

**ANALYSIS OF THE WORD OF IMAN IN THE QUR'AN: INTEGRATION OF  
KALAM SCIENCE AND ARABIC SEMANTICS**Septika Rudiamon<sup>1</sup>, Razia Khan<sup>2</sup>, and Dedi Jistito<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup> Al-Hikmah Islamic College of Pariangan Batusangkar, Batusangkar, Indonesia<sup>2</sup> Paktia University, Gardez, Afghanistan<sup>3</sup> Mahmud Yunus State Islamic University Batusangkar, Batusangkar, Indonesia**Corresponding Author:**

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2025**Abstract**

Interpretations of the term iman (faith) in the Qur'an are often subject to reduction due to the dominance of singular approaches, whether linguistic or theological. This study aims to analyze the lexical and contextual meanings of iman based on Arabic semantic theory, to explore the concept of iman from the perspective of Ilm al-Kalam, and to integrate both in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. The research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach using primary data from key Qur'anic verses related to iman and secondary data from relevant books, journals, and previous studies. The analysis is based on the lexical-contextual semantic theory (Abdul Fattah Ismail Syaltut and Toshihiko Izutsu) and classical theological thought in Ilm al-Kalam from the Ash'ari, Maturidi, and Mu'tazili schools. The findings reveal that the meaning of iman is not monolithic but emerges from a dynamic interaction between linguistic context and theological doctrine. The term iman in the Qur'an carries flexible meanings that reflect a synthesis of linguistic and theological depth. This study emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in Qur'anic studies that combines Arabic semantics and Islamic theology to better understand fundamental Islamic concepts in a more holistic and contextually relevant manner.

**Keywords:** Arabic Semantics, Iman, Kalam Science

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## INTRODUCTION

The word *iman* in the Qur'an appears in various forms and contexts, indicating that its meaning is neither fixed nor singular. In some verses, *iman* relates to inner conviction, in others to verbal affirmation, and in still others to manifest behavior (Komaruddin & Majdi, 2021; Sunardin, 2021). These contextual variations open the possibility for diverse interpretations, depending on the scholarly approach applied. Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic theology, and Arabic linguistics each contribute differently to the understanding of this term. When a purely textual approach is used without theological dimensions, the meaning of *iman* may lose its conceptual depth. Conversely, a theological approach that ignores linguistic structure risks misrepresenting its lexical sense (Imeldawati & Sihombing, 2023; Kamal dkk., 2024; Taftazani, 2022). Hence, understanding *iman* requires a more integrative and comprehensive approach. This research proceeds from the premise that the Qur'anic conception of *iman* necessitates a synthesis of linguistic and theological perspectives to avoid partial interpretations. These meaning variations highlight the urgency of a renewed, interdisciplinary exploration of the term *iman*.

Studies on *iman* are often polarized between two separate academic domains: Islamic theology (*Ilm al-Kalam*) and Arabic semantics. In the context of Qur'anic studies, however, these fields should not be segregated. *Ilm al-Kalam* provides a conceptual and philosophical framework (Ali & Bakar, 2025; Fhadila dkk., 2024), while semantics offers linguistic analysis based on structure and context (Nabil & Abdallah, 2023; Nurhayati dkk., 2025; Sofa & Febrianti, 2025). Previous research has largely favored one over the other, resulting in incomplete understandings. Semantic analysis without theological grounding tends to produce shallow meanings, whereas theological interpretations without linguistic reference may become speculative. Academic literature that integrates both perspectives remains scarce. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge these approaches within a unified analytical framework. The disciplinary gap between *Kalam* and Arabic semantics presents a major challenge in fully comprehending *iman*. Addressing this gap underscores the need for an interdisciplinary method that harnesses the strengths of both to attain a comprehensive interpretation of *iman* in the Qur'an.

This study pursues several interrelated objectives. First, it aims to analyze the lexical and contextual meanings of the word *iman* in the Qur'an using an Arabic semantic approach. This approach enables understanding based on linguistic structures and relevant textual contexts. Second, it explores the concept of *iman* from the perspective of *Ilm al-Kalam*, focusing on theological views from different schools such as Ash'ariyyah, Maturidiyyah, and Mu'tazilah. This aims to examine how theological constructs influence the understanding of *iman*. Third, it integrates semantic and theological analyses to arrive at a more comprehensive interpretation of *iman* in the Qur'an. Through this integration, the study seeks to harmonize textual meanings with conceptual insights. Lastly, the study proposes a new interdisciplinary approach to Qur'anic studies, combining Arabic linguistics and Islamic theology as two core disciplines in interpreting divine revelation holistically.

The urgency of this research stems from the fact that interpretations of *iman* in the Qur'an often suffer from semantic reduction due to single-disciplinary approaches. A purely linguistic or theological method cannot fully capture the richness of *iman* as a central Islamic concept. Linguistic approaches that focus solely on literal meaning frequently overlook the conceptual dimensions emphasized in theological discourse. Conversely, theological interpretations that ignore linguistic structures may diverge from the Qur'anic text. Therefore, an interdisciplinary methodology combining Arabic semantics and *Ilm al-Kalam* becomes a necessary scholarly strategy. This research aims to contribute significantly to contemporary Islamic studies, particularly in interpreting key Qur'anic terms. Based on the facts and objectives outlined, the study is not only academically relevant but also epistemologically and

practically essential for formulating a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of iman.

The concept of iman (faith) is one of the fundamental doctrines in Islam and has long been a central theme in Islamic scholarly discourse. Etymologically, the word iman derives from the root a-m-n, which denotes safety or trust (Rahman & Nurrahmania, 2024; Sertkaya, 2025; Sinambela dkk., 2022). In Islamic terminology, iman is defined as firm conviction in the truth of the teachings brought by the Prophet Muhammad, encompassing belief in Allah, angels, scriptures, prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine predestination (Harahap dkk., 2022). This definition is primarily based on the famous Hadith of Gabriel, which serves as a foundational reference for formulating the pillars of faith. Classical scholars such as Imam al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, and al-Nawawi emphasized that iman is not only cognitive but also includes affective and conative dimensions. Hence, faith is not merely an intellectual affirmation but also a form of inner commitment and manifested behavior. This definition serves as a conceptual framework for understanding its role in both spiritual and social aspects of Muslim life. In the context of this study, a clear comprehension of the conceptual meaning of iman is essential as a starting point for integrating theological and linguistic approaches in a deeper and more systematic manner.

In both classical and contemporary Islamic literature, iman is not perceived as a singular concept but manifests in various forms that reflect its complexity. Faith is commonly categorized into three main dimensions: *tasdiq bi al-qalb* (affirmation by the heart), *iqrar bi al-lisan* (declaration by the tongue), and *'amal bi al-jawarih* (actions of the limbs) (Fikri dkk., 2024). This tripartite classification is crucial for understanding the internal and external aspects of belief. Certain theological schools, such as the Khawarij and some strands of Ahl al-Hadith, emphasize that righteous deeds are integral to faith. In contrast, groups like the Murji'ah separate actions from the essence of faith, arguing that internal conviction is sufficient. These differing perspectives highlight a broad spectrum of interpretations regarding the manifestation of faith in religious practice. In modern discourse, the categorization of iman is also often linked to social and moral dimensions such as justice, compassion, and adherence to human values. Understanding these variations in the manifestation of iman is vital in the semantic and theological analysis of the term, as it opens pathways for diverse yet scientifically grounded interpretations.

Ilm al-Kalam, or Islamic theology, is a branch of knowledge that deals with the articulation and defense of Islamic beliefs through rational and argumentative methods. Literally, kalam means "speech" or "discourse," (Dorsey, 2024; Hussain, 2024; Mansoori, 2024) but within Islamic terminology, it refers to the discipline concerned with theological doctrines based on both rational ('aqli) and textual (naqli) evidence. The primary objective of Ilm al-Kalam is to safeguard Islamic creed from internal and external deviations (Afifah, 2024; Handayani dkk., 2025). Historically, it played a pivotal role in formulating theological foundations in response to Greek philosophy, sectarian heresies, and intra-Muslim conflicts. Prominent scholars such as al-Ghazali, al-Baqillani, and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi significantly contributed to the development of this science. With its rational and systematic nature, Ilm al-Kalam offers profound insights into abstract religious concepts like iman, tawhid, and divine justice. Within the framework of this research, Ilm al-Kalam functions as the theological foundation for analyzing the concept of iman in the Qur'an, unveiling its deeper conceptual implications through a rigorous interpretive lens.

Ilm al-Kalam encompasses various approaches and theological schools, reflecting the diversity of Islamic theological thought throughout history. The most well-known schools include Ash'ariyyah, Maturidiyyah, and Mu'tazilah. Each presents distinct views on the essence of iman and its relationship with actions. The Ash'arites, for instance, argue that iman resides in the heart, while deeds merely complement faith. The Maturidis adopt a more rational methodology, granting greater weight to reason in theological matters (Hasanah & Sofa, 2025;

Mukminin dkk., 2024). On the other hand, the Mu‘tazilites insist that actions are integral to faith, maintaining that a major sin can expel a believer from the fold of iman (Riduan dkk., 2025). These classifications reveal that Ilm al-Kalam is not a monolithic tradition but a dynamic and multifaceted discourse. Understanding these theological manifestations is critical to identifying how the concept of iman has been interpreted and constructed across historical and doctrinal contexts. In this study, such diversity provides a rich theoretical foundation to support the integration of semantic analysis with theological interpretation in the Qur’anic framework.

Arabic semantics is a linguistic discipline concerned with the study of meaning in the Arabic language, particularly within Qur’anic texts (Hayati & Harahap, 2021; Zulkiflih & Fitria, 2023). The term "semantics" originates from the Greek word *semantikos*, meaning “significant,” and in Arabic linguistic tradition, it aligns with the science of *dalalah* (indication or meaning). In the context of the Qur’an, semantics plays a crucial role in examining how word meanings shift depending on grammatical context, syntactic positioning, and lexical associations. Scholars like al-Zamakhshari and al-Raghib al-Isfahani have made notable contributions to the semantic analysis of Qur’anic vocabulary. Arabic semantics encompasses not only lexical meaning but also contextual, grammatical, and pragmatic dimensions (Cambria, 2025; Saleem & Ahmad, 2025). In contemporary studies, semantic approaches are employed to analyze sacred texts systematically by uncovering hidden semantic elements within the language structure (Gaanoun & Alsuhaibani, 2025). This research adopts Arabic semantics as a primary tool to delve into the multi-layered meanings of the term *iman* in the Qur’an—forming the basis for an integrative analysis that unites linguistic and theological perspectives for a more holistic interpretation.

Arabic semantics in Islamic studies is generally categorized into several analytical approaches, including lexical semantics, structural semantics, and contextual semantics (Wahdan dkk., 2024). Lexical semantics focuses on dictionary-based definitions; structural semantics examines meaning within syntactic relationships; and contextual semantics considers how meanings evolve based on sentence or discourse-level context. In Qur’anic exegesis, scholars frequently employ a combination of these approaches to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of a term. For instance, the word *iman* in one verse might refer to inner conviction, while in another context, it could signify religious identity or ethical commitment. These manifestations underscore the dynamic nature of meaning in Arabic, resisting static or isolated interpretations. Thus, Arabic semantics emerges as an essential analytical tool for interpreting sacred texts. In this study, familiarity with various semantic approaches strengthens the analysis of *iman* in the Qur’an, particularly when integrated with theological insights drawn from Ilm al-Kalam.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The main object of this study is the variation in the meaning of the word *iman* (faith) in the Qur’an, which appears in various contexts and carries multiple meanings. These variations can lead to different interpretations depending on the approach used, whether theological or linguistic. One of the main challenges of this study lies in the integration of Ilm al-Kalam (Islamic theology) and Arabic semantics, which are often treated separately. However, both fields are complementary in deeply understanding the meaning of *iman*. An interdisciplinary approach is therefore crucial in bridging the textual (*lafzi*) and conceptual (*ma’nawi*) meanings within the Qur’anic discourse. Furthermore, the diversity of theological interpretations regarding the essence of *iman*—as seen in the views of the Ash‘arites, Maturidites, and Mu‘tazilites—reflects a conceptual crisis that necessitates a thorough and systematic reexamination.

This research employs a qualitative library-based method using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. Primary data is drawn from relevant literature addressing the diverse meanings of iman in the Qur'an, the integration of Ilm al-Kalam and Arabic semantics, and interdisciplinary approaches in theological-linguistic studies. Secondary data consists of relevant sources such as books, academic journals, scholarly articles, and previous research related to the key terms: iman, Ilm al-Kalam, and Arabic semantics. SLR is used to systematically identify, assess, and synthesize all relevant literature to provide a comprehensive and unbiased understanding. The objective is to construct a scientifically grounded synthesis that offers a solid theoretical foundation.

This study is underpinned by three main theoretical foundations. First, the Lexical-Contextual Semantic Theory of Abdul Fattah Ismail Syaltut and Toshihiko Izutsu, which is applied to analyze the meaning of iman through semantic fields and Qur'anic contextual relationships. Izutsu emphasizes the importance of understanding key concepts within the Qur'anic worldview. Second, the Theological Theory of Ilm al-Kalam, based on the views of classical theologians such as al-Ash'ari, al-Maturidi, and Mu'tazilite thinkers, to explore the normative and doctrinal dimensions of iman. Third, the Interdisciplinary Theoretical Integration, which positions language as a medium for expressing doctrine, and theology as the semantic content of that language. Hence, the meaning of iman is not only analyzed grammatically but also epistemologically and normatively within Islamic teachings.

The research process follows a structured protocol typical of Systematic Literature Review (SLR). It begins with the formulation of a clear and specific research question, followed by the development of a research protocol that outlines search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and data analysis methods. Data collection involves systematically searching electronic databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and JSTOR using predetermined keywords. Once relevant literature is identified, the researcher performs quality assessment, data extraction, and systematic analysis. This transparent and structured procedure ensures that the findings are unbiased, replicable, and academically robust.

Data analysis in this study employs a content analysis approach, which involves examining and processing the collected data to identify patterns, relationships, and key information. The analysis is conducted by reading and categorizing data according to major themes such as the meaning of iman, theological approaches, and semantic perspectives. The data is then reduced and grouped to uncover connections between textual and conceptual meanings. This process enables a comprehensive synthesis of the linguistic and theological dimensions in understanding iman in the Qur'an, aligned with the interdisciplinary objectives of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature review on the concept of iman in the Qur'an reveals that the term appears in various derived forms and sentence contexts. Some verses present iman as an internal spiritual act, while others frame it as a social commitment to Islamic values. Classical sources such as the tafsir of al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī describe iman as encompassing verbal declaration (*iqrār bi al-lisān*), heartfelt conviction (*taṣdīq bi al-qalb*), and practical deeds (*ʿamal bi al-jawāriḥ*). Meanwhile, contemporary studies portray a broader understanding of iman, associating it with spirituality, social ethics, and religious identity.

The explanation of these findings shows that the meaning of iman has evolved across different historical and interpretative contexts. In classical tafsir, iman is seen as the core of a Muslim's theological identity. In modern interpretations, however, iman is viewed not only as an inner belief but also as a principle that motivates social engagement. Hadith literature and studies in *usul al-din* emphasize the practical dimension of iman, as in the tradition describing it as having over seventy branches.



The relationship between the descriptive and explanatory data on iman and the core issues of this research reveals a conceptual challenge. The diversity of interpretations has led to multiple approaches in understanding iman. This directly aligns with the urgency of this study—to propose an integrated method bridging the textual (linguistic) and normative (theological) dimensions of the word iman in the Qur'an.

Literature on Islamic theology (Ilm al-Kalam) shows that iman has been a central topic of theological debate. The Ash'arites emphasized *taṣdīq bi al-qalb*, while the Maturidites added rational elements in defining iman. On the other hand, the Mu'tazilites stressed that righteous actions are integral to genuine faith. Classical references such as *al-Ibānah* by al-Ash'arī and *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* by al-Māturīdī are key sources in these discussions.

The explanation of these theological debates reflects the distinct methods employed by each school in approaching scripture and reason. The Ash'arites lean toward scriptural authority with minimal rational interference, the Mu'tazilites elevate reason as the main tool in religious understanding, while the Maturidites attempt a balance. These doctrinal differences shape varying theological definitions of iman.

The relation between the theological literature and the problem of this research indicates that definitions of iman by different theological schools are often partial and context-bound. Each school offers its own formulation, creating interpretive gaps regarding the unity of meaning in the Qur'anic text. This underlines the need for an integrative approach that includes both theological and linguistic perspectives.

The literature on Arabic semantics—especially works by Toshihiko Izutsu and Abdul Fattah Syaltut—emphasizes that the meaning of iman in the Qur'an must be approached through semantic field theory and relational context. Izutsu highlights the importance of key word analysis within the Qur'anic worldview. In this light, iman is studied not in isolation but in relation to terms such as *kufr*, *islam*, and *taqwā*, through analysis of verses that include *āmana*, *mu'min*, and other derivatives.

The explanation shows that the meaning of iman shifts according to sentence structure, object, and social context. For example, during the early Meccan period, iman was emphasized as acceptance of the prophetic message, while in the Medinan period, it related more to communal loyalty and legal adherence. This underscores the contextual flexibility of Qur'anic language.

The relation between the descriptive and explanatory data from Arabic semantics and the research problem shows that while linguistic approaches effectively reveal the textual complexity of iman, they still require alignment with theological norms to achieve a holistic understanding. This confirms the significance of integrating linguistic and theological sciences in comprehensively interpreting the term iman in the Qur'an. The following is a table of research findings from observations, interviews and documentation studies.

Table 1. Research Findings

No.	Research Objectives	Research Findings
1	To analyze the lexical and contextual meanings of the term iman in the Qur'an using the Arabic semantic approach	The term <i>iman</i> in the Qur'an exhibits diverse meanings depending on the verse's context and semantic relations. Lexically, <i>iman</i> denotes affirmation ( <i>tasdiq</i> ), while contextually it reflects praxis, moral commitment, and existential relationship with God.
2	To examine the concept of iman from the perspective of Ilm al-Kalam across different Islamic theological schools	The <i>Ilm al-Kalam</i> perspective reveals diverse definitions and theological implications of <i>iman</i> . The Ash'ari school emphasizes internal affirmation, the Maturidi school adds verbal confession, while the Mu'tazili school includes righteous actions as part of faith.

3	To integrate semantic and theological analysis for a comprehensive understanding of iman in the Qur'an	The integration of semantics and theology reveals that <i>iman</i> cannot be understood in isolation. Interpretation requires linking linguistic context with normative theological frameworks to reflect the full Qur'anic truth of <i>iman</i> .
4	To propose an interdisciplinary approach in Qur'anic studies combining Arabic linguistics and Islamic theology	The interdisciplinary approach enhances interpretive validity and overcomes the limitations of singular frameworks. The integration of Arabic semantics and <i>Ilm al-Kalam</i> enables deeper, more relevant, and contextual Qur'anic studies in addressing contemporary scholarly challenges.

This study reveals that the meaning of iman in the Qur'an cannot be reduced to a single dimension, whether theological or linguistic. From a semantic perspective, the term iman exhibits a complex, contextual, and relational range of meanings within the Qur'anic semantic field. Meanwhile, the theological perspective of *Ilm al-Kalam* offers distinctive normative boundaries shaped by each school's doctrinal orientation. The integration of these approaches demonstrates that understanding iman in the Qur'an requires an interdisciplinary reading to avoid simplification or sectarian interpretations.

Compared to previous studies that focused solely on either semantic or theological approaches, this research contributes by offering an integrative analytical framework. For example, works such as those by Toshihiko Izutsu emphasize linguistic aspects without systematically connecting to Islamic theological traditions. Conversely, classical Kalam studies rarely address the linguistic dynamism of the Qur'an. The strength of this research lies in its ability to bridge both fields within a coherent conceptual framework.

The reflection from these findings underscores the importance of interpreting iman as a dynamic and contextual concept that remains grounded in Islamic normative values. This indicates that studying faith is no longer sufficient when approached from a single perspective. The synthesis between Arabic linguistics and Islamic theology is increasingly essential, especially in addressing the demands of the modern era that require holistic and integrative readings of religious texts.

The implications of this study are far-reaching, particularly in Islamic education, curriculum development in Qur'anic studies, and methodologies in Qur'anic interpretation. The proposed interdisciplinary approach opens new avenues for understanding key Qur'anic concepts—not limited to iman, but also kufr, taqwā, and islam. Moreover, this integration has the potential to strengthen dialogue between classical Islamic intellectual traditions and contemporary scientific methodologies.

These research findings emerge from a long-standing conceptual disconnection between two disciplines that have developed independently. *Ilm al-Kalam* evolved within a normative and apologetic framework, while Arabic semantics developed in a more descriptive linguistic framework. Without mutual engagement, the understanding of Qur'anic meanings becomes fragmented. Thus, the findings respond to a methodological need for a more comprehensive approach to Qur'anic studies.

Based on these results, necessary actions include promoting interdisciplinary studies in the fields of tafsir and Islamic studies in general. This can be achieved by designing curricula that integrate Arabic linguistics and Islamic theology, developing integrative tafsir methodologies, and offering academic training for Qur'anic researchers. Furthermore, there must be collective awareness among scholars that the meanings of the Qur'an require plural approaches to preserve the richness and depth of its divine messages.

## CONCLUSION

The most striking finding of this study is that the meaning of iman in the Qur'an is not solely shaped by linguistic structures or theological doctrines, but rather emerges from the dynamic interplay between the two. This reveals that each usage of the term iman in the Qur'an carries layers of meaning that cannot be captured through a single lens. The integration of Arabic semantics and Ilm al-Kalam exposes the surprising fact that iman accommodates plural understandings while still preserving its normative foundations. This makes iman an elastic yet principled concept—something that has rarely been explored in such depth in prior studies.

This study offers significant contributions in both theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, it expands the scope of Qur'anic studies through an interdisciplinary approach that unites linguistics and theology. Practically, it paves the way for developing more integrative methodologies in tafsir for contemporary Islamic education and research. By presenting an analytical model that connects the lexical and contextual meanings of iman with theological doctrines, this study introduces a new paradigm for understanding fundamental concepts in Islam.

While this research successfully introduces a novel approach, its scope remains limited to a single key term—iman—and has not yet explored the broader Qur'anic semantic network. This limitation is not a weakness, but rather a starting point for future development. Subsequent studies can expand this analytical model to other key terms such as kufr, islam, and taqwā, and examine its application in thematic or maqāṣidī tafsir to enrich the interpretive discourse of the Qur'an in a more comprehensive manner.

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