A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE HOLY QUR'AN: INTEGRATING THE LEECH AND SHORT MODEL WITH CLASSICAL ARABIC LINGUISTICS

Dr. Faisal Muzaffar
Email: faisal.muzaffar5@gmail.com
Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of English, Karachi

Dr. Muhammad Shamim Akhter
Email: m.shamim@hamdard.edu.pk
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Hamdard University, Karachi

Hafiz Imran Nawaz
Email: Imran.nawaz@hamdard.edu.pk
Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of English, Karachi

Abstract

This paper presents a systematic stylistic analysis of the Qur'an, integrating the multi-level framework of Leech and Short with Classical Arabic linguistics. It examines how the text's distinctive choices across lexical, grammatical, rhetorical, and cohesive levels produce its unique expressive power. Through close analysis of selected verses, the study highlights key features including strategic ellipsis, grammatical shifts (iltifāt), and profound polysemy. These elements work in concert with intricate sound patterning to generate the Qur'an's renowned rhetorical impact (balāghah) and mnemonic quality. The analysis demonstrates that the Qur'an's language operates as a cohesive artistic system. Key findings show that sound and meaning are deeply linked, grammar is used for deliberate rhetorical effect, and single terms often carry layered theological meanings. Furthermore, the text's syntactic structures such as the use of nominal sentences for timeless truths contribute to its semantic depth. This linguistic artistry underpins the classical Islamic concept of inimitability (iʿjāz). By bridging traditional philology with modern stylistics, this study offers a structured approach to appreciating the Qur'an's enduring significance as a literary and linguistic phenomenon.

Keywords: Qur'anic linguistics, stylistic analysis, Arabic rhetoric (Balāghah), Leech and Short model, Iʿjāz al-Qur'an (inimitability).

Introduction

The Quran holds a central place in Arabic linguistic and literary history, as it is widely used as a guiding model and corpus through which Arabic grammar has been codified into formal rules, philology, poetry and rhetoric, semantics and phonology. Revealed in the 7th century CE, it is now widely accepted as the earliest literature that has preserved its form and content without loss and distortion (Syarifuddin et al., 2024). The Qur'an was revealed into a highly poetic Arabic oral tradition, but alongside this deeply influential allusive sound patterning, many subsequent traditions of vocal performance have elicited meaning from the sounds of the language which has meant that the stream of religious recitations across at least fourteen centuries is customarily formulated in scriptural purity. But from the beginning, Islam's scholars had read the Qur'an not only as a divine revelation but also as a kind of linguistic miracle to be scrutinized for meanings

and defended against doubting rivals by reference to rules that could themselves attest to its threat (Nasser, 2025).

Critical linguistics of Arabic, as a formal field it grew partly out of the Qur'an. The early grammarians, lexicographers and rhetoricians were anxious to conserve the language of the Qur'an, explain its syntactic and morphological structures, and describe its principles of eloquence. The Qur'ān thus became the principal basis for al-ʿArabiyyah al-fuṣḥā (Classical Arabic). This conclusion is underscored by the fact that this essay is an investigation of the Qur'anic text from a linguistic point of view; in particular, phonology, morphology-syntax-semantics-pragmatics and rhetoric (Mahardika, 2025).

Leech and Short Model

To assess the various levels of linguistic sophistication present in the Qur'an, this research will abide by the principles of one of the more formalist branches of literary theory, i.e. stylistics. More precisely, the present study will follow the most elaborate, albeit also the most intricate, example of such a theory, namely, Leech and Short's (2007) Style in Fiction. Although this framework was conceived primarily for the purpose of analyzing fictional literature, the multiple tiers that it discusses and the detail to which the framework attends to each will greatly facilitate an analysis of the Qur'anic discourse. In particular, the framework delineates four levels of analysis to which each of the linguistic features of a text may be assigned:

- **The Lexical Level**: the analysis of the text's choice of words, e.g. presence of archaisms, neologisms, the various semantic fields the vocabulary of the text may pertain to, etc.
- **The Grammatical Level:** the examination of the text's syntax, i.e. the study of how the elements of a sentence (e.g. which may be nominal or verbal, affirmative or negative) are organized, the sequence in which they are arranged (e.g. inwaq tāqdīm or ta'khīr), and whether or not any of the elements have been omitted (ellipsis);
- **The Rhetorical Level:** the analysis of the use of rhetoric, e.g. the study of metaphor (istiʿārah), simile (tashbīh), and 'kināyah' (which, in this case, metonymy may also be referred to as).
- **The Cohesive Level:** the analysis of how the text is unified in its use of repetition, parallelism, and the Qur'anic iltifāt (shifts) as well as other cohesive devices and the analysis of the pragmatic and discourse context of the linguistic choices that have been made.

Research Objectives

1. To descriptively analyze the salient phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic features of the Qur'anic text.
2. To examine how these specific linguistic choices, at each level of the Leech and Short model, function to produce the text's unique rhetorical impact (*balāghah*) and persuasive power.
3. To explore the relationship between these stylistic features and the central Islamic doctrine of the Qur'an's inimitability (*iʿjāz*), assessing how linguistic form is understood to convey transcendent meaning.

Literature Review

The Qur'an studies and modern textual analysis show the crossroads of the various intricacies of Islamic philology. This review encapsulates the most significant studies and describes the evolution of the field by framing it with the aforementioned early traditions of Arabic grammar and contemporary linguistic and stylistic theory.

The Qur'an's role in the unification of Classical Arabic (al-ʿArabiyyah al-fuṣḥā) is critically documented. As Versteegh (1997) writes, the Arabic linguistic sciences, namely, grammar (naḥw), morphology (ṣarf), and phonetics, were catalyzed by the necessity to pre-serve the meticulous articulation and meaning of the divine revelation. Early Arabic grammarians and other experts such as Sibawayh, considered the Qur'an to be the highest source of reference, and documented its diverse and unique syntactic arrangements of the structures to assist in the formulation and, at times, contradict the emerging grammatical rules (Carter, 2004). This tradition of philology is documented in detail in al-Suyūṭī's (n.d.) al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān, and a tradition of Qur'anic linguistic scholarship was established, which focussed its efforts on the lexical, syntactic, and phonetic analysis of the Qur'an.

A recurring theme in the scholarly literature concerns the doctrine of iʿjāz al-Qurʾan (inimitability) where perfection of the Qurʾanic Arabic as a chief proof. The initial theoretical construction was by ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078/471 AH) who claimed that the miracle of the Qurʾan was its naẓm, the miracle of its construction and meaning (al-Jurjānī, 1992). Contemporary scholars have elaborated on this idea using precise textual analysis. For example, Abdel Haleem (2004) describes the interplay of sound, syntax, and semantics and argues that it accounts for the text's extraordinary rhetoric, thereby offering a linguistic justification for the classical inimitability arguments. For Neuwirth (2010), the Qurʾan's 7th-century Arabian context is essential, and he describes the Qurʾan's reception as a literary phenomenon that both engaged and transcended the existing systems of articulation, both poetry and prose.

The application of contemporary linguistic techniques to Qurʾanic texts has utilized various specialized frameworks. Most syntactic analyses focus on Qurʾan's word order anomalies and the functional contrast and theological implications of nominal vs. verbal sentence constructions (Fischer, 2002), with nominal sentences expressing timeless truths and verbal sentences referring to specific occurrences. Pragmatic analyses of the phenomenon of iltifāt (shifts in adherence to one grammatical rule) justice in the poetic sense of the term, whereby the means of audience management and emotion control are treated as sophisticated discourse strategies (Abdul-Raof, 2006). Even in the analyses conducted and attributed to such a cohesive intellectual, Izutsu (2002), the Qurʾan, pre-Islamic Arabic, and various theological vocabularies, and frameworks are deemed relevant in order to illustrate the Qurʾanic text's potential for semantic and conceptual innovation. A growing number of scholars are applying stylistics and discourse analysis in their Islamic Studies research. Robinson (1996) documents the presence of ring composition and the thematic unity of the Qurʾan in his analysis of the macro-structures of the Qurʾan. This research also continues that trend of scholarship by applying the Arabic classical rhetorical model of balāghah and the style framework proposed by Leech and Short (2007) to combine quantitatively and qualitatively the various levels and structures of the linguistic expression of the Qurʾan to the various levels of traditional Islamic hermeneutics and modern textual linguistics to fully elucidate the persuasive and communicative potential of the Qurʾan.

Methodology

The methodology used in the study is qualitative and textual-analytical. It involves the examination of the Arabic Qur'an and its translations alongside the Qurʾanic Verses and classical Arabic language resources (naḥw, balāghah, tafsīr) and contemporary linguistics. The analysis identifies different levels of the chosen framework and elaborates on the discourse's classical Islamic philology and modern stylistic theory.

Finding and Discussion

Qur'an's influence on linguistic studies and claims of its linguistic inimitability (iʿjāz) (Toriq, 2022).

Classical Arabic and Context of Revelation

Before the reveal of the Qur'an Arabic was mainly an oral language. Which were distinguished by local dialects and advanced poetic tradition. Pre-Islamic poetry or jāhilī poetry was the yardstick of linguistic correctness, preserving archaic vocabulary and grammar as well old idioms. The Qur'an was given in this linguistic milieu, but it wasn't just a copy of what was already there. Instead, it imaginatively worked with them by using familiar words and expressions in new literary fashion.

The Qur'an specifically claims for itself a linguistic and cohesive quality that is not found in other texts or speech in "standard" Arabic, (li-saan ʿarabiyy mubīn), an assertion without parallel in the pre-Islamic poetry. But its Arabic is not the dialect of any single tribal clan. It does not stand for a dialect, but rather for a supra-dialectal entity that encompasses several dialect features in a coherent system. This feature would later help propagate the Quran amongst Arab tribes and among non-Arabs after Islamization and hereafter I would standardize Arabic.

The authority of the Qur'an in matters of language eventually became greater than that of any pre-Islamic poetry. Although early grammarians still cited poetry as evidence, the Qur'an became seen as the most authoritative and sacred source of language. It had a drastic impact on the history of Arabic grammar.

The Phonology and Sound Pattern of the Qur'an

Phonological: Phonetically, the Qur'an is characterized by its attention to speech sounds, prosodic features and phonetic co-occurrence. Its verses are sown with sound effects that increase memorability and emotional force. Elements such as alliteration (jinās ṣawtī), assonance, consonance and end-rhyme (fāṣilah) are among the core features of Qur'anic speech. The holy Quran is based on the existing phonology of Arabic, which includes uvular consonants and emphatic sounds and both long and short vowels. Such sounds add beauty not only to the esthetics of language, but also to its semantics. For instance, hard consonant clusters tend to occur in connection with verses on punishment or warning, and softer ones occur more often in conjunction with passages on mercy or Paradise.

The science of tajwīdis a practical application of the Arabic phonology. It governs articulation points (makhārij al-ḥurūf), phonemic quality (ṣifāt), assimilations (idghām, ikhfa), and the omissions (qibd) of sounds. These rules work to maintain the phonological sanctity of the Qur'an throughout generations and emphasis on how sound is connected to meaning in this text.

Morphology and Word Formation

Arabic has a root-and-pattern morphology, and the Qur'an makes masterful use of it. Triliteral and quadriliteral roots produce a large number of words by simple fixed, often variable usage of the three bases or four base letters, bringing it to richness and economy. Proximity in appearance is a key literary strategy in the Qur'an, and it often sets related morphological forms in opposition to produce semantic contrast or reinforcement.

For example, differences of the verb forms (abwāb al-fiʿl) indicate nuances such as volition, intensity, reciprocity, and causation. The active and passive participles are alternated dependant on theological reasons, emphasising divine action or human participation. Also, the distinction of nominal versus verbal construction can convey permanence versus temporality.

In addition, the Qur'an contains unusual or novel grammatical forms (and hapax legomena). These forms have generated a great deal of linguistic discussion, in part because both the lexicographer and the grammarian are urged to consider their etymological background, patterns and meanings. Conversations like this further developed the theory of Arabic morphology.

Syntax and Sentence Structure

Example of (Ḥadhf)

Surah Yā Sīn (36:82)

"His command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, 'Be,' and it comes into existence."

In this verse, several actions are implied but intentionally omitted in the textual structure. These omissions are not accidental; rather, they serve the purpose of brevity and conciseness. Through this ellipsis, the Qur'anic expression powerfully conveys the majesty and absolute divine power of Allah, demonstrating that creation occurs instantly by His will, without any process or intermediary

The structure of the Qur'an (naḥw) simultaneously adheres to and twists Classical Arabic standards. Although the text complies with accepted grammatical guidelines, it often includes syntactic deviation for stylistic purposes. Strategic movement, ellipsis (ḥadhf), fronting and postponement (taqdīm and taʾkhīr) are employed to focus particular items within a verse. A striking characteristic is the frequent occurrence of nominal sentences as a way to express universal facts and verbal ones to depict events and happenings.

Nominal and Verbal Sentences: Permanence versus Temporality

Surah al-Baqarah (2:2)

" .ذَالِکَ الْکِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ"

This verse is structured as a nominal sentence (jumlah ismiyyah), which in Arabic conveys the sense of permanence, stability, and an established truth. The absence of a verb emphasizes the timeless and enduring nature of the statement.

Surah al-Naṣr (110:1)

" .اذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللهِ و الْفَتْحُ"

In contrast, this verse is a verbal sentence (jumlah fiʿliyyah), which is inherently linked to occurrence, action, and time. It refers to a specific event and moment, thereby illustrating how verbal structures in Arabic are used to convey temporality and change

Interchanges between the two types of sentences correlate with interchanges of theme. Moreover, the Qur'an employs frequently conditional clauses, oaths and interrogative constructions most of which are actually pragmatically rather than literally motivated.

Early grammarians like Sibawayh made analysis of the Qur'an 'by way of example' in matters of grammar, even when this seemed to fly in the face of some rule that was established for ordinary usage. It is not that such constructions were by definition "non-grammatical": more often than not scholars modified grammar as they knew it to accommodate them, acknowledging the authority of the Qur'an as a normatively challenged source.

Semantics and Polysemy

Syntactic proofPositive semantic analysis clearly presents the extraordinary depth of meaning that is characteristic of Uniquely The Qura'n. More than one meaning attached to a word in Qur'an. This verbal density allows a verse to be in relation to several individuals and situations at the same time.

The term "نور Nūr" (Light)

Surah al-Nūr (24:35)

"الله نور السموات والارض".

In this verse, the word nūr does not merely signify physical or visible light. Rather, it conveys broader and deeper meanings such as divine guidance, knowledge, and the source of existence itself. The Qur'anic usage of nūr thus illustrates semantic depth and polysemy, where a single term carries multiple interrelated meanings beyond its literal sense

Context (siyāq) is an important factor in interpretation. The semantics of the Qur'an must not be purely interpreted on the basis of lexicographical definitions; meaning is derived from the syntax, discourse situation and intertextual relations within the Qur'an. The understanding that multiple meanings were possible in the Qurʾān was developed by ʿilm al-wujūh wa al-naẓāʾir which focused specifically on words occurring with similar but not same meaning in various verses.

The Qur'an also twists words already present in Arabic by banjoing new religious meanings to common ones. Words such as īmān (faith), kufr (disbelief) and taqwā (Godconsciousness) take on technical meanings that are more than the mere existence of these terms in the pre-Islamic lexicon. This semantic shift to some extent corresponds with the Qur'an's status as not merely a linguistic text but also as one which informs a particular worldview.

Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis

On a practical plan of action, such language the Qur'an uses. Precepts, proscriptions, histories and parables do other than inform; they instruct, to scare and cajole, comfort and direct. Speech acts in the Qurʾān often esche both literal dimensions; so interrogatives may be used rhethorically or for admonition rather than as a seeking after information.

Discourse markers, theme-coherence, and changes in pronouns (iltifāt) are also key components of the Qur'anic style. The linguistic term iltifāt, the abruptly shifting of person, number, or tense in speech, is much commented upon. Contrary to appearances these shifts are not stylistic caprices, but perform quite pragmatic functions from catching the listener's ear, to underscoring emotional engagement.

Recent discourse analysis has also clarified the Quran's cohesive structure as repetitive, thematically clustered, often ring-composed, at both micro- and macro-textual levels.

Rhetoric and Balāghah

Arabic rhetoric (balāghah) was built mostly on the study of the Qurʾān. Classical rhetoricians wrote elaborate theories of meaning (maʿānī), expression (bayān) and embellishment (badīʿ) in order to account for the Qur'an's eloquence.

Metaphor (istiʿārah), simile (tashbīh), metonymy (kināyah) and parable (mathal) abound in the Qur'an, making of its expression a display vehicle for abstract ideas through imagery. Of course, the flavor is never a rich or intoxicating one; indeed, Qur'anic rhetoric spurns any incense-incited fustiness and guards against immoderacy of ornament), but it still kicks.

Al-Jurjani's doctrine of naẓm (syntactic-semantic arrangement) laid weight on the fact that a good style is a manifestation of a well-ordered mind, and that in writing each part of speech should match with its own kind. This theory is still active in both traditional and modern Arabic grammar, and has implications for Qur'anic studies.

Iʿjāz al-Qur'an and Linguistic Inimitability

The doctrine of iʿjāz al-Qur'an—positing that the Qur'an is inimitable in its language—has been a major focus of discussion among Muslims. Linguistic analysis has a major role in making the

concept articulated. The Qur'an's indivisible semantic, syntactic, rhetorical and phonological features have never been replicated in human language.

The Qur'an does not belong to an existing literary genre, neither poetry nor prose, but it exceeds both in terms of expression. Efforts to imitate the Qur'an, past and present, have been unsuccessful in matching its even distinctiveness or cohesiveness so as to coincide with assertions of unimitability.

Linguistically, iʿjāz does not mean that the Qur'an breaks any rules of language; rather, it shows a fluid movement of those rules in ways that are claimed to be beyond human capability.

Qur'anism and the Emergence of Arabic Philology

The influence of the Qur'an on Arabic linguistics may perhaps be an accurate description of the division of the Arabic language into its constituent parts. The Qur'an's influence on the division of the Arabic language into its parts, namely: grammar (naḥw), morphology (ṣarf), lexicography, rhetoric and phonetics, is the same as its influence on the division of the Arabic language into its constituent parts. The desire to make each of the texts of the Qur'an into an inseparable part of the canon of an Islamic tradition which consists of an Islamic narrative the Qur'an and its accompanying traditions Canon means an unalterable part of the Islamic script; the Qur'an, is an Islamic narrative, and its accompanying traditions. The insertion of something that is no longer needed is taken to be an indication of an error which is to be located and eliminated. Knowledge of Linguistics is the combination of that which is constituent and that which is not constituent to language. The construction of Syntactic Structures is a direct result of the desire to prevent inappropriate use of language. This type of activity is a direct result of the desire to prevent the inappropriate use of language, and the construction of Syntactic Structures is a direct result of this desire. Unconstructive is a direct result of the use of the phonetic parts of an Arabic word that is without a meaning. This is referred to as the Peircean Theory of phonetic spelling. The absence of an accepted meaning for a word results in an inefficiency of the language. When the cultures that are not influenced by the Arabic language and are of a geometric structure realized that they could claim their independent discoveries that are not the same as the Arabic civilization.' Abbasid. The Arabic word for meaning consists of the sounds of the letters that make up a word.

Lexicographical works relied heavily on the Qur'an to define meanings and document forms that were infrequently recorded. Similarly, the Qur'an's captivating nature led scholars in the Qur'anic studies to seek the discipline of rhetorical theory. Arabic linguistics, alongside all fields of science, is still advancing (ANALYSIS of the Qur'an considering contemporary scientific and linguistic advancements). Even contemporary Qur'anic studies, by many of the young scholars, affirm the eloquence and linguistic beauty of the Qur'an.

Conclusion

Viewed from the perspective of Arabic linguistics, the holy Qur'an appears to be a document of remarkable linguistic complexity. Its brilliance in phonological craftsmanship, morphological exactitude, syntactic elasticity, semantic fertility, pragmatic power and rhetorical mastery puts it on an excellence pedestal for both language and thought. Rather than a passive point of orientation in linguistic analysis, the Qur'an actively influenced the disciplines through which it is to be studied." The Qur'an was thus the locus classicus for Classical Arabic: it held on to the language, but also put in place a new expressive repertory. Its language still arouses academic curiosity that bypasses classical ad modern. And finally, the Qur'an–being the word of God and the literary miracle is also a big linguistic monument whose investigation paves the way to Arabic language and literature.

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