

5- A TONGUE-MANAGEMENT MODEL FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

تطوير إطار نظري لإدارة اللسان من المنظور الإسلامي

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Progress Received: 28 November 2025, Revised: 29 December 2025, Accepted: 8 January 2025;

Published: 20 January 2026, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.65461/tanmyia.2026.2.1.5>

ABSTRACT:

This study aims to examine the concept of managing the tongue in Islam through a faith-based and educational lens grounded in the principles and higher objectives of Islamic law. It connects scriptural texts with contemporary realities and explores the seriousness and significance of the tongue, highlighting its spiritual, psychological, and social consequences. The analysis draws upon the Qur'an, the Prophetic Sunnah, and the insights of classical and contemporary scholars. The study was motivated by the observable neglect of proper tongue conduct in modern contexts influenced by materialistic Western culture, which often fails to accord speech the importance it holds in Islamic teachings. In response, the research proposes an educational model consisting of two integrated levels:

1. The Preventive Level, which focuses on restraining the tongue from falsehood, idle talk, backbiting, etc.

2. The Constructive Level, which emphasizes guiding the tongue toward faith-based speech that leads to righteous actions and generates benefit for the individual and all other creatures.

These two levels are examined across three dimensions: the individual's relationship with Allah, with the self, and with other created beings.

Keywords: Tongue-Management Model, Islamic Perspective.

الملخص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة موضوع إدارة اللسان في الإسلام دراسة تربوية وإيمانية، تستند إلى أصول الشريعة ومقاصدها، وتربط بين النصوص الشرعية والواقع المعاصر. وقد تناول البحث خطورة اللسان ومكانته، وبين الآثار الإيمانية والنفسية والاجتماعية لإعمال اللسان، مستنداً إلى القرآن الكريم والسنة النبوية وفهوم العلماء. وذلك لما لوحظ من إهمال لأعمال اللسان نتيجة لطغيان الثقافة الغربية المادية التي لا تعير الأقوال اهتماماً يليق بأهميتها من المنظور الإسلامي، حيث اقترح نموذجاً تربوياً يقوم على مستويين متكاملين: المستوى الوقائي الذي يختص بكفّ اللسان عن الباطل واللغو والغيبة، والمستوى البنائي الذي يركّز على توجيه اللسان إلى الأقوال التي تبني على الإيمان وتثمر أعمالاً صالحة وتحقق منافع للإنسان وغيره من المخلوقات، حيث تمت دراسة هذين المستويين عبر ثلاثة محاور وهي محور علاقة العبد بربه، ومحور علاقة العبد بنفسه، ومحور علاقة العبد بالمخلوقين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إدارة اللسان، المنظور الإسلامي.

Introduction

The spoken word is one of the greatest powers possessed by the human being. It is not merely a tool for expressing ideas and emotions; rather, it is an instrument capable of both construction and destruction. Through words, concepts are formed, ethics are shaped, and human relationships are defined. Islam has given special attention to speech, making it a central basis for moral responsibility and accountability, as indicated in the verse: *“Not a word does he utter but there is an observer ready (to record it).”* (Qāf 50:18). This verse highlights that every utterance made by a person is subject to divine monitoring and ultimate accountability, reinforcing the concept of **verbal responsibility**, one of the essential pillars of Islamic ethics.

With the development of human societies and the rapid expansion of modern—particularly digital—communication channels, the danger and influence of speech have increased significantly. Words are no longer confined to personal conversations or private gatherings; they are now broadcast across digital platforms and can reach millions within moments. Consequently, **“managing the tongue”** in the age of digital media has become an educational, ethical, and even security-related concern that extends beyond the individual to affect the intellectual and psychological stability of entire communities.

God Almighty endowed the human being with a unique blessing that expresses the essence of human nature: the gift of articulation, which distinguishes humans from all other creatures. Allah says: *“The Most Merciful, who taught the Qur’an, created humankind, and taught them articulation.”* (Al-Raḥmān 55:1–4). The sequence of these verses suggests that the teaching of articulation came after creation and after the teaching of the Qur’an, indicating that articulation represents the perfection of human creation. It is the capacity through which humans comprehend revelation, interact with it, and express their existence. Speech, therefore, is not merely a vocal ability or physical articulation; it is a reflection of intellect and understanding, a manifestation of inner awareness translated into meaningful and influential language.

From this perspective, the tongue becomes the mirror of the mind, the interpreter of the heart, and the bridge between thought and action. A person is known not merely by what they possess or do, but by what they say, for speech reveals one’s inner state, level of consciousness, and true intentions. The Prophet ﷺ captured this profound relationship in his concise wisdom: *“A servant’s faith will not be upright until his heart is upright, and his heart will not be upright until his tongue is upright.”* (Musnad Aḥmad, 12819). This integrative connection between the heart and the tongue forms the ethical foundation upon which Islam evaluates speech and regulates verbal behavior; speech cannot be separated from intention, nor the tongue from faith.

In this light, the concept of **“tongue management”** emerges as a comprehensive ethical system encompassing prevention from verbal vices, constructive use of good speech, and the devotional purpose behind utterances. A truthful word reflects firm faith, builds conscience and community, and generates benefit; whereas a harmful word becomes the root of discord and a source of moral and social destruction.

Studying the tongue from an Islamic perspective extends far beyond viewing language as a mere phonetic or semantic system. Rather, it approaches speech as a moral and behavioral phenomenon that expresses one’s inner spiritual state and the presence of God-consciousness in daily conduct. In Islamic thought, the tongue is a trust and a responsibility, a field for reward and

punishment, and thus **managing one's speech** is an essential component of self-purification and of building a compassionate, believing community.

Research Problem

The research problem lies in the limited religious and educational awareness surrounding the concept of *managing the tongue*, and in the failure of many individuals to recognize the seriousness of verbal actions and their impact on the soundness of faith and the quality of social relationships. In addition, there is a lack of a comprehensive understanding of the preventive and constructive dimensions associated with proper tongue conduct.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the status of the tongue in Islam, and what are the Shari'ah-based foundations for regulating it?
2. What are the major afflictions of the tongue, and what dangers does each one pose?
3. What are the spiritual, psychological, and social effects of verbal actions?
4. What is the proposed model for managing the tongue?

Research Objectives

The research aims to:

1. Clarify the Islamic concept of tongue management and ground it in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.
2. Analyze the afflictions of the tongue and highlight their legal and social dangers.
3. Demonstrate the spiritual, psychological, and social consequences of truthful or corrupt speech.
4. Develop an educational model for managing the tongue.

Significance of Study

The significance of this research emerges from several dimensions:

1. **Religious Significance:** Because of the tongue's direct connection to matters of faith, sincerity, and the consequences that follow—whether for good or for harm.
2. **Educational Significance:** Refining the tongue is one of the central themes of self-purification (*tazkiyah*) and moral excellence (*ihsān*).
3. **Social Significance:** Speech profoundly influences relationships, and many forms of discord and societal tension arise from the misuse of the tongue.
4. **Digital Significance:** With the expansion of digital communication, words spread rapidly and often without reflection, intensifying the need for regulating and managing speech.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, which involves collecting relevant scriptural texts and scholarly articles related to the tongue, analyzing these sources, extracting their spiritual and educational implications, and classifying them accordingly.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is limited to the religious and educational aspects connected to verbal actions—whether positive or harmful—and their preventive and constructive dimensions.

2. *The Sharī‘ah Foundations and Functional Roles of the Tongue*

1 *The Blessing of Bayān and the Function of the Tongue*

Bayān—the ability to articulate meaning—is among the greatest blessings God has bestowed upon the human being. Early Muslim scholars recognized that this divine gift constitutes the essence of human distinction, enabling the individual to convey the meanings that reside within the mind and to express needs and intentions. Ibn Jinnī defines language in *al-Khaṣā‘iṣ* as “sounds by which each people express their purposes,” a definition that captures the core of *bayān* as an instrument for representing thought and achieving communication. Language is not merely a collection of sounds; it is a semantic system that embodies the identity and shared consciousness of a community. (Ibn Jinnī, 1985)

Because *bayān* is intimately linked with reason and faith, Islam assigns to the tongue both a devotional and an ethical function. It is the medium of remembrance, supplication, and glorification of God, and simultaneously a tool for dialogue, reform, and counsel. The first revelation—“*Read in the name of your Lord who created*” (al-‘Alaq 96:1)—is a profound indication that articulation is, at its root, an act of the mind and heart through which one draws closer to God by truthful and meaningful speech.

Within Islamic thought, the tongue is viewed as a trust and a moral responsibility. When employed in goodness, it contributes to the construction of individual character and the welfare of society; when released into falsehood, it becomes a means of destruction. Ibn al-Qayyim explains in *al-Jawāb al-Kāfi* that the tongue expresses the hidden states of the self and serves as the intermediary between the heart and the limbs; its discipline leads to the rectification of the heart, while its laxity results in corruption and deviation. (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1997)

For this reason, restraining the tongue is a central feature of spiritual purification. Al-Ghazālī states in *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* that most of human error stems from the tongue and that true piety requires guarding one’s speech and avoiding verbal harms because of their impact on the heart and on one’s level of God-consciousness. (al-Ghazālī, 1997)

Thus, the function of the tongue extends beyond communication to moral education and civilizational development. The word is an instrument of teaching, conveying the message of God, social reform, public speaking, scholarship, and media—all of which arise from the blessing of *bayān* and are rewarded when accompanied by sincerity and righteous intention.

This means that the blessing of *bayān* is not complete unless directed toward purposes of goodness. In Islam, speech is not the private possession of the speaker but a moral and legal responsibility for which one will be held accountable. This understanding forms the foundation for an “ethical management of speech,” in which freedom is balanced with discipline, and expressive capacity is coupled with piety—so that the word fulfills its role in building both the individual and society.

1.2 *Commandments on Truthfulness and Good Speech*

Truthfulness is among the highest virtues of the tongue in Islam. It is the essence of moral character, the foundation of faith, and the basis upon which trust within society is established.

The Qur'an repeatedly connects truthfulness with faith, as in: *"O you who believe, fear Allah and be with the truthful."* (al-Tawbah 9:119)

This divine instruction frames truthfulness as a comprehensive way of life rather than a mere verbal attribute. A truthful tongue expresses a believing heart, as the Prophet ﷺ said: *"Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise... a person continues to speak the truth until he is recorded with God as a truthful one."* (Bukhārī, 6094)

Truth in speech reflects correct intention, a sound heart, and inner balance. It is not merely a moral obligation but a pedagogical and spiritual foundation of the upright Muslim personality. Conversely, Islam warns strongly against lying and deception due to their destructive effects on social and interpersonal relations. The Qur'an states: *"Only those who do not believe in the signs of God fabricate lies."* (al-Nahl 16:105)

The relationship between faith and truthfulness is inseparable. The Qur'an frames truthfulness as part of tawhīd and righteous action, while false speech is associated with hypocrisy. Islam also commands *good speech*, which encompasses sincerity, kindness, and beneficial communication. God says: *"And speak to people good words."* (al-Baqarah 2:83)

Al-Ghazālī explains that good speech is that which is free from sin, falsehood, and heedlessness, and which carries benefit and righteousness. Ibn al-Qayyim adds in *al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib* that the righteous word ascends to God and elevates its speaker, while the corrupt word falls back upon its author, illustrating the spiritual impact of speech. (al-Ghazālī, 1997; Ibn al-Qayyim, 1999)

Commands for good speech appear throughout the Qur'an in legislating various domains:

- **Family interaction:** *"And speak to them a noble word."* (al-Isrā' 17:23)
- **Social relations:** *"And speak to people good words."* (al-Baqarah 2:83)
- **Dialogue and da'wah:** *"And debate with them in the best manner."* (al-Nahl 16:125)

These verses establish a comprehensive ethical framework in which the good word becomes a means of reform, education, and mercy. Good speech is not only verbal refinement but an act of worship with social, economic, and political consequences. It builds trust, resolves conflict, and strengthens relationships at individual and societal levels.

1.3 Silence and the Regulation of Speech

In Islam, silence represents a distinguished ethical and pedagogical quality—not in the sense of withdrawal or passivity, but as a conscious restraint of the tongue and an expression of intellectual and spiritual clarity. Silence is not the absence of speech but the presence of wisdom.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent." (Bukhārī, 6136; Muslim, 47)

This ḥadīth establishes the foundational rule of Islamic speech etiquette: the word must be good, or silence is preferred. Practiced with sincerity and wisdom, silence becomes a devotional and behavioral discipline.

1. The Preventive Dimension of Silence

Silence serves first as a preventive strategy that protects the individual from sin, idle talk, and futile argument. The Prophet ﷺ taught: *"Are people not thrown into the Fire on their faces for anything more than the harvest of their tongues?"* (Tirmidhī, 2616)

Al-Ghazālī considers restraint of the tongue one of the pillars of spiritual refinement, and Ibn al-Qayyim regards the tongue as the greatest instrument for good or evil. Therefore, monitoring speech is essential for upright conduct. (al-Ghazālī, 1997; Ibn al-Qayyim, 1999)

In contemporary settings, preventive silence also includes controlling one’s writing and digital expression—since online posts and media communication function as extensions of the tongue.

2. *The Constructive Dimension of Silence*

Constructive silence is practiced with the intention of reflection, discernment, and choosing the most beneficial moment to speak. It is silence that *builds*—preparing the ground for wise and impactful speech. Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh al-Sakandarī states: “How many times has silence been more eloquent than speech, and how many words have caused more harm than silence.” (al-Sakandarī, 1998)

Al-Ghazālī links constructive silence with sincerity of intention, and Ibn ‘Āshūr explains that speech in a Muslim society is not a private affair but a social and civilizational responsibility. (al-Ghazālī, 1997; Ibn ‘Āshūr, 1984)

3. *The Psychological and Educational Dimensions of Silence*

From a pedagogical perspective, silence trains the self to control emotions and impulses. When a person is angry or provoked, restraining the tongue reflects the strength of faith and intellect. The Prophet ﷺ stated: “*The strong person is not the one who overpowers others, but the one who controls himself when angry.*” (Bukhārī, 6114)

Thus, silence is both a communicative skill and a psychological discipline, meriting integration into Islamic psychology and educational curricula.

1.4 *Afflictions of the Tongue and Their Impact on the Individual and Society*

The tongue is among the most consequential limbs of the human being, for it expresses the contents of the heart and manifests intellect and faith. For this reason, Islam pays extraordinary attention to regulating speech and warning against the diseases of the tongue that corrupt both religion and worldly life. Though seemingly simple, speech carries moral power that can build or destroy, reconcile or divide, spread peace or ignite discord.

1. *Theological (‘Aqīdah-Related) Afflictions of the Tongue*

a. *Speaking about God without Knowledge*

Among the gravest verbal offenses is speaking about God without knowledge. God links this sin with polytheism:

“*Say: My Lord has only forbidden immoralities... and that you say about God that which you do not know.*” (al-A‘rāf 7:33)

This transgression is the root of doctrinal deviation, for every innovation or misguidance originates from attributing to God what He has not revealed.

b. *Mocking Religion and Its Symbols*

Mocking God, His signs, or His Messenger is a major crime. God declares: “*Was it God, His signs, and His Messenger that you were mocking? Do not make excuses; you have disbelieved after your belief.*” (al-Tawbah 9:65–66)

Ibn ‘Āshūr explains that such mockery reflects inner disbelief, for the tongue here exposes disdain for revelation and irreverence toward the sacred. Regulating the tongue in this domain is therefore a binding religious obligation.

2. Afflictions of the Tongue in the Social and Ethical Domain

a. Backbiting (ghībah) and Talebearing (namīmah)

Backbiting and talebearing are among the most widespread afflictions of the tongue in societies. They represent two forms of verbal deviance that undermine and destroy social bonds. The Prophet ﷺ defined backbiting as: “Mentioning about your brother that which he dislikes.” (Muslim, 2589).

The Qur’an likens it to one of the most repulsive moral scenes:

“Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it.” (al-Hujurāt 49:12)

Al-Nawawī (2001) states that backbiting is prohibited by consensus of the Muslim community and that it corrupts the heart and plants enmity and hatred among people. Talebearing—conveying speech with the intention of causing discord—is even more dangerous, as it builds relationships on suspicion and mistrust. The Prophet ﷺ said: “The talebearer will not enter Paradise.” (Bukhārī, 6056).

Ibn Rajab (1999) comments that talebearing dismantles the pillars of social trust and opens the doors of discord, which then becomes very difficult to extinguish.

b. Lying and Slander

Lying is one of the major sins and a hallmark of practical hypocrisy, as indicated in the ḥadīth: “The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is entrusted, he betrays the trust.” (Bukhārī, 33).

At its core, lying is a deviation of the will before it is a deviation of the tongue, as it reflects a disturbance in inner truthfulness. Truth is the root of all virtue, whereas lying is the root of all vice. This shows that Islam does not deal with speech in isolation from its purposes; rather, the ethical criterion in Islam is intention and consequence, not merely the outward utterance.

c. Idle Talk, Argumentation, and Fruitless Disputation

Idle talk (*laghw*) is a manifestation of the absence of ethical awareness. God describes the believers as:

“Those who turn away from idle talk.” (al-Mu’minūn 23:3)

Idle talk includes any speech that has no benefit in this world or the next; excessive engagement in it leads to hardness of the heart and heedlessness. As for argumentation and fruitless disputation, they are two afflictions that corrupt knowledge and generate hostility. The Prophet ﷺ said: “I guarantee a house on the outskirts of Paradise for the one who abandons argumentation, even if he is right.” (Abū Dāwūd, 4800).

Blameworthy disputation is often linked to corrupt intention, as its aim is typically to achieve victory for the ego rather than for the truth. Thus, regulating one’s tongue in dialogue is a hallmark of scholars and those spiritually aware.

3. Psychological and Social Effects of the Afflictions of the Tongue

a. Psychological Effects

Unrestrained speech contributes to inner psychological disturbance. Hastiness in speech generates lasting regret and feelings of guilt, whereas controlling the tongue produces serenity and tranquility. Scholars of Islamic education have observed that excessive talking weakens contemplation and awareness, while purposeful silence strengthens the faculties of reflection and understanding.

From the perspective of Islamic psychology, the mature use of the tongue supports a healthy balance between emotion and reason: the individual expresses the self without harming others and engages in communication bound by ethical restraints.

b. Social Effects

On the social level, the afflictions of the tongue are among the primary causes of social disintegration, as they transmit discord from the heart to the wider community. Backbiting and lying create an environment of mistrust, and talebearing undermines the spirit of cooperation, leading to fragility in the social fabric.

In contrast, training the tongue in truthfulness and good speech fosters a culture of respect and dialogue. This enhances social security and reduces hate speech in media and social networks. Hence, building ethical awareness in a Muslim society begins with educating the *word*, for it is the vessel that carries both meaning and value.

1.5 Dhikr (Remembrance of God) and Worship by the Tongue

Dhikr (remembrance of God) is one of the noblest and highest functions of the tongue, combining the presence of the heart, the articulation of the tongue, and the orientation of the limbs toward obedience to God. When the tongue is used for good, it becomes an instrument for self-purification and community building. God says:

“Those who believe and whose hearts find tranquility in the remembrance of God—indeed, in the remembrance of God do hearts find tranquility.” (al-Ra’d 13:28)

Dhikr is not mere verbal repetition; it is the presence of the heart and conscious awareness of God’s greatness. For this reason, it is regarded as a form of worship that unites intellect, spirit, and speech.

1. The Status of Dhikr in the Qur’an and Sunnah

The Qur’an frequently commands remembrance of God, indicating its central role in the life of the believer:

“So remember Me; I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and do not be ungrateful.” (al-Baqarah 2:152)

In the Prophetic Sunnah, the Prophet ﷺ links constant remembrance with spiritual elevation, saying:

“The ‘solitary ones’ have gone ahead.” They asked, “Who are the solitary ones, O Messenger of God?” He said: “Those men and women who remember God often.” (Muslim, 2676)

This indicates that *dhikr* is not a superficial ritual practice; it is a spiritual and ethical way of life that reshapes the believer’s conscious awareness of faith.

2. The Tongue as an Instrument of Worship and Faith Expression

a. Uttering the Two Testimonies and Their Existential Significance

The first word by which a person enters Islam is the word of *tawhīd*—the testimony of faith. It is an utterance of the tongue that expresses the conviction of the heart, as in the verse:

“*So know that there is no deity except God.*” (Muḥammad 47:19)

This utterance is a public declaration of a covenant with God, not a mere verbal statement. The tongue here translates the heart’s knowledge and submission. Verbal acts of worship therefore derive their value only when affirmed by the heart and embodied by the limbs, such that the components of the human self—faith, intention, intellect, and emotion—are harmonized, with the heart serving as the central locus of guidance and behavior.

b. Recitation, Supplication, and the Qur’an

The tongue is also the medium through which divine revelation is carried to human consciousness via recitation and *tilāwah*. God says:

“*And recite the Qur’an with measured recitation.*” (al-Muzzammil 73:4)

Reciting the Qur’an with the tongue, accompanied by reflection in the heart, represents the highest form of interaction between word and meaning. It trains the believer in truthfulness, contemplation, and practical commitment to divine guidance.

Supplication (*du‘ā*) is likewise a verbal act of worship, a form of intimate discourse directed to God that links speech with creed and thought with emotion. The Prophet ﷺ said: “*Supplication is worship.*” (Tirmidhī, 2969).

Du‘ā is thus a verbal expression of neediness and certainty in God, rebuilding the relationship between servant and Lord on the basis of sincerity and hope.

3. Remembrance and Psychological Refinement

In Islam, *dhikr* is closely tied to spiritual psychology, as it creates balance between agitation and calm, and between anxiety and tranquility. Remembrance is a remedy for the heart, while neglect of *dhikr* is a cause of spiritual hardness.

From a contemporary perspective, regular practice of *dhikr* helps reduce stress and improve psychological and social adjustment, as it returns the individual to the core of his or her faith-consciousness and enhances the capacity to manage emotions. *Dhikr* is thus not only an act of worship but also an educational and psychological method that nurtures self-awareness in light of one’s relationship with God, thereby achieving inner equilibrium, which is the foundation of ethical behavior.

4. Dhikr as a Constructive Social Force

The impact of *dhikr* is not limited to the individual; it also extends to society at large. It reinforces a sense of collective faith and builds an identity grounded in shared values and principles. The tongue that remembers God is the same tongue that calls to goodness; and a tongue that calls to goodness is the basis of sound social communication.

Societies in which *dhikr* and good speech are widespread are more likely to enjoy stability, as the good word generates positive energy that translates into cooperation and solidarity. The Qur’an expresses this with the parable:

“Have you not seen how God presents an example: a good word is like a good tree...” (Ibrāhīm 14:24)

The “good word” is not confined to individual remembrance but includes every utterance that inspires reform and social construction—whether in teaching, preaching, writing, media work, or positive digital communication.

5. A Balance Between the Afflictions of the Tongue and the Worship of the Tongue

The central paradox highlighted by the Islamic perspective is that the same instrument—the tongue—can either lead a person to Paradise or drive them to destruction. When used for backbiting, lying, and slander, it becomes a cause of moral ruin; when used for remembrance, teaching, and reform, it becomes a means to spiritual elevation and divine acceptance.

No limb is more deserving of constant monitoring than the tongue, for it is the locus in which both good and evil converge. Whoever controls it controls their overall conduct; whoever lets it loose endangers themselves and others. This balance demonstrates that managing the tongue constitutes the pinnacle of faith-conscious awareness, as it requires internal discipline grounded in intention, belief, intellect, and emotion—components that should form the foundation of contemporary programs in spiritual and psychological education.

2. The Educational Classification and Theoretical Foundations of Tongue-Related Actions

The educational grounding (*taʿsīl tarbawī*) of tongue-related actions allows for a systematic classification that helps distinguish between positive, constructive forms of speech and negative forms that require prevention, discipline, and corrective intervention.

2.1 Classification of Positive and Negative Actions of the Tongue

In the Islamic worldview, the influence of the tongue extends across a person’s relationship with God, the self, and other created beings. Accordingly, tongue-related actions can be classified into two primary dimensions: the **preventive dimension** and the **constructive dimension**.

- The **preventive dimension** encompasses actions intended to safeguard the tongue from prohibited speech and to protect the heart from its harmful consequences.
- The **constructive dimension** comprises actions that strengthen faith, refine the soul, and build relationships and communities.

I. The Preventive Dimension of Tongue-Related Actions

The preventive dimension represents the moral discipline that protects the tongue from deviation and prevents the individual from uttering words that corrupt faith, harm the self, or weaken social bonds. This is a conscious and intentional restraint—not a mere passive silence—aimed at preserving the heart, guarding the limbs, and averting harm from oneself and others.

1. Preventive Dimension in a Person’s Relationship with God

Preventive discipline in relation to God is realized by restraining the tongue from any expression that contradicts monotheism or violates proper reverence toward God. The believer avoids speech implying shirk, objecting to divine decree, expressing resentment or despair, or using statements that reflect poor assumptions about God or liken divine attributes to those of creation.

The believer refrains from fruitless theological argumentation, avoids innovating unfounded devotional formulas, and abstains from transmitting scriptural texts without knowledge. Here, **silence becomes a protective measure** against speaking about God without authority.

2. Preventive Dimension in a Person's Relationship with the Self

Preventive discipline regarding the self involves restraining the tongue from speech that pollutes the heart or weakens one's character. This includes avoiding lying, idle talk, obscenity, insults, and argumentation driven by ego. The believer also avoids negative verbal patterns that feed self-doubt, harmful inner talk, excessive oaths, or psychologically injurious expressions. Conscious silence—especially during anger—prevents impulsive speech and guards a person from regretful words.

3. Preventive Dimension in a Person's Relationship with Others

In interpersonal relations, preventive discipline includes restraining the tongue from backbiting, talebearing, mockery, ridicule, verbal aggression, false testimony, slander, and spreading rumors. The believer refrains from speech that provokes hostility, damages reputations, fractures family ties, or humiliates individuals or communities. Preventive speech ethics also include avoiding words that kindle conflict, threaten social cohesion, or create unnecessary confrontations.

II. The Constructive Dimension of Tongue-Related Actions

The constructive dimension represents the positive, uplifting use of speech that elevates the spirit, refines character, and strengthens social relationships. The tongue becomes a means for goodness, promoting faith, and building society.

1. Constructive Speech in a Person's Relationship with God

Constructive speech that deepens one's relationship with God includes acts such as dhikr, Qur'an recitation, du'ā', istighfār, praising God, expressing gratitude, honoring revelation, teaching religious knowledge, reciting verses with reflection, and calling to God with wisdom. Constructive speech also includes expressing sincere intentions, using words that guide the self toward piety, and articulating devotion through reverent expressions.

2. Constructive Speech in a Person's Relationship with the Self

Constructive speech toward the self includes words that strengthen resolve, purify the heart, and promote psychological resilience—such as honest self-reflection, expressing emotions appropriately, motivating oneself with positive speech, and reminding oneself of virtuous goals. It also includes disciplined emotional expression, thoughtful silence for reflection, using speech to correct personal flaws, apologizing, and fostering healthy self-confidence.

3. Constructive Speech in a Person's Relationship with Other Created Beings

Constructive speech with others includes sincere advice, teaching, guidance, mediation between disputants, encouragement, motivation, gentle and kind speech, expressing noble sentiments, bearing witness to truth, calling to virtue, and cultivating social awareness through responsible discourse.

It also encompasses beneficial writing, ethical media communication, expressing gratitude, apologizing, praying for others, and any form of speech that strengthens trust and human relationships.

2.2 Educational and Preventive Methods for Managing the Tongue

Managing and disciplining the tongue is a central educational issue addressed deeply by Muslim scholars, as it relates to the development of a balanced, morally upright believer. In Islamic thought, the word is not merely an instrument of expression—it is an instrument of influence, purification, and reform.

The Islamic pedagogical approach to tongue management is based on two integrated dimensions: the **preventive** and the **constructive**, both grounded in faith-based education that reforms the inner self before external behavior.

The Preventive Approach

The preventive approach involves refraining from falsehood and idle speech, in line with the Prophet’s ﷺ instruction:

“Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent.” (Bukhārī, 6018)

Here, silence becomes an intellectual and moral act—silence rooted in knowledge and wisdom. It protects one from sin and opens the door to deep understanding. God says:

“O you who believe, fear Allah and speak words that are just.” (al-Aḥzāb 33:70)

Ethical silence prevents verbal harm, preserves human relationships, and averts social discord. Its educational cultivation begins in the home and school through teaching children proper communication, attentive listening, and the value of truthful speech.

The Constructive Approach

The constructive approach guides speech toward reform, remembrance, teaching, and community building. The Qur’an describes this model:

“Who is better in speech than one who calls to God, acts righteously, and says, ‘Indeed, I am of the Muslims?’” (Fuṣṣilat 41:33)

Constructive speech spreads goodness and knowledge. Quranic eloquence educates both intellect and emotion, tying speech to intention and excellence (*iḥsān*). Teaching is among the most powerful forms of constructive speech, functioning as continuous charity and a tool for moral development, as the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Whoever guides to good has a reward similar to that of the one who practices it.” (Muslim, 1893)

In the contemporary world, constructive speech includes writing, media communication, and digital expression—all extensions of the tongue that shape collective consciousness.

Both the preventive and constructive approaches converge into a unified vision that reflects Islam’s balanced methodology in managing speech—beginning with the reformation of the heart, intention, intellect, and emotions, and culminating in righteous action.

- **Conscious silence** prevents harm and purifies the self.
- **Purposeful speech** builds individuals and communities.

Together, they form the core of Islamic character education.

3. Models of Tongue Management

3.1 Pre-Modern Theoretical Frameworks

Muslim scholars have addressed the topic of the tongue with profound integration of spirituality, ethics, and education, identifying it as a key to the purity of the heart and the rectification of behavior. Their approaches can be grouped into three major intellectual orientations:

1. The Ethical-Pedagogical Orientation (Imām al-Ghazālī)

Imām al-Ghazālī provides one of the most comprehensive treatments of the tongue in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, dedicating an entire book—"The Book of the Afflictions of the Tongue." He categorizes tongue-related actions into positive and negative forms and emphasizes that the tongue is "the most dangerous of the limbs and the most beneficial or harmful."

Positive actions include dhikr, Qur'an recitation, supplication, teaching, and reconciliation. Negative actions include backbiting, talebearing, lying, flattery, and disputation.

Al-Ghazālī views silence as a spiritual discipline, not mere absence of speech—an exercise in heart-monitoring and self-purification. He proposes three practical steps for disciplining the tongue:

1. **Mindfulness:** reflecting before speaking.
2. **Intention:** ensuring speech is sincere for God.
3. **Habituation:** training oneself to use the good word until it becomes a natural disposition. (al-Ghazālī, 1997).

2. The Spiritual-Behavioral Orientation (Ibn al-Qayyim)

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in *Madarij al-Sālikīn* and *al-Fawā'id*, presents a spiritually grounded view in which the tongue mirrors the heart. If the tongue is sound, the heart is sound; if the tongue is corrupt, it indicates a diseased spiritual interior.

He articulates three main categories of speech:

- **Speech that gives life to the heart:** dhikr, Qur'an, teaching.
- **Speech that sickens the heart:** idle talk, disputation, ego-driven argumentation.
- **Speech that kills the heart:** lying, slander, mockery.

He identifies three stages of tongue purification:

1. **Removal:** eliminating sinful speech.
2. **Adornment:** filling the tongue with dhikr and calling to God.
3. **Elevation:** using speech for higher moral and reformative purposes. (Ibn al-Qayyim, 2008)

3. The Maqāsid-Based Social Orientation (al-Māwardī and Ibn 'Āshūr)

Al-Māwardī, in *Adab al-Dunyā wa-l-Dīn*, highlights the role of speech in preserving the higher objectives of Sharī'ah. A truthful word protects religion, intellect, and honor; a corrupt word destroys social order. He frames speech as a socially regulated responsibility, not an unrestricted freedom. (al-Māwardī, 1986)

Ibn 'Āshūr, in *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, views speech as an instrument for the realization of Sharī'ah's aims in reform and social construction. For him, speech is not a mere sound but an *act* with profound consequences for societal harmony or discord. His approach integrates freedom of

expression with ethical accountability, emphasizing that the word must serve as a tool of building rather than destruction. (Ibn ʿĀshūr, 1948)

Discussion and Analysis

A review of the three earlier models shows that each perspective highlights a fundamental dimension of tongue management. Al-Ghazālī focuses on the **ethical-pedagogical dimension**, emphasizing the regulation of speech through silence, mindfulness (*murāqabah*), intention, and habituation, thereby making the tongue an instrument of self-purification. Ibn al-Qayyim, on the other hand, highlights the **spiritual-behavioral dimension**, presenting the tongue as a mirror of the heart and classifying speech into that which gives life to the heart, that which sickens it, and that which kills it—while affirming the stages of *takhliyah* (removal), *taḥliyah* (adornment), and *tarqiyah* (elevation) as a comprehensive educational path.

Meanwhile, al-Māwardī and Ibn ʿĀshūr offer a **maqāṣid-based social dimension**, in which speech is tied to the public good and the word is treated not as a mere personal freedom but as a social responsibility and a tool for preserving moral and social order.

Taken together, these perspectives demonstrate that tongue management cannot be reduced to a single dimension. Rather, it is a comprehensive system in which individual ethics, inner faith, and social objectives are deeply interwoven. Ethics regulate behavior, faith directs intention, and maqāṣid (higher objectives) determine purpose and function. From this arises the need for an **integrative model** that combines these three dimensions into a unified vision in which the heart functions as the center of leadership, the tongue as an instrument that expresses faith, regulates conduct, and serves society.

3.2 The Proposed Integrative Model for Tongue Management

The analysis of the preceding models reveals complementary elements that need to be brought together within a single framework. This leads to the **proposed integrative model for tongue management**, which begins with the heart as the locus of leadership and the center of the entire system.

First: The Central Dimension – The Heart as the Leadership Center and Core of the System

The proposed model is built on the premise that the **heart** is the central axis in managing the tongue, surrounded by four key components: **intellect, faith, intention, and positive emotions**. In the Islamic conception, the heart is not merely a spiritual organ; it is the leadership center in which these elements interact and from which speech and righteous, beneficial actions emerge. The tongue is thus nothing more than a translator of what resides in the heart and its components. The Prophet ﷺ said:

“Indeed, in the body there is a morsel of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.” (Bukhārī, 52; Muslim, 2996)

Accordingly, the heart encompasses:

1. **Faith (īmān):**

Faith is the spiritual energy that illuminates the heart and directs it toward truth. When faith fills the heart, its effects overflow onto the tongue in the form of truthful and balanced speech, in line with the verse:

“O you who believe, fear Allah and speak words that are just.” (al-Aḥzāb 33:70)

Faith connects speech to *taqwā* and transforms the word into an act of worship linked to God, rather than a passing utterance.

2. *Intellect ('aql):*

Intellect is the faculty of discernment and evaluation that protects the heart from impulsiveness and weighs words before they are spoken. Intellect balances emotion and intention, and grants speech its conscious and responsible dimension. God says:

“Not a word does he utter but that with him is an observer, prepared [to record].” (Qāf 50:18)

3. *Intention (niyyah):*

Intention is the moral driver of both action and speech. It is through intention that speech transforms from habit into worship, and from a casual utterance into a righteous deed rewarded by God. The Prophet ﷺ said:

“Actions are only by intentions, and each person will have only what he intended.” (Bukhārī, 1)

Intention directs speech and grants it value in the scale of Sharī‘ah.

4. *Emotions (mashā‘ir):*

Emotions represent the human dimension that colors speech with mercy or harshness, sincerity or ostentation. One word can function as a cure or a poison, depending on the emotional state and inner warmth behind it. God says:

“It is by a mercy from Allah that you were gentle with them.” (Āl ‘Imrān 3:159)

When the Prophet ﷺ prohibited anger (Bukhārī, 6116), he effectively directed believers to regulate their emotional responses as part of tongue discipline, since managing emotions precedes managing speech.

Thus, the heart emerges as the central anchor in the internal system, with intellect, faith, intention, and emotions operating as integrated units that surround and nourish it and receive guidance from it. Faith illuminates the heart, intellect directs it, intention purifies it, and emotion softens it. All of these converge in a sound heart that overflows onto the tongue in truthful, balanced, and wise speech. When the heart is rectified through these four components, speech is rectified, and the tongue becomes an instrument of purification, construction, and reform.

Second: The Tongue as the Interpreter of the Inner Self

The tongue is the mirror of the inner self and the instrument through which intentions, beliefs, and emotions are expressed. It is the medium that connects the heart to the outside world and transfers faith from conceptual belief to embodied action.

The Qur’an makes speech a locus of accountability:

“Not a word does he utter but that with him is an observer, prepared [to record].” (Qāf 50:18)

This indicates that the word is an accountable act, not a fleeting sound. The Prophet ﷺ linked the integrity of faith to the integrity of the tongue, saying:

“A servant’s faith will not be upright until his heart is upright, and his heart will not be upright until his tongue is upright.” (Aḥmad, 12636)

The tongue thus serves as a measure of the heart’s purity and the conscience’s soundness, and from it begins the journey of self-purification and reform.

Third: Preventive and Constructive Actions of the Tongue

The Islamic concept of tongue management is built upon two complementary dimensions: the **preventive dimension** and the **constructive dimension**.

The **preventive dimension** concerns safeguarding the tongue from slipping into speech that corrupts the heart or harms the individual or society, in line with the verse:

“And those who turn away from idle talk.” (al-Mu’minūn 23:3)

This dimension is expressed across three axes, each illustrated by examples (not intended as exhaustive):

1. Preventive Dimension Between the Servant and His Lord

This appears in the believer’s caution regarding speech that affects tawḥīd or breaches proper etiquette with God—such as refraining from comments on divine decree that imply discontent, avoiding speculative speech in theological matters without knowledge, and steering clear of religious disputes that stir doubts and harden hearts.

2. Preventive Dimension Between the Servant and Himself

This is seen in refraining from expressions that harm one’s own dignity and spiritual well-being, such as lying, vulgarity, idle talk, or words that fuel anger and impulsiveness. It also includes practicing prudent silence that protects a person from hasty statements they might later regret.

3. Preventive Dimension Between the Servant and Other Creatures

This is realized by restraining the tongue from verbal harm—abandoning backbiting, talebearing, ridicule, and slander; avoiding rumor-spreading and inciting discord; and refraining from hurtful words that spoil relationships or destroy social bonds.

In contrast, the **constructive dimension** directs the tongue toward meanings that nurture faith, reform the soul, and build relationships, as captured in the verse:

“And speak to people good words.” (al-Baqarah 2:83)

This dimension also unfolds across three axes:

1. Constructive Dimension Between the Servant and His Lord

This includes directing the tongue toward the remembrance of God, recitation of the Qur’an, supplication, expressing gratitude, teaching beneficial knowledge, and speaking in ways that glorify the symbols of Islam and deepen one’s connection with God.

2. Constructive Dimension Between the Servant and Himself

This appears in honest emotional expression, self-encouragement toward obedience and good works, using speech for inner counsel and self-correction, and adopting a positive internal language that strengthens confidence and tranquility.

3. Constructive Dimension Between the Servant and Other Creatures

This is reflected in speech that improves social conditions—kind advice, reconciliation between people, encouragement, prayer for others, bearing witness to the truth, and responsible public discourse that reinforces respect, affection, and cooperation among individuals.

In this way, the two dimensions work together: **preventive silence** averts harm, and **constructive speech** brings about benefit—transforming the tongue into a means of purification and building, rather than sin and destruction.

Fourth: From Speech to Righteous and Beneficial Action

In the Islamic worldview, speech is not an end in itself, but a means that should culminate in righteous and beneficial action. God says:

“To Him ascends good speech, and righteous work raises it.” (Fāṭir 35:10)

Truthful speech ascends to God with acceptance, but it is righteous action that elevates it and grants it existential weight. Speech and action thus work together in building the individual and society. Faith itself is defined as **speech of the tongue, belief in the heart, and action of the limbs.**

The Prophet ﷺ drew attention to the practical consequences of speech, saying:

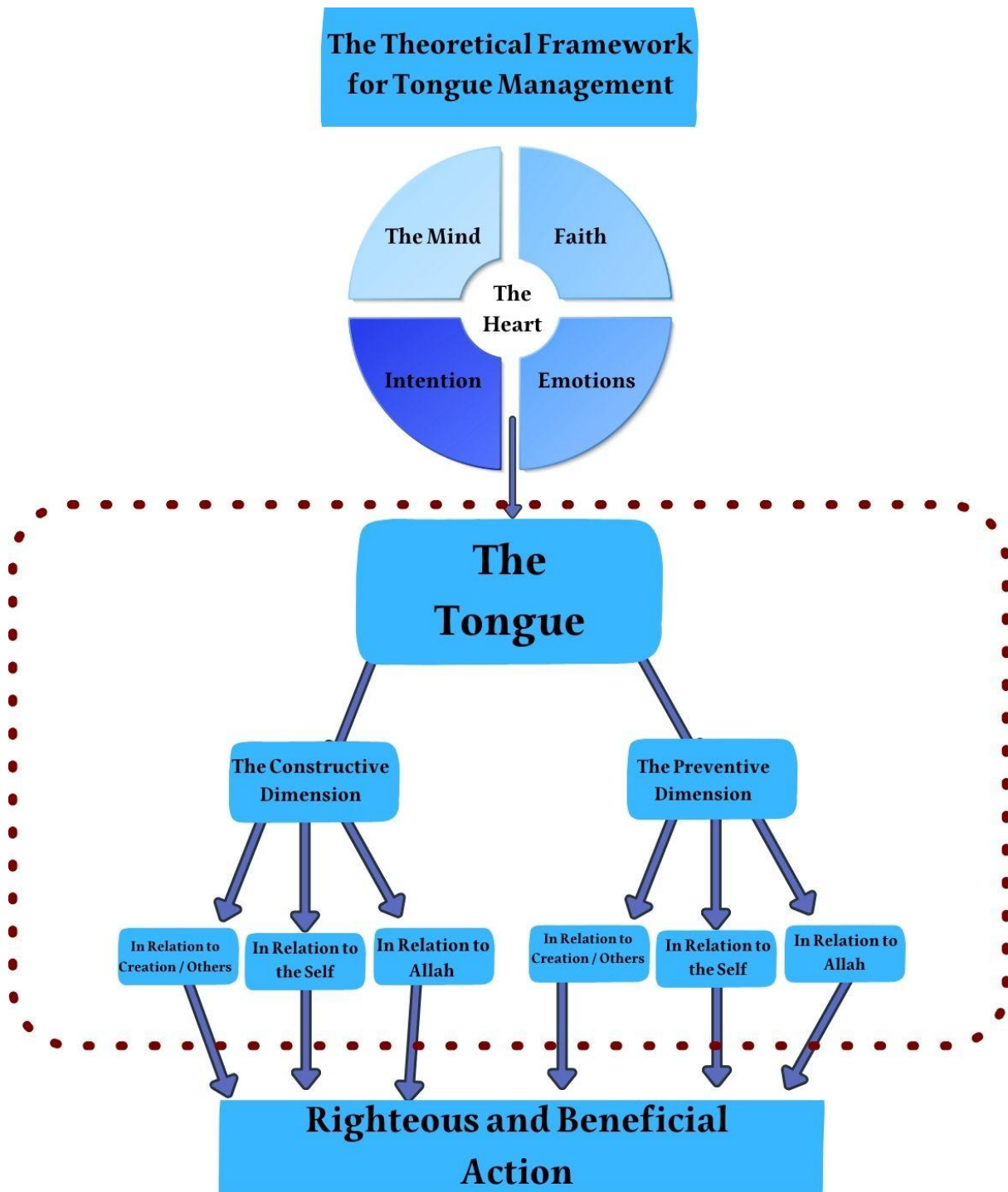
“A servant may utter a word that is pleasing to God... and God raises him by it in rank.”
(Bukhārī, 6478)

A good word generates good behavior, and beneficial action is the fruit of sound speech. Thus, the cycle of faith is completed—from heart, to tongue, to action—where disciplined speech is transformed into righteous deeds that contribute to personal purification and the cultivation of the earth.

In light of this, the proposed model for tongue management from an Islamic perspective can be summarized as a movement **from the heart to the tongue, then to preventive and constructive dimensions, and finally to righteous and beneficial action.**

This progression may be visually represented as follows (conceptually):

Heart (faith–intellect–intention–emotion) → Tongue (expression of the inner self) → Preventive and Constructive Speech → Righteous and Beneficial Action.



Findings

The study reveals that the tongue, within the Islamic worldview, is regarded as a trust and a profound moral responsibility, and that the divine gift of articulation (*bayān*) represents the essence of human dignity that distinguishes human beings from all other creatures. The findings show that managing the tongue is not merely a matter of regulating speech; rather, it constitutes a comprehensive ethical framework grounded in the values of truthfulness and good speech.

Silence, in this framework, emerges as a positive pedagogical virtue—not a negative withdrawal—because of its role in refining the self and safeguarding the heart. Furthermore, the afflictions of the tongue pose a direct threat to doctrinal integrity and social cohesion, whereas *dhikr* (remembrance of God) represents the highest function of the tongue and serves as an instrument of spiritual purification.

The results confirm that cultivating disciplined speech is foundational to building a conscious, faith-inspired personality, and that the relationship between the heart and the tongue is an integrative one in which speech reflects the inner state of the soul.

In contemporary contexts, the spoken and written word—particularly in the digital age—functions as a dual instrument capable of construction and destruction, which necessitates heightened ethical and educational awareness in its use. Ultimately, the fruit of tongue management is righteous and beneficial action that contributes to personal purification and the flourishing of society, forming a cornerstone of human civilizational development.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthening the family's role** in cultivating etiquette of dialogue and disciplined speech.
2. **Integrating tongue management concepts** into school curricula and academic programs in higher education institutions.
3. **Embedding the concept of “tongue management”** within media practices and religious discourse.
4. **Training preachers, teachers, media professionals, and policymakers** in the optimal and ethical use of professional speech.
5. **Developing training programs** on tongue management for all sectors of the Muslim community.
6. **Reviving a culture of dhikr, constructive silence, and good speech** in public life, in light of their long-term effects on individuals and society.
7. **Connecting tongue management** to the broader civilizational project of the Muslim ummah.

Suggestions for Future Research

It is recommended to encourage research related to speech practices and tongue management, including diagnosing the current state of public discourse across different societal groups in order to identify strengths and weaknesses. This can be achieved through discourse analysis, surveys, and community-based assessments

Moreover, conducting **action research** to examine the impact of diverse strategies aimed at enhancing effective tongue management is suggested. Such studies can contribute to promoting

affection, compassion, cooperation, and social cohesion among community members, thereby supporting societal development and prosperity.

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