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Pessimism in the Glorious Quran: A Semantic Study

A B S T R A C T

The present study tends to investigate the term pessimism linguistically in Arabic religious discourse. Pessimism is carried out by different linguistic terms. The study aims at identifying the different pessimistic expressions in the Glorious Quran and the relationship among them through the linguistic model which is adopted to analyse the data. It consists of the contextual analysis of the data through Hymes' (1974) speaking model and the semantic analysis through Leech's (1983) seven types of meaning. The study employs a qualitative theoretical method to analyse three Quranic texts which include pessimism in the Glorious Quran. The number of data is limited to three to eliminate redundancy. The study reveals that pessimism is of three levels and is conveyed mainly by the three leveled near-synonyms from down to up rate ((قنوط, يأس, تطير)) (augur, despair, utter despair) which cannot be used interchanchably because each word has its contribution and a specific meaning although they share the meaning of being pessimistic. Eventually, pessimism in the Glorious Quran is associated with the term (كفور) (ungrateful) which indicates that pessimism is forbidden and undesirable behavior.

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التشاؤم في القرآن الكريم - دراسة دلالية-

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المستخلص

تميل الدراسة الحالية إلى تقصي مصطلح التشاؤم لغوياً في الخطاب الديني العربي . يتم التعبير عن التشاؤم بمصطلحات لغوية مختلفة . تهدف الدراسة إلى التعرف على التعبيرات التشاؤمية المختلفة في القرآن الكريم والعلاقة بينها من خلال النموذج اللغوي الذي اعتمد لتحليل البيانات . وهو يتألف من التحليل السياقي للبيانات من خلال نموذج التحدث هيمز للتحدث (1974) والتحليل الدلالي من خلال ليتج (1983) السبعة أنواع من المعنى . اتبعت الدراسة المنهج النوعي النظري لتحليل ثلاثة نصوص قرآنية تتضمن التشاؤم في القرآن الكريم . وقد اقتصر عدد البيانات على ثلاثة عينات لغوية

للقضاء على التكرار. كشفت الدراسة أن التشاؤم يتكون من ثلاثة مستويات ويتم نقله بشكل أساسي من خلال المرادفات الثلاثة المرتبة من الأقل تأثيراً إلى الأعلى (التطبير، اليأس، القنوط) والتي لا يمكن استخدامها بالتبادل لأن كل كلمة لها خصائصها الخاصة. ولكل كلمة سياق مختلف ومعنى محدد على الرغم من أنها تشترك في معنى التشاؤم، وفي النهاية يرتبط التشاؤم في القرآن الكريم بمصطلح (كفور) (جحد الجميل) مما يدل على أن التشاؤم محرم وسلوك غير مرغوب فيه. المفردات الرئيسية: التشاؤم، المعنى الدلالي، علم الدلالة، القرآن الكريم

1. Introduction

The linguistic expressions are chosen precisely in the religious discourse as it is used in a particular context in a way it may share the same meaning with other word/s but it cannot be used interchangeably (Alhussieni, 2007). Religious language is rich to be investigated by the researchers of linguistic studies. It is the standard form of any language since words are purposefully chosen (Al-Duri, 2005). In addition, religious texts have the feature of infiniteness by the sense it is not bounded by time or place. Logically, each word is used for a certain wisdom by choosing it, and that why no word stands for another (Al- Husaini, 2007). The current study aims at investigating the terms that are used to express pessimism in the Glorious Quran and to discover the relationship among the mentioned expressions with supporting the contextual analysis for each pessimistic term.

2. Pessimism in Glorious Quran

Pessimism is a very old habit that rooted in the depth of history. It is linked to mankind fears involve sorrows, misfortunes and bad surprises. This concept is mentioned in the Glorious Quran mainly with the appearance of the God's messengers. Thamud people were pessimistic with their Prophet Salih (pbuh), and Pharaoh was pessimistic about Prophet Moses (pbuh), just as the infidels of Mecca were pessimistic about Muhammad (pbuh) (Sukar, 2017). Linguistically, the word pessimism has the word (شأم) (Sha'im) which means to have negative views towards something or someone. It is mainly derived from the word (مشئمة) (Masha'amah) that refers to the left direction in the opposite side of the right one where people were pessimistic from the left side movement of the birds (Ibn Faris, 395H). Pessimism was expressed also by another word in the Glorious Quran, the word "طيّرة" (tiyarah) was fundamentally derived from the movement of birds and it was used as a synonym for the term pessimism. Ahmed and Alum (2014) stated that the word "Tiara" (طيّرة) and "Tattyer" (تطير) are the Arabic words that refer to omens. Arabs used to consider the directions in which birds or other animals as a guidance to know good and bad omens. Thus, the action was derived from the verb (طار) which means "flew" to describe birds' movement. Omens were either good which were welcomed to occur or evil omens that were undesirable to occur. Altunisi (1984) stated that pessimism is negative views of future forthcoming. It is the opposite of the word (optimism). Pessimism is mentioned by one clear synonym in the Glorious Quran by the verb (تطير) (tattayarah).

3. Semantic Aspects of Pessimism

Semantics basically means the study of the meaning of words. Words mainly have two types of meanings. The two types of meaning are related to the use of words by societies. Semantics is considered as a fundamental branch of linguistics due to the study of meanings (Crystal, 1991:310). The word “meaning” in turn refers to the thoughts and ideas that are transformed from the Speaker’s mind to the listeners’ minds (Fromkin, 1999:151). In natural languages, there are three ways to explain the word “meaning”. It is either the natural meaning of words, or it is the nature of meaning of words according to its contribution as it occurs in systematic ways in sentences. The third explanation of meaning is the way in which words and sentences are used in communication (Kempson, 1977). Leech (1977) stated that semantics is the central study of communication as it is an essential factor concerning social organization. Yule (2006) stated that semantics deals with identifying the meaningful elements of a specific language. So it has a central role to comprehend and understand languages. Generally speaking, pessimism means to think negatively about future forthcoming. It is the belief of the misfortune and the fear of the unknown (Al Tunisi, 1984).

3.1 Denotative Meaning

Leech (1983, p.18) stated that the denotative meaning of the word is shared by all the users in one community. According to leech, it is the core linguistic meaning so it is more important than the connotative meaning. It is stable since it does not change by time or place. It is close-ended that is limited and universal due to its stability. It represents the literal and primary linguistic meaning of the linguistic item. According to Widarso (1989), denotation refers to the meaning of words which exists in the dictionary. Crystal (1987) pointed out that the denotative meaning is the objective relationship between words and their referents. Leech (1977) called the denotative meaning as the conceptual and cognitive meaning. He regarded it as the central factor in linguistics communication. Brinton (2000.p.132) defined denotative meaning as the referential meaning of words whereas connotative meaning as the feelings, attitudes and opinions that people might associate with words. Peteda (2001) stated that denotation depends mainly on the word itself rather than the context at which it occurs. To sum up, denotative meaning is the literal objective cognitive referents of the words that exists in the dictionary.

3.2 Connotative Meaning

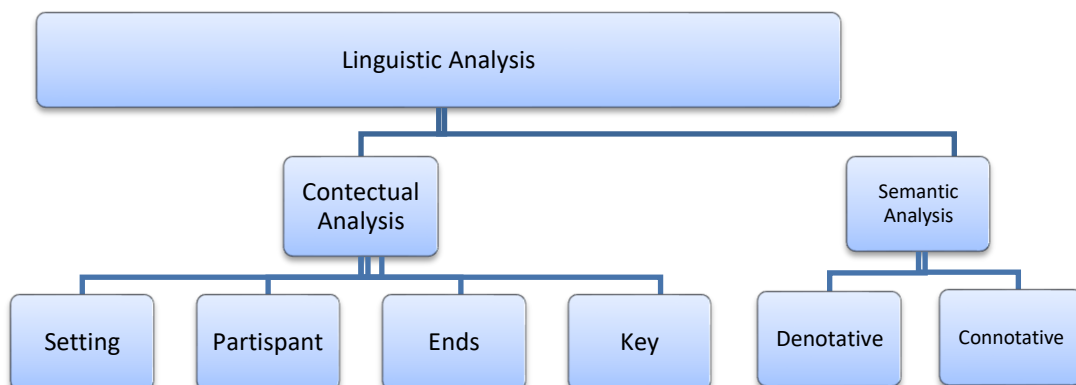
Leech (1977, p.418) defined connotative meaning as the communicative power of the word that is associated with words by people. Bowers (1989) added that connotations are often related to the philosophical use of the linguistic technical terms. Precisely, it refers to the abstract ideas and values that people associate with the use of words in their daily communicative situations. According to Wardaugh (1977), connotative meaning is the extra implications of the words that are used by people to convey extra meaning precisely by the metaphor and poetic language. Connotative meaning depends mainly on the context because it is not based on an objective understanding that is called as the “normal use of language”. In the contrary, it is based on the shared values of a specific culture. Braker (2001) stated that the connotative meaning is the communicative power of the word that is beyond its pure conceptual meaning. It is the word’s indirect meaning therefore, it is more complicated than

the word's denotative meaning. finally, connotative meaning is related to the language users' attitudes, feelings and emotions.

4. Methodology

The present study is a theoretical qualitative in nature. It is adopted to search the semantic features of the pessimistic expressions in the Glorious Quran. The qualitative method enables the researcher to study the data in its particular context (Siegel, 2002). The selected data is to be analysed in such a scientific and subjective way. It is to be analysed according to the model of analysis that consists of Hymes' (1974) speaking model and Leech's (1983) seven types of meanings. Ethnography of speaking is a linguistic approach deals with the study of language use throughout different cultures. It aims at describing the act of conversations to provide the knowledge that participants need for a successful part of interaction. Most of the pioneers of this approach are (Malinowski, 1923; Hymes, 1964, 1972; Bernstein, 1971; Cook-Gumperz, 1975 and Whorf, 1956). The purpose behind the current analysis is to identify the contextual features including the setting, participant, end and key of speech according to Hymes' (1974) speaking model and to identify the denotative and connotative meanings of the pessimistic expressions according to leech's (1983) seven types of meaning. The samples of the current study are selected according to the representation of the pessimistic expressions regarding the simplicity of the analysis. Murray and Chamberlain (1998) stated that the researcher should consider the entire topic regarding the process of selecting the data in a way that is manageable. In spite of the size importance, it is not to be focused on but rather the accuracy of that samples. Figure (4.1) represents a theoretical framework of the model adopted for the current research.

Figure (4.1) the Adopted Model of the Current Study



6. Data Analysis

The present section represents the analysis of the selected texts. The three selected Quranic texts are chosen purposefully to eliminate redundancy. It is translated according to Ali's (2019) translation for its familiarity and reliability. The selected texts are analysed contextually and semantically according to the adopted model.

6.1 Analysis of Text1

(وَلَئِنْ آتَيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِمَّا رَحْمَةً نُّمَّا نَزَعْنَا مِنْهُ إِنَّمَا لِيُنُوسَ كُفُورًا) (هود:9)

If we give man a taste of Mercy from Ourselves, and then withdraw it from him, behold! He is in despair and (falls into) blasphemy. (Ali, Trans., 2019).

6.1.1 Contextual analysis

Almighty Allah describes man's nature. He is ignorant and unjust that if God makes him living good life's conditions such as health, sustenance, children, and the like. Then takes it away from him, he submits to despair and despondency. So he does not hope for God's reward, nor does it occurs to his mind that God will return it back for him. The listener /reader is the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The end of speech is to warn people from despair. Key of speech is warning and advising in the same time (Alsaadi, 2002).

6.1.2 Denotative Meaning

The QV contains explicit pessimism that is expressed by pessimistic expressions. It is expressed clearly by the term "يئوس" (ya'us) [it is adjective means to give up]. It means to despair of the thing and stop hoping for something to happen. It occurs many times in the QVs "when the messengers despaired of the (disbelievers)" (13:32) to describe the prophets' situation when they lose the hope of their missions. It comes also to describe Zacharias' wife despair as in the verse "the woman became barren, despaired of bearing children". Pessimism is also clear in the term (كفور) (kafuur) which indicates disbelief and ingratitude. It means 'habitually ungrateful' to describe feminine as well as masculine. (Farid, 2006, p.722).

6.1.3 Connotative Meaning

The term "ya'us" "despaired" is associated with the people who are ungrateful as in the QV "He is despairing, ungrateful" (11:10). And it is associated with the term in the selected QV with the term (كفور) which means habitually ungrateful. It is clear that to be pessimistic or to give up is not good feature of man although it is original feature of his nature. Despaired and

ungratefulness are separated by the conjunction “and” which gives the quality of equality for the two sides of the word.

6.2 Analysis of Text 2

(وَإِذَا أَدَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَقْتِنُونَ) الروم:36

When we give men a taste of Mercy, they exult thereat: and when some evil afflicts them because of what their (own) hands have sent forth, behold, they are in despair!(Ali,Trans.,2019).

6.2.1 Contextual Analysis

The speaker is Almighty Allah, the listener is the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The purpose behind speech is to describe the nature of most people in a state of prosperity and adversity. That is if God makes them taste mercy from him in terms of health, wealth, victory, and so forth, they rejoice with joy, but not joy of thanksgiving but arrogance of God’s grace. {And if evil befalls them} i.e. the state of their misfortune, {for what their hands have committed} of the sins. {When they despair} they despair of the removal of that poverty and disease and the like. The key of speech is a warning of man’s ignorance and his lack of knowledge (Alsaadi, 2006).

6.2.2 Denotative Meaning

Pessimism is explicitly stated by the term (يقتنون) which is a verb derived from the adjective “قنوط” (Qanuut) [intens. Act. Part.] to describe one who is in utter despair and despondence. It is a synonym of the word pessimistic but with different contribution. The term “Qanuut” in the QV represents the fact that a man does not tired of asking for good things but if evil checks him, he is hopeless and in deep despair. Qanuut is the highest degree of despair (Badawi & Abdel Haleem, 2008, p.777).

6.2.3 Connotative Meaning

The QV has a lot of connotations. Man is impatient and ignorant. It is man's nature to ask for unlimited pleasure such as health and wealth, forgetting the graces he has in hands. He is in utter despair if a simple evil touches him. To be pessimistic is a negative feature. It leads man to be unfaithful as well as ungrateful. It is a feature of unbelievers (tafsir Al Jalalayn, 2021).

6.3 Analysis of Text3

(قَالُوا أَطِيرْنَا بِكَ وَيَمُنُّ مَعَكَ ۚ قَالَ طَائِرُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ) (النمل:47)

They said: "I'll omen do we augur from thee and those that are with thee". He said: "Your ill omen is with Allah; yea, ye are a people under trial." (Ali, Trans., 2019)

6.3.1 Contextual Analysis

The speaker is Almighty Allah, the listener is the prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The purpose behind the speech is to inform the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that he is not the only one who faces the hardships with conveying his Holy messages. Almighty Allah says that they said to their prophet Salih, disbelieving and opposing “We augur bad omens from thee and those with thee”. They claimed that they did not see a righteous face and that he and those with him from among the believers became a reason to prevent some of their worldly demands. The key of speech is to encourage the prophet by telling him the stories of old nations and their habits of denying their Prophets (Alsaadi, 2002).

6.3.2 Denotative meaning

The QV contains explicit pessimism that is clearly stated by the word (انا أطيرنا) [tattayerah is intransitive verb that is derived from tayyer “bird”] which indicates an old action by which people augur bad omens by the movement of birds. “Tattayerah” means to augur bad omens from something or someone and it is a pessimistic expression. People tell the messengers that they are pessimistic with their coming (Badawi & Abdel Haleem, 2008, P.582).

6.3.3 Connotative Meaning

The QV contains explicit pessimism by the word “tattayerah”. Pessimism is explicitly related to peoples’ thought. They relate the occurrence of good or bad things with other concrete things. In fact, pessimistic views are their own thoughts, beliefs and ideas. It is their bad deeds are the only one thing that is responsible for the bad outcomes. Additionally, people in general may ascribe good things for themselves, while bad ones to others see (Shwra: 48). Almighty Allah negates this action by the fact that their pessimistic views basically occur in their thoughts. Their pessimistic views have not any scientific base but one, it is the outcomes of their bad deeds. People do not recognize that fact because of their limited knowledge.

7. Conclusions

The study investigated pessimism in the Glorious Quran throughout adopting the model that consists of hymes' (1974) speaking model and Leech's (1983) seven types of meaning. The researcher concludes that pessimism is mainly expressed by three words in the Glorious Quran. They are (تطير, يأس, قنوط) (utter despair, to despair and to augur bad omens). The three terms are near-synonyms since they cannot be used interchangeably. Each word has its particular distribution in the Glorious QVs though they have something in common which is mainly related to some rate of being pessimistic. In fact the three words have different rates as for instance the word "tattayer" which means to augur bad omens of something or someone, has the least feeling of being pessimistic. It is used mainly by old nations to describe their pessimistic feelings regarding the coming of the Holy messengers (see text 3). Meanwhile, the word "Qanuut" has the highest level of being pessimistic, it is used to describe people with utter despair (see text 2). Eventually, the word "despair" has the middle rate of being pessimistic and it is used for many times in the Quranic verses with the negative article (الناهية لا) (see, Joseph :87) to indicate the fact that being pessimistic is not preferred behavior. These terms are associated with the term (كفور) (ungrateful) to emphasize the unpraised nature of being pessimistic (see text1). Table (7.1) represents the four pessimistic expressions with their frequency in the QVs.

Table (7.1) Pessimistic Expressions in the Glorious Quran.

N.	Word	Part of Speech	Frequency of the root	The meaning
4	تطيرنا	Intrans. Verb	29	We augur
6	يؤوس	Int. act. Part.	13	To give up
7	قنوط	Int. act. Part.	6	Utterly despaired
8	كفور	Int. act. Part.	510	To be habitually ungrateful

Note: Intens. (Intransitive), Int. (intensive), act (active) and part. (particle).

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