



RESEARCH PAPER

The Influence of Binary Opposition and Stylistic Devices on Reader Interpretation of Quranic Themes

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the structural and stylistic aspects of the Quranic text with a special focus on binaries and dichotomies with the aim of explaining how these binaries are contextually employed and supported rhetorically in selected verses. Binary forms are a distinct characteristic of Quranic discourse which direct the thematic elements of divine justice, divine guidance and dialectic of faith versus unbelief. The structuralist theory presents a powerful analytical model, inquiring the functional interplay of these oppositions. A qualitative and interpretive approach will be used in the current study to analyse specific verses with a view to identifying the binary oppositions that are predominant and the rhetorical devices that perpetuate them. The results indicate that future studies ought to expand their horizons to include larger narrative units to have a more comprehensive mapping of the Quranic dichotomies, conduct comparative studies to understand how these rhetorical units work to shape the meaning for readers, and apply cognitive and reader-response models to gain a deeper insight into the effect of these rhetorical units.

KEYWORDS Binaries, Stylistic Devices, Divine Justice, Thematic Elements, Dichotomies

Introduction

The linguistic structure of the Quran has been praised and valued long enough due to its unmatched eloquence and inimitability (i'jaz al-Quran). This paper is an examination of the stylistic and linguistic tools used in the Quran, the stylistic complexity of the Quran, and its context in contradistinction to classical texts and the modern science of linguistics. Using both the classical Islamic tradition and the views of contemporary literary critics, the paper shows how phonetic harmony, syntactic transitions, metaphor, parataxis, and intertextual resonance are used by the Quran to fulfil its persuasive and aesthetic purposes. As an example, assonance, consonance and rhyme are commonly used in the Quran to achieve sonic resonance which makes it easier to imbibe meaning, remember and emotionally affect its audience. In the example of Surah 93 (al-Duha), there are end rhymes on the vowel.

The Quran, being the divine scripture is the principal book of Islam, occupying an extra-ordinary place among scriptures and books of theology. The Quran is a holy text and a masterpiece of classical Arabic rhetoric, which Muslims consider to be the literal word of God (kalam Allah), and which was revealed to the Holy Prophet (Muhammad Peace be upon Him) in Arabic during a span of twenty-three years. Its linguistic form has been a source of admiration and analysis since more than fourteen centuries and the aesthetic, rhetoric and cognitive influence of Quranic diction has been acknowledged by both traditional and modern scholars (Abdel Haleem, 2004, p. 1; Neuwirth, 2010, pp. 133-134). The impact and beauty of the language of the Quran has been of prime interest to scholars

since centuries. The early Muslim academics like al-Jurjani (d. 1078) and al-Baqillani (d. 1013), based their arguments on the divine nature of the Quran by referring to its inimitable language. Later on, Western critics, such as Angelika Neuwirth and Navid Kermani, have approached its stylistic richness with respect to literary criticism and discourse analysis.

The basic idea of *i'jaz al-Quran*, the inimitability of the Quran, has its role in the Islamic thinking. Al-Baqillani (d.1013) and al-Jurjani (d.1078) established elaborated models to prove the rhetorical perfection of the Quran claiming that the words were both beyond the abilities of the most successful Arabic poets and speakers. An example is theorist Al-Jurjani, who argued that the eloquence of the Quran was found in its accurate ordering of meanings and in its syntactic unity and not just in lexical richness (al-Jurjani, trans. 2011 pp. 27-29).

These initial investigations of Quranic style formed the basis of what can be considered as an indigenous type of poetics in Arabic that is empirically rich and theoretically invaluable. The following scholarship has led to research in the disciplines of semantics, pragmatics and stylistics. Contemporary scholarly research has extended this study through the use of rigorous instruments of structural linguistics, discourse analysis, and literary theory. The meaning of the Quran has been studied by scholars like Angelika Neuwirth, Navid Kermani, and Michael Sells amongst others in terms of phonology and lexical density, as well as sound, symbolism, repetition, imagery, and syntactic novelty. Their overall performance puts emphasis on the oral form of the Quran, its pathos (surrounding the repercussions befalling wrongdoers), and the dialogic model of the Quran which make it primarily an 'oral epic' rather than a classical Arabic prose (Sells, 1999, pp. 12-14; Kermani, 2004, pp. 45-47).

The scripture in Quran has a divine diction that cannot be classified under the normal category of literature. Neither is it a straightforward story, or free-standing code of laws, nor is it a collection of poems; it is, amazingly, a divine message, which simultaneously, wonders to relate to all three. The language of the Quran is filled with divine eloquence, and the tonal changes are dynamic, i.e. poetic to prosaic, instructional to contemplative, metaphysical to juridical, but these changes are governed by the rhetorical variance and appeal to the audience.

The linguistic devices in the Quran, according to Gade (2004), do not serve as stylistic decorations, but play a key role in the manner in which the text conveys authority, urgency and moral change (pp. 69-71).

Literature Review

The study involves a thorough analysis of the literature that has been done on structuralism and rhetorical analysis of the Quran. After that, the textual analysis of the chosen verses is carried out in detail, and binary opposites and rhetorical devices are identified and divided. The interplay of these factors has been explored in an attempt to know how they jointly contribute to the extremely influential diction of the Quran. The rhetorical authority of the Quran is generally recognized by the scholars who study the binary oppositions and some stylistic devices used in the Quran. Gul, Farooq, and Ali (2021) have explored Surah Ash-Shams in structuralist terms, where they discovered dualities in meaning light/darkness as well as good/evil, which falls in congruity with Saussure's creation of meaning through oppositional relations. Mahliatussikah and Al-Khreshheh (2020) conducted an exploratory research using Part Thirty of the Quran, which demonstrates the commonness of the use of antithesis, consonance, and paronomasia.

As their analysis shows, the use of antithesis, which is the juxtaposition of the opposing ideas, helps to support the moral and theological messages of the Quran to make the readers turn into ethical thinkers. To supplement this, Tzortzis (n.d.) gives a comprehensive description of the rhetorical elements in the Quran such as analogy, alliteration, chiasmus, epizeuxis, and rhetorical questions. He stresses that the Quran uses these devices more often than any other literature, both classical and modern, which lends it a specific form as a genre and the great influence it produces on the reader. Going further through individual devices, Mulawwih (2023) also analyses the use of antithesis as a rhetorical strategy in the Quran in terms of its structure and functionality. The paper comes to a conclusion that antithesis is one of the most important stylistic tools in the Quran, which is employed to introduce the idea of contrast and maximize the clarity of messages. This structural resistance does not only highlight moral dichotomies, but makes it easier to memorise and reflect. In a similar manner, the studies by Al-Khazaali (2020) examine the application of rhetorical questions, speech acts, and persuasive appeals of logos, pathos, and ethos to the use of appeals in the Quran and how they help in the argumentative approach of the Quran. When these devices are employed through dialogic way of engaging readers, it brings about a reflective value and supports the convincing nature of the text. In addition to the enrichment of the discourse, Azaiez (2015) touches upon the idea of Quranic counter-discourse, when the Quran quotes or refers to the opposing views in order to prove the divine commandment in an unquestionable way. The technique is not only a response to modern objections, but it also gives the Quran more authority. Boisliveau (2014) discusses self-referential discourse in the Quran and the use of the text to refer to itself as a way to support its divine origin and authority.

This authentication of the message and creation of a thread of continuity by such self-referentiality adds to the coherence and strength of the Quranic discourse. Although previous works have discussed several rhetorical devices in the Quran, we need to have an in-depth analysis that would combine these rhetorical devices with the thematic aspects of binary opposition. Future studies may be done to explore the interaction between binary oppositions and rhetorical elements in various Surahs, understand how these rhetorical elements affect the understanding and interpretation of Quranic messages by the reader and how cultural and historical contexts influence the application of binary oppositions and rhetorical devices in the Quran to offer a more holistic picture on the rhetorical and thematic structures of the Quran.

Material and Methods

In this qualitative study, structuralist and rhetorical means of analysis is employed. Specific Verses are examined in order to find binary oppositions and other rhetorical tools. The discussion centres on the role of these devices in strengthening such thematic elements as divine justice, guidance, and the contrast of faith and non-faith. The results are expected to give a better insight into the narrative techniques in the Quran and their influence on internalization of the message.

Results and Discussion

This paper explores some of the most important linguistic characteristics of the Quran such as phonological patterning, syntactic divergence, metaphor, parataxis and thematic repetition. Combining them with the standard elements of the Arabic stylistic tradition and modern linguistic and literary theory, the goal is to shed some light on the interconnection between the form and the role of the sacred text. This exploration helps the article to contribute to the wider discussion about sacred language and provides new information about the long-lasting rhetorical power of the Quran. Assonance, consonance,

and rhyme in the Quran are used very often to provide sound resonance and, thus, increase understanding, memorization and emotional appeal. An example of this is Surah Al-Duha, which has end-rhymes of the vowel -a, enhancing the tonal quality of the Surah: By the morning light / and the night when it wraps into darkness (93: 1-2).

The sonic texture of the Quran is one of the most notable elements of the Quran as a combination of rhyme, assonance, alliteration, and rhythm that helps make the Quran easier to assimilate and intellectually stimulating. The linguistic and figurative devices not only enhance the textual intensity but also serve a semantic function. The rhythmic repetition of the last vowel sound (a) and the intonation of the brief verses evokes a lull and silence that is thematically addressed by the Surah which is a sonic manifestation of divine comfort. According to Rahman (1980), such sound patterns are meaningful at a level that goes beyond the semantic to influence the listener.

These phonetic parallels work at an aesthetic and semantic level and strengthen the rhythmic intonation necessary to oral recitation and engagement with both reason and emotion (Rahman, 1980, p. 25). Syntactic innovation, as *haddf* (omission) and *taqdim wa ta'khir* (fronting and delaying) are frequently used in the Quran to pre-empt the meaning or bring about the multiplicity of interpretation. An example of this is in Surah Al-Fatiha where the phrase *iiyyaka na'bbudu wa iiyyaka nasta'ieen* (You alone we worship and You alone we seek help) is employed to produce emphatic effect.

The syntactic inversion is created by placing the word *iiyyaka* at the origin of the clause in order to emphasize divine exclusivity. Al-Jurjani (trans. 2011) held that this effect is rhetorically intense, claiming that it stands out against the norms of language so that it can find a spiritual power (pp. 32-33). Besides, elliptical constructions often need a contextual reinforcement, thus appealing to the cognitive appeal of the listener. According to Gade (2004), this poetic indirectness, produces a text that is exquisitely accurate and hints at the same time, permitting various readings (p. 69). Metaphors are more than mere ornamental rhetoric; it is the means of abstract moral, theological and cosmological utterance. For example in the Verse: *Allahu nuru s- samawati wa-l-ardh* (Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is in a crystal, the crystal is like a shining star, lit from 'the oil of' a blessed olive tree, 'located' neither to the east nor the west, whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire. Light upon light! Allah guides whoever He wills to His light. And Allah sets forth parables for humanity. For Allah has 'perfect' knowledge of all things.) (Quran 24: 35).

This conceptual metaphor theory based ontological metaphors presents the view of divine omnipresence and guidance by the experience of light in the five senses and beyond. The verse is followed by a multilayered parable that intensifies the figurative structure proving that the Quran adroitly blends concepts and layers of symbols. The metaphorical economy outlined in the Quran is not only visually stunning but also conceptually moving. It is a way of putting abstract principles of theology into an organic whole. The parable further expands and develops the metaphor with several imagery which details a lamp inside a glass, the glass like a shining star, lit by a blessed olive tree (Quran 24:35). In this regard, the theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is especially relevant because the Quran does not only associate the phenomenon of light with the visual facts but also with divine cognition and spiritual clarity (p. 38). However, unlike classical Greek rhetoric where hypotaxis (subordinate clause patterns) is the dominant feature of the rhetoric, the Quran is marked by parataxis (the juxtaposition of independent clauses without connectives). This mode of style provides the text with a rhythmic urgency and associative reasoning as opposed to linear argument: *Fa -amma man a't a wattaqa / wa -saddaqa bi l -husna.*

(And who is the giver, and who fears God, and affirms the best reward) (Quran 92:5 6). The oral and revelatory character of the Quran is manifested in parataxis, in which argumentation is cumulative and rhythmic, as opposed to deductive (Neuwirth, 2010, p. 74). The non-linear, mosaic form is reminiscent of revelation as the unfolding process as opposed to argumentation, and conditional statements are constructed to construct thematic force without logical subordination. This style is congruent with the description of Neuwirth's (2010) so-called epic composition when the ideas are structured by accretion, as opposed to deduction (p. 148).

The symbolic syntactic structure that is parataxis in the Quran is an intellectual tool used to urge the reader to think critically, which is in line with the revelatory essence of the text of urging the reader to ponder deeply (*tadabbur*). The paratactic structure, in which juxtapositional relations are valued over subordinating relationships, is also an indication of the oral formation of the Quran and its ontological nature as a revelation. Instead of developing causally correlated, deductive and the text is built up by connections, association and subjective accretion.

This composition approach is participatory and calls upon reflective deliberation in that listeners are invited to furnish associations and find meanings. The fact that Neuwirth (2010) calls it an epic composition also emphasizes the narrative rhythm of the Quran, which does not allow hard and fast closure and instead encourages continuous reflection (p. 148). This kind of structure can be correlated with the theological focus of futural contemplation (*tadabbur*) in the Quran and the fact that it is a lifelong, open-ended process. Quran is often involved in the interlocution with previously existing Abrahamic histories and it is reinterpreted in such a way that it is placed at the immutable level of Godly authority. This intertextual approach enables the Quran to work in a dialogical manner so that it finds itself in dialogue with Judaic and Christian writings but at the same time claims its divine and theological superiority.

An example of this is the account of Prophet Yusuf (PBUH) (Surah 12) that is told with the veracity of a moral-theological parable that underlines the divine providence and patience (Sells, 1999, p. 29). This narrative becomes a vehicle of the divine voice and lends a textual consonance and highest moral vantage point. This intertextual approach conforms to Bakhtinian ideas of dialogism where a text is spoken in and against already existing discourses. According to Sells (1999), this is defined as a scriptural counter-discourse that is not mere recapitulation but re-interpretation of the existing narrative forms passed down (p. 29).

Another common figure of speech is ellipsis. Verbs or conjunctions that are missing in verses need to be deduced through context and result in semantic compression and increased thinking. For example, the declaration: *Hamim. Tanzilun mina al-Rahman al-Rahim* (Qur'an 41: 1- 2). (Hamim. (This is) a revelation of the most Merciful, the most Compassionate) is a matter of gaining clarity by means of contextual inference without verbal specification. This is an elliptical form that, as Gade (2004) puts it, creates a sense of involvement in the reader by enabling the listener to fill in the meaning (p. 71). One of the main Quranic methods is repetition (*takrar*), which has a rhetoric and structural purpose. The interrogative widely used in Surah al-Rahman, the Question of whose favour of thy Lord wilt thou both deny? is used 31 times in the Surah. A repetition of the theme of divine beneficence reverberates through the manifestation of the cosmic order and moral judgment and is interspersed with divine depiction.

According to Abdel Haleem (2004), repetition is never unnecessary or superfluous in the Quran, it is developmental, structural and performative (p. 38). It is reminiscent of

the oral traditions where repetition serves as an aid of mnemonics to enhance spiritual and emotional appeal. The Quranic language is divine; therefore, its purpose is not to lend mere embellishment to the text, rather pronounce its reformatory appeal. The Quran, which is considered the central text of Islam is not only counted by its spiritual teachings but it is also an unparalleled masterpiece rich in employing a vast array of stylistic devices.

Among a host of rhetorical means, antithesis, chiasmus and rhetorical questions can be singled out because of their effectiveness in conveying the complicated theological and moral directives. Such features as antithesis, the juxtaposition of opposite ideas in the balanced phrasing or clauses is used to emphasize moral oppositions and encourage contemplative reasoning. As an example, Surah Faatir (35:7) is a declaration: Believers and unbelievers will have a great reward and a bitter torment respectively. This verse outlines the contrasting outcomes of bolstering faith and by the same token, the consequences of wilful, blatant lack of faith. The two courses of action and their consequences are clearly spelt out. This kind of antithetical usage helps in enhancing the contrast between good and evil and in enforcing the moral code of the Quran. One of the rhetorical techniques, namely chiasmus, which is defined as the reversal of grammatical construction in consecutive phrases or clauses (ABBA pattern), is widely scattered throughout the Quran and it contributes to the rhythmic and thematic unity of the text. An example of this is surah Aal Imran (3: 27): You cause night to penetrate day, You cause day to penetrate night; You cause living to come forth out of dead, And dead to come forth out of living. The reflected format does not just create a poetic rhythm but also restates the motifs of change and the power of God.

Such chiasmic structures, scattered all over the Quran, help to make it eloquently inimitable and impeccable, also easy to imbibe the essence and recite effortlessly. Chiasmus which is a form of inverted parallelism adds structural and thematic concreteness to the Quran. This figurative device helps to enhance the aesthetic value of the text and strengthen the messages of the text through parallel structures. These constructions contribute to easy memorization, soulful recitation thereby emphasizing the interdependence of ideas related to existential phenomena as life and death, light and darkness (Al-Harash, 2019). A chiasmic structure of the ideas, which is willed and planned, helps a reader to perceive profoundness and intricacy of the Quranic teachings. The use of rhetorical questions in the Quran is used as a device to provoke the reader response towards thinking and reflecting by themselves. They play their part strategically and provoke assumptions and direct people towards reflection. An example is the Surah Ar Rahman (55: 60) which asks: Are there any rewards of good but good? These questions are not posed with the aim of seeking a direct response, but rather to make readers think about the natural justice and giving back in the moral acts.

Through this interaction of the audience into this way, the Quran establishes a more interactive relationship between the text and the reader, and the teaching in the Quran takes more serious examination. Rhetorical questions thus play a strategic role of provoking divinely inspired and faith-based responses; thereby challenging preconceived notions, and guide individuals to look within themselves (Saeed, 2018).

The binary forms in Quran like antithesis, chiasmus and rhetoric questions contribute to the understanding among the reader and interpretative nature of thematic points of Quran. Through antithesis with its contrasting ideas, moral dichotomies are highlighted and the consequences of humanity are brought into focus. An example of this is the verse, Those who do not believe will be subjected to a harsh torment, but those who believe and do good deeds will be forgiven and will be granted a mighty reward (Quran 35:7) which outlines the moral aspect of either the course of faith or lack of faith.

Conclusion

Thus, we can say that the stylistic devices are not just ornamentation of the message, but rather the very substance of the message. Starting with phonological resonance and syntactic deviation, the Quran speaks not only that but also the way it speaks, through metaphorical overlay and intertextual revisionism. Its stylistic architecture ushers into a sense of emotional immersion as well as intellectual stimulation, hence fulfilling its proclaimed role of a reminder, guide and challenger of existing social maladies. Placing the Quranic language in the larger contexts of classical Arabic rhetoric and the current literary theory, this paper validates the inimitability of the Quran. Verily the Quran is not merely a theological argument but a divine assertion that can be proven. The stylistic devices of the Quran demonstrate a text with a high degree of interest in the rhetorical, aesthetic, and theological. Immediate use of phonetics, syntax, metaphor, and the form of the structure all create an incomparable linguistic mode that breaks the traditional perspective of the Arabic literary genres. The language of the Quran provides a venue to delve into divine revelation which appeals both to its readers during the era of the Quran and to the present-day reader.

The use of figurative language in Quran functions as a cognitive and theological tool. For example, the divine omnipresence, the knowledge, and the guidance are all complex notions that are condensed into one dense image in the metaphor of divine light (Quran 24: 35). This ontological metaphor fits into the theory of conceptual metaphor introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which points out the way abstract spirituality is based on sensory experience. The language density demonstrates that the Quran is able to convey the deepest theological truths in the form of concrete, easy to understand images, thus supporting the pedagogical and emotive power of the text itself. The Quran also employs linguistic and rhetorical devices like antithesis, chiasmus and rhetorical questions not merely as decorative embellishments but as didactic means of highlighting primary thematic issues of divine guidance, justice, retribution, afterlife; thereby eliciting active contemplation on the part of the reader. Such subtle understanding of linguistic devices and rhetorical patterns call for a better appreciation of the depth of the Quran and its timeless nature as a piece of divine revelation and literary masterpiece.

Recommendations

The Quranic diction being God-sent is rich beyond measure and calls for further syntactical studies which dwell on complete chapters of the Holy Quran tracing the stylistic aspect informed by various exegesis. It is further recommended that apart from the stylistic, linguistic and rhetorical aspect, research studies delve into difference in exegesis on account of difference in interpretation of lexical items. This can be broadened to entail Quranic worldview with cognitive linguistics and explore Quranic narrative, characterization and thematic relevance to globalization.

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