

Arabic Grammar as A Tool for Studying the Glorious Qur`An

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Abstract: *This paper examined the Arabic grammar as a tool for studying the glorious Qur'an. It discussed the concept of grammar and Qur'an, importance of knowledge in studying the Qur'an given the appropriate examples. The paper concluded by identifying that there is a strong relationship between the grammar as a tool in the studying Qur'an. Recommendation was proffered that study of the Islamic studies should adhere to study Arabic language for a better elucidation of the Qur'an.*

I. Introduction

In the name of Allah the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, all praise is to Almighty Allah, Creator of the universe, peace and blessing of Allah be upon his apostle Muhammad bin Abdullah, his family and his companions.

This paper titled: Arabic Grammar as a Tool for Studying the Glorious Qur'an attempts to discuss the importance of knowledge of Arabic grammar in studying Qur'an with some examples from Qur'an verses. Bellow is subtitles of the topic:

- Definition of grammar.
- Qur'an in Arabic text.
- Importance of Arabic Language.
- Importance of Arabic grammar.
- Using Arabic grammar in studying Qur'an: examples from Qur'an verses.
- Conclusion
- Notes and References.

On God we depend and we seek his Marcy and forgiveness.

Definition of grammar

Grammar can be define as: the whole system and structure of language or of languages in general usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflection) and sometimes also phonology and semantic.[\[i\]](#) Or, it is the rules in language for changing the forms of words and joining them into sentence, the basic rules of language.[\[ii\]](#) In the light of the above definitions one can understand that the grammar is a study of words and sentences, such as nouns, verb, pronoun, Adjectives, etc.

Qur'an Arabic text:

The Qur'an is a significant religious text written in Qur'anic Arabic, and followed by believers of the Islamic faith. The Qur'an contains 6,236 numbered verses (ayāt) and is divided into 114 chapters. An example verse from the Qur'an: (21.30) Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and we separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?[\[iii\]](#)

The 1st surah of the holy Qur'an is Fatiha and last one is Nās, but the first verse revealed to prophet (SAW) is five verses in Surah al – Alaq and last verse revealed is 2:281[\[iv\]](#)

Importance of Arabic Language.

As the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, the importance of the knowledge of Arabic cannot be over emphasized. Even if one does not know or understand Arabic it is useful to know a few facts about the Arabic language. Arabic is a very scientific language, in which the meaning of a word is based on its roots, which usually consists of three letters. Variations in shades of meaning are obtained, first by vovelling the simple roots, and secondly by the addition of prefixes and in-fixes, thus from the root Salima سَلِمَ to be safe (literally he was safe) we drive Sallama سَلَّمَ To deliver; aslma أَسْلَمَ to submit (also to become a muslim) istaslama اسْتَسَلِمَ to surrender; salamun سلام “peace” Salamatun سلامة “safety” well being, muslimun مسلم ‘a muslim’. It is unfortunately fact that only when one has grasp of the structure of language and in particular, when one knows the various derive form of the verbs, both strong and weak – is one able to use an Arabic Dictionary with ease, as well as Arabic Dictionaries enters words under their roots and the only roots are in alphabetical order. So

those who have some grounding in Arabic can easily find the meaning of Arabic words from its roots by consulting an English – Arabic, Arabic – English lexicon.[\[v\]](#)

There is no doubt that for a deeper understanding of the Qur`an knowledge of the Arabic language is absolutely essential. Such knowledge can be achieved easily if the language is taught in the early stages of schooling. [\[vi\]](#)

The importance of Arabic grammar in studying Qur`an.

The Qur`an is a treasure true of gems and jewels. For the one to delinquently seeks them, it can provide any or all of the following priceless blessings required for spiritual growth and rejuvenation: knowledge, insight, understanding of reality vs. illusion, the ability to identify causes of day – to – day situations and human reactions to them, a variety of psychological behavior traits displayed by people in any era of time, and a deep grasp of the concepts of life death and after life.

Not just this, but the Qur`an also details numerous past, real-life, historic events accompanied by dialogues that actually took place centuries ago between people, necessitating the students of knowledge to dig deeper into the context behind the revelation of its verses, and to consult other reliable sources for details of the events in the likes of previous prophets and bygone nations, with most authentic of these sources primarily being Hadith collections.

Last but not the least, one of the greatest gems that can be extracted from this glorious Book is the immense enjoyment of communicating directly with Allah through unrushed, beautified and deliberate recitation of His own spoken word. Such recitation results in the subsequent of, and the feeling of being enveloped by, His Divine mercy.

All of the above are blessings and treasures that can be derived from this ‘treasure chest’ – The Glorious Qur`an – to name but few.

Yes, the Qur`an is indeed a treasure trove of gems, but only for the one who seeks them from this trove with the correct intention, and via correct branches and sources of knowledge, which includes the rules of grammar and other supplementary subjects.

One of the most popular – and also often the most feared – subjects that a student of knowledge pursues to understand the Qur`an better is Arabic Grammar. Comprising mostly of a set of, lexical rules derived to help understand Arabic as a Language, Grammar is sometimes a difficult nut to crack. May it is many a student most Arden nemeses.

I admit that I have heard some extremely polarized views about this subject from different people, be they experienced teachers or frazzled students at their wits end, students ready to pull their hair out over sincere but futile efforts to memorize the complex, multidimensional tables of Arabic pronouns, nouns and verbs!

Some of the opinion that Arabic Grammar makes it difficult and confusing for a student of knowledge to get a grasp of the language. They opine that memorization of tables does not help it, at the end of the day; the student cannot apply its basic concepts to comprehend the actual Qur`anic text.

Others stand by the claim that memorization of the complex noun and verb tables of Arabic Grammar is one of the secrets to unlocking the deeper meanings of the Comprehensive yet compact words in the Qur`an.

As a word – in progress student of knowledge, I admit that I hold the latter opinion. I have benefited tremendously by studying basic Arabic Grammar. However, my primary concern was never memorizing the tables just to get good marks in the test, but rather, to apply the knowledge of grammar to the Qur`an’s Arabic text in order to scoop out meanings from it that simple language translations did not adequately convey.

Below, I will attempt to express the importance of studying Arabic grammar by explaining examples in the Qur`an:-

1st Example:-

“O” you who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger” (Qur`an 4:134)

The above portion of this verse carries 2 Arabic words that sounds incredibly similar to each other, and they occur consecutively. In fact, the only difference between the two words is changing the fatahah on the “ءامنوا” in to a kasrah “ءامنوا”

The change of the single fatahah into a kasrah changes the entire meaning of the same set of letters. Whereas the words means. “Those people who have believed” and the second word is a verb or action – word, the word means, “Believe, you all! “a command verb” i.e. an action word that is meant as a command someone. In grammatical but we also say the word “eat” as a verb in other contexts, e.g. “we will eat in an hour”

The beauty of the Arabic Language is that it uses separate combinations of the same set of root letters (in this case, these letters are: م and ن), with difference in meaning using very beautiful.

2nd Example:-

For the next example, here is a verse from surah Aali Imran.

“O you who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy; view in such Persevere; strengthen each other; and fear Allah that you may prosper.” (Qur’an – 3:200)

In the above verse, again, two very similar words came right one after another. They are: in this case (اصبروا) (وصابروا), both these words are command verbs ordering a group to a certain action. However, their form is different by a single Arabic letter or consonant, the alif (ا). In the first word, the alif comes before the (ص).

In the second word, the alif comes after the (ص) this single, apparently very slight, difference in writing the some set of consonant, results in two command – verbs that convey completely different meanings, the command verb means be patient (you all) where as the command verb means “exhort each other towards patience (You all).”

Is not it obvious how powerful the language of the Qur’an is? How beautiful conveys different meanings by adding or moving around just one consonant letter in a word, or the vowel on it?

3rd example:

Now, let us look at the third example. This one will present how knowledge of Arabic grammar help in pondering more deeply on the verses of the Qur’an, to get a more detailed picture of what is being said:

“A lay hold of him, and shackle him” (Qur’an 69:30)

This verse of the Qur’an contains two commands – verbs which have the pronoun “O” appended at their end. Both the words are command – verbs directed at several masculine recipients, or a group of men. This is apparent because of the “وا” appearing at their end. This present an interesting insight in to this verse. The English translation says, “Lay hold of him” but analysis of the Arabic command verbs reveals that actually, several beings are being addressed to “Lay hold of him” not one person.

This knowledge of a bone – chilling scene that shows us a picture of what will happen to wrong - doers in the Akhirah: numerous angels will be commanded by Allah to hold and shackle one sinning human being, and then thrust him into the hell fire!

The next verse, shown below, completes the terrifying picture:

“And then let him enter hell” (Qur’an – 69 – 31)

Another command – verb occurs in this verse having the pronoun “و” appended at its end. The meaning is the same: an order from Allah to several angels to throw the person referred to by the pronoun “و” into the hell fire.

“And then thrust him into a chain (of other sinners like him a chain), the length where of is seventy cubits” (Qur’an – 69: 32).

Finally, using the command verb, Allah commands the numerous angles to pass the sinner on to a chain of others like him.

Tafsir Ibn kathir explain the above verses thus: Allah’s words “seize him and after him; then throw him in the blazing fire” mean that He (Allah) will command the guardians of hell to forcibly remove him from the gathering place fetter him – meaning put iron collars on his neck then carry him off to hell and cast him into it, meaning they will submerge him in it.

“Then fasten him on a chain whereof the length is seventy cubits” Ka’b al - Ahbar said “ Every ring of it will be equal to the entire amounts of iron found in this world.

Al – Awfi reported that ibn’ Abbas and Ibn Jurayj both said, “Each cubit will be the forearm’s length of an angle”. Ibn Jurayj reported that ibn Abbas said. (Then fasten him) “It will be entered into his buttocks and pulled out of his mouth. Then they will be arranged on this (chain) just like locust are arranged on a stick that is being roasted”

Al – Awfi reported that Ibn Abbas that said “it will be ran into his behind until it is brought out of his two nostrils so he will not be able to stand on his two feet”. [vii]

Arabic Grammar thus enables us to understand certain things while reciting or reading the Arabic text of the Qur’an directly, without needing an accompanying translation or consulting a tafsir (Qur’anic commentary).

As shown above, the tafsir makes it clear that several angels – in the role of the guardians of Hell will be taking hold of fettering and thrusting each other hell, dwellers in to either:

(i) A chain of other sinners headed for Hell or,

(ii) an extremely huge iron chain that will be passed through his body like a skewer. This terrifying pictures of several harsh, stern angels working together in a group on one sinner at a time sends chills down the spine. [viii]

Grammatical shift in Qur`an for the Rhetorical purposes.

There is sudden shift in the pronouns of the speaker or the; person spoken about known as iltifat in Blagah (Arabic Rhetoric) in the holy Qur`an. Arab writer ibn al-athir after studying this stylistic feature classed it among the remarkable things and exquisite subtleties in the holy Qur`an.

The impression that the incidence of iltifat in the Qur`an is low can also be gained from books on Balagah in Arabic tends to confine themselves to specified examples including for instance Q. 1:4, 36:22, 10:22, 35:9, 108:2, repeated with little variation, to represent the various types of iltifat between 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons these only represented a small sample is made clear by reference to the books of ibn al-athir who discussed some 20 examples, suyuti who deals with about 35 examples of iltifat and related features. And Badr al-din, al-Zarkashi who provides the most extensive treatment of this phenomenon and includes about 50 example. [ix]

There are six types of change in the person,

1. Change of person between 1st 2nd and 3rd person which is the most common and is usually divided into six kinds.
2. Change in number, singular, dual and plural.
3. Change in address.
4. Change in the tense of the verbs.
5. Change in the case marker.
6. Using noun in place of pronouns.

Subsequently, one of these styles that is (1st to 2nd person) they all give just one example Q36:22, and indeed, as we shall see, even that is doubtful. The change from 2nd to 1st person occurs in the Qur`an. However, it will be seen that other types are used for more frequently, for instance the change from 3rd to 1st person is represented by well over a hundred examples. Identifying the precise extent to each type will help us to understand the nature and functions of the features under discussion. It has, moreover, been argued that almost all examples of iltifat in the Qur`an are to be found in the Makkan Suras [x]

II. Conclusion

We discussed in this paper about the importance of grammar in studying holy Qur`an and find out that:

1. There is no doubt that for a deeper understanding of the Qur`an knowledge of the Arabic language is absolutely essential.
2. The change of the single Fathah into a Kasrah changes the entire meaning of the same set of letters.
3. Arabic grammar thus enables us to understand certain things whilst reciting or reading the Arabic text of the holy Qur`an directly, without needing an accompanying translation or consulting a tafsir.

Finally, the paper urge the students of knowledge and Muslims Ummah in general to acquire this important knowledge, that enable them the immense enjoyment of communicating directly with Allah and un rushed, beautified and deliberate recitation of his own spoken word. Such recitation results in the subsequent of, and the feeling of being enveloped by, his divine mercy.

Notes and references

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