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Cementing devices and ambiguity in the Holy Qur'an: Al-Qasas Surah as a model

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This study aims to identify the cementing devices used in the Holy Qur'an, Al-Qasas Surah, in particular. Specific cementing devices appear to connect the phrases and clauses contextualized in the verses of this Surah. Three exegeses and three different translations of the meaning of the Holy Qur'an were referred to in this study for data collection and data analysis. The study's findings indicate that these devices have more than one sense, leading to other meanings and interpretations. The study also concluded that cementing devices reveal additional senses and interpretations of the verses discussed in this Surah. Furthermore, the study highlights the relationship between cementing devices and ambiguity, which appears clearly in the verses and gives rise to a different understanding of the meanings and interpretations of the verses discussed in this paper.

Key words: Ambiguity, cementing devices, Holy Qur'an, meaning, Al-Qasas Surah.

INTRODUCTION

Not only is discourse analysis concerned with analyzing language and its linguistic forms, it also focuses on describing language meanings and their multiple senses (Brown and Yule, 1983, as cited by Al-Harashsheh and Kanakri, 2013). The primary function of language in discourse is to exchange meanings with different senses among speech community members. This paper aims to identify some discourse markers (cementing devices) used in the Holy Qur'an, using Surah Al-Qasas as a model. Researchers have proposed many definitions of discourse markers. Fraser (1999) states that researchers have introduced discourse markers with several

meanings. For instance, many studies have been conducted on discourse markers and cohesive devices using various terms referring to discourse markers (Al-Shishtawi, 2020). These include discourse connectives, discourse operators, discourse particles, discourse signaling devices, phatic connectives, pragmatic connectives, pragmatic expressions, pragmatic formatives, pragmatic markers, pragmatic operators, pragmatic particles, semantic conjuncts, sentence connectives, and lately cementing devices.

The technical term „Cementing Devices“ was first used in a study on discourse markers in the Holy Qur'an,

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conducted by Al-Rawajfeh (2018), Al-Rawajfeh and Al-Khalafat (2019). They defined such a new term, which is equivalent to the term *discourse marker*, as a common word, phrase, clause, sentence, or a particle, or even a mark or pause used between two sentences or phrases that give a specific meaning related to the preceding sentence or phrase and another meaning to the following sentence or phrase. According to Jucker (1993), the term *discourse particle* is also equivalent to *discourse marker*. The former term is used to indicate the same linguistic elements as the latter. However, the two terms are sometimes used to refer to different usages. Furthermore, Alami (2015) defined discourse markers as dependent elements that classify speech by combining interactional and variation methods to discourse so that the roles of markers in the created discourse can be analyzed.

Furthermore, Schiffirn (1987) states that using discourse markers indicates the discourse topic boundaries, where one topic ends, the next topic starts, and they play a significant role in directing the pragmatic nature of discourse. Fraser (1999) indicates that the sentence meaning can be analyzed into two different senses: content meaning, where a sentence carries only one sense and the other is a pragmatic definition based on the intention of the speaker "speaker's meaning." According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), text unity is generally concerned with some cohesive devices that can be used in different parts of the text to create other meaningful relations leading to the agreement of the text (Huneety et al., 2017).

Another semantic term suggested by Halliday and Hassan (1980) is *cohesion*, which is found in text and situation as linguistic and extra-linguistic entities, giving the text continuity by making sense relations between the different parts of the text. According to De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), cohesion indicates how the elements of the text surface structure, including phrases, sentences, and clauses, are connected through a sequence. Cohesion is defined by Halliday (1994) as „the set of resources for constructing relations in a discourse which transcend grammatical structure“ (p. 309). Leech (2001) considered cohesion as a way through which ideas are linguistically connected to introduce texts. Furthermore, in the terminology of the interpretation of the Quran, language cohesion has been accommodated by Quranic scholars with the term "Munasabah" between verses and letters.

Moreover, Johnstone (2002) points out that cohesion links sentences to other sentences in a text, showing that a set of internal cohesive devices exists. These include reference, conjunctions, and substitution, which enable text receivers to relate the various portions of the text and combine them. According to Graesser et al. (2004: 193), cohesion uses unambiguous structures, words, phrases, or sentences that help interpret the practical ideas in a text connecting ideas with themes and topics. Besides,

lexical cohesion is referred to as „the relationships in meaning between lexical items in a text and, in particular, content words and the relation between them“ (Partridge, 2012: 117).

However, the researchers of this study have used the term cementing devices to refer to discourse markers or cohesive devices. As a technical term, Cement is defined in *Mariam-Webster Dictionary* as "Bind or join with or as if with cement," or "a binding element that serves to unite firmly." Therefore, this term can be used in discourse to refer to uniting or bringing together two sentences affecting their meanings by contributing different senses to the text. Cementing devices are essential semantic parts through which texting relation can provide a variety of purposes and senses to the sentence and its components. Moreover, cement devices refer to discourse markers or cohesive devices that researchers know, but they are also phrases or sentences that can convey different senses in the text.

According to Kiraz (1994), Arabic is a firmly structured and highly derivational language. To understand the Arabic language, the treatment of the language constituents is required at all levels. Therefore, this study aims at identifying and understanding cementing devices used in Al-Qasas Surah in the Holy Qur'an. It also attempts to analyze such devices that have led to various interpretations and meanings conveyed in this Surah. Moreover, it aims at showing the relationship between these cementing devices and the lexical items associated with them in the verses and the intended meaning in the text. The discourse in the Quranic text has two meanings. The first meaning is the call, and the second meaning is the overall message that the Noble Qur'an wants to convey to people. An example is: "O people...". The verses of the Holy Qur'an were filled with this call. For example, suppose we want to extend our eyesight a little, in that case we find that people's speech is equal to the speech of man, "Oh, man." All the places in which the human being was mentioned were blame, or description and characteristics. Examples of this are the Almighty's saying: "We created man from a sperm," then it is true, but when the Almighty God says: "O man, what has deceived you about your generous Lord," that is to blame, and reprimand, unlike mentioning a person without a call, such as: "We created man, and we know what his soul whispers to him."

Before the assignment, the human being was the one to which the messages were revealed at different eras. If the human nature before the assignment was true, then this person, after the assignment, takes a position on this assignment. For example, Qur'an did not speak of the call to Muslims but instead spoke of the believers with the difference between Islam and faith. The term "people" refers to man, and he has transcended species and nature to meeting and interacting. Referring to a person or people will equate the two before commissioning; therefore, it is a general discourse that does not address

supporters of a specific mandate or a specific message but instead begins with nature and roots, making the public discourse absolute. It is the origin of creation before social manifestations such as language, culture, color, civilization, and religious affiliation.

Thus, the Holy Qur'an addressed man absolutely on the basis that the people in the Qur'an are human beings, and the fluctuation between people and humans in the Quranic discourse continues to produce meanings and connotations. Therefore, the union of man and people indicates that the jinni is the other side of the Almighty's saying in Surat Al-Nas: "From heaven and people." People or human beings indicate the unity of origin before meeting and commissioning; therefore, a man in every field and era is man, his share of life gains varies, according to the environment and upbringing. Anatomy and natural formation confirm that man is one and that he is born equal with others, and that after birth, he is acquired, and this is the basis that wastes claims of racial superiority, racism, and others.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive and analytical approach was applied in this study by referring to three different translations of the Holy Qur'an. These include translations of Al Madina (2007), Pickthall (2002), and Kattab (2015). Furthermore, two more exegeses were also used to interpret the meaning of the verses and the functions of the cementing devices employed in these verses. These exegeses include *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an) by Sayyed Qutub (1959) and *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an* by Al-Qurtubi (2006). Finally, after identifying the cementing devices in the Surah, the researchers reviewed the interpretations of the verses, including those devices, analyzing their functions that reveal different senses and interpretations expressed in this Surah.

RESULTS

In this study, special attention is paid to identifying and analyzing lexical devices, which are called from now on cementing devices, in the Holy Qur'an, Al-Qasas Surah in particular. It is essential to point out that few studies have been recently conducted by Al-Rawajfeh (2018), Al-Khalafat, Al-Rawajfeh (2019), Al-Marayat et al. (2019), and Hajjaj and Al-Rawajfeh (2020). These studies, which are concerned with cementing devices/ markers and the relationship between lexical items used in a text such as words, phrases, or sentences in the Holy Qur'an, act here as a starting point for this study, as an increasing interest in lexical devices used in the Holy Qur'an. This study, however, is concerned with identifying and analyzing cementing devices, which are used to connect sentences or phrases to express two or more related meanings. For example, in verse (25), Allah says,

فَجَاءَتْهُ إِخْدَاهُ مَتَمَّرِي عُيَى لِبَيْحِي إِعْقَالَتْ إِنْ بَلْبِي دُغْ وَكَلْبِي حُفْرِيكَ أَجْرَمَا (25) سَرَقَاتُهَا

—Then one of the two women came to him, walking

bashfully. She said, —Myfather is inviting you so he may reward you for watering `our animals` for us (Khattab, the Clear Qur'an, 2015).

The prepositional phrase "عُيَى لِبَيْحِيَاء" (*shyly*), functions as an adverb of manner, describing the woman's walk "one of the two women came to him walking shyly." However, the exact prepositional phrase can explain the following sentence, "She said," describing how the woman spoke. This shows that the prepositional phrase is used as a cementing device that links both sentences and specifies them simultaneously.

Textual coherence is an essential component of the text in the ancient Arab heritage, and in the text, it means verbal and moral continuity through the units of a text or a discourse. Textual coherence is one of the essential elements by which the Qur'anic text becomes a coherent and coherent unit. The ancient Arab scholars took care of it under the bosom of the Qur'anic miracle, and they put "the coherence of the Qur'anic text" as the essential criterion for the Qur'anic miraculousness, whether this coherence is verbal or moral. The ancient Arab scholars took care of it under the bosom of the Qur'anic miracle, and they put "the coherence of the Qur'anic text" as the most crucial criterion for the Qur'anic miraculousness, whether this coherence is verbal or moral. We find in the Arab heritage several manifestations of textual cohesion, the most important of which are: "connection," "systems," "compatibility," "cohesion," "correlation," "proportionality," "consistency," and others. It is also used clearly in another example on lexical devices is found in the verses (33-34),

قَالَ رَبِّ لِي قَاتِلْتُ مُؤْمِنًا (33) وَأَخِي هَارُونَ مَوْلَانُ حِي لِسْرًا... 43) فَوَخِافُ أَنْ يَكْتُلُونِ

"... I have killed a man among them, and I fear that they will kill me (33). My brother Harun —is more eloquent than me... (34)" Khattab, the Clear Qur'an, (2015).

The phrase "وأخي هارون" (*And my brother Harun*) starts the verse (34), and so connect it with the verse (33), giving two different meanings. The first meaning can be understood if verse (33) is linked with this phrase "*And my brother Harun*," and so Moses said that he and his brother together might be killed by the Pharaoh. However, the phrase gives another meaning if it is linked with the phrase "*is more eloquent than me (34)*", to describe Harun as more eloquent than Moses. This also shows that the phrase "*And my brother Harun*" is a cementing device that gives two meanings depending on the sentence it modifies.

Furthermore, this cementing device is found in other verses in the same Surah. For instance, the prepositional phrase "*With Our Ayaat* (verses, signs, proofs...) in verse (35) can reveal two meanings as to what it modifies.

... وَنَخْرَجُ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانَ أَفْكَالٍ يَصْرُلُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ ابْعَثْنَا قَاتِلًا وَمَنْ نَبْعَثْكُمْ (35) لَعَلَّكُمْ

"...and grant you both authority, so they cannot harm you. With our signs (Ayaat), you and those who follow you will 'certainly' prevail." Khattab, the Clear Qur'an, (2015).

The first meaning is established when the prepositional phrase "With Our signs" modifies the pronoun "you" that precedes it; the meaning becomes they will not be able to harm both of you with the signs you have. Nevertheless, the phrase brings about another understanding if the exact phrase "With Our signs" modifies the clause that follows it, where the meaning becomes "with Our signs, you both and your followers are victorious. As can be seen, the prepositional phrase reveals two distinct meanings based on the constituent it modifies.

Similarly, the prepositional phrase "And on the Day of Judgment" in verse (42) also can be interpreted to express two meanings based on which it modifies.

وَلَيَبْخَسُنَّ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةُ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ مَن (42)
لَقَبُوحِينَ

—~~It~~ caused a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Judgment, they will be among the outcasts (42" Khattab, the Clear Qur'an, 2015).

The first meaning is revealed by the phrase: "on the Judgment Day", which is associated with the previous clause as a complement of the sentence "We caused a curse to follow them in this world". This indicates that they are cursed in this world and on the Day of Resurrection. However, the same phrase brings about an unrelated meaning as it complements the following finite clause "they will be among the contemptuous." In this sense, the phrase indicates that not only are they cursed in this world, but also they will be among those who will be prevented from receiving Allah's Mercy, despised. Syntactically speaking, the meaning of the exact prepositional phrase is affected by the relation between the two clauses with this phrase and what it modifies.

Furthermore, verse (43) has two different meanings based on the way it is read. The verse says:

وَقَدْ نَحْنُا مُوسَىٰ لِلنَّبَاةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَلْهَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الَّتِي عَصَوْا رَبَّ النَّاسِ (43)
وَمُدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةً لِيُتَّقُوا

—~~Indeed, We gave Moses the Scripture—after destroying earlier nations—as an insight for the people, a guide, and mercy so perhaps they would be mindful (43)"~~ (Khattab, the Clear Qur'an, 2015).

To illustrate, the verse can be interpreted as Moses being given the Scripture (Torah) after destroying the ancient generations. However, if a pause occurs after the word, then a new meaning can be conveyed as Moses was given the Torah after defeating Pharaoh and taking his people away.

In addition, there are more cementing devices in Al-

Qasas Surah that connect two verses revealing different meanings and interpretations.

For example, the verse (51) ends with the clause:

(لَوْ قَدْ وَصَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَابَ لَإِذْنًا وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (51))

"We have conveyed the Word to them, so that they may remember (51)."

And verse (52) starts with:

(الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ بَعْدُ) (52)

—Those to whom We gave the Scripture before it, they believe in it (52)."

As can be seen, the clause "so that they may remember" links the two verses (51, 52) and expresses two distinct meanings. The first meaning comes from that Allah conveyed the Word (The Qur'an in which is the news of everything) to the people, and so they may remember or receive admonition (The Noble Qur'an, 2007). However, the other meaning can be understood when completing this clause with the following verse. Here, the purpose revealed is that they may remember those (Jews and Christians) who were given the Scripture (that is, the Torah and the Bible) before the Qur'an (Al-Sabouni, 1981). Another sense can be understood when the verse (52) is read alone. In this sense, those (Jews and Christians) who had been given the Scripture (the Torah and the Bible) before the Qur'an do believe in it (The Noble Qur'an, 2007).

Moreover, verse (66) is related to the previous verse (65), as it is connected with it. Therefore, when reading the phrase

فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَنصُرُونَ

—They will be too dumbstruck on that Day to ask one another for answers." Khattab, the Clear Qur'an, (2015).

The phrase "On that Day" refers to the Day when Allah calls them, which is mentioned in verse (65). Therefore, the news (of the excellent answer) will be obscured on that day. However, when continuing the reading of the verse (66), the meaning can be on that day, they will not be able to ask one another (The Noble Qur'an, 2007).

Another example is revealed in verse (68), which has two different senses. Allah said,

وَيُلْقِي فِي سُبْحَانَ مَا يَخْتَارُ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

—~~Yar Lord creates and chooses whatever He wills, and He chooses—the choice is not theirs. Glorified and Exalted is Allah above what they associate with Him?~~ (68)," Khattab, the Clear Qur'an, (2015).

In this verse, the first meaning is that the Lord creates what He wills to create, and He selects whoever or whatever He wills for His authority. No one has the command and choice, but all that is for the Lord alone

-*"the choice is not theirs"* (Al-Qurtubi, 2006). On the other hand, the verse has a different interpretation, which can be understood by the fact that Lord creates and chooses whoever or whatever He sees is good for them. It has been realized that having a pause after the sentence *"Your Lord creates and chooses whatever He wills, and He chooses"* expresses the meaning that only the Lord chooses what He wants and creates. However, completing the verse with the appositive clause *"... and He chooses whatever He wills"*, that is, the Lord selects anyone or anything good for them (Al-Qurtubi, 2006). This reveals a difference in the verse (68) interpretation, which leads to a different understanding and meaning.

DISCUSSION

Having identified some cementing phrases and sentences associated with different meanings expressed in some texts of the Holy Qur'an, Al-Qasas Surah as a model, it has been realized that a relationship exists between these cementing devices and ambiguity. That is to say, the structure of such devices and the ways how they combine two phrases or sentences revealed a range of different interpretations and understanding the metaphorical meaning in the verses discussed in this Surah. Therefore, it is ambiguous where a word, phrase, or sentence gives rise to different meanings and senses. This is attributed to the grammatical syntactic representation of the sentence or phrase, which has two distinct meanings, sometimes leading to different interpretations. Furthermore, the examples and verses discussed above reveal ambiguity, which appears in all the examples, and that the same cementing devices link the two sentences or phrases together and give different meanings.

When referring to the cementing devices mentioned above, there appears a high degree of ambiguity regarding their relationship in the text. To illustrate, the prepositional phrase (Galaa Estehya'a/ عُذِي لَيْتِجَاء) that functions as an adverb meaning *shyly*, is ambiguous as it specifies the verb *walking* in the first sense; however, it conveys another metaphorical meaning when it modifies the verb *said*. Another example is the conjunction (Wa: and), which is used to introduce a sentence or indicate addition, especially of items within the same class or type. In Arabic specifically, it is sometimes used to express accompaniment or *with*. In this sense, verse (34) completes verse (33) and indicates two different interpretations of the two verses. Thus, when (Wa: and) expresses accompaniment, the meaning given here is that Moses feared that they would kill him and his brother, Harun (Al-Sabouni, 1981). However, the second sense is when (Wa: and) indicates addition, linking the two sentences together, so the meaning differs. Again, this shows that other functions express different meanings.

Another example of cementing devices that shows

ambiguity in its use is the phrase (بِآيَاتِنَا) which means *With our Ayaat (signs)* (35). In this verse (35), the prepositional phrase reveals two different meanings based on what this phrase modifies, showing ambiguity in its interpretation. The previous section shows that changing the primary constituent entails two different variations with a different understanding of the verse (Al-Sabouni, 1981). This is clear evidence that this prepositional phrase expresses ambiguity, through which the range of various interpretations can be implied. Other instances of ambiguity exist due to the nature of cementing devices used in this Surah, as language expresses necessarily a kind of vagueness (Kreidler, 1998).

Moreover, ambiguity is clearly expressed in the verse (42) as Allah says:

—*They caused a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Judgment, they will be among the outcasts (42)*". Khattab, the Clear Qur'an.

Here, the word which shows ambiguity is the conjunction (*and*) that connects the preceding sentence with the following phrase *"on the Judgment Day"*. In this sense, the meaning becomes that Pharaoh and his soldiers were cursed in the world *and* on Resurrection Day. But, on the other hand, when the phrase *and on the Day of Judgment* is linked with the following sentence, the meaning reveals that they are cursed, and on Judgment Day, *"they will be among the contemptuous."*

To add more, verse (43) reveals more examples with cementing devices that bring about ambiguous interpretation and different meanings. For example, the preposition *"after"* in verse —*They gave Moses the Scripture after destroying earlier nations*— can be interpreted into two different meanings. The first notion is that Moses was given the Scripture after destroying the earlier nations. Thus, the preposition *"after"* manifests the incident taken against the earlier nations' incident. However, the expression (من بعد/ after) establishes another different meaning when a pause occurs on it. As known, a pause sometimes has its function in a language, and so when a reader reads this verse and pauses on the word (من بعد/ after), there appears a different interpretation, which leads to a difference in meaning. The meaning expressed here is that Moses was given the Scripture after he had destroyed Pharaoh and his army. Ambiguity is shown clearly in this verse as the same expression (من بعد/ after) reveals different meanings.

In addition, ambiguity is made clear in this Surah as expressed by verse (64). One obvious meaning can be revealed through stating that the Lord creates whatever He wills and chooses whoever or whatever is good for them. This is shown by using the particle (مَنْ/ مَن), a determiner that refers to whoever or whatever. However, the same particle (مَنْ/ مَن) may be interpreted as it has a different function, negation (not). This new function reveals a different meaning to the verse in that the Lord

creates whatever He wills and selects, and they are not the ones who choose, but the Lord is the one who chooses; *—He choice is not theirs*” (Qutub, 9191). It has been noticed that this verse has more than one sense, which indicates that it is ambiguous. As can be seen, the previous examples, where cementing devices are used to show coherence in Al-Qasas Surah's verses, clearly manifest some sense relations, that is, ambiguity.

The research on Quran concepts has removed a field with excellent scope for investigating what the researcher expanded to investigate. This is because the entire Qur'anic concepts contain inwardly and outwardly mental and heart connotations that help understand the text underlying the apparent meanings of the verses and the surahs. Therefore, scholars paid attention to these Qur'anic concepts and gave them all the attention, whether they studied them as a linguistic lesson, a graphic lesson, or an explanatory lesson based on the logical and sensible aphorisms of the ancients and moderns. Perhaps among those concepts are the concepts of (tyranny) and (arrogance), which were mentioned in several verses and surahs of the Noble Qur'an, and they were expressive of the meaning intended for them to make clear to the Muslim.

These two concepts were mentioned in Surat Al-Qasas, which is unanimously agreed by the commentators (Makkah). We know that the group of Meccan Surahs that were revealed before the migration of the Messenger of God (- may God's prayers and peace be upon him) contained references from the news of the previous nations that struck the ears of the tyrants and arrogant infidels of Quraysh who denied the message of the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him). So, they needed to pay attention to why they heard the news of the tyrants and the arrogant so they might be taught by it and turn back from their tyranny and arrogance in the land.

Conclusion

The current study has been concerned with identifying and analyzing cementing devices used in the Holy Qur'an, primarily in Al-Qasas Surah. Generally, the study demonstrates the uses of these devices associated with their different functions and meanings, which are found in this Surah. The analysis also reveals a relationship between such devices and ambiguity, as different interpretations were evidenced in the verses discussed in this study. Given the above examples, it is evident that cementing devices serve several functions in the verses found in Al-Qasas Surah in the Holy Qur'an. However, such devices also showed several ambiguous implications and interpretations, revealing different meanings and senses associated with these devices. The study showed that there is a relationship between cementing devices and ambiguity. This relation is based on the other senses conveyed through these devices, which have different

functions and meanings as well. The study also indicated the significant role of the sentence structure of the verses in interpreting the phrase or word that has more than one sense and meaning, based on its position in verse and what it specifies.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

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