الرَّقِيقَةُ الَّتِي تَعْلُو السَّحَابَ الْكَثِيفَ فُتَّعْطِيهِ كَأَنَّمَا كِنَانٌ لَهُ	A thin layer of clouds located above thick clouds, covering them as if it serves as a veil or protective covering
20	الْمُتَدَبِّ	ه-ي-د-ب	فَعْلَل	السَّحَابُ الْمَتَدَلِّي الدُّبُولُ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ، وَهُوَ السَّحَابُ الثَّقِيلُ الْمُمِيطُ	Clouds whose lower edges hang downward toward the earth, referring to thick clouds heavily laden with water that are carrying rain
21	الْقَنِيفُ	ق-ن-ف	فَعِيل	السَّحَابُ الْأَبْيَضُ الْحَالِصُ الْبَيَاضُ الْحَسَنُ	Clouds that are pure white in color and appear beautiful
22	المُزْنُ	م-ز-ن	فَعْل	جَمْعُ مُزْنَةٍ، وَهُوَ السَّحَابُ الْمُمِيطُ الَّذِي يَحْمِلُ الْمَاءَ الْعَذْبَ	The plural form of <i>muznah</i> , referring to rain-bearing clouds that contain fresh and pure water.

23	الصَّبِيرُ	ص-ب-ر	فَعِيل	السَّحَابُ الْأَبْيَضُ الضَّخْمُ الْفَوْقَ فَوْقَ، الْمَتْرَاكِمُ عَرْضًا فِي الْأَفْقِ لَا يَتَزَوَّلُ سَرِيعًا	Massive white clouds forming horizontal layers along the horizon, characterized by their stability and slow movement
24	الْهَزِيمُ	ه-ز-م	فَعِيل	السَّحَابُ الَّذِي لَهُ رَعْدٌ شَدِيدٌ يُسْمَعُ لَهُ صَوْتُ كَالْتَكْسِيرِ	Cloud formations accompanied by powerful thunder sounds, perceived as resembling the sound of breaking or collapsing objects
25	الْأَجَشُّ	ج-ش-ش	أَفْعَل	السَّحَابُ الَّذِي يَكُونُ صَوْتُ رَعْدِهِ غَلِيظًا حَثِينًا فِيهِ بُحُوحَةٌ وَثِقَلٌ	Cloud formations accompanied by thunder sounds perceived as heavy, rough, deep, and resonant
26	الصُّرَادُ	ص-ر-د	فُعَال	السَّحَابُ الْبَارِدُ الرَّقِيقُ الْمُرْتَفِعُ فِي السَّمَاءِ الَّذِي لَا مَاءَ فِيهِ	High-altitude, thin, and cold clouds that drift across the sky without containing moisture or producing rain
27	الزَّرَجُجُ	ز-ب-ر- ج	فَعِيل	السَّحَابُ الرَّقِيقُ الْمَلُونُ الْمَائِلُ إِلَى الْحُمْرَةِ أَوْ الصُّفْرِ عِنْدَ الشُّرُوقِ أَوْ الْغُرُوبِ	Thin, beautifully colored clouds exhibiting reddish or yellowish tones during sunrise or sunset
28	الصَّبَبُ	ص-ي-ب	فَعِيل	السَّحَابُ الَّذِي يَنْزِلُ مِنْهُ الْمَطَرُ الشَّدِيدُ، أَوْ هُوَ الْمَطَرُ النَّازِلُ نَفْسُهُ	Rain-bearing clouds that release torrential rainfall, or the heavy rain itself during its downward descent
29	الْجَهَامُ	ج-ه-م	فُعَال	السَّحَابُ الَّذِي لَا مَاءَ فِيهِ، يُحْبَلُ إِلَيْكَ أَنَّهُ مُمَطَّرٌ ثُمَّ يَجُوزُ بِأَنَّهُ مَطَرٌ	Clouds that seem to promise rain but carry no moisture, eventually drifting away without ever producing precipitation.

The morphological and lexical evidence in Table 1 shows that Arabic cloud lexemes are semantically distinct from one another, rather than simply serving as interchangeable synonyms. While each lexeme carries its own specific dictionary meaning, a closer look at the corpus reveals recurring semantic patterns that go beyond these individual definitions. These patterns tend to cluster around four broad conceptual dimensions: how clouds form and develop, their physical shape and structure, their density and coverage in the sky, and their meteorological role. These shared characteristics, in turn, form the basis for the morphosemantic classification discussed in the next section.

3.3 Morphosemantic Mapping of Classical Arabic Cloud Expressions

Based on the lexical evidence presented in Table 1, the Arabic cloud lexemes can be synthesized into four interconnected morphosemantic dimensions. Figure 1 illustrates how the lexemes are systematically organized according to developmental stages, physical characteristics, atmospheric density, and meteorological phenomena rather than functioning as simple lexical synonyms. (Setiyadi et al., 2025).

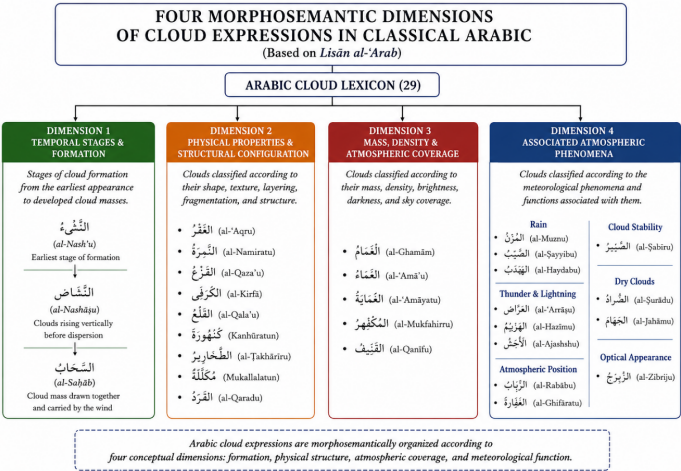


Figure 1. Four Morphosemantic Dimensions of Classical Arabic Cloud Expressions Based on *Lisān al-ʿArab*

Temporal Stages and Cloud Formation

The first conceptual dimension traces how clouds develop over time, from their earliest appearance to their fuller formation in the sky. It starts with al-Nash'u (النَّشْءُ), which refers to the very first sign of clouds forming, moves to al-Saḥāb (السَّحَابُ), describing cloud masses that gather and drift with the wind, and ends with al-Nashāṣu (النَّشَاصُ), which describes clouds rising vertically before the wind breaks them apart. Seen this way, these three lexemes aren't just synonyms they represent different stages in a single process. This supports semantic field theory, showing that the way words are organized in a language can mirror the natural progression of a phenomenon. Cognitive semantics adds to this by suggesting that repeated observations of clouds developing over time eventually became fixed as separate, distinct words.

Physical Properties and Texture

The second category groups cloud lexemes based on their physical appearance and surface features. Instead of being mere synonyms, each word here highlights a different visual trait that Arabic speakers noticed, such as scattered clouds (al-Qaza'u (الْقَزَعُ)), spotted or mottled color (al-Namiratu (النَّمِرَةُ)), thick layers (al-Kirfā (الكَرْفَى)), curly texture (al-Qaradu (الْقَرْدُ)), large compact masses (Kanhūrah (كَنْهُورَة)), clouds that appear to hang or stay in one place (al-'Aqru (العَقْرُ)), and scattered leftover clouds after rain (al-Ṭakhārīru (الطَّخَارِيرُ)). This supports semantic field theory, since it shows that these words are grouped not by strict categories but by physical features that are easily noticed. In simpler terms, this suggests that when Arabic speakers repeatedly observed different shapes and textures of clouds, these observations gradually became fixed as separate words—showing how everyday visual experience gets built into the vocabulary of Classical Arabic.

Cloud Density and Atmospheric Coverage

The third category groups cloud lexemes based on how dense, widespread, or bright they appear in the sky. Al-Ghamām (الْغَمَامُ), al-'Amā'u (الْعَمَاءُ), al-'Amāyatu (الْعَمَايَةُ), and al-Mukfahirru (المُكْفِهَرُّ) show a gradual increase in how thick and covering the clouds are, while al-Qanīfu (القَنِيفُ) instead focuses on clouds that are especially bright and white. This means these words aren't just different labels for the same thing—they represent different points along a scale of how dense or bright clouds can look. This supports semantic field theory, since it shows that words are organized based on differences that can actually be seen. From a cognitive semantics view, this also suggests that Arabic speakers, through repeated observation of clouds' density and brightness, gradually turned these visual differences into separate, fixed words in the language.

Associated Atmospheric Phenomena

The fourth category groups cloud lexemes not by how they look, but by the weather events linked to them. Al-Muznu (المُزْنُ), al-Ṣayyibu (الصَّيْبُ), and al-Haydabu (الْهَيْدَبُ) all refer to rain clouds, though each one describes a different kind of rainfall. Al-'Arrāṣu (الْعَرَّاصُ), al-Hazīmu (الْهَزِيمُ), and al-Ajashshu (الْأَجَشُّ) describe clouds that come with lightning and different levels of thunder. Al-Rabābu (الرَّيَابُ), al-Ghifāratu (الْغِفَارَةُ), and al-Ṣabīru (الصَّبِيرُ) point to specific atmospheric conditions and how the clouds are arranged in the sky. Meanwhile, al-Jahāmu (الْجَهَامُ), al-Ṣurādu (الصُّرَادُ), and al-Zibriju (الزَّبْرِجُ) describe clouds that don't bring rain or that simply stand out visually in some other way. This shows that Arabic doesn't only classify clouds by appearance, but also by what effects or events they bring. In other words, semantic field theory is supported here because word organization reflects real-world function, not just visual traits. Cognitive semantics helps explain this too, since it suggests that these categories developed as Arabic speakers repeatedly experienced different weather patterns and eventually fixed them into specific words.

3.4 Cognitive and Morphosemantic Implications of the Arabic Cloud Lexemes

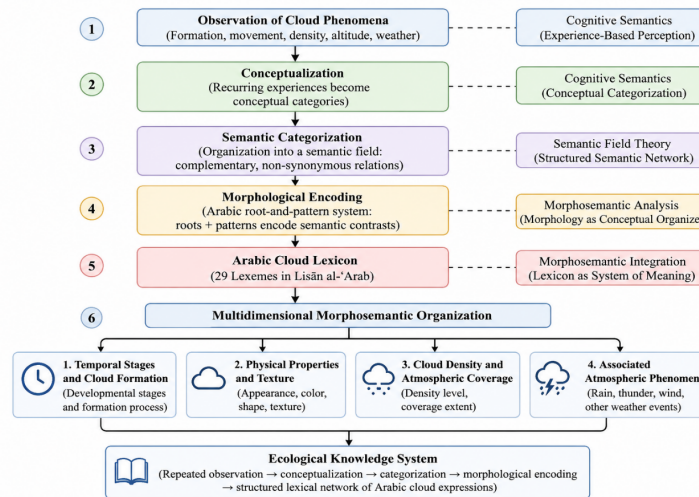


Figure 2. Cognitive–Morphosemantic Framework of Arabic Cloud Expressions

Figure 2 illustrates how cognitive processes play a role in shaping the classification of cloud-related terms in the Arabic language. The twenty-nine cloud-related terms found in "Lisān al-‘Arab" are not merely a collection of terms separate from one another, but rather the result of repeated human observations of atmospheric phenomena, which were subsequently processed through cognitive experience to become meaningful semantic categories (Gurning & Damanik, 2025). Differences in the way clouds form, move, their specific density, their varying altitudes, as well as their diverse atmospheric behavior, form the experiential basis underlying this conceptualization process. This is what later became the foundation for organizing cloud-related terms in Arabic, both semantically and morphologically, in the following discussion (Fuchs, 2026; Lakoff, 2012). The conceptual categories mentioned above constitute a semantic field, where each lexeme occupies a place in the ‘cloud’ that complements the others, rather than simply being their synonym. This discovery supports the theory of the semantic field, as it demonstrates that the formation of words in a language is not only based on semantic similarity but also takes into account the chronological order of things and the relationships between natural phenomena themselves. These conceptual distinctions are then morphologically reflected through the Arabic root-and-form system, where the root and its derivative forms complement each other to produce various meanings. In other words, morphological function in the Arabic language is not only concerned with the formation of new words, but also plays a part in organizing conceptual knowledge within the entire semantic field. This indicates that morphosemantic analysis pertains not only to dissecting the meaning of individual words, but also to dissecting how these words form a larger, interconnected cognitive system. The interaction between semantic classification and morphological encoding forms an integrated morphosemantic system, in which word forms and conceptual meanings are systematically organized. Within the Arabic root-and-pattern system, this interaction has produced twenty-nine cloud-related expressions, each capturing a specific aspect of atmospheric phenomena while remaining interconnected within a coherent semantic network, rather than functioning as separate, isolated words. Together, these lexemes form a multidimensional morphosemantic system comprising four integrated categories: the temporal stages of cloud formation, physical properties and texture, density and atmospheric coverage, and related meteorological phenomena. This framework not only supports existing theories but also shows how repeated observation of natural phenomena can evolve into a structured lexical system through cognitive conceptualization, semantic categorization, and morphological encoding.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the 29 linguistic units related to clouds in the Arabic language, as recorded in Lisan al-'Arab, are not merely a collection of synonyms, but constitute a systematic morpho-semantic network. Through analysis, four morpho-semantic categories were identified: the stages of time and the process of cloud formation; physical characteristics and texture; cloud density and atmospheric coverage; and the accompanying meteorological phenomena. These four categories can be understood more deeply through four epistemological dimensions: chromatic (color), spatial, psychological, and kinetic (movement). Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Classical Arabic depicts cloud phenomena through the interaction between morphological patterns, semantic classification, and human cognitive perception. Furthermore, this study enriches the theory of semantic-morphonomics by demonstrating that the “root and pattern” system in Arabic not only plays a role in word formation but also serves as a means of organizing conceptual knowledge within specific semantic domains. By combining cognitive semantics, semantic field theory, and morphosemantic analysis, this study presents an analytical framework that can be applied to other areas of lexicography, both in Arabic and in other related Semitic languages. This study still has some limitations, namely that it focuses solely on lexicographical sources in Classical Arabic. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore the use of “lexical clouds” in a broader context, such as the Holy Quran, classical literary works, modern Classical Arabic, as well as contemporary Arabic dialects. This is important for gaining a deeper understanding of the relationship between morphology, semantic organization, and cognitive perception.

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