

AN IN-DEPTH LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE THEMATIC CONNECTIVITY IN THE HOLY QURAN

Dr. Hassan Khajehei, Dr. Alireza Shakarami
Department of English, Islamic Azad University,
Kazerun, IRAN.
hkhajeie@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The analysis of textual relations in the holy Quran, usually regarded as Munasaba or the organic unity, is an intersection between Tafsir and Linguistics. Considerable debates exist on whether the Quran possesses such an integrity or not in terms of linguistic analysis of the verses and suras. The lion's share of the muslim literature on this issue believe in the existence of unity within the holy scripture whose inimitability and authenticity is beyond dispute. However, there might be cases where the themes in consecutive verses are not related to the same idea unit. Nevertheless, they are unified in terms of conveying the Islamic preaching to the recipients. That is, spiritual unity can be traced in sequence of verses.

The present study aims at investigating the issue using a linguistic approach, referred to as Relevance theory. It tries to demonstrate that despite the apparent thematic disconnectivity, we can help the readers through the explanation and categorization see how the operations in the cognitive processes can contribute to the creation of meaning. In so doing, a retrospective overview of the previous attempts followed by an analysis of a Sura are performed to develop our understanding of the Quran.

INTRODUCTION

There has always been considerable debates on whether the Quranic texts possess an organic unity or not. Through the analysis of the textual relations where linguistic analysis and tafsir meets, we may come to a convincing answer. Islamic scholars, although agree upon the authenticity and the order of arrangement as instructed by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), are divided on this issue. Some like Mustafa Sadeq al-Rafii, in Shams al-Din (1994), maintain that Suras contain a variety of topics which are not necessarily related as a single theme, but they are unified in terms of conveying the preaching of Islam to mankind and the physical and spiritual unity realized in the form of rhythm and rhyme dominating the very Suras.

There are still others like Sayyed Qutb (1967), Allameh Tabatabaei (1985), and recently Abdulla Draz and Neal Robinson among others who hold the notion of "central Idea", i.e., the whole Sura is devoted to a single idea and various topics and themes within that Sura are employed to elaborate on the central idea. Robinson (1986) and Draz' (2000) works on Sura al-baqara have identified the central idea in it. On the other hand, some non muslim scholars influenced by the loss of style and in some cases meaning evident in the translation of the holy Quran into European languages, claim that Quranic text lacks coherence.

The present study seeks to develop an approach to tafsir which is theory grounded and aims to show how pragmatic principles can explain such problematic aspects of the meaning of the Quranic texts. In doing so, the gap between the conflicting studies can be filled through communicative and pragmatic textual analysis. In the first part, a short account of a retrospective overview and the related critical discussions are provided, followed by the theoretical framework adopted to the present study. The Relevance theory (henceforth, RT) which draws upon the textual relations on the basis of pragmatic/linguistic viewpoints is applied and the significance of context to the understanding of the

relations is focused. Finally, the assumptions and principles mapped out in the previous parts are applied to a medium length Sura, Al-ahzab, whose textual relations seems highly problematic.

Terminology

By textual relations in the present study, the elements that hold a variety of topics together within one Sura is meant. Discourse refers to any chunk of language with reference to non-linguistic, social and political context. It is both meaningful and purposeful. By utterance, we mean as sentence or a set of grammatical sentences conveying propositional and non-linguistic meaning. When the emphasis is strictly on the linguistic aspect, we use sentence rather than utterance. Proposition refers to the explicit meaning of an actual sentence. Assumption here means thoughts reflecting representation of the actual world and finally by communication we mean the exchange of meaning.

It is worth mentioning that all quotations and verses pointed out in the present study are based on the Egyptian edition of the holy Quran by Mohammad Asad. However, other references are listed in either the text or on the references list. Since the focus is on those aspects whose understanding may cause change in both muslim and non-muslim awareness, the careful analysis of the coherence existing in the text which is not purely rhetorical or literary (ijaz) is a must. The communicative and pragmatic viewpoints deal with the text as an act of verbal communication but it doesn't imply that literary aspects of the holy Quran is of less significance and it just limits the scope of the research. Literary style, figures of speech, etc are dealt with from pragmatic rather than rhetorical or aesthetic approach and the literary values are deliberately overlooked in favor of the corresponding communicative values. For example, an expression like " wa iltafat alsauqa bilalsaq,75:29) is not discussed with regard to the art of metaphor it consists of, but rather with how the expression contributes to the message of the paragraph and the Sura in which it occurs. In one word, we seek to understand how linguistic expressions are used in the production of meaning. In case of ambiguous expression, textual relation analysis may not help understanding and tafsir can prove as the most appropriate source.

Another point worth mentioning here, is that as historically well established, the holy Quran is basically an oral text in terms of the style and the act of worshipping used in it, so a methodology based on a theory of verbal communication is the most effective in the context. The holy text was revealed among non-muslims and is never claimed to be only for the Muslims, thus a non-muslim theory could be no different from the muslim counterparts as long as they both analyze the utterances in the way that early muslim commentators did in application of rhetorical and grammar and even poetry to explain the Quranic text. It is very well known that Ibn Abbas used to explain ambiguous Quranic vocabulary by reference to pre-islamic poetry El- Awa S.(1998).

The current study doesn't seek to arrive at a value based judgment as to whether or not the text is adequate. It is rather challenging the view that the text has to be coherent in the conventional sense if it is to possess textuality or to achieve successful communication.

Text Relations in Retrospect

The earliest published material on the study of textual relations in the Quran dates back to Al-Fakhr Al Razi (1981). Definition of such relations in the early exegetes' understanding of the relations between two successive verses is as follows;

" A meaning that links them together, and could be general or specific. It could be two things mentally associated such as cause and effect, reason and consequence or analogous and opposite. Or, it could be a propositional concomitance such as that connecting subject to predicate."

This definition covers both the physical and non physical relations and both interverse and intersentence relations, but in this study we are concerned with those between the verses. Such relations fall within Halliday and Hassan (1976) linguistic coherence and cohesion and exclude grammatical relations within single sentences. Not all the Quranic exegetes agree that the relations should be sought between verses, not even between successive verses within one Sura. They argue that

coherence is expected in a unified text whose beginning connects to the end. If the text has got more than one purpose, coherence is not then a necessity. However, this is not the case with the Quran because it was revealed over 23 years touching on various matters for various reasons. So such a text could not possibly possess coherence.

Many scholars in the period of Islamic scholarship maintain that it was the prophet's will to arrange the verses the way they are now, and not according to chronological considerations. It was concluded that this form and order of the text expresses the intended meaning of the Quran, regardless of the time and occasion of revelation.

In the following section a brief account of the most influential works previously done on the coherence of the Quran in terms of methods of analysis is provided:

Broadly, there are three types of works on this issue as follows; 1. Theoretical works dealing with how interpreters and commentators approach the issue 2. Commentaries which enumerate textual relations between verses as part of explanation of the corresponding meaning and 3. Modern works which are a production of different cultures and hence differ from the above two types.

Regarding the theoretical works, scholars attempted to describe the works of former scholars toward the 8th century AH/14 AD. The first of these was al-Burhan fi ulum al-Quran, by Badr al-din al-Zarkash (1999). Accordingly, it could be said that applied works in Islamic studies in many cases preceded the theoretical ones. The present study starts with the theoretical approach and its application in tafsir literature as representation of textual relations. Finally, modern writers and the changes brought about by them to the study of coherence or textual relations in the Quran are reviewed.

Zarkashi's work can be taken as an authentic and comprehensive representation of most scholars on textual relations. He has used the term Al-munasaba to refer to the coherence existing in Quranic text. The term is taken from the Arabic homonymic word for occasion, relation, concordance or relevance. He believes such studies can play a critical role in the vocabulary of the text. Two major relations are highlighted by him; 1. when coherence and cohesion are clear and tied together and the meaning cannot be considered complete from the first part only. Relations here are obvious and there is no need for discussion 2. when connectedness is not easily evident and sentences independent of each other. He has considered other categories as well. In some cases sentences in the Quran are connected by the conjunction and (waw) which comes to two major types; A. connection by ambiguous and (waw) whose relations can be explained in terms of elaboration, affirmation or contrast, Zarkashi (1999). B. connection by ambiguous connective (waw) whose relations could be explained through contextual information Zahniser (2000).

Another category is the sentences which are not connected by a conjunction but there is some evidence indicating continuity of the speech. This type is complementary to the previous ones in which the connection was physical. Implicit connection occurs in three situations as follows: 1. Drawing attention to some similarity of some apparently different situations, persons or human actions 2. when a case of contrast is to be highlighted between some seemingly unrelated objects, etc. and 3. when the aim is to raise a subpoint which is not central to the major subject but is of equal importance.

Apparently the tools used in Zarkashi's work are derived from three theoretical sources; Arabic grammar, study of meaning (ilm al-maani), a branch of Arabic rhetorics and finally and most importantly tafsir principles. Contextual information should be sought first within the text and then within complementary text or Sunna Literature Watt (1970). There are two prominent tafsirs known to have adopted the search for textual relations as their principal framework; tafsir mafatih al-ghayb and al-burhan fi munasabat al-Quran. The former is by al-Fakhr al-Razi and the latter by Burhan al-din ibn umar al-biqai (885 AH), in Asad (1980).

Studies in the 20th Century

Many western as well as muslim scholars have addressed the issue of coherence in the Quran. The traditional western approach support the view that the Quran lacks coherence. There are some muslim scholars who took strong stance against this view and their works have altered the dominant approach.

Sayyid Qutb (1967) and Amin Ahsan Islahi, in El-Awa Salwa (1998), are among such impressive muslim scholars. A number of western scholars suggested re-ordering the Quran according to various criteria such as chronological order Birri (1977). Their assumption was that alterations and misplacements took place during the process of editing the Quran which resulted in what Bell (1989) calls grammatical unevenness and interruptions of sense in the Quran. In such works they have actually ignored the documented history of the writing down of the Quran immediately after the demise of the Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h), detailed and established in authentic traditions of al-Bukhari, in Hisham (1969). They have also ignored the well established historical accounts of the completion of the Quran during the Prophet's life and his comprehensive instruction to his companions about the ordering of the text.

Remarkable increase of emphasis on the issue of coherence in the Quranic studies resulted in their turn to more emphasis on inter-verse relationships. Sayyid Qutb and Ahsan Islahi both rejected the earlier assumption that the Quran should be arranged in the form of single subject chapters. Both focus more on the interpretation itself and hence provided us with less theoretical discussions of what called "Mihwar" whereas, Islahi was concerned with establishing a theory that covers not only the Suras as separate units, but also the relations between the different Suras in pairs and groups, in Blass (1990). Despite the difference, i.e., that Qutb's main aim is to produce an interpretation and Islahi is mainly concerned with the establishment of a suggested system of coherence in the Quran, there remains a number of similarities between the two scholars as follows:

- a. Both reject the view that the Quran lacks coherence
- b. The Sura is conceived of as a unified text with parts hinge together within a unique structure
- c. Each Sura has got a bedrock which underlies its surface
- d. The bedrock of each Sura should be discovered if the meaning is to be unfolded
- e. The bedrock phrasing describes what Qutb refers to as Mihwar (axis), or what Islahi calls Amud (pillar)
- f. Each Sura can be divided into sections or passages of various lengths

Although both works serve as the first systematic analysis, the relations within parts of a Sura, they leave the readers with a puzzling methodological question at the stage of deciding the Amud or underlying theme, "what is the tool used for discovering the theme?"

In sum, the significance of both works on inter verse relations lies in their introduction of a plausible solution for the problem, which is based on a theory developed through studying the text's content and structure. However, lack of technical explanation of their methods of analysis suggest that there is still a great need for further theoretical work in order to establish a framework for working out verse relationship.

Neal Robinson (1986) in his book, *Discovering the Quran*, covers a number of most controversial issues in Quranic studies including the inter verse relation. He maintains that although the division into Meccan and Medinan Suras belongs to the historical approach to the study of the Quran, the Medinan suras are more complex in structure than the Meccan counterparts. In his study of the structure of both types of Suras, he exploits the linguistic term "register" which he introduces in its linguistic definition for the first time in Quranic studies. Register is defined as the context dependent linguistic characteristics, either spoken or written, and encompasses a set of choices made according to a conscious or unconscious notion of appropriateness to the context (vocabulary, syntax, grammar, sound, pitch and so on). Robinson uses the term register in dividing the Suras into separate parts and also carefully studied these variations in their relations to the change of subject content.

In short, he was the first in the history of considering cohesion and coherence in the study of Suras and verse relations and employing the structural/linguistic approach to the Quranic text.

In a nutshell, a juicy account of the reviewed previous studies on textual relations in the Quran could be as follows:

General agreement on the point that verse relations in the Sura should be addressed by the use of contextual information provided in various sources.

No sound, well established theoretical framework has been provided yet.

Only recently the exegetes shifted their attention from linear connectivity and logical dependency of verses to more complicated analysis of structural unity

The 20th century exegetes explained the structure of the Quranic suras in terms of sections or subsections which are influential in creating one master idea.

Taking into account the above findings, the present study attempts to develop a more systematic theory for the study of textual relations in the Quran. Also, it tries to clarify the role played by cohesive devices (physical connectives as opposed to implicit relations) as indicators of textual relations and examining the Quranic exploitation of this linguistic tool. In so doing, a clear understanding of the Quranic text and relations might be achieved.

Linguistic Study of Textual Relations

The two approaches which are pragmatic in essence and do not explain the text just in terms of linguistic factors are coherence theory and Relevance theory. The former is concerned with formal relations between major parts of the text and search is for cohesive ties. The latter sees coherence and cohesion merely superficial symptoms of something deeper, i.e., relevance relations. While coherence is the relation between linguistic units such as utterances, relevance is a relation defined not only for utterances but also for assumptions, i.e., units of information and thoughts, Blass (1990).

Coherence Relations

As carefully studied by Halliday and Hassan(1976) cohesion accounts for the essential semantic relations whereby any passage of speech or writing is enabled to function as a text. For them, the physical expression of the relations between linguistic items is what the analyst is looking for in order to establish textuality and meaning of the text. The existence of cohesive devices and ties including substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion (like repetition) is the criteria based on which we can distinguish text from non-text. The criticism is that many texts may contain such elements but still are ambiguous in terms of what is meant by them and on the other hand there might be many texts without such ties , yet make sense to the recipients. An example for the former case is verse 6 of the Sura 33 (al-ahza). This verse has been claimed to lack coherence with preceding verses. It contains lexical cohesion, reference items, sentence conjunctions and sentence connectives , and yet its reference to the preceding verses has not been clear to some researchers. Take the utterance “ Trespassers will be prosecuted”. It is not preceded nor followed by any other text and there is no context with which cohesive ties would connect. However, we have no trouble understanding its message and would not trespass. This example shows that coherence based approach fails to explain.

All types of Quranic repetitions and the use of conjunction and (waw) at the beginning of many utterances which appear in content unrelated to the preceding parts fall within this category. It is not true to claim that description of cohesive ties is totally unnecessary for text and discourse analysis and indeed it is not. Cohesion directs us toward the relation between the parts of the text, but does not determine what we understand from the linguistic form that we receive.

Relevance Theory

Relevance theory (henceforth, RT) maintains that instead of taking the notion of coherence as the main holder of textual relation, what is needed for comprehension is relevance relation in terms of contextual effects. A new item of information is relevant if it improves the cognitive environment of the recipients and the more contextual effects an utterance has, the more relevant it is. Recipients have lots of assumptions in their cognitive environment from which they pick those assumptions that

interact with the new information. Contextual implications are needed if the recipient is to understand the meaning.

The choice of context is constrained by many factors among which accessibility of assumptions is essential. In other words, the assumptions or presupposition needed for processing an utterance must exist somewhere within the recipient's cognitive environment. When something is uttered, the recipient should be able to construct a context in which the utterance could possibly be understood by accessing one particular assumption Blass (1990). Take the following example; A: that church is very beautiful B: yes, indeed. B is able to infer that the building is a church and knows what makes a building beautiful (assumption or presupposition shared between A and B). That's why B can respond positively to A. Think of another scenario in which there are three beautiful buildings and none looks like a church. A says: That church is very beautiful B: which church? A: that with red brick in the middle B: Oh, yes, I never realized it was a church. Here B didn't know that there was a church over there, or the assumption needed for successful comprehension was lacking and not accessible to him. Sometimes an assumption is inaccessible due to not having information needed in our schemata (i.e., encyclopedic entries) or preoccupation with other assumptions which are more relevant to B at receiving the utterance.

There are some rules which help successful communication if followed and satisfied ;

1. Any act of communication is optimally relevant if it achieves an adequate range of contextual effects for minimum justifiable processing efforts. Ideally, a communicator produces only the utterances they think are relevant to their recipients. S, communication is an inferential rather than decoding process .
2. Understanding the intended meaning is not a matter of knowing semantics or grammar of the sentence uttered, but adding to these the pragmatic elements of the context.
3. Sometimes recipients fail to recover the intended meaning for some reasons including the speaker's lack of knowledge of what the hearer knows. One can find interesting examples of misinterpretations in tafsir, rooted in interpreter's lack of access to contextual information needed for understanding certain verses or because the more relevant contextual assumptions were less relevant to the interpreters.

Ambiguity is liking to occur when more possible meaning and interpretation are possible. To disambiguate , more constraints should be imposed on the relevance of the utterance to guide the recipient toward the correct intended meaning and interpretation. Constraints can be linguistic (cohesive ties) or non-linguistic such as pointing to an object to direct the hearer's attention to the correct position.

There are other cases where multiplicity of meaning results from other phenomena other than lack of constraints. Within this framework, communication of assumption or information can be either implicit or explicit.

If explicit content of an utterance has a contextual impact on the recipient's cognitive environment, the effect is called an explicature i.e., by filling in the gap between linguistic meaning and the proposition expressed. On the other hand, if the meaning is recovered from an utterance when the semantic representations are fleshed out, it is called implicature. In both cases contextual information is employed and pragmatic principles are applied. Thus, there are two ways in which an utterance can contribute to the context of another utterance, 1. by adding to the explicatures of the previous utterance or by 2. adding to the implicature of the previous utterance.

RT stresses the fact that the pragmatic principles used in the interpretation of ordinary language use are the same as those used in literary styles and they have a lot to say about some rhetorical tools such as irony and metaphor.

Literature and Communication

Although the main function of literature is arguably aesthetic, it does nevertheless have a communicative aspect to its language. It can't be said that the main objective of the ordinary language is communication but this is not the case with literature. Nigel Fabb (1997) elaborates on communication as one of the possible functions of literature. He maintains that the production of verbal act or literature can in principle serve any of a wide range of functions including but not restricted to communication.

Consider the following instance from Arabic poetry:

Shaka Il Jamali Tula-ssura, Sabrun jamilun fa-kilana muftala The English translation: my camel has protested at the length of the journey, Wait patiently we are both being tested. Although the lines contain a metaphor and produce a number of aesthetic effects by means of rhyme and rhythm, they still have a meaning conveyed by means of linguistic and non-linguistic elements. For example, they inform us that the poet has been traveling for a long time and he is tired of the long journey. This is part of the proposition expressed by the lines, although it is not made explicit from the linguistic content of the words.

So our encyclopedic mental entry and non linguistic contextual cues make us realize this feeling. Thus meaning is recovered according to the pragmatic principles. Now the question that remains is that of Quranic text, "is the Quran a communicative text or a literary text?" Whatever the answer, the same pragmatic principles can be applied to the interpretation of this holy text. However, more interestingly, in spite of its hugely literary use of language, the primary function of this holy text is communicative. It is truly a text revealed to guide humanity to the right path, by instructing them thoroughly and repeatedly in the social, moral and legal system of Islam. In contrast to most other literary texts, the Quran is a communicative text but it has a literary function which itself support the challenge posed by the Quran to the Arabs of the time, that they should produce something at a similar level of eloquence (The Quran;2:23)

This was a challenge facing the Arabs who would have rejected it if it were in any ordinary form. But they accepted it as a unique and unlike any classical work of literature even by their greatest poets. Now let's look at the way in which contextual information is used in interpreting some of the simplest and least controversial verses of the Quran, the story of Moses (Quran, 28:11-13).

There are many elements we can understand about the story, but not from what included in its linguistics, for example, the pronoun "she" in *she said unto his sister* and she in *she said shall I show you a family*. The assignment of antecedent in these two forms is an inferential rather than decoding process. The relation between the last two verses lies in the fact that the family refers to Moses' real family and nothing explicitly is said about it. This is an example illustrating the fact that little contextual information is used to interpret a meaning that otherwise would sound incoherent.

In sum, the key factor is contextual effect. If every item has a contextual impact on the co-text, then together all parts contribute to the overall coherence. So, coherence depends on the proposition expressed, their corresponding implicature and access to contextual assumption. This view of textual relation as opposed to thematic unity or linear connectivity could have a great influence on our understanding of the Quranic discourse and it would free us from the traditional question of what the central idea is that holds all different topics within one Sura together. Accordingly, information from the reader's cognitive environment contributes significantly to the understanding of the verses. For example, if one has no access to historical information about the life and trades of the Quraysh, then understanding the relevance of the Sura 106 to "the two journeys of the summer and winter" would be quite difficult. This is also applied to the majority of the verses.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

To analyze textual relations in the Quranic text, we then look for the above-mentioned contributions to the understanding of the text. In the present paper, the text is divided into parts in order to establish the propositional content of each and then look for how each part contributes to the development of the

Quranic text. Two units smaller than the Sura are considered; one is the section and the other is the paragraph.

The Context of the Quran

The significance of context as an essential aid to interpreting of the text is unanimously emphasized in the commentaries (Tafsir, Fiqh, Nahw and Maoni). We briefly review what scholars consider as the context of the holy book and how they use it in interpretation of the holy text. We start with some quotations from scholars:

1. Ibn al-Qayyim (751AH) in Bada I al Fawaid: “ overlooking context is likely to lead to misunderstanding and false argumentation, P;29”
2. Al-Amin al-jakni al- shinqit; “ contextual explanation of the verses should be sought within the Quran itself”

There are two broad types of context used and prescribed as important sources for contextual information that help clarifying the meaning of the corresponding text.

1. Textual(internal) context: refers to the information that the text provides to its readers in immediate preceding or following verses (i.e., what commentators refer to as al- Quranu yafassiru baoduhu baodan= Quranic verses shed light on the intended meaning of other verses)
2. Non-textual (external) context: refers to the information outside the text but is necessary for understanding the meaning. Use of Sunna and deduction of Jurisprudential rules from certain verses and use of pre-Islamic poetry have been among the means of understanding the intended meaning.

In addition, Sunna can serve the following functions to aid understanding the verses:

1. Sunna *Muakkida*; confirming the meaning of a Quranic text
2. Sunna *Shriha*: explanatory of the Quranic text
3. Sunna *Mustaqilla bit tashri*: independent of any Quranic text
4. Sunna *Nasikha*: abrogating a Quranic text

These roles correspond to those explained by the RT, i.e.:

Explanatory sunna adds details and/or confines the application of verses

Independent sunna adds new legislation to the already existing Quranic legislation.

However, one should remember that when there is more than one contextual item or information available, the most accessible one is the one consistent with principles of the RT used to recover the intended meaning.

Textual relations and section division in Suras, with focus on Al- ahzab

In the previous section we outlined the main theoretical principles and their implications for understanding the textuality in the Quran. Here, we are to apply this framework to the materials presented in Al-ahzab. We also aim to unravel how the notion of relevance and observation of cohesive devices and ties contribute to our explanation of the structure of this sura in terms of content division, passage relations and information distribution.

Let's begin with the type of discourse, called sura. Being a part of the Quran, sura is a part of a message. It is a large linguistic unit consisting of utterances meant to communicate something to the recipients and the readers. Smaller utterances in the sura are guaranteed by the RT principles. That is they yield some contextual effects in a particular context accessible to the readers. On that basis, the effort into processing each smaller units become justifiable. Thus, the message of the sura is not necessarily a simple one, since one small utterance can have more than one contextual effect.

It is worth noting that the concept of verse is a Quranic concept rather than a linguistic unit and verse is not grammatical unit, either. The end of a verse is not necessarily the end of grammatical sentence, and there are several possibilities: sometimes the end of a verse appears in the following verse. On the other hand, not all verses are explicitly connected. In fact, the occurrence of inter-sentential connectives and speech markers in Arabic literary text and style is much less frequent than in English. To achieve such a stylistic feature, one means is to limit the use of speech connectives, i.e., the fewer connectives the less restricted the text is to its particular context and more likely to apply to other situations. The Quranic utterances reflect such a feature and meanings are layered and can be applied to unlimited number of situations.

Linguistic complexity, referred to in RT as one means of reducing the contextual effect is achieved through a more complicated process than that involved in inferring messages of shorter suras. Here, I suggest passage as a unit of utterance with one subject of content and a number of subsections, as an arbitrary unit of meaning in sura. Passage is an alternative to a sentence or utterance whose contextual effect determines its relevance and the aim should be finding relations between passages. In the following section, we look for the passages in the Sura Al-ahzab.

The 73 verses of this sura have been divided into 10 passages, the content of each varies from large information units to a single unit of information in one verse. Switch markers were used to identify the new subjects intended in the verses.. They include grammatical complexes like paragraph markers occurring at the beginning of each new passage. Table 3.1 shows the main division of the 10 passages.

Table 3.1 Passages of Sūra 33 and their main content

Passage	Number of verses	Verses	Main contents
1	8	1-8	Introduction to the <i>sūra</i> ; legislation of social relations; prophets' missions and the fate of their peoples
2	19	9-27	The Day of Trench: different stands of different groups, mainly the hypocrites
3	13	28-40	Rules for the Prophet's wives; the Prophet's marriage with <i>Zaynab</i> ; more on the prophets' missions
4	4	41-44	Heart softening from God to the believers
5	4	45-48	The Prophet's mission and a repetition of the first command of the <i>sūra</i>
6	1	49	General regulation for one type of divorce
7	3	50-52	Restrictions on the Prophet's marriages
8	6	53-58	Restrictions on the social life of the Prophet's family
9	1	59	General regulation for women's style of dress
10	14	60-73	Round off all the contents of the <i>sūra</i>

These passages cover a variety of content with the two exceptions of the verses 49 and 59, in passages 6 and 9, respectively which contain only a single subject and a single item of information. Passage 10 is distinct from others, because the included utterances can be described as commentary or as raising a comparison which implies a judgmental position. The very passage, unlike the others, is characterized by a sudden change of tone of speech, the choice of grammatical structures and the vocabulary used in referring to people and a noticeable reduction in the length of the verses. It merely rounds up all that has preceded it from a superior viewpoint, where God the speaker no longer addresses people kindly but speaks about fate and warns the wrong doers and in addressing the believers it more firmly does so than earlier in the sura. Table 3.2 demonstrates the distribution of all the markers over the passages and the sub-section and the changes of the content.

Table 3.2 Paragraph markers in Sūra 33

Section no.	Verses	Major marker	Minor marker	Main content
<i>Passage 1</i>				
1	1-3	yā 'ayyuhā	—	Introduction of the sūra and the passage
2	4-6	—	—	New legislation for lawful and unlawful social relations
3	7-8	—	wa 'idh	Prophets make pledge to God
<i>Passage 2</i>				
1	9-11	yā 'ayyuhā	—	Introduction: the implications of the Day of the Trench
2	12-20	—	wa 'idh	The hypocrites
3	21-24	—	la qad	The believers
4	25-28	—	wa	Final section
<i>Passage 3</i>				
1	28-29	yā 'ayyuhā	—	The wives' lives
2	30-31	—	yā	Special judgement
3	32-34	—	yā	Restrictions on behaviour and justification
4	35-36	—	'inna	Generalization
5	37	—	wa 'idh	The Prophet's marriage with Zayd's divorcee
6	38-40	—	—	Prophets
<i>Passage 4</i>				
1	41-44	yā 'ayyuhā	—	The believers relation to God
<i>Passage 5</i>				
1	45-48	yā 'ayyuhā	—	The Prophet
<i>Passage 6</i>				
1	49	yā 'ayyuhā	—	A rule for divorce
<i>Passage 7</i>				
1	50-52	yā 'ayyuhā	—	Rules for the Prophet's marriage
<i>Passage 8</i>				
1	53-55	yā 'ayyuhā	—	Social mixing, the prohibition of disturbance
2	56-58	'inna	—	Believers' social relations
<i>Passage 9</i>				
1	59	yā 'ayyuhā	—	Restrictions on women's appearance
<i>Passage 10</i>				
1	60-62	—	—	The hypocrites-warning
2	63	—	—	The Day of Judgement
3	64-68	—	'inna	The unbelievers fate
4	69-71	—	yā 'ayyuhā	The believers-reward
5	72-73	—	'inna	Man's responsibility: commencement and fate

Another formal characteristic is the employment of pronoun shift and turns for pragmatic purposes. Such shifts are not always of the type known as “iltifat” in Arabic rhetorics and the shift has mostly pragmatic function. Take passage 1 to see the phenomenon. The sura starts by addressing the prophet, “ ya ayyuha al-nabiyy”, so the emphasis is on the fact that he is prophet. Since the main concern of the current study is the pragmatic effect rather than the rhetorical effects, I shall suggest that another main function of Iltifat here is indicating or announcing a change of subject matter. In the case of verse 4, the change is from ordering the prophet to be conscious of God and justification for the request., to directing a number of commands which concern all Muslims in order to introduce new legislation. In other cases, change of pronoun as a rhetorical style is used to indicate simple turn taking process, i.e., focus moves from some persons to allow others to occupy the recipients’ central attention. Accordingly, it affects the pragmatic meaning since it indicates that “ Person 1 is no longer concerned and person2 now is the most concerned one”.

Table 3.3 The relation between distribution of information over the passages and the concepts developed in the *sūra*

<i>Introducing and establishing new concepts</i>		
Passage 1	1–8	<i>New concepts 1:</i> Muslims versus the hypocrites and the unbelievers, social relations in the Muslim society, the prophets’ roles and the fate of their peoples
Passage 2	9–27	<i>New concepts 2:</i> the hypocrites’ hostile towards Muslims
Passage 3	28–40	<i>New concepts 3:</i> the truth of the Prophet Muhammad’s family life issues and regulations for it
<i>New information detailing and confirming the new concepts</i>		
Passage 4	41–44	Rewards to the believers among the prophets’ peoples
Passage 5	45–48	The Prophet’s role
Passage 6	49	Further regulations of marriage divorce
Passage 7	50–52	More regulations for the Prophet’s marriage relations (clarifying the truth in the rumours spread by the Hypocrites)
Passage 8	53–58	Limits of social mixing and relation between the Prophet and the believers and declaring harm and disturbance, of any kind, as a prohibited attitude in the relations between people in the Muslim society
Passage 9	59	Details of special social behaviour of women, to avoid being exposed to any harm
Passage 10	60–73	Rounds off all the earlier concepts

Now we turn to Relevance based analysis of the sura which starts with a three verse introduction about both the whole sura and passage 1 as well as relating effectively to other passages. The end of sura is a long concluding passage verses.60-73 , most of which represents God’s own comments on many

issues raised in the course of other passages and round off all the concepts developed throughout the sura. We analyze each passage based on the Relevance principle that each item of information provides some necessary contextual assumption for the comprehension of an item in the preceding or following part of the sura.

Let's now take two passages as examples which illustrate the aforementioned theoretical principles: first distribution of information over the 10 passages is reviewed in table 3.3.

Passage 4, consisting of 4 verses (41-44) returns to the believers as the vocative marker of the paragraph. The believers are addressed with information about their duties towards God. These duties are of spiritual nature such as continuous remembrance of God and they are followed by the divine rewards as the result of the ritual duties. The verses construct a sort of God/believers dialectic relation. When Muslims remember God and glorify Him day and night, God in return bless them and guides them from darkness to light, a frequently used Quranic analogy in which darkness stand for atheism or ignorance of the truth of God and light stands for remembering God's unity. This aspect of relation provides the context for new information which must be providing assumption for understanding the following utterances. The passage also relates to the preceding concepts by means of its addition to one's knowledge about the believers. The last verse especially connects with the verse 8 where the fate of both believers and unbelievers is touched upon. The verse 41 echoes the verse 21 where the prophet is said to be the good example for whoever believes in God and the Day of judgement and remember God unceasingly. The following sequence can clarify the interaction between the verse 21 and the verse 41.

Those who remember God incessantly follow the good example of Mohammad (V.21)

Believers should remember God unceasingly (V.41)

Believers follow the good example of Mohammad

Number 3 above is the conclusion which can firm an assumption which was previously developed, from V.21, that is part of Mohammad's relation to the believers that they follow his way in life. So the Verse 21 provides an assumption for understanding the Verse 41. On the other hand, the conclusion from the combination of these two verses confirms another assumption previously derived from the V.21. This is how the passage interacts with other passages in the sura.

Now let's try to analyze passage 7 (verses 50-52) in terms of the same principles. The speech in this passage turns to addressing the Prophet Mohammad with regulations concerning the women whom it is lawful or unlawful for him to marry, and is followed by generalizing the rule for all Muslims by virtue of pronoun shift (37).

The first verse (50) makes an intensive use of pronoun turn taking from addressing the prophet with regulation throughout one long sentence to speaking of the believers (qad alimna ma faradna alayhim fi azwajihim= we know what we have enjoined upon them with regard to their wives), a comment generalizing the regulation over all the community.

Another turn to addressing the prophet in (likay la yakuna alayka haraj= in order that thou be not burdened with undue anxiety) echoing parts of Verses. 37 & 38 where the prophet's marriage was discussed, again limits the comment to the prophet, after the regulation was generalized to all. It also draws upon the issue of who is lawful to marry and who is unlawful to marry. Finally, it should be noted that the passage contributes to the whole sura in terms of its addition to both contexts of marriage mentioned in it : the general regulations for all Muslims and those particular to the prophet.

CONCLUSION

The study of relations between the various contents of al- ahzab was based on 3 main hypotheses about text and textual relations. First, explicit linguistic devices do not necessarily determine textual relations and utterances related to one another by means of contextual effects they have in a certain

cognitive context which is relevant to the recipients (Relevance based approach). Second, from the same theoretical framework it is noted that communicators rather than language itself communicate thoughts and items of information. The verses of this sura have been viewed through the information they communicate, and their relations have been analyzed in terms of the contribution of each item of information to the context of the sura or other plausible context in the historical background of the sura. The third tenet is the concept that speech connectives or markers are indicators of meaning and not just carriers of it. We have traced the diversions in the content and changes taking place from time to time according to these indicators.

The concepts developed in the sura were believers as followers of the prophet, believers and the prophet as opposed to the believers and the deniers of the truth, the clarification of the truth about lawfulness of the prophet's social and personal believers and finally information regarding the prophets sent to people by God and that the fate of all people is according to their stands with regards to the truth. Each of these concepts has been developed simultaneously and not separately in a tight texture of relevance relation between several passages where the contexts were introduced and then gradually expanded and enhanced which makes it fairly difficult to see the distinction and the borders between them.

The present study suggest a pattern of division of the sura into passages, potential paragraph markers as indicators of subject change which are constructive addition to the context of some plausible concepts developing throughout the sura. It is believed that each introduction of a new item of information should be studied with an eye to its contribution to the development of concepts on the basis of relevance theory: i.e., communicators intend to be relevant as they mean to be understood. The contribution of each new item produces a change in the recipient's understanding of the concept that the sura is to build up. Thus, it is only at the end of a full analysis that we can be assertive about the claims dealing with the concepts and what the sura is really to say about them.

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