

The Dynamic Role of Signification in Maintaining the Cohesion of the Qur'anic Text

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Abstract:

This study aims to affirm the brilliance of the linguistic system in the Quranic text and its ability to express precise meaning through the use of textual cohesion devices. Grammatical and semantic relationships serve as the fundamental criteria for the textuality of any given text. These relationships facilitate the understanding of phrases and convey the intended meaning. The study has selected several examples from the Quran to illustrate these points. Consequently, the following research question is posed: What are the types of grammatical and semantic relations that abound in the Quranic text, and how have these relations contributed to its cohesion?

Keywords: Textual grammar, cohesion, text, grammatical function, semantic relation.

Introduction:

Textual grammar represents the latest linguistic approach concerned with the descriptive study of textual structures. It reveals the tools and relationships that contribute to textuality. Researchers argue that cohesion and coherence are essential elements in achieving coherence among the parts of a text. These are textual criteria that de Beaugrande posits must be present in any text to be considered textual. The absence of either of these criteria negates textuality. These criteria include cohesion, coherence, acceptability, intention, informativity, intertextuality, and context. These relationships create a tightly woven fabric where elements are interconnected. As the grammar of text transcends the grammar of the sentence, so too does semantic cohesion transcend grammatical coherence¹. While cohesion ensures the grammatical continuity (or linearity) of sentences within a text, coherence ensures the semantic continuity of the text, thus guaranteeing its thematic unity. A text whose readers cannot discover such continuity indicates a significant flaw in the interplay between the configuration of concepts and relationships expressed in the text and the reader's prior knowledge of the world². Consequently, this study explores how the Quranic text, specifically Surah Al-Shu'ara, achieves cohesion using a descriptive and analytical approach.

The objective of this research is to confirm the cohesion and coherence of the Quranic text by answering the following research question:

What types of semantic and grammatical relationships are abundant in the text of Surah Al-Shu'ara? How have these relationships contributed to the cohesion of the surah?

Secondly, Introduction to the Surah

Surah Al-Shu'ara, like other Meccan surahs, discusses the oneness of God, calls for belief in Him, rejects disbelief, corrects beliefs, and encourages critical thinking. It presents a clear contrast between disbelief and belief, or between guidance and misguidance. The Prophet (peace be upon him) calls for the oneness of God, while his people resist, mock, and disbelieve in his message. The surah carries a warning to the polytheists about what will befall them if they cling to their old beliefs. This warning is exemplified through a series of stories of prophets and what happened to their people, such as Moses, Abraham, Noah, Saleh, Hud, Lot, and Shu'aib (peace be upon them all).

Thirdly, coherence, which guarantees the structural continuity of a text, is achieved through various grammatical and lexical means, one such meaning is

The Grammatical Function And Its Role In Maintaining Textual Cohesion³

Grammar is concerned with revealing the brilliance of the linguistic system in the text and its ability to precisely express the meanings underlying different structures. It is one level of linguistic study that explores the logic of language, analyzes the types of relationships between its words, and explains the intuition of the language community reflected in this admirable grammatical structure⁴. Al-Jurjani closely linked grammar to composition, stating that composition is nothing but arranging one's words in a manner dictated by grammar and its rules⁵.

Grammar is the fundamental pillar upon which composition rests⁶. The goal of grammar is not merely to distinguish between correct and incorrect usage, or to teach the rules of construction and inflection, but rather to understand the meanings of phrases and to place them in a position that conveys the intended meaning in the mind⁷. Grammar—the science of Arabic—is the key to understanding the Quranic discourse. This section specifically focuses on studying sentences that are grammatically linked to other sentences and enhancing the meaning of the text. This is because every relationship that goes beyond the subject-predicate relationship is established by the speaker to clarify and remove any ambiguity that may arise in the semantic meaning of the sentence if the speaker had not established that relationship. This is all subject to the context of the situation and the speaker's intention⁸.

Understanding the grammatical function of subordinate clauses clarifies the grammatical and semantic relationship between them, explains the reason for their inclusion in the text, and highlights their role in clarifying and expanding the meaning.

1. The Semantic Significance of Explanatory Clauses

Explanatory clauses, according to traditional Arabic grammar, do not hold an independent syntactic function within a sentence. However, they serve a crucial clarifying role, elucidating a preceding ambiguous or incomplete statement. as seen in Quranic verses such as: 'And when your Lord called to Moses, saying, "Go to the wrongdoing people"' (10). Here, the subordinate clause explains the purpose of the divine call. Similarly, in verses 52 and 63, explanatory clauses elucidate the specific divine commands given to Moses. These clauses enhance textual coherence by providing essential context and avoiding ambiguities."

2. The Semantic Significance of Conjunctive Clauses:

These clauses contribute to the expansion of sentence structure both in form and meaning. For example, Allah says: "He said, 'My Lord, indeed I fear that they will deny me, and my chest will feel constricted, and my tongue will not be fluent, so send Aaron with me.'" (12-13). The two conjunctive clauses here can be either nominative or accusative depending on what they are attached to. In each case, they convey a different meaning. If they are nominative, then the verbs are attached to the predicate 'indeed I fear', indicating three reasons for his fear: being denied, feeling chest constriction, and tongue-tiredness. However, if they are accusative, then the verbs are attached to the object of 'fear', suggesting that his fear is related to these three things. The difference in grammatical case leads to a difference in meaning. Al-Zamakhshari says: "The difference in meaning is that the nominative case indicates that there are three reasons for his fear: fear of being denied, chest constriction, and tongue-tiedness. The accusative case, however, indicates that his fear is related to these three things⁹."

These conjunctive clauses clarify why Moses asked his Lord for Aaron's assistance.

Similarly, in the response of the people of Ibrahim to his question, "And when he said to his father and his people, 'What do you worship?' They said, 'We worship idols, and to them we are devoted,'" (70-71), the clause "and to them we are devoted" is conjunctive to the clause "we worship idols." It is the direct object of the verb "said" and emphasizes their deep devotion and pride in idol worship. By repeating the verb "worship," they exaggerate¹⁰ their commitment.

The Semantic Significance of Adverbial Clauses:

An adverbial clause is typically in the accusative case and provides descriptive information. For instance, in the verse: "Do you build on every high place a monument, playing?" (128), the clause "playing" is an adverbial clause that describes the action of building. It conveys the idea that these people were building these structures for no practical purpose but merely for amusement¹¹. If we were to omit this clause, we would not understand the frivolous nature of their actions.

In another example, the people of Noah said, "Shall we believe in you when the most wretched have followed you?" (111). The clause "when the most wretched have followed you" is an adverbial clause that reveals the contempt the people of Noah had for Noah and his followers. It suggests that they considered Noah's followers to be inferior, and thus, they saw no reason to follow him.

Consider the implications of these nuances introduced by this condition. What if we were to remove it?

The Semantic Significance of Appositive Clauses:

An appositive clause has the same grammatical case as the noun it modifies and serves to explain or identify that noun. In the verse: "They said, 'You are only one of those who practice magic. You are only a man like us,'" (153-154), the clause "You are only a man like us" is an appositive to the previous clause "You are only one of those who practice magic." Both clauses convey the same idea: that the prophet is a human being and not a divine messenger. The addition of the second clause emphasizes their disbelief. Al-Zamakhshari explains that the difference between using a connective particle between the two clauses and omitting it is

significant. If the connective particle is used, as in this case, it implies two distinct accusations: that the prophet is a magician and that he is merely a human. If the connective particle is omitted, it suggests a single accusation: that he is a magician, which is then clarified by comparing him to ordinary humans¹².

The Semantic Significance of Relative Clauses:

A relative clause clarifies a preceding noun. For example, in the verse: "Indeed, they are enemies to me, except the Lord of the Worlds, who created me, and it is He who guides me, and it is He who feeds me and gives me drink, and when I am sick, it is He who cures me, and it is He who causes me to die and then gives me life, and it is He in Whom I hope that He will forgive me my sin on the Day of Judgment" (77-82). The clauses following "who" are relative clauses that describe the "Lord of the Worlds." These clauses emphasize the unique attributes of God and the deep connection between Ibrahim and his Lord. Without these relative clauses, the verse would be less meaningful and the reader would not fully understand the depth of Ibrahim's faith¹³.

The Semantic Significance of Genitive Constructions:

A genitive construction, where one noun is attached to another to form a phrase, is used to provide additional information or to specify the relationship between two nouns. For example, in the verse: "And do not disgrace me on the Day when they are resurrected, on the Day when neither wealth nor sons will avail" (87-88), the phrase "on the Day when they are resurrected" and "on the Day when neither wealth nor sons will avail" are genitive constructions modifying the noun "Day." These phrases specify the day on which Ibrahim is asking God to protect him from disgrace, and they emphasize the futility of worldly possessions on that day.

These grammatical relationships between the various sentences have been clarified, significantly contributing to the text's coherence by enhancing its structure and meaning."

Fourthly, Coherence

De Beaugrande argues that coherence is specific to the continuity achieved within the world of a text. This semantic continuity is manifested in a system of concepts and the relations that connect these concepts¹⁴.

Brown and Yule, in their work "Discourse Analysis," posit that coherence is determined by the reader's interpretation of the text. They examine how language is used as a tool for communication and how it constructs linguistic messages that the reader processes in a specific way to interpret¹⁵.

According to Cohen, connections within a text can be achieved with or without linguistic connectors. He argues that juxtaposition, the mere placement of elements next to each other, is a common way to create connections. He states, "The presence of a conjunction at the beginning of each sentence makes the discourse very heavy, which is why discourse tends towards mere juxtaposition. (...) Although traditional rhetoric has called the omission of a connector a 'separation,' we consider juxtaposition to be the normal form of connection¹⁶." ¹⁷While linguistic connectors are important for textual cohesion, they are not sufficient. Semantic relations are also necessary to ensure coherence.

The elements that contribute to the coherence of any text are numerous and vary from one text to another and from one language to another. However, the most prominent elements include:

- A. Textual structures: macrostructure, microstructure, and substructures.
- B. Logical semantic relations (the focus of this study)
- C. The principle of appropriateness (in the Quran)
- D. Sound patterns

Since each element requires extensive research, this study will focus on "logical semantic relations," which include:

- ✓ The relationship between generalization and specification
- ✓ The logical order of ideas
- ✓ The relationship between cause and effect

Logical Semantic Relations in the Quran:

1. The Relationship Between Generalization and Specification

One of the prominent logical semantic relations found in the Quranic text is that of generalization and specification. This involves the use of a general statement that is subsequently elaborated upon with more specific details. Often, there is no explicit linguistic connector between the general statement and its subsequent specification.

Examples from the Quran:

- A. **The Story of Moses:** When Pharaoh threatened to imprison Moses, the latter proposed a miraculous sign as proof of his prophetic mission. God says, "Even if I were to bring you a clear sign?" (30).

The phrase "a clear sign" is a generalization that is subsequently specified in the following verses: "So he cast down his staff, and behold, it was a serpent, plain to see" (32) and "And he drew forth his hand, and behold, it was white to the beholders" (33). These verses provide specific examples of the miraculous signs that Moses performed.

The Story of the Pharaoh and the Magicians: When the magicians believed in Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh threatened them, saying, "Have you believed in him before I have permitted you? Indeed, he is your elder who has taught you magic. So you shall soon know. I will surely cut off your hands and your feet from opposite sides, and I will crucify you all" (49). The phrase "you shall soon know" is a generalization of the impending punishment. The subsequent verses provide specific details about the torture they will endure.

- B. **The Story of Hud:** God says, "And fear Him Who has provided you with all that you know" (133). The verb "provided" is general and is then elaborated upon in the following verse: "He has provided you with livestock, sons, gardens, and springs" (134).
- C. **The Story of Saleh:** God asks the people of Saleh, "Will you be left secure in what is here?" (146). The adverb "here" is general and is then made specific in the following verse: "In gardens, and springs, and cultivated fields, and palm trees whose fruit is abundant, and you carve out houses from the mountains, securely?" (149).
- D. This pattern of generalization and detail is also evident in the stories of other prophets, such as **Hood, Lot, and Shu'aib**. Each prophet's story provides specific examples of the general admonitions against idolatry, immorality, and injustice.
- E. For instance, in the **Story of Hood**, the Quran highlights the people's corruption, stating, "Do you build a monument on every high place, playing? And do you take for yourselves monuments, thinking you will abide forever? And when you strike, you strike as tyrants" (130).
- F. In the **Story of Lot**, the specific details of the people's immorality are elaborated upon, inviting them to abandon their sinful practices: "Do you approach males among the worlds, and leave that which your Lord has created for you as mates? Nay, but you are a people transgressing" (166).
- G. In the **Story of Shu'aib**, the specific acts of injustice and corruption committed by his people are detailed, such as cheating in trade, using false weights and measures, and oppressing others. God commands them to be just and righteous: "Give full measure and do not be of the losers. And weigh with a true balance. And do not withhold from people their due. And do not commit corruption in the land" (181-184).

The relationship between generalization and specification ensures semantic continuity between the parts of the text, fostering coherence through the elaboration and clarification of general statements

2. The Logical Sequence of Ideas

The Quran is meticulously structured, with ideas presented logically and coherently. This careful sequencing enhances the text's clarity and persuasiveness.

A prime example of this logical order can be seen in the story of Moses and Pharaoh. The narrative begins with God instructing Moses to confront the oppressive people of Pharaoh in Surat Ash-Shu'araa, verses 10-11: "And [mention] when your Lord called to Moses, saying, 'Go to the wrongdoing people, the people of Pharaoh, will they not fear?'" Moses, feeling apprehensive, seeks divine assistance in verses 12-14: "He said, 'My Lord, indeed, I fear that they will deny me and narrow my chest and my tongue not become fluent, so send Aaron with me. And they have a crime against me, so I fear that they will kill me.'" Subsequently, he and Aaron are sent to Pharaoh with a clear message in verse 16: "So go to Pharaoh and say, 'Indeed, we are messengers of the Lord of the worlds.'" The dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh unfolds logically, with Moses' eloquence and divine signs countering Pharaoh's arrogance. For instance, in verses 32-33, Moses performs his miracles: "So he cast down his staff, and at once it was a serpent, apparent; and he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to the beholders." The narrative culminates in Pharaoh's ultimate defeat and the triumph of divine justice in the subsequent verses of Surat Ash-Shu'araa.

Another example is found in the story of Ibrahim. He supplicates to God in Surat Ash-Shu'araa, verse 83: "My Lord, grant me judgment and join me with the righteous." The request for wisdom precedes the request for righteousness, reflecting the logical progression from intellectual understanding to righteous action.

Razi justified this introduction by stating, 'Theoretical knowledge precedes practical application because one can know the truth without acting upon it, while the opposite is not possible. Knowledge is an attribute of the soul, while action is an attribute of the body. Just as the soul is superior to the body, so too is knowledge superior to reform'¹⁸

Similarly, in the story of Noah, he calls upon his people to fear God and obey him in Surat Ash-Shu'araa, verse 108: "So fear Allah and obey me." The priority given to fearing God underscores the foundation of obedience.

Abu Hayyan posits that Noah's obedience was a direct consequence of his God-consciousness¹⁹.

In the narrative of the Prophet Shuayb (peace be upon him), when he called upon his people to believe and desist from corruption on Earth, they responded with a defiant challenge: 'And cast upon us a fragment from the sky, if indeed you are of the truthful' (187). Their request was answered in a manner that mirrored their defiance. Divine retribution descended upon them from the heavens, as described in the Quranic verse: 'So they belied him, and the punishment of the Day of Overcast seized them. Indeed, it was a punishment of a terrible Day' (189). The term 'overcast' here refers to a dense cloud that enveloped Shuayb's people after a severe heatwave, from which scorching fire rained down upon them²⁰.

This meticulous sequencing and organization of events contribute to the text's overall coherence and unity, seamlessly weaving together its various components into a cohesive whole.

The Cause-Effect Relationship in the Quran

The Quran is meticulously structured, with ideas presented logically and coherently. One such technique used to enhance textual coherence is the establishment of cause-effect relationships between different parts of the text.

Examples from the Quran:

1. **The Story of Moses:** In Surah Ash-Shu'araa, verse 63, the cause-effect relationship is established: "So We inspired Moses, saying, 'Strike the sea with your staff,' and it parted." The action of striking the sea with the staff is the cause, and the parting of the sea is the effect.
2. **The Supplication of Ibrahim:** In Surah Ash-Shu'araa, verse 51, the cause-effect relationship is implied: "Indeed, we hope that our Lord will forgive us our sins, since we were the first of the believers." The belief in God is the cause, and the hope for forgiveness is the effect.
3. **The Test of Wealth and Time:** In Surah Ash-Shu'araa, verses 205-207, the cause is granting people wealth and time, and the effect is their ultimate fate: "Have you considered, if We had allowed them to live for many years, and then what they were promised came to them - what would their enjoyment have profited them?"
4. **The Revelation to Non-Arabs:** In Surah Ash-Shu'araa, verses 198-199, the cause is revealing the Quran to a non-Arab people, and the effect is their disbelief: "And if We had revealed it to one of the foreign peoples, and he had recited it to them, they would not have believed in it."

By employing such cause-effect relationships, the Quran creates a cohesive and logical narrative. This technique enhances the reader's understanding and appreciation of the text.

Fifthly, Conclusion:

The Quran presents a rich field for linguistic and literary studies. Given its unique cognitive and stylistic makeup, it remains a text that scholars continue to explore for its profound meanings and miraculous qualities.

Upon analyzing the selected surah, the following conclusions were reached:

- ✓ **Grammatical and semantic relationships** contribute to a clear coherence within the Quranic text.
- ✓ The surah, like other Quranic chapters, is replete with **logical and semantic relationships** that foster a cohesive and integrated structure.
- ✓ **Independent and dependent clauses** contribute to a broader and more nuanced meaning by introducing new elements to the text. For example, in the verse "Then it will come upon them suddenly, while they perceive not" (Ash-Shu'araa:202), the adverbial clause "while they perceive not" adds a layer of meaning, emphasizing the sudden and unexpected nature of the event.
- ✓ The prevalence of **logical and semantic relationships** significantly enhances the text's coherence and unity.
- ✓ The relationship between **general and specific statements** plays a role in clarifying the meaning. A general statement, such as "Will they not fear?" can be elaborated on through a series of more specific statements, creating a coherent and interconnected narrative.

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³ For example, two academic studies (Ph.D.) in this field are: “The semantic implications and their impact on utilizing jurisprudential rulings from the Holy Quran” by ‘Aziz al-Din Sulaimani, and “The interaction of vocabulary with grammatical functions and its impact on producing meaning in the Quranic sentence” by Naeem Muhammad ‘Abd al-Ghani.

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¹⁹ Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi. (1983). *The vast ocean*, pp. 26, 30.

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