LINGUISTIC ACCOMMODATION IN *THE HOLY QURAN*: AN ANALYSIS OF PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES USED FOR A DIVERSE AUDIENCE IN THE QURANIC LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the significance of understanding how religious texts like the Holy Quran communicate effectively with diverse audiences through pragmatic language choices. The research aims to examine how the Holy Quran employs linguistic accommodation to address various social and religious groups, specifically believers, disbelievers, and the People of the Book using pragmatic strategies to adapt language according to the audience. The problem addressed in this study is the lack of in-depth linguistic analysis of how the Quran modulates its discourse for different audiences, thus filling a theoretical and analytical gap in Quranic pragmatics. To achieve this, a qualitative method was adopted, using purposive sampling to select verses from the Quran that demonstrate audience-specific discourse. The analysis is grounded in frameworks such as Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, Speech Act Theory, Relevance Theory, and the concept of implicature. Each verse was analyzed for linguistic accommodation through speech acts, politeness strategies, presuppositions, and implicates. The study was evaluated through a discourse-pragmatic lens, focusing on the effectiveness of communicative intent and audience orientation within Quranic verses. The findings reveal that the Quran strategically modifies tone, vocabulary, and rhetorical style to align with audience identity and context, thereby enhancing its persuasive and moral messaging. In conclusion, the study affirms that linguistic accommodation is a key element in the Quran's communicative success with a heterogeneous audience.
Keywords: Linguistic accommodation, Pragmatic strategies, Holy Quran, Politeness theory, Speech act theory, Implicature, Audience adaptation.

Introduction

Language plays a central role in communication, and its strategic use becomes even more critical when addressing audiences with differing ideologies, cultural affiliations, and spiritual orientations. *The Holy Quran*, as the final divine scripture, addresses a broad spectrum of audiences with varying beliefs, mindsets, and cultural backgrounds. These include believers, disbelievers, and the People of the Book, each receiving messages that are tailored to their specific contexts. This variation in audience requires a strategic use of language that not only conveys divine guidance but also resonates with the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual states of the recipients. *The Holy Quran*, being a universal text, offers an exceptional model of such strategic communication. It not only conveys divine laws and spiritual truths but does so by carefully adjusting its language to suit the audience being addressed. The linguistic strategy of accommodation, as explored in sociolinguistics and pragmatics, refers to the adaptation of speech according to the listener's social identity, expectations, and context (Giles & Ogay, 2007). The Quran's ability to shift tone, politeness strategies, and rhetorical styles depending

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on whether it addresses believers, disbelievers, or the People of the Book reflects a sophisticated form of linguistic accommodation that warrants deeper investigation.

Despite the universality and complexity of Quranic discourse, limited research has been conducted to examine how the Quran uses pragmatic strategies to accommodate its diverse audiences. The absence of detailed pragmatic analysis, particularly focusing on politeness, presupposition, implicature, speech acts, and relevance in relation to specific audience groups, leaves a significant gap in understanding how Quranic language is adapted to achieve effective communication. The present study aims to investigate how the Quran employs linguistic accommodation, particularly through pragmatic strategies, to effectively communicate with these diverse groups. By analyzing select Quranic verses, the research seeks to identify and explain how politeness strategies, presuppositions, implicatures, speech acts, and relevance are used to accommodate different audiences within the Quranic discourse.

Earlier research has analyzed the Quran from stylistic, rhetorical, or thematic perspectives (Abdul-Raof, 2006; Khan, 2011), but little attention has been given to its pragmatic structure in relation to its audience diversity. The lack of comprehensive studies on this specific phenomenon presents a research gap. Understanding the Quranic use of presupposition, implicature, politeness, and speech acts in addressing varied audiences is crucial in appreciating its linguistic and communicative power. Moreover, with the increasing global interest in Islamic texts, there is a strong need to analyze the Quran's communication strategies from a modern linguistic lens.

If this issue is not addressed, it may limit both academic and religious communities in understanding how divine language adapts to human variation. The current research attempts to bridge this gap by using a pragmatic framework to analyze selected verses where language accommodation is evident. The novelty of this work lies in its integrated approach to pragmatic strategies, which have not been previously applied to the Quran in a comprehensive manner. Thus, this research is not only linguistically relevant but also contributes to the interpretation and appreciation of Quranic discourse in a modern context.

The current research study significance lies in its potential to offer new insights into the strategic use of language in divine discourse. By analyzing the Quran's linguistic accommodation to different audience groups, this study deepens our understanding of how sacred texts manage diverse communication needs. The findings will contribute to the fields of applied linguistics, religious discourse analysis, and intercultural communication. They can be utilized in academic curricula, Islamic scholarship, and interfaith dialogue to demonstrate how language can be sensitively tailored to audience expectations. This research also underscores the Quran's rhetorical excellence and its adaptability, serving as a model for effective and inclusive communication in broader contexts.

Research Questions

The current study is governed by the following questions

1. What pragmatic strategies are employed by Allah?
2. What are the differences in linguistic features for different groups/categories?

Research Objectives

1. To identify pragmatic strategies of Allah employed in the text.
2. To identify differences in linguistic features for different groups/ categories.

Literature Review

Linguistic accommodation, rooted in Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), has been widely examined in contexts such as political speeches, classroom discourse, intercultural communication, and the construction of social identity. (Giles, as cited in Crystal, 2008). Some studies

have employed pragmatics to religious texts generally (Blum-Kulka, 1989; Leech, 1983), however they have primarily focused on rhetorical effectiveness or theological interpretation instead of audience-oriented linguistic shifts. While some researches have highlighted the role of politeness strategies, deixis, presupposition, and implicature in Quranic language (Yule, 2020; Crystal, 2008; Cutting, 2002), these analyses consider the Quran as a monolithic text rather than one that adapts discourse pragmatically based on the Intended audience. Other perspectives have investigated Quranic communication from theological, exegetical, or rhetorical angles, but very few studies systematically examine how the Quran linguistically accommodates its diverse audiences specifically believers, disbelievers, and the People of the Book through pragmatic strategies. This gap becomes especially significant given that the Quran frequently shifts tone, lexical choice, and structural complexity in addressing these groups. Therefore, this study fills a vital gap by offering a focused pragmatic analysis of Quranic verses through the lens of linguistic accommodation, aiming to uncover how divine discourse adapts linguistically to maximize relevance, politeness, and clarity for distinct audience categories.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework
The current study used qualitative research method and applied purposive sampling technique to select the verses directly from *The Holy Quran* that address the intended audiences, believers, disbelievers, and the People of the Book. The sample size of the current study includes the selected verses from *Surah Al-Baqarah, Surah Aal-Imran, Surah Al-Nisa* and *Surah Al-Tahreem*. The data were collected from the original Arabic text, English translations, and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir,*and were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and pragmatic discourse analysis. Each verse is examined through multiple analytical lenses based on major theories in pragmatics. The following analytical tools and frameworks are used in the current study: Politeness theory, speech act theory, Gricean implicature and presupposition and relevance theory. These tools allow for an in-depth analysis of how language is used strategically to accommodate audience expectations, beliefs, and worldviews.

The study is guided by the framework of Linguistic Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973), which explains how speakers adjust their language based on the social identity, expectations, and characteristics of their audience. Linguistic Accommodation Theory distinguishes between convergence (adjusting language to be more like the listener) and divergence (emphasizing difference). In the Quranic context, these concepts help explain why language directed at believers often employs encouragement and reassurance, while language aimed at disbelievers may be more direct, cautionary, or condemnatory.

To support this framework, the study also incorporates Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, which aids in analyzing how face-threatening and face-saving acts are managed in divine discourse. Grice's (1975), Austin (1962) Speech Acts, and Sperber and Wilson's (1995) Relevance Theory are further used to examine how meaning is optimized in the Quranic message. Together, these frameworks provide a robust structure for analyzing the Quran's complex rhetorical and linguistic strategies.

Data Analysis and Discussion
This section presents
1. Address to believers
2. Address to non-believers
3. Address to the People of the Book

1. Address to Believers
Allah has addressed believers in two ways

i. Address with Vocative expression يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ
ii. Address with relative clause ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا

i. Address with Vocative expression يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا

Analysis of Pragmatic Strategies and Linguistic Features Used in Allah's Address to Believers

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:104)

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَٰعِنَا وَقُولُوا ٱنظُرْنَا وَٱسْمَعُوا ۗ وَلِلْكَـٰفِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

English Translation

O you who believe! Do not say (to the Messenger): Ra`ina but say Unzurna (do make us understand) and listen. And for the disbelievers there is a painful torment.

Pragmatic Strategies Used for Believers

Politeness strategies

The verse uses negative politeness by advising believers to avoid potentially disrespectful or ambiguous language "Ra'ina" when addressing the Prophet. Instead, they are guided to use clearer, respectful alternatives "Unzurna", showing attention to honorific interaction

Presupposition

It presupposes that the believers are using or might use ambiguous terms, and Allah corrects them to maintain clarity and respect in communication with the Prophet.

Speech Acts

The directive "do not say" and "say" functions as directive speech acts, commanding believers to adjust their language appropriately.

Relevance Theory

The guidance to use unambiguous words ensures relevance and prevents misunderstanding in communication. The instruction is practically useful and religiously meaningful for the context of prophetic discourse.

Implicature

There is an implicature that the term "Ra'ina" might be misused or mocked by others (e.g., hypocrites or Jews), so believers should avoid it to prevent negative associations and confusion.

Linguistic Features for Believers

The verse begins with vocative form "يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَءَامَنُوٓاْ" which respectfully addresses the believers directly, emphasizing their identity and responsibility.

The verbs "لَا تَقُولُوا" and "قُولُوا" do not say… but say… are imperatives, indicating direct commands that guide proper religious behavior.

The use of contrast between terms "Ra'ina" and "Unzurna" draws attention to lexical precision, showing how word choice carries weight in religious and social contexts.

This verse reflects how linguistic accommodation in the Quran regulates believers' discourse to ensure respect, clarity, and alignment with prophetic dignity.

ii. Address with relative clause ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا

Surah Al-Baqarah (2), Verse 82

Arabic Text

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

English Translation (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

But those who believe and do righteous good deeds, they are dwellers of Paradise, they will dwell therein forever.

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Pragmatic Strategies
Politeness strategies
This verse uses positive politeness by affirming the identity of the believers in a dignified and approving tone. The reward of eternal Paradise is presented as a form of praise and encouragement, reinforcing the positive face of the believers. The term "أُوْلَٰئِكَ" (those) is a deictic expression that elevates their status with respect.

Presupposition
The verse presupposes that belief and righteous action are prerequisites for Paradise. It also presupposes that such individuals exist and are distinct from disbelievers.
It further presupposes that Paradise is eternal and exclusive to the righteous.

Speech Acts
This verse acts as a commissive (promising Paradise to a specific group) and expressive (praising the conduct of believers).
It assures the believers of the consequences of their faith and deeds.
The verse establishes a clear and cognitively relevant link between belief, righteous action and the reward of eternal life in Paradise.
This outcome is maximally relevant to believers seeking divine approval and guidance.

Implicature
The implicature is that only those who combine faith with righteous actions will attain Paradise.
It also suggests that mere identity or lineage is not sufficient action must accompany belief.

Linguistic Features
The structure "آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ" uses a conjunctive phrase combining faith "آمَنُوا" and good deeds (عَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ) emphasizing both as necessary.
The demonstrative pronoun "أُوْلَٰئِكَ" highlights their distinction and honor.
The phrase " هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُون " uses emphasis with هُمْ and permanence with خَالِدُونَ to underline the eternal nature of their reward.
The verse follows a binary contrast with previous verses addressing disbelievers, positioning believers positively in both content and tone.
This verse uses affirming and respectful language to accommodate and honor the believers, promising them eternal reward and distinguishing them from other groups through both pragmatic and linguistic strategies.

2. **Address to non-believers**
Allah has addressed non-believers in two ways
    i. Address to non-believers with vocative expression   يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُو
    ii. Address to non-believers with relative clause الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ
    i.   **Address to non-believers with vocative expression   يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُو**
Analysis of Pragmatic Strategies and Linguistic Features Used in Allah's Address to Non-believers
Surah At-Tahrim (66), Verse 7
This is the only one verse in the Holy Quran Allah has addressed non-believers with vocative expression يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
Arabic Text
يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَا تَعْتَذِرُواْ ٱلْيَوْمَۖ إِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

English Translation (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

O you who disbelieve! Make no excuses this Day. You are being recompensed only for what you used to do.

Politeness Strategies

The verse uses bald-on-record strategy, directly addressing the disbelievers without mitigation or softened language. The phrase "لَا تَعْتَذِرُواْ ٱلْيَوْمَ" (Do not make excuses today) eliminates any space for negotiation or plea, reflecting the finality of divine judgment. There is no use of redressive politeness; the tone is stern and authoritative.

Presupposition

The verse presupposes:

The addressed group, "الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا" knowingly disbelieved and acted wrongly.

The Day of Judgment is a real, inescapable event.

There is no opportunity for repentance or justification on that Day.

Their deeds are recorded and form the basis of their punishment.

Speech Acts

This verse performs multiple speech acts:

Directive: "Do not make excuses" instructs a specific action (or inaction).

Declarative: It announces their compensation based on action.

Expressive: It conveys divine displeasure with disbelief and wrongdoing.

Relevance Theory

The verse ensures high relevance by using a dramatic scene the Day of Judgment which evokes fear and seriousness. The context assumes shared understanding of divine justice, making the message clear and powerful with minimal processing effort.

Implicature

It implies

Any attempt at excuse is useless and invalid.

Disbelievers had opportunities in life to act righteously but chose otherwise.

Divine justice is exact and based on actual deeds, not claims or words.

Linguistic Features Used for Addressed Group

Vocative: "يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا" (O you who disbelieve) direct, specific, and unambiguous.

Negation and Prohibition: "لَا تَعْتَذِرُواْ" (Do not make excuses) establishes authority and finality.

Passive Voice and Nominalization: "تُجْزَوْنَ" (you will be recompensed) emphasizes the action rather than the actor, aligning with the tone of judgment and fate.

    ii.   **Address to non-believers with relative clause** الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا

Verses for non-believers

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 6 and 7

Arabic Text

Verse 6

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Verse 7

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ ۖ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

English Translation (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

Verse 6

"Indeed, those who disbelieve it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them they will not believe."

Verse 7

"Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment."

These verses do not employ direct politeness strategies towards the disbelievers; instead, they serve as a stern warning. However, by informing the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) of the futility of warning such individuals, it indirectly consoles him, acknowledging his efforts and relieving him of the burden of their guidance.

Politeness Strategies

The verses presuppose that:

There exists a group of individuals who have chosen disbelief.

These individuals have been warned but remain unresponsive.

Their faculties (hearts, hearing, sight) are impaired concerning guidance.

A severe punishment awaits them due to their persistent rejection.

Speech Acts

The primary speech act here is assertive, as Allah declares the state of the disbelievers' hearts and senses. It also serves a directive function by implicitly advising believers to focus their efforts elsewhere, as these individuals are beyond guidance.

Relevance Theory

In the context of the early Muslim community facing opposition, these verses provide cognitive relevance by explaining the intransigence of certain disbelievers. It helps believers understand that some rejections are not due to the message's shortcomings but due to the disbelievers' own choices and conditions.

Implicature

The Implicatures is that persistent disbelief leads to spiritual blindness and deafness, making individuals impervious to guidance. It also implies that the responsibility of accepting faith lies with individuals, and divine punishment is a consequence of their choices.

Linguistic Features for Addressed Groups

Lexical Choices: Terms like "disbelieve," "seal," "veil," and "punishment" are strong and convey the severity of the disbelievers' state.

Syntax: The structure emphasizes the futility of warning them, highlighting the permanence of their condition.

Metaphors: The "seal" and "veil" are metaphors for spiritual obstruction, making abstract concepts tangible.

3. Address to the People of the Book

Allah has addressed the People of the book in four ways

    i.   Address to the People of the Book with vocative expression يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ

    ii.   Address to the People of the Book with noun phrase أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ

    iii.   Address to the People of the Book with vocative expression يَا أَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ

    iv.   Address to the People of the Book with passive verb phrase أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ

    i.   **Address to the People of the Book with vocative expression يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ**

Analysis of pragmatic strategies and Linguistic Features Used for the people of the book

Surah Aal-E-Imran (3), Verse 64

Arabic Text

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُواْ ٱشْهَدُواْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

English Translation (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

Say: "O People of the Book! Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall not associate partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allah." Then if they turn away, say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims."

Pragmatic Strategies

Politeness Strategies

The verse begins with a respectful address: "O People of the Book", which is a title of honor acknowledging their previous divine revelations. This is a form of positive politeness, recognizing the addressee's identity respectfully. The invitation "Come to a word that is just between us and you" is a strategy of inclusion and cooperation, reducing social distance. Even disagreement is handled gently with an imperative to "bear witness" rather than confrontation.

Presupposition

The verse presupposes common ground: belief in one God, rejection of polytheism, and the shared Abrahamic tradition. It also presupposes that the People of the Book are aware of the concept of Tawheed (Oneness of God) and the prohibition of taking others as lords besides Allah.

Speech Acts

The speech act Is primarily directive and commissive. The speaker (Prophet Muhammad on behalf of Allah) invites the People of the Book to commit to a just principle. If rejected, the response is declarative, reaffirming Muslim identity. The phrase "Come to a word" is a peaceful proposal, performing a cooperative act.

Relevance Theory

The reference to "a word that is just" makes the message relevant and accessible, highlighting shared values rather than differences. This strategy increases the cognitive effect for the audience with minimal processing effort, as it appeals to already accepted truths in their tradition.

Implicature

By stating "let us not take one another as lords besides Allah," it implies criticism of clergy or religious authority being placed above divine law. It also implies that Islam is a continuation of the Abrahamic faiths and seeks unity on the pure concept of monotheism.

Linguistic features used for addressed group

The expression "يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ" acknowledges the religious heritage of Jews and Christians respectfully. The verb "تَعَالَوْا" (come) is inclusive, encouraging open dialogue. The phrase "كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ" a just word uses balanced and neutral language to find common ground. The conditional clause "فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا" (if they turn away) is non-confrontational and allows for peaceful dissociation without hostility. The final declarative "اشْهَدُواْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ" reaffirms Muslim identity while maintaining calm and dignity.

    ii.   **Address to the People of the Book with Noun Phrase أَهْلَ الْكِتَاب**

Surah Aal-e-Imran (3), Verse 69

Arabic Text

وَدَّت طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ لَوْ يُضِلُّونَكُمْ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّآ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

English Translation (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

A party of the People of the Book wishes to mislead you, but they only mislead themselves, though they do not perceive it.

Pragmatic Strategies
Politeness Strategies
The verse uses negative politeness by attributing the desire to mislead to "a party" rather than generalizing all the People of the Book. This softens the tone. The indirect form "wish to mislead you" rather than direct accusation also reflects off-record politeness.

Presupposition
That among the People of the Book are those who wish harm upon the believers.
That misleading other is actually self-deception.
That their intentions are ultimately destructive to themselves.

Speech Acts
Assertive: The verse states a reality about some People of the Book who intend to mislead.
Expressive: It shows disapproval of their hidden intent.
Indirect directive: Encourages Muslims to remain cautious without directly commanding them.

Relevance Theory
The verse is made relevant through the contrast between the outward action (attempting to mislead) and the hidden consequence (misleading themselves). This cognitive dissonance creates a deeper understanding of hypocrisy and delusion.

Implicature
That believers should be aware of external attempts to confuse or misguide them.
That such attempts are ultimately futile and damaging to the deceivers themselves.
That there is spiritual blindness among some People of the Book.

Linguistic Features Used for Addressed Groups
"طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ" A group among the People of the Book avoids generalization.
يُضِلُّونَكُمْThe use of the verb form implies an active effort to cause deviation.
"وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّآ أَنفُسَهُمْ" This reflexive construction highlights irony and spiritual consequence.
وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ Suggests a lack of awareness or spiritual perception, implying inner ignorance masked by outward actions.

iii.   Address to the People of the Book With vocative expression يَا أَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ
Surah An-Nisa (4), Verse 47
This address has occurred only one time in the Quran
Arabic Text
يَا أَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ ءَامِنُواْ بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهَا أَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّآ أَصْحَـٰبَ ٱلسَّبْتِ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ ٱللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا

English Translation (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)
O you who have been given the Book! Believe in what We have sent down (to Muhammad), confirming what is with you, before We efface faces (by turning them) backward or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers. And the Command of Allah is always executed.

Pragmatic Strategies
The verse opens with "يَا أَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ" O you who were given the Book, a respectful title acknowledging their religious identity. However, the rest of the verse employs a serious bald-on-record warning strategy, threatening consequences without mitigation, thus moving from respectful address to firm confrontation.

Presupposition
It presupposes that:
The People of the Book have knowledge of previous revelations.

The Qur'an confirms their scriptures.

They are expected to recognize the truth in the Qur'an.

Disbelief will lead to divine consequences, as with previous communities.

Speech Acts

The verse is primarily a directive speech act, urging belief in the Qur'an. It also functions as a commissive act by promising consequences for non-compliance, and an expressive act through the Invocation of past divine punishments, expressing Allah's disapproval.

Relevance Theory

By referencing shared knowledge (their scriptures and the punishment of Sabbath-breakers), the verse increases relevance to the People of the Book. It uses this contextual familiarity to drive home the urgency of accepting the Prophet's message.

It Implies that refusal to believe in the Qur'an despite its confirmation of earlier scriptures constitutes deliberate denial. It also implies that a repeated pattern of disobedience will yield similar punishments.

Linguistic features used for addressed group

"ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ" (those who were given the Book) directly identifies the People of the Book.

The phrase "مِّن قَبْلِ أَن نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوهًا" before We efface faces uses vivid imagery of divine punishment to evoke fear and seriousness.

The reference to "أَصْحَـٰبَ ٱلسَّبْتِ" (the Sabbath-breakers) links the addressed group to a known historical rebellion, suggesting that similar consequences could befall them.

iv. Address to the People of the Book With passive verb phrase أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ

Surah Aal-e-Imran (3), Verse 19

Arabic Text

إِنَّ ٱلدِّينَ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْإِسْلَـٰمُۗ وَمَا ٱخْتَلَفَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ إِلَّا مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ ٱلْعِلْمُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْۗ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِـَٔايَـٰتِ ٱللَّهِ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ سَرِيعُ ٱلْحِسَابِ

English Translation (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam. Those who were given the Scripture did not differ except out of mutual jealousy, after knowledge had come to them. And whoever disbelieves in the Ayat of Allah, then surely, Allah is swift in reckoning.

Pragmatic Strategies

The verse uses Indirect reference when addressing the People of the Book (أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ) maintaining a formal and respectful tone. The blame is limited to those who differed "after knowledge," showing a degree of politeness by avoiding a general accusation. The clause "مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ ٱلْعِلْمُ" indicates that their error was not due to ignorance, but intentional deviation, implying a deeper moral responsibility.

Presupposition

Islam is the only religion accepted by Allah.

The People of the Book were previously united on the truth.

Their differences arose after receiving knowledge.

Rejection of Allah's Ayat is blameworthy and leads to swift reckoning.

Speech Acts

Declarative: The verse declares the truth about the only accepted religion.

Assertive: It asserts the historical deviation of the People of the Book.

Warning (Directive): "فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ سَرِيعُ ٱلْحِسَابِ" acts as a warning to disbelievers.

Relevance Theory

The contrast between the ideal (Islam) and the reality (disputes among the People of the Book) draws the reader's attention to the consequences of rejecting divine guidance. The relevance is heightened by highlighting the cause of deviation, envy does not lack of understanding.

Implicature

The People of the Book had clear knowledge of the truth.

Their disputes were not rooted in misunderstanding but arrogance or rivalry.

Allah's judgment is swift, so delaying belief or rejecting guidance carries consequences.

Linguistic Features Used for Addressed Groups

People of the Book: Mentioned indirectly as "ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ" giving their religious status recognition. Their deviation is marked by (بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُم) a term connoting transgression and envy, which frames their behavior in negative moral terms.

Disbelievers: Not directly named but referred to through the phrase "وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِـَٔايَـٰتِ ٱللَّهِ" which generalizes the warning but still applies to a known group within context.

The use of temporal sequencing (after knowledge came to them) shows that error followed enlightenment, intensifying the moral responsibility.

Conclusion

The analysis indicates that the Holy Quran uses range of pragmatic strategies like politeness theory, presupposition, speech act theory, implicature, and relevance theory adapted to the linguistic and ideological backgrounds of its diverse audiences, including believers, disbelievers, and the People of the Book. Believers are addressed with positive and negative politeness strategies that enhance clarity, respect, and obedience, by directive and commissive speech acts. Disbelievers, in contrast, are addressed using bald-on-record strategies that highlight accountability, finality, and divine judgment, employing strong assertive and expressive acts. The People of the Book are approached through a blend of respect and correction, often using positive politeness and off-record strategies to invite dialogue and religious alignment. The use of these different strategies demonstrates a deliberate and context-sensitive linguistic accommodation that ensures effective communication linked with theological goals and audience-specific needs.

Linguistically, each group is addressed with distinct features that align with their identity and purpose of the message. For believers, vocative expressions like "يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا" are used to affirm their identity and responsibility, along with imperative verbs and contrastive lexical choices that guide respectful conduct. Disbelievers are addressed with stark and direct phrases such as "يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا" and strong negations like "لَا تَعْتَذِرُواْ" alongside metaphors like "seal" and "veil" to emphasize their spiritual condition and fate. The People of the Book are approached with respectful titles like "يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ" and inclusive terms like "كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ" that seek common ground, using conditional clauses and indirect warnings that balance correction with recognition of shared heritage. These tailored linguistic features reinforce the pragmatic strategies and reflect Quranic sensitivity to audience diversity.

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