

CASE GRAMMAR IN THE SHORT STORY *AL-ISTIGHĀTHAH* BY ZAKARIYA TAMER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF C. J. FILLMORE

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Abstract

This study addresses the limited number of semantic-structural analyses of Zakariya Tamer's short story *Al-Istighāthah*, focusing on how ideological meaning and social representation are constructed through case structures in Arabic. Despite the story's richness in symbolism, ellipsis, and social critique, analyses employing Fillmore's Case Grammar remain scarce. This research aims to uncover meaning construction in the text by mapping verb–argument relations and identifying ten case roles proposed in Fillmore's theory, while examining the role of modality—including tense, mood, negation, and adverbs—in meaning formation. A qualitative descriptive approach was adopted, employing documentation, close reading, note-taking, and distributional analysis of dialogues. The findings indicate that **Agentive and Objective cases dominate the discourse**, highlighting the focus on actors and targets in conflict construction. **Locative, Benefactive, Experiencer, and Instrumental cases** enhance symbolic spatial meanings, moral objectives, and characters' inner conditions. Furthermore, **modality plays a central role** in emphasizing power relations, ideological positioning, and resistance against oppressive structures. These results demonstrate that Fillmore's framework is effective in revealing networks of ideological meaning in modern Arabic literature and suggest its potential for advancing interdisciplinary linguistic–literary studies.

Keywords: Case grammar; Arabic literature; Ideological meaning

تجريد

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هي النقص في التحليلات الدلالية-البنوية لقصة «الاستغاثة» لـ زكريا تامر عبر توظيف «قواعد الحالات» لفولمر، مع التركيز على كيفية تشكُّل المعنى الإيديولوجي والتمثيل الاجتماعي من خلال البنى الحالية والمقولات-الإضافية (الزمن، المزاج، النفي، والظروف). باعتماد المنهج الوصفي-النوعي وأدوات التوثيق والقراءة الدقيقة والتحليل التوزيعي، أظهرت النتائج هيمنة حالي الفاعلية والموضوعية على الخطاب، ما يبرز تركيز النص على فاعلي الصراع وأهدافهم، في حين تُضفي الحالات المكانية، المنتفع، المجرب، والأداة معاني رمزية مكانية، أهدافاً أخلاقية، وحالات نفسية. كما تبين أن المقولات-الإضافية تؤكد علاقات القوة والتموضع الإيديولوجي وتبرز مقاومة الشخصيات للبنى القمعية. بذلك تثبت الدراسة فعالية إطار فولمر في الكشف عن شبكات المعنى الإيديولوجي بالأدب العربي الحديث وتفتح أفقاً لتطوير دراسات لغوية-أدبية متداخلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: قواعد الحالة؛ الأدب العربي؛ المعنى الإيديولوجي

INTRODUCTION

The short story *Al-Istighāthah* by Zakariya Tameer¹ represents a socio-political portrait of Syrian society during a period of stagnation and state repression, particularly in the years leading up to the 1990s, when the authoritarian regimes of Bashar al-Assad and previously Hafez al-Assad tightly controlled public life and spaces of expression. During this period, Damascus and other major cities became symbols of the people's alienation from the power system, in which freedom of speech, criticism, and expression was severely constrained². According to Alatrash, political hegemony in postcolonial Arab states produced a crisis of representation, whereby popular voices were marginalized and individuals experienced alienation within repressive social structures³. Through his literary works, Tamer exposes this social reality using an allegorical narrative style, portraying "sleeping" characters as a metaphor for a society trapped in collective helplessness and structural fear. This condition aligns with the phenomenon of apathy and alienation in authoritarian societies, where hegemonic power paralyzes citizens' critical consciousness⁴. Therefore, *Al-Istighāthah* functions not merely as a literary text, but also as a social reflection on Syrian society within a repressive political landscape.

Zakariya Tamer is widely recognized as one of the most influential Syrian writers in modern Arabic literature. He is a prolific author in the genres of short stories and allegorical narratives⁵ and is among the most widely read and translated Arab writers⁶. Other studies emphasize Tamer's crucial role in shaping a new direction in modern Arabic literature that foregrounds social awareness and criticism of power structures⁷. Tamer is not affiliated with any particular school or political party; rather, his primary concern lies in depicting the human struggle with life and existential crises⁸. His distinctive style is characterized by satirical and symbolic language, employing concise, dense, and elliptical sentences, a form of linguistic compression that produces high semantic density. Consequently, his works, including *Al-Istighāthah*, are particularly suitable for analysis through semantic approaches such as Fillmore's Case Grammar, which enables the exploration of the relationship between surface structure and the deeper meanings implied in the text.

The Case Grammar approach proposed by Charles J. Fillmore (1967) is therefore considered relevant to addressing this analytical need. Case Grammar emphasizes the relationship between syntactic structure and the semantic functions of sentence constituents⁹. Introduced through *The Case for Case*¹⁰, this theory developed from Chomsky's

¹ Zakaria Tamer, *Dimasyqo Al-Haraiq*, 3rd ed. (London: Riad El-Rayyes Books Ltd., 1994).

² Gabriel Garroum Pla, "Assad and the Politics of Space," *Urbicide in Syria*, June 24, 2025, 85–118, <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526180254.00012>.

³ Ghada Alatrash, "On Decolonizing Curriculums: The Unethicity and Implications of Western Knowledge on Arab Subjectivity," *Sociology Lens* 36, no. 2 (June 1, 2023): 198–207, <https://doi.org/10.1111/JOHS.12419>.

⁴ M. Bahaa El-Din Hany, Abdallah Rezk Walid, and Salah Abdel Hafeez Mahmoud, "Voice of the Marginalized in the Grapes of Wrath (1939) by John Steinbeck, and Hunger (2013) by Mohamed El Basaty," *المجلة العلمية لكلية الآداب-جامعة أسيوط* 30, no. 89 (January 2024): 1299–1324, <https://doi.org/10.21608/aakj.2023.240101.1566>.

⁵ Pla, "Assad and the Politics of Space."

⁶ Alatrash, "On Decolonizing Curriculums: The Unethicity and Implications of Western Knowledge on Arab Subjectivity."

⁷ Hany, Walid, and Mahmoud, "Voice of the Marginalized in the Grapes of Wrath (1939) by John Steinbeck, and Hunger (2013) by Mohamed El Basaty."

⁸ Salahaldin Abdi and Akram Zolfaghary, "A Deconstructive Reading of Zakaria Tamer's 'Oh, the Forgotten Cherry,'" *Studies in Arabic Narratology* 5, no. 1 (2023): 53–75, <https://doi.org/10.61186/san.5.1.53>.

⁹ Abdul Basid et al., "An Analysis of Case Grammar in English Film Dialogue: A New Perspective of Linguistic Modern," *Eralingua: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Asing Dan Sastra* 7, no. 2 (August 29, 2023): 200–219, <https://doi.org/10.26858/ERALINGUA.V7I2.44335>.

transformational-generative grammar. Fillmore highlighted the importance of semantic relations within sentence structure, particularly the relationship between verbs and their arguments, so that analysis moves beyond surface structure to access deeper semantic organization¹¹. He criticized Chomsky's framework for its limited ability to distinguish grammatical categories and functions at the level of deep structure, arguing that meaning relations must be understood through semantic roles rather than formal structure alone. For this reason, Case Grammar maintains a distinction between semantic depth and surface arrangement. By mapping verb-case relationships, the theory allows a more comprehensive analysis of meanings embedded within sentence structures, including how actions, events, and experiences are linguistically constructed in texts¹².

Fillmore further argued that noun phrases marking "cases" bear specific syntactic relations to the main verb based on case categories rather than traditional subject-object status (Fillmore, 1963). This theory accounts for grammatical compatibility as well as the cognitive processes involved in language production and comprehension (Fillmore, 1970). Sentence structure is divided into modality (negation, tense, aspect) and proposition (verb + case categories), formulated as $S \rightarrow M + P$ and $P \rightarrow V + C_1 + C_n$.

Fillmore identified ten primary case roles: agentive, benefactive, objective, destination, instrumental, locative, source, experiencer, accompanying, and time¹³. For example, in the sentence *The boy opened the door with a key*, *the boy* functions as agentive, *the door* as objective, and *with a key* as instrumental. He also explained noun phrase (NP) structures through patterns such as $NP \rightarrow d + N$, $N + d$, or $N + n$ (possessive), as well as the relationship between NP and case markers (K) through patterns like $C \rightarrow NP + K$ or $K + NP$. Within this framework, prepositions function as markers of semantic relations between verbs and their arguments.

Through these concepts, Case Grammar bridges syntax and semantics by accounting for both surface structure and the underlying meaning that explains why certain elements occupy particular positions¹⁴. Subsequent developments of this theory gave rise to Frame Semantics¹⁵ and later Construction Grammar¹⁶. Contemporary studies have expanded its application: highlights the ideological dimension of Fillmore's theory; Kravchenko et al. (2022) apply it to international legal discourse through the analysis of commissive modality; and extends it to probabilistic semantics in Arabic modality.

The application of this theory to literary texts characterized by ellipsis and symbolism, such as *Al-Istighāthah* by Zakariya Tamer, is particularly compelling. The text frequently omits sentence elements or obscures subjects and objects, a strategy that paradoxically intensifies its semantic force and symbolic message. From the perspective of

¹⁰ Charles J. Fillmore, *The Case for CASE, Work Study*, vol. 48 (Texas Symposium On Linguistic Universals, 1967), <https://doi.org/10.1108/00438029910272391>.

¹¹ Charles J. Fillmore, "Some Problems for Case Grammar. In R. J. O'Brien, Editor, 22nd Annual Round Table. Linguistics: Developments of the Sixties – Viewpoints of the Seventies, Volume 24 of Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics.," *The Modern Language Journal* 56, no. 1 (1971): 56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/325580>.

¹² Hamada Hassanein, "Less Form, More Meaning: A Case Study of Al-Ihtibāk in the Qur'an Through the Prism of Dependency Grammar," *Sage Open* 13, no. 4 (October 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231199921>.

¹³ Charles J. Fillmore, *Fillmore's Case Grammar: A Reader*, ed. René Dirven and Günter Radden (J. Groos, 1987).

¹⁴ Charles J. Fillmore, *Form and Meaning in Language* (Center for the Study of Language and Information Publication, 2003).

¹⁵ Charles J. Fillmore, "Frame Semantics And The Nature Of Language," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 280, no. 1 (October 1976): 20–32, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1976.tb25467.x>.

¹⁶ Charles J. Fillmore, Paul Kay, and Mary Catherine O'Connor, "Regularity and Idiomaticity in Grammatical Constructions: The Case of Let Alone," June 5, 2014, 243–70, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315777443-10>.

Case Grammar, such omissions or disguises of sentence constituents can be understood as semantic strategies that reflect tensions between agent and experience, power and suffering, or action and consequence¹⁷. This approach helps reveal how ideological and emotional meanings in the text are constructed not only through lexical choices, but also through the underlying structure of semantic roles.

Numerous previous studies demonstrate that Charles J. Fillmore's Case Grammar theory has been widely applied to various objects of analysis, including films and translated texts, to uncover the relationship between syntactic structure and semantic meaning. Studies by Basid, A., Kamil, H. I., and Innah¹⁸; Basid, Arzaqi, et al¹⁹; Basid and Maghfiroh²⁰; and Nuratul Muntahana and Abdul Muntaqim Al Anshory²¹ have applied Case Grammar to diverse data, ranging from literary works to films. Firdianto²², in his study of *Rowā'i'ul Qaṣaṣ al-Islāmiyyah*, identified four types of modality: intentional, epistemic, obligation, and dynamic as well as ten types of propositions such as agentive, locative, and benefactive. Similarly, Rizkyafudin in his analysis of the novel *Iyyāka Min Ḥubbī*, found modality patterns consistent with earlier findings. Abdani, examining *Akhir Ayyām al-Basyā* by Rasha Adly, identified the dominance of locative propositions and three main forms of modality: tense, adverbial, and negation. Basid, Zidan, Romadani, and Miolo²³ further demonstrated that Fillmore's theory can systematically explain semantic relations between verbs and arguments in English-language film dialogues.

In a different framework, Ayuningtyas analyzed speeches by U.S. President Joe Biden using Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and identified three types of modality: inclination, probability, and obligation reflecting Biden's image as a visionary, firm, and empathetic leader. In the literary domain, Fatmawati, et, al.²⁴ adapted Fillmore's theory in their analysis of the translated novel *Sayap-Sayap Patah* by Kahlil Gibran, identifying four forms of modality with a dominance of intentional modality that reflects non-authoritarian and democratic character traits. Cross-linguistic studies by Hamed Shoay Saleh Al-Mogarry²⁵ also indicate that Fillmore's model is effective in systematically mapping semantic roles and verb-argument relations. Nevertheless, the application of this theory to Arabic literary texts, particularly the works of Zakariya Tamer remains very limited. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by analyzing the semantic structure of the short story *Al-Istighāthah* through Fillmore's Case Grammar approach.

Despite the breadth of prior research, applications of Case Grammar to Arabic literary texts, especially those characterized by symbolism and ellipsis such as Tamer's works,

¹⁷ Zeki Hamawand, "The Configuration Theory," in *English Stylistics* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 91–116, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-22556-7_6.

¹⁸ M. Basid, A., Kamil, H. I., & Innah, "Sentence Structure in Film 'Knives Out' Based on the Perspective of Charles J. Fillmore's Case Grammar," *Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya* 4, no. 3 (2021): 301–320.

¹⁹ Basid et al., "An Analysis of Case Grammar in English Film Dialogue: A New Perspective of Linguistic Modern."

²⁰ Abdul Basid and Devi Laila Maghfiroh, "Seloka: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia Case Grammar in the Movie 'The Gentlemen' Based on the Perspective of Charles J. Fillmore," *Seloka*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.15294/seloka>.

²¹ Nuratul Muntahana and Abdul Muntaqim Al Anshory, "Tata Bahasa Kasus Dalam Film Kena: Bridge of Spirit Berdasarkan Perspektif Charles J. Fillmore," *Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya* 6, no. 1 (February 1, 2023): 95–112, <https://doi.org/10.30872/diglosia.v6i1.572>.

²² M. Aji Firdianto, "قواعد الحالة النحوية في كتاب روايات القصص الإسلامية للدكتور عمر سليمان الأشقر على وجهة النظر تشارلز جاي," *فيلمور*, December 10, 2024.

²³ Basid et al., "An Analysis of Case Grammar in English Film Dialogue: A New Perspective of Linguistic Modern."

²⁴ Fatmawati et al. (2023)

²⁵ Hamed Shoay Saleh Al-Mogarry, "An Application of Syntactic Semantic Analysis in English and Arabic Translation," *مجلة جامعة صنعاء للعلوم الإنسانية* 1, no. 1 (January 2024), <https://doi.org/10.59628/jhs.v1i1.215>.

are still scarce. Previous studies have tended to focus on explicit linguistic structures and have rarely addressed the representation of implicit meanings that are distinctive of modern Arabic literature. As a result, the potential of Case Grammar to uncover semantic dynamics and meaning relations among agents, actions, and suffering in Arabic literary texts has not been fully explored. This study responds to that limitation by applying Fillmore's theory to a semantic reading of *Al-Istighāthah*, demonstrating how semantic structure contributes to the construction of social and ideological meaning in the text.

The aim of this research is to reveal how the semantic structure of *Al-Istighāthah* is constructed through case frames attached to the main verbs in the text. Specifically, it seeks to map semantic roles such as Agentive, Experiencer, Objective, and Instrumental in order to trace meaning relations among agents, actions, and suffering as depicted in the narrative. In addition, this study examines how the omission or obscuring of certain semantic roles functions as a strategy to reinforce social messages and implicit critiques of power structures in Zakariya Tamer's work.

This research is expected to make two main contributions, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it extends the application of Fillmore's Case Grammar to the analysis of modern Arabic literature, an area that has received relatively little attention in linguistic studies. Through this analysis, new insights are expected to emerge regarding how semantic structure can serve as an instrument for uncovering ideological and emotional meanings in literary texts. Practically, this study may serve as a reference for future researchers seeking to develop semantic-linguistic approaches to Arabic literary works, while also enriching interdisciplinary research at the intersection of linguistics and literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to achieve an in-depth understanding of linguistic phenomena through the analysis of meaning in literary texts rather than through statistical generalization²⁶. This approach is consistent with Fillmore's Case Grammar theory, which emphasizes semantic relations between verbs and their arguments. The focus of the study is on conversational texts in the short story *Al-Istighāthah* by Zakariya Tamer, included in the anthology *Dimashq al-Harā'iq*. Dialogues were selected because they contain expressions of modality and propositions that are particularly relevant to Case Grammar analysis. Through this approach, the study examines the relationships among utterance meaning, grammatical structure, and the situational context framing the conversations.

The research data consist of primary data in the form of characters' dialogues in *Al-Istighāthah* and secondary data drawn from books, articles, and relevant studies on Case Grammar and semantics²⁷. Only dialogue segments were analyzed, as they reflect natural language use and allow for the observation of modality (intentional, obligation, epistemic) and propositions. Data collection was conducted through documentation, reading, and note-taking techniques²⁸. The researcher read the short story thoroughly, identified dialogues containing modality and propositions, and recorded them in tabular form. Data validation was carried out through prolonged engagement, the elimination of irrelevant data, and peer discussion to ensure the accuracy of interpretations.

Data analysis employed the distributional method using the Immediate Constituent

²⁶ Douglas Ezzy, "Qualitative Analysis: Practice and Innovation," *Qualitative Analysis: Practice and Innovation*, January 1, 2013, 1–190, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315015484/Qualitative-Analysis-Douglas-Ezzy/Rights-And-Permissions>.

²⁷ P. Ratu Ile Tokan, "Manajemen Penelitian Guru Untuk Pendidikan Bermutu," 2016.

²⁸ Martin W Bauer and George Gaskell, *Qualitative Researching With Text, Image and Sound* (London: SAGE Publications, 2007).

Analysis technique²⁹. Each sentence was examined based on its syntactic structure to identify verb–noun relations and to determine case types such as agentive, objective, instrumental, or locative. The analysis also included the identification of modality markers (obligation, possibility, intention, knowledge) through lexical choices and the structure of characters' utterances. The analytical process began with the identification of modality, followed by the decomposition of propositions to uncover semantic relations between actions and participants, which were then interpreted contextually based on situational factors and social relations among characters. The findings are presented in an interpretative narrative that illustrates the interaction between modality and propositions in meaning construction. Through this method, the study demonstrates the application of Fillmore's Case Grammar theory to the analysis of Arabic literary dialogue and highlights the contribution of modality and propositions to the expression of meaning, emotion, and ideas in the dialogues of *Al-Istighāṭḥah* by Zakariya Tamer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Findings and Analysis

This study analyzes dialogic data from the short story *Al-Istighāṭḥah* by Zakariya Tamer, focusing on modality and propositional structures based on Charles J. Fillmore's Case Grammar framework. The analysis identifies modality elements including tense (past, present, and future), mode (indicative, imperative, interrogative, and desiderative), negation (لا *lā*, ليس *laysa*, and ما *mā*), and adverbs (frequency, manner, degree, quantity, and explanatory). Meanwhile, the propositional structure comprises ten case roles: agentive (A), experiencer (E), instrumental (I), objective (O), source (S), goal/destination (G), locative (L), time (T), accompaniment/collateral (C), and benefactive (B). These elements collectively construct the semantic and pragmatic meanings of dialogue in the narrative.

Modality

The dialogues in *Al-Istighāṭḥah* reveal social absurdity and power relations through strategic use of modality. Following Fillmore's Case Grammar theory³⁰, three broad modal patterns emerge: tense modality, mode modality, and negation, supported by adverbial modality.

Table I
Modality and Its Forms

Case Grammar Element	Types of Modality	Forms of Modality
Modality	Tense	Past Present Future
	Mode	Desiderative Imperative Indicative Interrogative
	Negation	No Not
	Adverb	Frequency Manner Degree Quantity Explanatory

Table. Modality Types and Linguistic Realization

²⁹ M. Zaim, "Metode Penelitian Bahasa: Pendekatan Struktural," 2014.

³⁰ Fillmore, *The Case for CASE*.

No.	Modality Type	Subcategory	Marker / Form	Arabic Example	English Translation	Functional Interpretation
1	Tense	Past	<i>fi'l māḍī</i>	أنا الذي حارب الجيش الفرنسي في ميسلون	I am the one who fought the French army in Maysalun.	Completed past action; historical memory
2	Tense	Past	<i>fi'l māḍī</i>	وهناك في ميسلون قُتل	And there, in Maysalun, I was killed.	Collective trauma
3	Tense	Past	<i>fi'l māḍī</i>	أجدادنا أروعوا ... الدنيا بسيفهم؟	Our ancestors terrified the world with their swords?	Heroic past narrative
4	Tense	Present	<i>fi'l muḍārī</i>	أعلم طبعاً	I certainly know.	Present mental state
5	Tense	Present	<i>fi'l muḍārī</i> + <i>wa huwa</i>	الأخ يتجول وهو يحمل سيفاً	The man is wandering while carrying a sword.	Ongoing action
6	Tense	Future	<i>sa- + muḍārī</i>	سنأخذه معنا ونريحك منه	We will take him with us and relieve you of him.	Future intention
7	Tense	Future	<i>sa- + muḍārī</i>	سنهزم لا محالة	We will certainly be defeated.	Fatalism / inevitability
8	Mode	Indicative	Declarative clause	أنا وزير الحربية	I am the Minister of Defense.	Assertion of authority
9	Mode	Indicative	Declarative clause	الوزير لا يمشي في آخر الليل كالشحاذ	A minister does not walk late at night like a beggar.	Social norm
10	Mode	Imperative	Imperative verb	كن مؤدباً وإلا ندمت	Be polite, or you will regret it.	Command / threat
11	Mode	Imperative	Imperative verb	أعطني هويتك	Give me your identity card.	Coercive authority
12	Mode	Interrogative	Interrogative pronoun	من أنت؟	Who are you?	Identity inquiry
13	Mode	Interrogative	Rhetorical question	ولن السيف؟	And whose sword is this?	Legitimacy challenge
14	Mode	Desiderative	Prayer expression	رحمة الله على أجدادي وأجدادك	May God's mercy be upon my ancestors and yours.	Ideological longing
15	Mode	Desiderative	Particle <i>layta</i>	ليتني كنت معهم	If only I were with them.	Unattainable wish
16	Negation	<i>lā</i>	Particle <i>lā</i>	لا يحق لك احتقار السيف	You have no right to despise the sword.	Denial of legitimacy
17	Negation	<i>lā</i>	Particle <i>lā</i>	لا تحمل هوية؟	You are not carrying an identity card?!	Negation of expectation
18	Negation	<i>laysa</i>	Copular negation	أنا لستُ بسكران	I am not drunk.	Rejection of accusation
19	Negation	<i>laysa</i>	Copular negation	أنا لستُ بكذاب	I am not a liar.	Defense of integrity
20	Negation	<i>mā</i>	Past negation	ما سمعتُ! باسي؟	Have you never heard my name?!	Rhetorical denial
21	Negation	<i>mā</i>	Past negation	ما فعلتُ شيئاً	I did not do anything.	Denial of action
22	Negation	Possibility	<i>lā yumkin</i>	لا يمكن أن أهرب وأنجو	It is impossible for me to escape and survive.	Epistemic/deontic negation
23	Adverb	Frequency	Adverb	دائماً في الأخبار	Always in the news	Habitual action
24	Adverb	Frequency	Adverb	أحياناً يتجول في الليل	Sometimes wanders at night	Irregular frequency
25	Adverb	Manner	Prepositional phrase	تكلم بهدوء	He spoke calmly	Manner of action
26	Adverb	Manner	Prepositional	قاتل بشجاعة	He fought bravely	Evaluative

			phrase			manner
27	Adverb	Degree	Intensifier	(27) جداً متعباً	Very tired	Intensification
28	Adverb	Degree	Comparative	(28) أكثر غضباً	Angrier than before	Comparative degree
29	Adverb	Quantity	Quantifier	(29) رجالاً كثيرين	Many men	Quantification
30	Adverb	Quantity	Quantifier	(30) قليل من المال	A little money	Limited quantity
31	Adverb	Explanatory	Locative adverb	(31) استشهد في ميسلون	He was martyred in Maysalun	Locative explanation
32	Adverb	Explanatory	Temporal adverb	(32) خرج ليلاً	He went out at night	Temporal specification

Propositions

In Charles J. Fillmore's Case Grammar, propositions are defined as the semantic core of a sentence, consisting of a main verb and a set of semantic arguments known as case roles.³¹ These case roles specify the conceptual relationships between an action and its participants, such as who performs the action, what is affected, where and when the event occurs, by what means, and for whose benefit. Through this structure, propositions provide a systematic representation of meaning that goes beyond syntactic arrangement and reflects how speakers conceptualize events.

Fillmore classifies semantic roles into ten major cases: Agentive, Experiencer, Instrumental, Objective, Source, Goal, Locative, Temporal, Collateral (Accompaniment), and Benefactive. Based on the analysis of 54 dialogic data from Zakariyyā Ṭāmir's *Al-Istighāṭah*, these case roles are variably distributed across the discourse. Agentive (A) and Objective (O) cases appear most frequently, indicating that the narrative strongly emphasizes action and its consequences. Other cases function to contextualize these actions spatially, temporally, psychologically, and ideologically.

Table 2
Proposition and Its Forms

Case Grammar Element	Types of Proposition	Forms of Proposition
Proposition	Agentive case (A)	First personal pronoun Second personal pronoun Third personal pronoun
	Experiencer case (E)	Basic verb Verb (modal)
	Instrumental case (I)	Noun Sense
	Objective case (O)	Human Thing
	Source case (S)	Noun phrase Noun
	Goal case (G)	Human Place
	Locative case (L)	Area Part of house Office
	Time case	Part of the day Year Century
	Collateral case (C)	With + noun
	Benefactive case (B)	For + noun

1. Agentive Case (A)

The Agentive case refers to the primary actor who intentionally performs an action. In Arabic, this role is commonly realized through personal pronouns. In examples (33) أنا وزير

³¹ Fillmore, "Some Problems for Case Grammar. In R. J. O'Brien, Editor, 22nd Annual Round Table. Linguistics: Developments of the Sixties – Viewpoints of the Seventies, Volume 24 of Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics."

and (34) *الحرية*, the pronoun *أنا* ("I") clearly marks the speaker as the agent. In (33), the proposition asserts social identity and authority, while in (34), it foregrounds deliberate heroic action against a specific object (the French forces). Semantically, the Agent functions as the center of initiative, emphasizing responsibility, authority, and conscious resistance.

2. Experiencer Case (E)

The Experiencer case denotes mental, emotional, or cognitive states experienced by the speaker rather than physical actions. This is evident in (35) *أشعر بالفخر* and (36) *أعلم طبعاً*. The verbs *أشعر* ("I feel") and *أعلم* ("I know") signal internal processes of awareness and emotion. In Fillmore's framework, these propositions highlight psychological depth, showing how knowledge, memory, and pride shape the speaker's ideological stance.

3. Instrumental Case (I)

The Instrumental case identifies the tool or means used to carry out an action. In (37) *أحمل سيفاً* and (38) *الشرطة مسلحة بمسدس*, the nouns *سيف* (sword) and *مسدس* (pistol) function as instruments. Beyond their practical function, these instruments carry symbolic meaning: the sword represents honor and traditional valor, while the pistol signifies institutional power and coercion. Thus, the Instrumental case contributes both functional and ideological dimensions to the narrative.

4. Objective Case (O)

The Objective case marks the entity affected by an action. In (39) *أقتلوا جنوداً* and (40) *احترم القانون*, the nouns *جنوداً* (soldiers) and *القانون* (law) receive the impact of the action. In *Al-Istighathah*, Objective roles frequently refer not only to physical targets but also to abstract values, reinforcing the moral and political implications of actions.

5. Source Case (S)

The Source case indicates the origin or cause of an action or state. In (41) *المشكلة من* and (42) *جاء من دمشق*, the preposition *من* (min) marks the starting point of responsibility or movement. Semantically, Source cases often pair with Goal cases to express causality and transformation.

6. Goal Case (G)

The Goal case denotes the endpoint or intended direction of an action. Examples (43) *أخذه إلى* and (44) *أرسل الرسالة إلى الوزارة* show how the preposition *إلى* (ilā) signals direction toward a person or institution. In Fillmore's theory, the Goal functions as the semantic endpoint that completes the action's trajectory.

7. Locative Case (L)

The Locative case specifies the place where an action occurs. In (45) *استشهد في ميسلون* and (46) *يمشي في الليل*, the preposition *في* (fī) marks location. Particularly in (45), Maysalun functions not merely as a physical location but as a symbol of sacrifice and historical struggle.

8. Temporal Case (T)

The Temporal case indicates when an action takes place. Examples (47) *أرجع ليلاً* and (48) *سُحرت يوم المعركة* situate events within specific time frames, contributing to narrative coherence and historical grounding.

9. Collateral Case (C)

The Collateral case expresses accompaniment or shared participation. In (49) *تحدث مع* and (50) *قاتل مع جنوده*, the preposition *مع* (ma'a) signals collective involvement, emphasizing solidarity and shared agency.

10. Benefactive Case (B)

The Benefactive case identifies the beneficiary or moral purpose of an action. In (51) *مقاتل من أجل الوطن* and (52) *ضحي لأجل الحرية*, the expressions *من أجل* and *لأجل* indicate actions performed for higher ideals. This case closely relates to the Goal case but emphasizes ethical motivation and sacrifice.

Overall, the distribution of case roles demonstrates that Fillmore's Case Grammar effectively captures not only grammatical relations but also the ideological structure of resistance, authority, and collective identity in *Al-Istighāthah*.

DISCUSSION

1. Modality

This study finds that modality in Zakariya Tamer's short story *Al-Istighāthah* plays a crucial role in constructing the semantic and ideological meanings of the discourse. Analysis based on Charles J. Fillmore's Case Grammar framework reveals four main categories: tense, mode, negation, and adverb modality which collectively shape the dynamic relationship between sentence structure, the speakers' social positions, and the values of struggle embedded in the text. These findings are consistent with previous studies³², which demonstrate that Fillmore's theory is effective in explaining the link between syntactic form and semantic function in film dialogues and literary texts. However, the application of this framework to Arabic literary texts, particularly the works of Zakariya Tamer, remains limited. Therefore, this study extends the scope of Fillmore's theory into the domain of modern Arabic literature.

From the perspective of tense modality, the use of past, present, and future forms functions not merely as linguistic markers of time but also as ideological devices that reinforce character identity. This finding aligns with Firdianto's³³ study on *Rowā'i' al-Qaṣaṣ al-Islāmiyyah*, which shows that past tense dominates in reviving religious events and linking characters to moral values of the past. Similarly, Abdani³⁴ observes a comparable tendency in Rasha 'Adli's novel *Ākhir Ayyām al-Bāsyā*, where tense is used as a symbol of historical continuity and resistance. In *Al-Istighāthah*, however, the future tense acquires an additional function as an affirmation of the characters' vision and moral commitment to defending national honor. Thus, tense modality here serves a dual function: as a temporal marker and as an ideological reflection.

Regarding mode modality, this study identifies four dominant forms: indicative, imperative, interrogative, and desiderative which reflect social hierarchy and power relations among characters. This pattern corresponds with the findings of Fatmawati, Zaini, and Ngarifah³⁵, who report the dominance of intentional modality in the translated novel *Sayap-Sayap Patah* by Gibran, reflecting democratic and anti-authoritarian character traits. However, in Tamer's text, interrogative and imperative forms function as rhetorical tools to challenge the legitimacy of power and question moral authority. A similar tendency is observed in Ayuningtyas's³⁶ study of Joe Biden's speeches, where modality variation reflects leadership

³² Abdul Basid, Habib Insan Kamil, and Mutma Innah, "Struktur Kalimat Pada Film Knives Out Berdasarkan Perspektif Tata Bahasa Kasus Charles J. Fillmore," *Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya* 4, no. 3 (August 1, 2021): 301–20, <https://doi.org/10.30872/diglosia.v4i3.209>; Basid et al., "An Analysis of Case Grammar in English Film Dialogue: A New Perspective of Linguistic Modern"; Muntahana and Al Anshory, "Tata Bahasa Kasus Dalam Film Kena: Bridge of Spirit Berdasarkan Perspektif Charles J. Fillmore."

³³ Firdianto, "قواعد الحالة النحوية في كتاب روائع القصص الإسلامية للدكتور عمر سليمان الأشقر على وجهة النظر تشارلز جاي فيلمور."

³⁴ Abdani, "قواعد الحالة في رواية آخر أيام الباشا لرشا عدلي بالمنظور تشرلز ج. فيلمور."

³⁵ Fatmawati, Zaini, and Ngarifah, "Divergensi Modalitas Charles J. Fillmore Dalam Novel Terjemah 'Sayap-Sayap Patah' Karya Kahlil Gibran."

³⁶ Ayuningtyas, "Modality Analysis in Joe Biden's Speech Delivered on the Anniversary of the Covid-19 Shutdown."

discourse strategies. This indicates that mode modality possesses a social–pragmatic dimension that varies according to discourse context; in Tamer’s work, it becomes a means of verbal resistance against oppressive systems.

Negation modality in *Al-Istighāṭah* plays a significant role in constructing semantic opposition between truth and power. The forms لا (*lā*), ليس (*laysa*), and ما (*mā*) do not merely signal grammatical negation but also build ideological resistance. This result is consistent with Abdani’s³⁷ findings that negation in modern Arabic texts functions to assert value opposition and strengthen character identity in situations of moral conflict. Unlike Basid et al.³⁸, who view negation in English film dialogue primarily as a reversal of logical propositions, this study highlights negation as an operator of power and a marker of morality illustrating how characters reject not only accusations but also the opposing value system itself.

Meanwhile, adverb modality enriches the semantic dimension by providing detailed information on frequency, manner, degree, quantity, as well as place and time. This contributes to narrative nuance and social realism in the text. These findings align with Al-Mogarry’s³⁹ cross-linguistic study, which demonstrates that adverbial elements within Fillmore’s framework effectively map the relationship between verbs and peripheral arguments in both English and Arabic texts. In *Al-Istighāṭah*, adverbs of manner and locative play a central role in creating a dramatic atmosphere and reinforcing the meaning of actions, in contrast to Fatmawati et al.⁴⁰, who found a dominance of degree adverbs in philosophical texts. This indicates that the distribution of adverb modality is strongly influenced by genre and communicative purpose.

Overall, this study confirms that Fillmore’s Case Grammar theory remains relevant for interpreting the relationship between sentence structure and ideological meaning in contemporary Arabic literary texts. The patterns of tense, mode, negation, and adverb usage in *Al-Istighāṭah* are consistent with Firdianto’s⁴¹ findings, yet they exhibit distinctive features in terms of rhetorical function and moral positioning of characters. While previous studies have largely focused on structural relationships between verbs and arguments, this research extends the analysis into pragmatic and ideological domains, demonstrating how modality functions as a tool for representing resistance, identity, and humanistic values in the works of Zakariya Tamer.

2. Proposition

The analysis of propositions in Zakariya Tamer’s short story *Al-Istighāṭah* demonstrates that the semantic relations between verbs and their arguments are structured through ten types of case roles within Fillmore’s Case Grammar framework, namely agentive, objective, locative, benefactive, instrumental, temporal, experiencer, goal (destination), source, and accompaniment. The findings reveal that the agentive case occurs 46 times and constitutes the most dominant category, followed closely by the objective case with 44 occurrences. This dominance indicates that the text is strongly centered on the relationship between the actor (agent) and the target of the action (object). Other cases such as locative (10), benefactive (8), instrumental (7), temporal (6), experiencer (6), goal (6), source (4), and

³⁷ Abdani, “قواعد الحالة في رواية آخر أيام الباشا لرشا عدلي بالمنظور تشرلز ج. فيلمور.”

³⁸ Basid et al., “An Analysis of Case Grammar in English Film Dialogue: A New Perspective of Linguistic Modern.”

³⁹ Al-Mogarry, “An Application of Syntactic Semantic Analysis in English and Arabic Translation.”

⁴⁰ Fatmawati, Zaini, and Ngarifah, “Divergensi Modalitas Charles J. Fillmore Dalam Novel Terjemah ‘Sayap-Sayap Patah’ Karya Kahlil Gibran.”

⁴¹ Firdianto, “قواعد الحالة النحوية في كتاب روائع القصص الإسلامية للدكتور عمر سليمان الأشقر على وجهة النظر تشارلز جاي فيلمور.”

accompaniment (2) function to reinforce the spatial, temporal, and moral contexts surrounding the main events.

These findings are consistent with Firdianto's⁴² study of *Rowā'ī' al-Qaṣaṣ al-Islāmiyyah*, which also identified the dominance of agentive and objective cases as the primary semantic pattern driving narrative structure. In both texts, the agentive case functions as the center of consciousness and morality, while the objective case represents the values or entities being defended or contested. However, the present study reveals a higher intensity of agentive usage, emphasizing Yusuf al-ʿAzma as an ideological agent who not only performs actions but also interprets those actions within historical and spiritual contexts. Consequently, the agentive role here is more complex, encompassing physical action, moral responsibility, and the representation of nationalism.

With regard to locative and temporal cases, the results also support Abdani's (2024) findings, which highlight the prominence of locative propositions in Rasha 'Adlī's novel *Ākhir Ayyām al-Bāsyā*. In both modern Arabic texts, place functions not merely as a narrative setting but as an ideological symbol. In *Al-Istighāthah*, locations such as Maysalun serve as historical spaces that signify sacrifice and honor, while temporal expressions (e.g., *laylan, yawm al-ma'rakah*) reinforce the continuity between past struggles and present resistance. Thus, locative and temporal cases operate as connectors between physical space and ideological time, supporting Fillmore's view that semantic cases reflect universal human experience mediated by cultural context.

Furthermore, benefactive and experiencer cases in this study reveal strong emotional and social dimensions. The benefactive case (eight instances) indicates actions performed for the benefit of others, such as the nation or the value of freedom, while the experiencer case (six instances) marks feelings, awareness, and inner reflection. This pattern aligns with the findings of Fatmawati et al. (2023), who observed that modality and case relations in Gibran's work reflect democratic values and universal spirituality. In Tamer's text, however, the experiencer case becomes salient within moral conflict: characters do not merely experience emotions but actively assert ethical positions against injustice. Thus, experience in Tamer's narrative is more existential than sentimental.

These results also reinforce Basid et al.'s (2023) conclusion that Fillmore's theory effectively explains verb–argument relations in narrative and cinematic texts. Nevertheless, compared to the English texts examined in their study, the case structure in *Al-Istighāthah* is more densely ideological. For instance, instrumental cases (seven instances), such as the sword, function not only as tools of action but also as symbols of morality and honor. Similarly, benefactive constructions marked by *li-* and *min ajl* explicitly convey social dimensions—actions performed for *al-waṭan* (the homeland) and *al-ḥurriyah* (freedom). This pattern suggests that semantic cases in Tamer's Arabic text tend to carry thicker layers of cultural and political values than Western texts, which often emphasize action structure over ideological symbolism.

Overall, the discussion of propositions confirms that Fillmore's Case Grammar remains relevant and adaptable for analyzing contemporary Arabic literary texts. The dominance of agentive–objective relations highlights the focus on actors and actions, while the variation in locative, benefactive, and experiencer cases reveals emotional and ideological layers within the narrative. By comparing these findings with Firdianto's (2024) study, it can be concluded that propositions in Zakariya Tamer's work do not merely construct semantic structure, but also articulate moral struggle, nationalism, and humanistic values that are characteristic of modern Arabic literature.

⁴² Firdianto.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the semantic structure of Zakariya Tamer's short story *Al-Istighāthah* is organized through case frames linked to main verbs, functioning both linguistically and ideologically. Applying Charles J. Fillmore's Case Grammar reveals the relationships among actions, agents, instruments, and characters' inner experiences, reflecting social critique of Syria's repressive power. The dominance of Agentive and Objective cases highlights the focus on actors and their targets, while Locative, Benefactive, and Experiencer cases reinforce symbolic space, moral purpose, and inner awareness. The omission or concealment of certain semantic elements serves as a strategy to depict repression, fear, and social alienation, positioning the text as a medium of resistance.

The semantic network formed by verbs and roles such as Agentive, Experiencer, Objective, and Instrumental uncovers moral and social dynamics. Agentive roles center awareness and action, while Objective roles represent defended values or entities. Benefactive and Experiencer roles add emotional and spiritual depth. Modality—tense, mode, negation, and adverbs—further strengthens meaning by highlighting tensions between truth and power, affirming the characters' moral stance.

Tamer's strategic omission of semantic roles demonstrates both aesthetic and political intent, reflecting human alienation under oppression. Fillmore's Case Grammar proves effective in showing how semantic structures can convey ideology and resistance in modern Arabic literature.

Future research may expand this approach to other Arab writers with symbolic and political narratives, integrate Case Grammar with pragmatics or critical discourse analysis, and apply it to non-literary texts such as political speeches or news discourse. The findings can guide researchers in methodological design, support educators in teaching semantic theory in contemporary Arabic texts, and foster interdisciplinary studies between semantics and Arabic literary criticism.

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