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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism***Imperative forms in Imam Malik's letter to Caliph Harun Al-Rashid: A linguistic study in semantic fields**Murad Rafiq Al-Bayyari^{1*}, Moath Haza' Alzubi¹, Fawz Suhail Kamel Nazzal², Saad Abd Allah Meqdad³ & Asma Sayel AlTalafeeh¹¹The Department of Arabic Language, Faculty of Arts, University of Jordan, Jordan²The Department of Arabic Language, Faculty of Arts, University of Jordan, Jordan³United Arab Emirates University, United Arab Emirates*Correspondence: muradbayyarri@yahoo.com**ABSTRACT**

Objectives: This study aims to examine the imperative (command) forms in Imam Malik's letter to Harun Al-Rashid and classify them according to the semantic fields in which they appear. It seeks to answer a set of questions, such as: What are the most prominent semantic fields for the imperative forms in the letter? Did the commands appear only in the forms traditionally identified by linguists? Does prohibition carry the deep meaning of a command? What specific imperative forms did the sender employ in each field and what is their significance? How were these forms utilized throughout the letter, and does this style indicate the sender's profound linguistic knowledge?

Methodology: The study is conducted within two frameworks. The theoretical framework provides a brief introduction to the author (Imam Malik), the recipient (Caliph Harun Al-Rashid), and the historical value of the letter, while also exploring the concepts and purposes of imperative forms in Arabic and semantic fields. The applied framework provides a detailed analysis of the most prominent semantic fields of the imperative forms found in the letter. The research demonstrates how these forms were employed in each field to highlight specific connotations, following descriptive and analytical methodologies. The study concludes by highlighting the most significant results.

Results: The study identifies the primary semantic fields within the letter, all of which belong to the broader and more comprehensive field of Islamic Teachings. The findings show that the sender demonstrated high linguistic skill through the strategic employment of these forms, resulting in a diverse range of imperative styles used by the author.

Conclusion: The use of imperative forms in numerous contexts had a clear impact on manifesting the intended meanings sought within each semantic field.

KEYWORDS: command, field, meaning, message, form/formula**Research Journal in Advanced Humanities**

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Introduction

Language forms the foundation upon which a text is built; therefore, its sender or speaker must arm themselves with attractive and stimulating methods and structures for the reader and the recipient. It is, thus, the standard by which the quality of a writer or speaker is measured.

Perhaps the study of literature through linguistic theories is of great importance to both the reader and the researcher, as it senses the reality of literature and discourse in general. This approaches a scientific and practical concept through its clear, precise, and comprehensive handling of issues (Khudair, 2017: 11). Linguistic choice is governed by a psychological influence stemming from both the conscious and subconscious; consequently, if the recipient successfully tracks and analyzes linguistic methods, they can uncover the semantic insights of the text (Al-Masry, 2009). (Meqdad, 2019b; Meqdad et al., 2024). (Meqdad & Issa, 2024; Almanasra et al., 2025). Recent scholarship has likewise emphasized that literary theory gains critical value when it is operationalized through close textual analysis rather than treated as an abstract framework (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

This study seeks to examine one of the heritage texts of prose art—specifically the “art of letters”—namely the letter of Imam Malik bin Anas to Caliph Harun al-Rashid. It aims to study a distinguishing linguistic feature: the letter’s presentation of a group of semantic fields using imperative forms with varied purposes and meanings. Our repeated readings revealed that imperative forms were clearly concentrated by the sender; therefore, we decided to classify these forms according to their semantic fields to demonstrate their most prominent connotations. (Meqdad et al., 2025). More broadly, studies of contemporary Arabic narrative have shown that transformations in structure and content become legible through attention to language, narrative openings, imagery, and contextual shifts (Alshamsi et al., 2024).

The choice of a heritage text, specifically this letter, was motivated by two reasons:

- **Creative Specificity:** Despite their age, heritage texts possess a specificity that has matured into a creative work capable of maintaining its presence in literary history, necessitating a reading that uncovers the depths of this experience (Tahrishi, 2000: 8).
- **Academic Gap:** Based on our review, the “art of letters” has not received the same level of study as other literary arts; furthermore, the status of prose studies in heritage has not reached the same prominence as studies of poetry.

Problem of the Study and its Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

- Did the commands in the letter appear only in the forms traditionally identified by linguists?
- Does prohibition (*al-nahy*) carry the deep meaning of a command (*al-amr*)?
- What are the most prominent semantic fields contained in the letter?
- What imperative forms did the sender employ in each field, and what is their significance?
- How did the sender employ imperative forms throughout the letter?
- Does the letter indicate deep linguistic knowledge on the part of the sender?

Objectives of the Study

- Defining the concept and forms of “command” according to linguists.
- Clarifying the concept of semantic fields.
- Identifying the most prominent semantic fields contained in the letter.
- Examining the specific imperative forms used in these fields and explaining their significance.
- Demonstrating the clear impact of imperative forms on the connotations of meaning

Limits of the Study

The study adopts the letter recorded by Ahmed Safwat in the book *Jamharat Rasa'il al-Arab fi 'Usur al-Arabiyya al-Zahira* (The Collection of Arab Letters in the Prosperous Eras of Arabic) as its primary material. This is the letter sent by Imam Malik to Caliph Harun al-Rashid to preach, guide, and urge him regarding matters of his religion and his world. The letter spans approximately thirty pages (pp. 466–496).

Methodology

The study follows descriptive and analytical methods. It began by reading the letter and classifying its semantic fields, identifying the key imperative forms used in each, accompanied by research and analysis. Most fields and their respective imperative forms are represented in tables to explain how they were employed. This procedure also aligns with discourse-oriented studies that connect formal textual devices with semantic coherence and contextual interpretation (Al-Thunebat et al., 2024).

Study Plan

The study is organized into two frameworks:

1. Theoretical Framework:

- A brief introduction to Imam Malik.
- A brief introduction to Harun al-Rashid.
- The literary value of the letter.
- The linguistic concept of the “command” and its most important forms.
- The concept and features of semantic fields.

2. Applied Framework:

- This section analyzes the most prominent semantic fields in the letter along with the imperative forms used in each. It notes that some verbs may appear in more than one field. The most important fields studied include Care and Attention, Caution, Priority and Initiative, Obedience to God, Benevolence, Speech, Remembrance of God, and Etiquette.

Theoretical Framework

Imam Malik (93–179 AH)

Malik bin Anas bin Malik al-Asbahi al-Himyari, Abu Abdullah: He is the Imam of Dar al-Hijra (Medina) and one of the four great Imams of the Sunnis, to whom the Maliki school of thought is attributed. He was born and died in Medina. He was known for being firm in his religion and keeping his distance from princes and kings. When the Abbasid Caliph al-Rashid sent for him to come and speak to him, Malik replied: “Knowledge is sought out (it does not come to you),” which prompted al-Rashid to go to Malik’s house. Malik told him: “O Commander of the Faithful, part of honoring the Messenger of Allah is honoring knowledge,” so the Caliph sat before him to listen.

At the request of Caliph al-Mansur to write a book for the people to follow, he compiled the famous *Al-Muwatta*. His other works include a treatise on “Exhortation,” a book on “Legal Issues,” a response to the “Qadariyah,” a book on “Stars,” and “The Interpretation of Unusual Words in the Qur’an”. Several scholars have written about his life, including Al-Suyuti, Muhammad Abu Zahra, and Amin al-Khouli.

Caliph Harun al-Rashid (149–193 AH)

Al-Rashid Harun Abu Ja’far: He was the son of al-Mahdi Muhammad and the grandson of al-Mansur. He succeeded to the Caliphate following the death of his brother, al-Hadi, in 170 AH. He was born in Rayy while his father was its governor. His mother was Al-Khayzuran.

The scholar al-Jahiz noted that al-Rashid possessed a unique circle of excellence that no other Caliph had, including: his viziers (the Barmakids), his judge (Abu Yusuf), his poet (Marwan bin Abi Hafsa), his chamberlain (al-Fadl bin al-Rabi’), and his wife (Zubaida). Al-Dhahabi remarked that the historical accounts of al-Rashid’s life are too extensive to cover in detail.

Literary Value of the Letter

The literary value of Imam Malik’s letter to Caliph Harun al-Rashid can be understood through three main aspects:

- Subject Matter: The letter focuses on Prophetic traditions (*Sunan*), exhortations, and etiquette, making it an exemplary model for such discourse.
- The Author: Its value is elevated by its attribution to Imam Malik, whose fame and scientific authority

were world-renowned.

- The Recipient: It was addressed to Harun al-Rashid, a leader who deeply valued knowledge and scholars and was so impressed by the letter that he ordered it to be written in gold.

The letter utilizes a variety of discourse styles that change based on the nature of the advice or obligation being discussed. At times, the Imam uses direct imperatives and decisive tones, while at others, he employs prohibitions or warnings against certain actions. The frequent use of commands and prohibitions by the Imam reflects his strong personality and the high level of respect and status he held in the eyes of the Caliph.

This study specifically focuses on these imperative forms and their linguistic connotations within their respective semantic fields to reveal how they served to effectively deliver Imam Malik's message. (Meqdad et al., 2025; Meqdad, 2019b).

The Imperative Verb and its Forms in Arabic

Grammarians and linguists agree that the imperative (command) is a form used to request an action from the addressed subject by deleting the present tense marker. Ibn Ya'ish views its meaning as a request for an action using a specific form. This form is named according to the relationship between the speaker and the listener:

1. **Command (Amr):** If it is issued from a superior to a subordinate.
2. **Request (Talab):** If it is between equals.
3. **Supplication (Du'a):** If it is from a subordinate to a superior.

The identifying sign of the imperative verb is that the word indicates a command and can accept the "nun" of emphasis (*nun al-ta'kid*), such as: "*qum*" (stand up), which becomes "*qumanna*". It also accepts the feminine second-person singular suffix (*ya'*), such as "*ijtahidi*" (strive).

Abbas Hassan elaborates that the sign of the imperative is a "dual sign": the word must indicate a request while simultaneously accepting the suffix *ya'*. For example, the words "*sa'id*" (help), "*takallam*" (speak), and "*ihris*" (be diligent) are imperative verbs because they can become "*sa'idi*", "*takallami*", and "*ihrisi*". Similarly, the words "*hat*" (give/bring) and "*ta'al*" (come) are considered imperative verbs because they accept this sign. However, if a word conveys the meaning of a command but does not accept these grammatical signs, it is classified as an "imperative verbal noun" (*ism fi'l amr*), such as "*sah*" (be quiet), "*mah*" (stop/leave what you are doing), "*nazali*" (descend), and "*hayyahal*" (come forward).

Linguists define the core meaning of a command as a request made from a position of superiority (*isti'la'*), unless the context dictates otherwise. Al-Qazwini notes that whether the form is combined with the letter *lam* (e.g., "*let Zaid attend*") or is a direct command (e.g., "*honor Amr*"), it is designed to request an action from a position of superiority. This is because the mind immediately assumes this meaning upon hearing such forms, and any other interpretation requires specific contextual clues. (Meqdad, 2019a).

While grammarians historically focused on the imperative solely as a verb form, this study considers the "command" in any form that conveys its meaning. Linguistic texts have identified several patterns for the imperative beyond the explicit verb, most notably:

1. The Present Tense Verb associated with the *Lam* of Command: As in the verse, "*Let a man of wealth spend from his wealth*" (Al-Talaq: 7). This *Lam* is always vocalised with a *kasra* at the beginning of a sentence, but it becomes silent (*sakin*) if preceded by the letters *Waw* or *Fa*.
2. The Imperative Verbal Noun (*Ism Fi'l Amr*): Such as "*Upon you [is the care of] yourselves,*" meaning "Adhere to".
3. The Gerund (Infinitival Noun) Acting as a Verb: Such as the verse, "*And [be] good to parents*" (Al-Isra: 23).

In its general sense, the command in Arabic employs various styles. It is not restricted to the standard "Do" (*Af'il*) or "Let him do" (*Li-yaf'al*) patterns; it extends to include declarative and interrogative sentences functioning as commands, as well as styles of warning, enticement, offering, and exhortation. Consequently, the "circle of the command" is much wider than what is traditionally defined by grammarians. (Abu-Rahme et al., 2025; Maqdad & Al-Shamali, 2023). (Khater et al., 2026).

Distinguishing Between the Imperative Verb and Imperative Forms

The imperative, at its core, signifies a request through a verbal formula, whether issued from a position of actual superiority or metaphorical superiority. A distinction can be made between the “Imperative Verb” and “Imperative Forms”:

1. The Imperative Verb: Refers strictly to specific verbal patterns (35 patterns) derived from trilateral or quadrilateral roots, such as “*Help*,” “*Honor*,” “*Fight*,” or “*Extract*”.
2. Imperative Forms (*Siyagh al-Amr*): This is a broader category that includes the imperative verb itself, as well as verbal nouns, gerunds, and declarative sentences that initiate a request. These are often collectively referred to by the label “Af’il” (Do) because it is the most common form and the one that immediately comes to mind to signify obligation and compulsion.

The Semantic Relationship Between Command and Prohibition

Given the expansion of what constitutes a “command,” a critical question arises: Can the style of “Prohibition” (*al-Nahy*) be considered a form of command?. In other words, does prohibition carry a deep semantic meaning of a command?.

Consider these two examples:

1. “Establish the prayer”: The imperative meaning is explicit.
2. “Do not anger your parents”: The surface form is a prohibition.

However, upon closer inspection, the second sentence carries a clear imperative presence. It is as if the speaker is commanding the listener *not* to anger their parents, creating a semantic equation where:

1. Literal Significance: A prohibition against angering parents.
2. Deep Significance: A command to not anger them, which ultimately functions as a command to obey and honor them.

Therefore, within a flexible linguistic framework, the style of prohibition can be viewed as entering the circle of the imperative in an indirect manner.

Consequently, the researcher notes that with a degree of linguistic flexibility, this style of prohibition can be regarded as indirectly falling within the “circle of the command”. This analysis supports one of the study’s primary conclusions: that the prohibition form (*al-nahy*) often carries the deep semantic weight of a command (*al-amr*). Therefore, with a bit of linguistic flexibility, we can consider this style as one that falls indirectly within the sphere of the command. (Meqdad et al., 2022; Al-Hawawsha et al., 2022).

Semantic Fields

Communication between individuals necessitates the existence of a shared list of words through which they understand meanings in a similar and approximate manner. However, it is difficult for them to agree on the specific abstract (moral) connotations of words, because the degree of understanding varies from one person to another depending on the individual experience of each person, the nature of the environment to which the speakers belong, the level of education, and other factors that contribute to defining the significance. (Meqdad, 2026)

The world, as it exists and is perceived, is a product of social culture and the lexical language system through which individuals communicate. Every word has its reference in the external world and is employed in a structure that relates to the world, or a part of it, in a way that differs from other words (Azzouz: 8, 2002). Therefore, the best way to understand the meaning of a word is through its presence within a structure that contributes to highlighting its meaning and makes it distinct from those that are close to it or seem similar (Ibrahim: 8, 1976). (Meqdad et al., 2024). (Miqdad et al., 2022; Almanasra et al., 2025).

Perhaps the Theory of Semantic Fields emerged in response to this purpose, as “this theory is based on gathering the words of a language and placing them into groups, each of which is specific to a field of human experience, wherein the meanings of words are linked and placed under a general term that unites them” (Al-Damen: 75, 1989). Defining a semantic field is done by adopting the hypothesis that the semantic structure is built from a unified gathering of structures, from which specific units are then determined (German: 54, 1997).

Some consider the theory of semantic fields to be one of the pillars of modern semantics, despite its ancient roots in Arabic linguistic studies, particularly in lexicographical studies and Arabic dictionaries. An example of this is the dictionary *Al-Mukhassas* by Ibn Sida, which is based on the idea of listing similar terms under a general word that serves as the “head” of the semantic field, requiring specific characteristics to qualify it for that position (Al-Aboud: 264).

The purpose of analyzing semantic fields is to collect scattered words belonging to a particular field and demonstrate their connections—whether overt or covert—to establish their relationship with the general term. It is necessary to point out that the semantic field is distinct from the lexical field; the former is general while the latter is specific. This is because the semantic field consists of two aspects: conceptual and meaningful. The lexical aspect is the space containing the numerous relationships between the words used to cover and represent the semantic field. From this, we conclude that: the semantic field relates to the overall mental perception (concept), while the lexical field relates to specific parts of that mental perception (Al-Sa’i: 124, 2022). (Meqdad et al., 2024; Al-Hawawsha et al., 2022). (Miqdad et al., 2022).

Applied Framework

Semantic Fields with Imperative Forms in Imam Malik’s Letter to Caliph Harun Al-Rashid:

First: The Field of Care and Attention to What is Said

The opening (*al-istihlal*) is considered a vital element in any literary work, regardless of its type. The first observation regarding Imam Malik’s opening in his letter is his concentration within this field of a group of imperative verbs used to initiate the message. He opened the letter with verbs indicating the importance of and care for what is being said, as follows:

“I am writing to you a letter in which I have spared no effort for your guidance, nor have I withheld any sincere advice, out of praise for Allah and etiquette toward the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). So, contemplate it (*tadabbar-hu*) with your mind, examine it repeatedly (*raddid fi-hi*) with your vision, and give it (*ar’i-hi*) your hearing; then comprehend it (*a’qil-hu*) with your heart, bring it (*ahdir-hu*) to your understanding, and do not let (*la tughayyibanna*) your mind be absent from it”.

The sequence of these imperative forms—mostly in the simple imperative verb form and once as a prohibition (*la al-nahiyah*) with an emphasized present-tense verb—is a clear indicator from the sender at the start of the letter regarding the significance of the advice and guidance being offered to the Caliph. All these verbs fall under the concept of care and attention.

The linguistic definitions for these terms are as follows:

- Contemplation (*al-tadabbur*): “In a matter, it is looking toward what its consequences will lead to” (Al-Razi: 101, 1999).
- Repeated Examination (*al-radd*): “Turning a thing back and returning it” (Ibn Manzur: 182, 1414).
- Giving Hearing (*ar’a... sam’ahu*): “Meaning one took interest in it, so they listened closely and heard the speech” (Omar: 909, 2, 2008).
- Comprehension (*al-’aql*): “It is knowledge, and through it, the soul perceives necessary and theoretical sciences” (Al-Fayrouzabadi: 1033, 2005).
- Presence (*al-hudur*): This is the opposite of absence (An-Naml: 185, 1988).
- Absence/Unseen (*al-ghayb*): “Every place in which it is not known what is inside is *ghayb*; likewise, a place where it is not known what lies behind it” (Al-Azhari: 182, 2001).

In this opening paragraph, the sender gathered everything that indicates perception and attention according to the following mapping:

- Contemplation → in the Mind
- Repeated Examination → for Vision
- Giving Care → for Hearing
- Comprehension → for Knowledge
- Presence and Non-Absence → Existence and stability in the Mind

Another feature observable in this opening is the sender's use of the conjunction "Waw" (and), which indicates combination and participation between the coordinated elements. This is a sign from the Imam of the necessity of combining all the advice he will provide. Undoubtedly, this is a successful opening through this sequence of imperative forms that all fall within a single semantic field: Care and Attention.

Second: The Field of Caution (*Al-Hadhar*)

The imperative forms indicating caution against numerous things varied throughout the letter, appearing as follows:

- Direct use of the imperative verb "Beware" (*Ihdhar*):
- "Beware (*f-ahdhar*) for yourself—may Allah have mercy on you—with a caution that is not deceptive."
- "Beware (*ihdhar*) of a bad inner circle and the people of destruction for your own sake."
- "Beware (*ihdhar*) of injustice (*al-baghy*), for its punishment is swift."
- Expressing caution with the imperative verb "Be on guard" (*Ihtariss*):
- "Be on guard (*ihhtariss*) against those who approach you with tale-bearing (*al-namimah*)."
- Omission of the imperative verb where the context implies it using the term "Beware of..." (*Iyyaka*):
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) being naked while alone."
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) arrogance and vanity, for Allah Almighty does not love them."
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) anger for reasons other than for Allah."
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) hypocrisy (*al-riya*)."
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) bad character, for it leads to acts of disobedience to Allah Almighty."
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) excessive speech."
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) entering the bath and water except with a wrap (*izar*)."
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) oppressing the weak and those who have no helper against you except Allah Almighty."
- "If you are in the presence of the Sultan, intercede with goodness, and beware of (*iyyaka*) speaking in his presence except with that which pleases Allah."
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) praising people and lauding them to their faces."
- "Beware of (*iyyaka*) envy and greed."
- Expressing caution through the prohibitive present tense:
- "Do not trust (*la ta'man*) any of your affairs to one who does not fear Allah."
- Expressing caution with the imperative verb "Fear/Avoid" (*Ittaqi*):
- "Avoid (*ittaqi*) superfluous talk."
- "Avoid (*ittaqi*) excessive laughter, for it leads to folly and takes away the light of the face and the believer's splendor."
- "Avoid (*ittaqi*) everything in which you fear suspicion regarding your religion and your world."
- "Avoid (*ittaqi*) insulting people and backbiting them."
- "Avoid (*ittaqi*) obscenity, sitting with people of destruction and immorality, and conversing with the low-life among people."
- "Avoid (*ittaqi*) following desires in abandoning the truth."
- "Avoid (*ittaqi*) bad food and contaminated clothing."
- "Avoid (*ittaqi*) undutifulness to parents and severing kinship ties, for there is shame in that."
- "Avoid (*ittaqi*) self-praise."
- "Adhere to high morals and noble character, and avoid (*ittaqi*) their vices and the trivial (*safsaf*)."

The letter condensed verbs indicating caution throughout its pages, which signifies a rising tone of advice to Caliph Harun al-Rashid. Consequently, several connotations for the act of caution were formed, as disclosed by the sentences containing these verbs in the letter, according to the following:

Verb of Caution	What is Cautioned Against
Beware (<i>Ihdhar</i>)	Exposing oneself to danger/deception, bad company, injustice.
Be on guard (<i>Ihtariss</i>)	Tale-bearing (<i>Namimah</i>).
Beware of (<i>Iyya-ka</i>)	Nakedness, arrogance/vanity, anger, hypocrisy, bad character, excessive talking, entering baths without a wrap, oppressing the weak, improper speech before authority, flattering people to their faces, envy, greed.
Do not trust (<i>La ta'man</i>)	Caution against those who do not fear Allah.
Avoid (<i>Ittaqi</i>)	Chattering, excessive laughter, suspicious matters in religion/world, insulting, backbiting, obscenity, sitting with the immoral, conversing with the low-life, following desires, bad food, undutifulness to parents, severing kin, self-praise, trivial/vile matters.

Third: The Field of Priority and Initiative

The letter succeeded in presenting imperative forms indicating priority and the importance of **starting with oneself** in any action. This can be illustrated in the following table:

Connotation	Command Sentence	Form	Command
Self-monitoring	"Take the initiative with yourself before you are preceded to it"	Simple imperative verb	<i>Badir</i> (Initiate)
Not following the self	"Contend with yourself slowly... to bring benefit to it and ward off affliction from it"	Simple imperative verb	<i>Khasim</i> (Contend)
Starting with oneself first	"Do not command good unless you have started by doing it"	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La ta'mur</i> (Do not command)
Starting with oneself first	"And do not forbid evil unless you have started by leaving it"	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tanha</i> (Do not forbid)
Starting with oneself first	"Dislike for people what you dislike for yourself"	Simple imperative verb	<i>Ikrah</i> (Dislike)
Impact of knowledge on the individual	"If you learn a piece of knowledge... let its effect be seen on you and let its character be seen in you"	Verb associated with the <i>Lam</i> of command	<i>Falyura / Liyura</i> (Let it be seen)
Avoiding arrogance/obstinacy	"And do not be ashamed, if you are called to a matter that is not right, to say: No"	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tastahi</i> (Do not be ashamed)
Initiative	"Connect with the one who has cut you off"	Simple imperative verb	<i>Sil</i> (Connect)
Initiative	"And forgive the one who has wronged you"	Simple imperative verb	<i>A'fu</i> (Forgive)
Initiative	"And give to the one who has deprived you"	Simple imperative verb	<i>A'ti</i> (Give)
Initiative	"Repel the evil deed with that which is better, for Allah has commanded that"	Simple imperative verb	<i>Idfa'</i> (Repel)

The imperative forms in this field constitute a refined moral model represented in monitoring the self first, the necessity of the effect of knowledge appearing on the individual, avoiding arrogance regarding what one does not know, and always taking the initiative to do good.

These verbs occurred within a sequence of command sentences intended for advice and guidance. It is

observed that the weight (or “size”) of each semantic circle corresponds to its importance; the circles of “Self-monitoring” and “Initiative” were given the largest focus compared to the circles of “Effect of Knowledge” and “Avoiding Arrogance”. This provides a clear indication that:

1. Self-monitoring is the foundation of human success.
2. The relationship with others occupies a secondary rank; an individual cannot effectively treat others with connection, forgiveness, and generosity unless they have first rectified themselves.

Fourth: The Field of Obligations

The letter employs various imperative forms to emphasize commitment to specific religious duties, as outlined in the table below:

Obligation	Command Sentence	Form	Command Verb
Prayer	“Make for Allah a portion of yourself by night and day”	Simple Imperative	<i>Ij'al</i> (Make)
Prayer	“Adhere to the prayer”	Simple Imperative	<i>Ilzam</i> (Adhere)
Daytime Prayer	“Pray twelve rak'ahs during the day”	Simple Imperative	<i>Salli</i> (Pray)
Nighttime Prayer	“Pray eight rak'ahs from the night with a portion of the Quran”	Simple Imperative	<i>Salli</i> (Pray)
Quran Recitation	“Read in every rak'ah the Opening (<i>Al-Hamd</i>) and what you wish of the Quran”	Simple Imperative	<i>Iqra'</i> (Read)
Proper Prayer	“Give every rak'ah its due... in terms of complete bowing and prostration”	Simple Imperative	<i>A'ti</i> (Give)
Night Prayer	“Pray them in pairs (<i>mathna mathna</i>)”	Simple Imperative	<i>Sallihinna</i> (Pray them)
Fasting	“Fast three days of every month”	Simple Imperative	<i>Sum</i> (Fast)
Zakat	“Give the zakat of your wealth with a good soul”	Simple Imperative	<i>A'ti</i> (Give)
Zakat Timing	“Do not delay it after it becomes due”	Prohibitive Present	<i>La tu'akbirkha</i> (Do not delay)
Zakat Recipients	“Do not place it except among the people of your religion from the Muslims”	Prohibitive Present	<i>La tada'ha</i> (Do not place)
Hajj	“Perform the Hajj of Islam from the best and purest of your wealth”	Simple Imperative	<i>Ihjud</i> (Perform Hajj)
Charity	“Do not leave charity, for it wards off a bad death”	Prohibitive Present	<i>La tatrak</i> (Do not leave)
Charity	“And let it be from the best of your wealth”	Lam of Command	<i>Liyakun</i> (Let it be)

This field, which covers the duties ordained by Allah, strategically utilizes a sequence of imperative forms—the simple imperative, the prohibitive present, and the present verb associated with the *Lam* of command—to convey different nuances of obligation.

The researcher identifies several key linguistic insights:

- Simple Imperative Verbs (*Af'al al-Amr al-Mujarradah*): These are used for actions where there is no room for compromise. These are core duties that an individual must perform regardless of their state or circumstances. Imam Malik employed this form for the pillars and essential practices:
 - Prayer: *Ij'al* (Make), *Ilzam* (Adhere), *Salli* (Pray).
 - Quran: *Iqra'* (Read).
 - Fasting: *Sum* (Fast).
 - Hajj: *Ihjud* (Perform Hajj).
 - Prohibitive Present Tense (*al-Mudari' al-Manhi*): These forms are used for matters that are comparatively “less intense,” operating on the linguistic principle that a prohibition carries a

meaning closely related to a command.

- Zakat Timing: While Zakat is mandatory, the specific timing (*La tu'akhirkha*) is treated with a slightly different linguistic tone than the core act of giving.
- Charity: The command not to leave charity (*La tatrak*) is used because voluntary charity (*sadaqah*) does not carry the same absolute legal weight as the five daily prayers or the mandatory Zakat.
- The *Lam* of Command (*Lam al-Amr*): This is used to define a specific quality or condition of the duty, such as *Liyakun* (Let it be), which emphasizes the requirement that the wealth given in charity must be of the highest quality.

Fifth: The Field of Obedience to Allah and Calling to Him

The concentration of imperative forms in the field of obedience to Allah is a clear indication of the sender's concern for this vital aspect of preaching (*dawah*) and righteousness. The following table details these forms:

Significance	Sentence	Form	Command Verb
Calling to obedience	"Command (<i>Mur</i>) to obey Allah and love [it]"	Simple imperative	<i>Mur, Abbib</i>
Forbidding disobedience	"Forbid (<i>Inha</i>) the disobedience of Allah and hate [it]"	Simple imperative	<i>Inha, Abghid</i>
Urging obedience / No weakness	"Do not surrender (<i>La tastaslim</i>) to people and seek their guidance in obedience to Allah"	Prohibitive present / Simple imperative	<i>La tastaslim, Istahdi</i>
Obedience to Allah	"Love (<i>Abbib</i>) the obedience of Allah, and He will love you"	Simple imperative	<i>Abbib</i>
Prioritising obedience	"Obey (<i>Ati</i>) Allah in the disobedience of people"	Simple imperative	<i>Ati'</i>
Prioritising obedience	"Do not obey (<i>La tuti</i>) people in the disobedience of Allah"	Prohibitive present	<i>La tuti'</i>
Promptness in obedience	"If you intend an act of obedience, do not hold it back (<i>La tahbis-hu</i>)"	Prohibitive present	<i>La tahbis-hu</i>

Sixth: The Field of Benevolence, Care, Respect, Assistance, and Generosity

The letter amasses numerous imperative forms for these meanings, scattered throughout the text to signal the necessity of adhering to such morals.

Significance	Command Sentence	Form	Command Verb
Benevolence to others	"Be good (<i>Absin</i>) to those whom Allah has empowered you over"	Simple imperative	<i>Absin</i>
Benevolence to family	"Make your character good (<i>Absin</i>) with your family..."	Simple imperative	<i>Absin</i>
Care/Discipline	"Adhere (<i>Ilzam</i>) to etiquette regarding those whose upbringing you are in charge of"	Simple imperative	<i>Ilzam</i>
Respect / No belittling	"Do not belittle (<i>La taghmis</i>) people and lower your wing (<i>Ikhfid</i>) to them"	Prohibitive present / Simple imperative	<i>La taghmis, Ikhfid</i>
Honouring guests	"Honour (<i>Akrim</i>) your guest..."	Simple imperative	<i>Akrim</i>
Gratitude /Reward	"Honour (<i>Akrim</i>) who loves you and reward (<i>Kafi</i>) them..."	Simple imperative	<i>Akrim, Kafi'</i>
Caring for orphans	"Honour (<i>Akrim</i>) the orphan, have mercy on him, and be kind to him"	Simple imperative	<i>Akrim, Irham, I'tif</i>
Respecting neighbors	"Give (<i>Addi</i>) the right of your neighbor..."	Simple imperative	<i>Addi</i>
Humility/ Gentleness	"Do not turn your cheek away (<i>La tusa'ir</i>) from people and soften your wing (<i>Alin</i>) to them"	Prohibitive present / Simple imperative	<i>La tusa'ir, Alin</i>

Gratitude	“Thank (<i>Ishkur</i>) people for the good they bring... and reward (<i>Kafi</i>) them...”	Simple imperative	<i>Ishkur, Kafi</i>
Assistance	“Know (<i>I’rif</i>) the right of the wayfarer...”	Simple imperative	<i>I’rif, Ihfaz</i>
Mercy / Assistance	“Have mercy (<i>Irham</i>) on the destitute... and help (<i>A’in</i>) them...”	Simple imperative	<i>Irham, A’in</i>
Helping / Victory	“Help (<i>A’in</i>) the oppressed and grant him victory (<i>Unsur</i>)”	Simple imperative	<i>A’in, Unsur</i>
Assistance / Advice	“Take the hand (<i>Khudh</i>) of the oppressor and restrain (<i>Ikfuf</i>) him”	Simple imperative	<i>Khudh, Ikfuf</i>
Helping beggars	“Have mercy (<i>Irham</i>) on the beggar and do not return him (<i>Urdud</i>) [empty-handed]”	Simple imperative	<i>Irham, Urdud</i>
Assistance	“Do not abstain (<i>La tazhad</i>) from doing good...”	Prohibitive present	<i>La tazhad</i>
Non-oppression	“Do not oppress (<i>La tazlim</i>) people...”	Prohibitive present	<i>La tazlim</i>
Appreciation	“Return (<i>Urdud</i>) the answer of a letter to everyone who writes to you”	Simple imperative	<i>Urdud</i>
Respect	“Do not insult (<i>La tashtam</i>) a male or female slave...”	Prohibitive present	<i>La tashtam</i>
Humility	“Do not like (<i>La tuhibb</i>) for people to stand for you”	Prohibitive present	<i>La tuhibb</i>
Generosity	“Gather (<i>Ijm’a</i>) those who are fasting for your food when you break your fast”	Simple imperative	<i>Ijm’a</i>

Returning to the imperative forms used in this field, the meanings of mercy, assistance, benevolence, and respect are prominent. Examining these terms in linguistic dictionaries clarifies the accuracy of the terms chosen by the sender:

- Goodness (*Al-Hasan*): Ibn Duraid (1987) notes that the plural of “good/beautiful” (*hisan*) is often paired with its opposite, “ugly/bad” (*qibah*).
- Belittling (*Ghamasa*): To belittle or despise someone, or to be dissatisfied with them (Al-Qali: 1975).
- Dignity/Veneration (*Al-Waqar*): Refers to forbearance and gravity (Ibn Faris: 1986).
- Restraint (*Kaffahu*): Means to prevent or stop someone (Al-Fayyumi).

Seventh: The Field of Remembering Allah Almighty and Relying on Him

For this semantic meaning, the letter employs the imperative form “Say” (*Qul*) or its synonyms in numerous instances to guide the recipient toward constant remembrance and spiritual reliance. These are detailed in the following table:

Significance	Command Sentence	Form	Command
Reliance on Allah	“If you are afflicted by distress, then say (<i>qul</i>): ‘O Ever-Living, O Sustainer, by Your mercy I seek help.’”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i> (Say)
Reliance on Allah	“If you are afflicted by sadness, illness, grief, humiliation, or hardship, then say (<i>qul</i>): ‘Allah is my Lord, I do not associate anything with Him’ three times.”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>
Supplication (<i>Du’a</i>)	“If you bid farewell to a traveler, then say (<i>qul</i>): ‘May Allah provide you with piety and decree for you what is best.’”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>
Praising Allah and seeking His help	“If you see one of the people of affliction, then say (<i>qul</i>): ‘Praise be to Allah who has healed me from what He has afflicted you with.’”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>

Remembrance and seeking help	“Do not take an evil omen from anything you see or hear, and if anything like that happens, then say (<i>qul</i>): ‘O Allah, none brings good but You...’”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>
Remembrance and seeking help	“If you feel injustice or arrogance from a leader, then say (<i>qul</i>): ‘Allah is Greater... Allah is Mightier than all His creation.’”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>
Remembrance and seeking help	“If you hear the caller to prayer (<i>Muezzin</i>), then say (<i>qul</i>) as he says.”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>
Supplication	“If the Imam says ‘Ameen’ after finishing the recitation of the Opening of the Quran, then say (<i>qul</i>): ‘Ameen’.”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>
Remembrance and seeking help	“If you stop at a destination, then say (<i>qul</i>): ‘I seek refuge in the perfect words of Allah from the evil of what He created.’”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>
Remembrance and seeking help	“If you are startled in your sleep, then say (<i>qul</i>): ‘I seek refuge in the perfect words of Allah from His anger and punishment.’”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>
Remembrance and Supplication	“If you come to a village or town, say (<i>qul</i>) before entering it: ‘O Allah, grant us the best of it and the best of its people.’”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>
Remembrance and seeking help	“If you see the crescent moon, do not face it to supplicate, but face the <i>Qibla</i> and say (<i>qul</i>): ‘Allah is Greater...’”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Qul</i>

This field highlights the spiritual depth of the letter. By using the repetitive command “Say” (*Qul*), Imam Malik provides the Caliph with a practical “linguistic toolkit” for handling various life experiences—ranging from personal distress and fear of injustice to communal worship and travel.

This concentration of commands reinforces the study’s overall finding that the letter functions as a comprehensive guide to Islamic teachings, where the sender utilizes his high linguistic skill to link everyday actions with divine remembrance.

Eighth: The Field of Etiquette (*Al-Adab*)

The system of imperative forms recommending the etiquettes that a Muslim should adhere to is presented as follows:

Etiquette Referred To	Command Sentence	Linguistic Form	Command
Walking and avoiding arrogance	“Do not drag (<i>la tajurra</i>) your clothes out of vanity”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tajurra</i>
Covering private parts	“Let no one enter (<i>la yadkhul</i>) the bath with you except with a wrap...”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La yadkhul</i>
Greeting and salutation	“Spread (<i>afshi</i>) the greeting, and if you can ensure no one precedes you in it, do so (<i>faf'al</i>)”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Afshi, if'al</i>
Sleeping and sitting	“Do not lie (<i>la tadhtaji'anna</i>) on your stomach while sleeping or otherwise”	Emphasized prohibitive present	<i>La tadhtaji'anna</i>
Cleanliness and purity	“Purify (<i>tahhir</i>) your clothes and cleanse them (<i>naqqi-ha</i>) from disobedience to Allah”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Tahhir, naqqi</i>
Riding	“Do not ride (<i>la tarkab</i>) on the red saddle cloth (<i>al-mithara</i>)”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tarkab</i>
Clothing	“Do not wear (<i>la talbas</i>) safflower-dyed garments”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La talbas</i>

Ablution	“Do not perform ablution (<i>la tatawadda</i>)’ with food... and do not rub yourself (<i>la tatadallak</i>) with it”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tatawadda</i> ’, <i>la tatadallak</i>
Appearance	“Do not change (<i>la tughayyiranna</i>) your nails with henna”	Emphasized prohibitive present	<i>La tughayyiranna</i>
Appearance	“Do not use perfume (<i>la tatatayyabanna</i>) whose colour shows”	Emphasized prohibitive present	<i>La tatatayyabanna</i>
Appearance	“If you can, do not leave (<i>la tada</i>)’ the turban and the cloak on the two Eids and Friday”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Af’al</i> (Do so)
Relieving oneself	“Do not face (<i>la tastaqbil</i>) the Qibla... do not turn your back (<i>la tastadbir</i>)... and do not clean yourself (<i>la tastanji</i>) with your right hand”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tastaqbil</i> , <i>la tastadbir</i> , <i>la tastanji</i>
Handshaking	“If someone shakes your hand, do not withdraw (<i>la tanzi’anna</i>) your hand until he is the one who withdraws”	Emphasized prohibitive present	<i>La tanzi’anna</i>
Meeting	“If a man faces you while speaking, do not turn (<i>la tasrif</i>) your face away until he is the one who turns”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tasrif</i>
Assembly/Sitting	“Do not stand (<i>la taqumanna</i>)... and do not let your knee cross (<i>la tujawizanna</i>) his knee”	Emphasized prohibitive present	<i>La taqumanna</i> , <i>la tujawizanna</i>
Clothing	“Do not wear (<i>la talbas</i>) silk or brocade, and do not sleep on them”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La talbas</i>
Relieving oneself	“Do not start (<i>la tabda</i>)’ anything until you wash your private parts with water”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tabda</i> ’
Food	“If food sticks between your fingers, lick them (<i>f-al’aq-ha</i>), and pick (<i>f-atakhallal</i>) your teeth”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Al’aq</i> , <i>takhallal</i>
The Mosque	“Do not raise (<i>la tarfa</i>)’ your voice in a congregational mosque”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tarfa</i> ’
Eids and Friday	“If you are at the two Eids, Friday, or Arafah... perform ghusl (<i>f-aghtasil</i>)”	Simple imperative verb	<i>Aghtasil</i>
Funerals	“Do not precede (<i>la tasbiq</i>) [the funeral]... and do not descend (<i>la tanzilanna</i>) until it is taken off men’s shoulders”	Prohibitive present tense / Emphasized prohibitive	<i>La tasbiq</i> , <i>la tanzi-lanna</i>
Food	“Do not blow (<i>la tanfukh</i>) into food or drink, for that is harshness”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tanfukh</i>
Appearance	“Do not chew (<i>la tamdagħ</i>) gum”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tamdagħ</i>
Clothing	“Do not untie (<i>la tahlul</i>) your wrap and do not be naked (<i>la tatajarrad</i>)”	Prohibitive present tense	<i>La tahlul</i> , <i>la tatajarrad</i>

Conclusion

After this reading of Imam Malik’s letter to Caliph Harun al-Rashid, the study finds that it has reached several key results, the most important of which are:

- The Deep Meaning of Prohibition: The present tense form preceded by a prohibition tool carries, in its deep meaning, the significance of a command.
- Comprehensive Semantic Fields: Through reading, researching, and collecting data, the study succeeded in identifying the most prominent semantic fields contained in the letter. All of these belong to a broader and more comprehensive field: the teachings of Islam.

- Linguistic Skill of the Sender: The study indicated that the sender's employment of these various forms demonstrates that he possessed high linguistic skills.
- Diversity of Imperative Forms: The imperative forms used by the author varied; the simple imperative verb form was used most frequently, followed by other forms such as the verb associated with the *Lam* of command, imperative verbal nouns, and the present tense preceded by the prohibitive *la*.
- Impact on Meaning: The use of these imperative forms in numerous instances had a clear and visible impact on clarifying the intended meaning within each specific semantic field.

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