

## ON QURANIC LEXICAL SEMANTICS<sup>(\*)</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Starting from Levin and Rappaport Hovav's (2005) argument that lexical semantic properties of words determine their morphosyntactic behaviour, this paper addresses the relationship between the lexical semantic properties a word bears and its linguistic behaviour in the Quranic text. Specifically, the paper seeks to address the following question: Do lexical items demonstrate a linguistic behaviour that is compatible with their lexical semantic properties and the properties of the context they appear in? Through scrutinizing those semantic properties of a group of lexical items that appear in different contexts in the Quran and their linguistic behaviour in terms of the grammatical, semantic, morphological and pragmatic functions they serve in the text, we aim to argue in favour of the fact that the selection of words in the Quranic text is not haphazard, rather it conforms with the contextual properties, the lexical semantic properties of the word, and the linguistic function they serve. The paper concludes that words in the Quranic text do not act haphazardly. Rather, their morphosyntactic behaviour and occurrences are governed by, among other things, the lexical semantic properties they encapsulate and the properties of the context they appear in.

**Keywords:** *Context of Situation, Context of Culture, Lexical Semantics, Morphosyntactic behaviour, Quranic Linguistics.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is an account of the semantic behaviour of a selected set of lexical items from Quranic discourse through which we aim to demonstrate that words do not act haphazardly but rather undertake more often than not a pragmatic function that underlies the text producer's intended (thematic) meaning. The present work provides a grammatical, semantic, morphological, and pragmatic analysis of lexical items through a diversity of examples based on Arabic and European linguistics. Thus, it is a rich source for contrastive linguistics. Examples of lexical behaviour are like polysemy, pleonasm, synonymy, morphological form, collocation, nominalisation, and active/passive participle. Our investigation of these grammatical and semantic mechanisms need to be explored through the context of situation and the context of culture which are, at times, related to the reasons for revelation. We will also examine the semantic primitives of lexical items based on the recent views of Talmy, 1985; Pinker, 1989, 1994, 2007; Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 2005, among others, on the lexical semantic determinants of syntactic behaviour of verbs in English.

## 2. CONTEXT AND MEANING

Context is concerned with the relationship between the contextual features and the semantic properties of lexemes (lexical items). During earlier studies, context refers to the text, i.e., the words and sentences that accompany the word or groups of words. Later on, the notion of text has expanded to include types of paralinguistic contexts such as context of organization, context of production, and context of building.

Due to this expansion of the meaning of the word, Catford (1950, 1965) proposed that another term needed to be coined to refer specifically and exclusively to the verbal environment; he suggested the term 'co-text'. Malinowski (1923: 306) argues that the meaning of any single word is to a very high degree dependent on its context. In turn, the intelligibility of this context requires placing it within its context of situation. For him, the rationale behind the coinage of this term is twofold. First, the necessity of expansion of the notion of context. Second, the linguistic expression cannot be detached from the situation in which lexical items are couched.

Further, Malinowski (1935) narrows down the notion of the context of situation suggesting that it exclusively refers to instances of language in use (i.e. texts and their constituents), while the context of culture includes the properties of the linguistic system (i.e. lexical items and grammatical categories). It is worthwhile to note that the semantic properties of a word depend on both its context of situation and context of culture. Firth (1957) also draws attention to

the dependence of meaning on the context. He views the text as central to the theoretical study of meaning and develops an approach to textual analysis that maps the notion of context of situation into a theory of polysystematism. In particular, he views textual analysis as a study of meaning which is defined as ‘function in context’.

It can be argued that the semantic analysis of the text requires an account of the text in terms of the different linguistic properties of the lexeme, such as syntactic, lexical, morphological, phonetic, and phonological. This approach is taken as a revival of Malinowski’s approach of linguistic analysis.

Let us consider the influence of context on meaning through the verbs (zanna) and (shakka). The major semantic componential feature of the verb (zanna) is [± Doubt], i.e., it means either:

- (i) [– Doubt] which signifies (firmly believe, is convinced, is certain of something) (Ibn ‘Atiyyah 2007, 1:201; Ibn ‘Ashur 1984, 1:480),
- (ii) [+ Doubt] which denotes (is not convinced, is doubtful of something) (ibid, or
- (iii) (‘alima – to know, to realize) (Ibn ‘Atiyyah 2007, 1:201).

Let us consider the following examples:

*alladhina yazunnun annahum mulaqu rabbihim wa'annahum ilaihi rajicun*

“Who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that they will return to Him”, (Q2:46).

*inni zanantu anni mulaqin hisabiyah*

“Indeed, I was certain that I would be meeting my account”, (Q69:20).

where (yazunnun) means (yuqinun – firmly believe, certain, convinced) [– Doubt]. This meaning also applies to Q2:249, Q18:53. It is worthwhile to note that if the [+ Doubt] → (is not convinced, is doubtful of something) meaning is enforced, this will entail the theological notion of (disbelief – kufr) because it refers to doubting to meet the Lord, doubting to return to Him, and doubting to be in the fire (Ibn ‘Atiyyah 2007, 1:201; Ibn ‘Ashur 1984, 1:480).

*zanna dawudu annama fatannahu*

– David has realized that We (God) had been testing him, Q38:24 where (zanna) signifies (to know) since the verb is followed by a piece of information (annama fatannahu – We (God) had been testing him) (Ibn ‘Atiyyah 2007, 7:340; al-Razi 1981, 3:53).

There are two interesting semantic facts about the verb (yazunnu):

- (i) The verb (yazunnu) does not collocate with [+ Concrete] nouns. Thus, it is stylistically wrong to say: (azunnu hadha insanan – I believe this is a human being).

(ii) The verb (*yazunnu*) collocates only with matters which are certain to take place and are established in terms of logical reasoning and jurisprudence (*thabit ʿaqlan washarʿan*) (Ibn ʿAtiyyah 2007, 1:202).

However, the noun (*shakk*) denotes uncertainty in decision-making and is the antonym of (*yaqin* – certainty about something). This meaning applies to (*fa'in kunta fi shakkin mimma anzalna ilaika* – So if you (Prophet) are in doubt about what We have revealed to you, Q10:94). Thus, (*shakk*) signifies (*idtirab fi al-nafs* – uncertainty about something) and its major semantic componential feature is [+ Undecided], i.e., someone who is *mutraddid*. The noun (*shakk*) has occurred 15 times in the Quran. It collocates with (*murib* – grave), as in Q11:62, 110, Q14:9, Q34:54, Q41:45, Q42:14.

However, the noun (*raib*) can be distinguished from (*shakk*) in that the major semantic componential feature of (*raib*) is [+ Doubt with Accusation], i.e., (*shakk maʿa tuhmah*). Therefore, (*raib*) occurs in the context of an addressee who is skeptical and who has an accusation against the revelation of the Quran or eschatology (the day of resurrection). Thus, (*raib*) occurs in the context of (i) revelation (the Quran), as in Q2:2, 23, Q, Q, and (ii) eschatology (*al-saʿah* – the hour, *yawm al-qiyamah* – resurrection day), as in Q3:9, 25, Q4:87, Q6:12, Q10:37, Q18:21, Q22:5. Thus, (*raib*) collocates with (*nazzala* – to reveal) and (*yawm al-qiyamah* – the day of resurrection), and (*al-saʿah* – the hour).

### 3. CONTEXT-BASED MORPHOLOGICAL FORM

Context is related to the decisions of the speaker/writer as to the selection of the appropriate word in a given context and situation, i.e., it is concerned with the 'correct' way of speaking (McCabe 2011:4). The contextual theory of meaning which was developed by J. R. Firth. This is also called the Firthian theory of meaning which is also linked to B. Malinowski (1930, 1935) who was an anthropologist. According to Firth, the most important thing about language is its social function. Every utterance occurs in a culturally determined context of situation. Therefore, the contextual meaning of an utterance is related to its social context. In other words, the contextual meaning is based on the social context. The contextual meaning of a word is related to the social and emotional content of the word. Contextual meaning also relies on speech sounds, prosodic and paralinguistic features. In other words, the stress of a word, facial expressions, and body movements can also play a role in word meaning (Abdul-Raof 2015:49-52).

This section is concerned with contextual meaning and why a specific lexeme occurs in a specific morphological shape in a given sentence. Let us consider the lexical behavior of the following lexemes:

Example 1:

Yatazakka (يَتَزَكَّى) – to purify himself, Q92:18

Yazzakka (يُزَكَّى) – to be purified, Q80:3

The verb (yatazakka – to purify himself, Q92:18) has occurred as a full form word because it is semantically related to donating charity to the needy continuously throughout one's life. In other words, the donation of charity has a long span, i.e., to be (zakiyan – one who donates without seeking fame) (al-Zamakhshari 2006, 4:576). Thus, to achieve coherence with the meaning, a long form lexical item is employed.

However, (yazzakka – to be purified from sin) occurs in the short form because it is related to the blind man who asked Muhammad to answer some questions but he did not pay attention to him. Thus, the action of enquiring and the subsequent act of neglecting the request is very short. Therefore, there is compatibility between the morphological form and contextual meaning. Also, morphologically, the verb (yazzaka) is related to (yazka) but the letter /t/ is altered to /z/ because the two sounds have the same place of articulation (Ibn 'Ashur 1984, 30:106).

Example 2:

al-mutasaddiqin – the charitable people, Q33:35, Q12:88

al-mussaddiqin – the charitable people, Q57:18

There are two reasons why the full morphological form has occurred:

(i) Lexical co-text influences the occurrence of (mutasaddiq – the charitable) in Q12:88. Lexical co-text is represented by the occurrence of the same lexical item of the same morphological form (tasaddaq – be charitable, Q12:88) which has an imperative grammatical function.

(ii) the denotative meaning of (mutasaddiq) signifies [– Hyperbole]. In other words, to give donation or to be charitable but to a moderate level and with no exaggeration in charity. Thus, Joseph's brothers were tactful when they asked him to be charitable but not to be extravagant. Having used the short morphological form [mussaddiq], they would have meant 'to be charitable to them to an extravagant level. Also, Joseph's brothers used (tasaddaq) meaning they were begging him for more supplies (al-Zamakhshari 2006, 2:368).

(iii) Due to lexical co-text where the form (tasaddaq) occurs, the morphologically related form (mutasaddiq) is employed in Q12:88. In other words, the verb (tasaddaq) has influenced the occurrence of the active participle (mutasaddiq) to occur in this form rather than in the form of (musaddiq).

(iv) the context does not refer to urging people to be charitable except in Q33:35

As for (mutasaddiqin – the charitable people, Q33:35), the full morphological form has been employed to suit:

(i) [+ Hyperbole]

(ii) the context where a semantic back-up has occurred at the end of the sentence through the sentence (yuda<sup>ʿ</sup>af lahum – it will be multiplied for them, Q57:18).

(iii) the context where reference has been made recurrently urging people to be charitable and abandon (al-bukhl – misery), as in Q57:7, 10, 10, 11, 18, 24.

#### 4. SYNONYMY

Synonymy is a relation between senses and not between word-forms (Hurford et al 1983:107). Synonymous lexemes exhibit considerable overlap of meaning (Radford et al 2009:175).

*man yashfac shafacatan hasanatan yakun lahu nasib minha waman yashfac shafacatan saiyyi'atan yakun lahu kifl minha –*

Whoever speaks for a good cause will share in its benefits and whoever speaks for a bad cause will share in its burden, Q4:85.

Based on collocational patterns, we can argue:

(shafa<sup>ʿ</sup>atan hasanatan – to intercede for a good cause) → (nasib – a share)

(shafa<sup>ʿ</sup>atan saiyyi'atan – to intercede for an evil cause) → (kifl – a share)

However, the lexical items (nasib) and (kifl) are partial synonyms, i.e., are not interchangeable but are context-sensitive. A semantic distinction between the two lexical items can be made:

(i) (nasib) is generic, infinite, and unlimited amount in terms of positive return and reward,

(ii) The above claim is intertextually backed up by Q6:160 (*man ja'a bil-hasanati falahu cashru amthaliha* – whoever has done a good deed will have it ten times to his credit), by Q27:89 and Q28:84 (*man ja'a bil-hasanati falahu khairun minha* – whoever comes with a good deed will be rewarded with something better),

(iii) (nasib) signifies increase in and doubling of reward,

(iv) (*man yashfac shafacatan hasanatan yakun lahu nasib minha* – whoever speaks for a good cause will share in its benefits) → (*man ja'a bil-hasanati falahu cashru amthaliha* – whoever has done a good deed will have it ten times to his credit),

(v) (kifl) is specific and has a finite (equivalent) but also a limited amount in terms of negative return and punishment,

(vi) The above claim is intertextually backed up by Q6:160 (*man ja'a bil-saiyyi'ati fala yujza illa mithlaha* – whoever has done a bad deed will be repaid only with

its equivalent) and by Q40:40 (man <sup>ʿ</sup>amila saiyi'atan fala yujza illa mithlaha – whoever does evil will be repaid with its like),

(vii) (kifl) signifies the exact amount of reward,

(viii) (*man yashfac shafacatan saiyi'atan yakun lahu kifl minha* – whoever speaks for a bad cause will share in its burden) → (*man ja'a bil-saiyi'ati fala yujza illa mithlaha* – whoever has done a bad deed will be repaid only with its equivalent),

(ix) (nasib) collocates with (al-khair – good things, charity) → [+ Good],

(x) (nasib) has an innate positive connotative meaning,

(xi) (kifl) collocates with (al-sharr – evil) and (al-khair – good things) → [± Good],

(xii) (kifl) has an innate negative connotative meaning, and

(xiii) the collocation of (kifl) with (al-khair) → [+ Good] is backed up by Q57:28 (*yu'tikum kiflain min rahmatih* – He will give you a double share of His mercy).

This denotative meaning, however, does not rule out the fact that the lexical items (nasib) and (kifl) are partial synonyms whose usage is not interchangeable.

In terms of modes of reading (al-qira'at), we at times encounter complete synonyms with different modes of reading. For instance, we encounter a mode of reading using a lexeme in the passive voice like (khuliqa – is created) but in a different mode of reading, we find the same lexeme used as a causative (transitive) verb (khalaqa – to create) with a direct object:

*khuliqa al-insanu dacifan* – Mankind was created weak, Q4:28

*khalaqa al-insana da'ifan* – He (God) created mankind weak.

*khuliqa al-insanu min ʿajal* – Man was created of haste, Q21:37

*khalaqa al-insana min ʿajal* – He (God) created man of haste.

Where (khuliqa) occurs as a passive voice in Q4:28 and Q21:37 while the other mode of reading employs a causative verb (khalaqa) whose direct object is (al-insana – mankind, man). However, the two distinct modes of reading provide a synonymous meaning.

## 5. POLYSEMY

Polysemy is the ability of a word to have separate but related meaning, as in (paint) as a noun and (paint) as a verb, (wood) meaning (lumber) and (wood) meaning (group of trees) (McCabe 2011:386).

*ya hasrati cala ma farrattu fi janb allah* – Woe is me for having neglected what is due to God, Q39:56

The polysemous lexical item is (janb) which has:

(i) a denotative meaning referring to the side of the body (a person's side), and  
 (ii) an underlying meaning (amr allah – God's matter) or (ta'at allah – God's obedience) (Mujahid 1976:559).

*allahu muhitun bil-kafirin* – God is encompassing of the disbelievers,  
 Q2:19

where (muhitun) is a polyseme with three distinct meanings:

(i) a denotative meaning (someone/something surrounds someone/something else) and for this reason we call the 'wall' (ha'it) because it surrounds something,  
 (ii) an underlying meaning (inflict punishment) or (gathering people for punishment), and  
 (iii) an underlying meaning (gather them in hell – jami'ahum fi jahannam) (Mujahid 1976:71).

Due to theological notion of de-anthropomorphism (al-tanzih), the denotative meaning is ruled out and only the underlying meaning is valid for the exegesis of Q39:56 and Q2:19.

*qul in kana lil-rahmani waladun fa'ana awwalu al-cabidin* – Say, (Prophet), 'If the Lord of Mercy truly had offspring I would be the first to worship them', Q43:81

where (al-<sup>c</sup>abidin – worshippers) is a polyseme with two distinct meanings:

(i) a denotative meaning (<sup>c</sup>abid – worshipper), and  
 (ii) an underlying meaning (muwahhid – monotheist) or (munkir lima yaqulun – denier of what they say). This meaning is based on the fact that the verb root (<sup>c</sup>abida) means (anifa – disbelieve in what they have claimed about God and deny it).

## 5.1 POLYSEMY AND CO-TEXT

Context disambiguates meaning. However, semantically related lexemes influence each other in terms of occurrence. Thus, a polyseme can be studied in its co-text. Co-text is defined as the lexical environment of a lexeme. It is the surrounding words of a lexical item which are semantically related to it. Our argument is based on the linguistic fact that within a sentence, we encounter some words that are semantically related to the polysemous lexical item. Thus, we can claim that co-text influences the semantic behavior of a lexeme, as illustrated in the following examples:

*khalq* – creation, Q4:119, Q26:137, Q29:17

The lexeme (*khalq*) as a noun has many meanings, such as (din – religion), as in:



*la tabdila likhalq allah* – no change should there be in the creation of God, Q30:30

To substantiate our claim that lexical co-text, i.e., semantic relatedness, can disambiguate polysemy, we need to have a panoramic view of the sentential scene:

*fa'aqim wajhaka lil-dini hanifan fitrata allahi allati fatara al-nasa calaiha la tabdila likhalq allah* – So (Prophet) as a man of pure faith, stand firm and true in your devotion to the religion. This is the natural disposition God instilled in mankind, no change should there be in the creation of God, Q30:30

According to Mujahid (1976:500), the meaning of (*fitrata allahi*) is (*al-fitrah* – natural disposition, i.e., religion, Islam). Thus, the 'religion' which God urges people to adopt has occurred four times in Q30:30 has occurred in the middle:

(din) + (*fitrata allahi*) + [*khalq*] + (din)

Based on the above co-text of (*khalq*), it can be safely claimed that the semantically related surrounding words point to the exegetical meaning of this lexeme as (religion).

It is interesting to note that when we encounter different modes of reading (*qira'at*), co-text can play a significant role in pin pointing the specific meaning of a lexical item, as in (*khuluq*):

*in hadha illa khuluq al-awwalin* – This is not but the custom of the former peoples, Q26:137.

Thus, based on co-text, the meaning of (*khuluq*) is (custom). This is based on the semantic relatedness of the surrounding sentences:

*kadhhabat cadun al-mursalin. idh qala lahum akhuhum hudan ala tattaqun. inni lakum rasulun amin. fattaqu allaha wa'aticuni. . . fattaqu allaha wa'aticuni. wattaqu alladhi amaddakum bima taclamun. amaddakum bi'ancamin wabanin. wajannatin wacuyun. inni akhafu calaikum cadhaba yawmin cazim. qalu sawa'un calaina awacazta am lam takun min al-wacizin. in hadha illa khuluq al-awwalin*

– Ad denied the messengers when their brother Hud said to them: 'Will you not fear God? Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger. So fear God and obey me.' ... 'So fear God and obey me. An fear He who provided you with that which you know, provided you with grazing livestock and children and gardens and springs. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a terrible day.' They said: 'It is all the same to us whether you advise or are not of the advisers. This is not but the custom of the former peoples.', Q26:123-137

The above text includes Hud's advice to his people (the people of <sup>c</sup>Ad) reminding them of the grievous day and the favours which God has bestowed

upon them. However, they have ignored him and responded: (*in hadha illa khuluq al-awwalin*). Thus, a semantic examination of the lexical item (khuluq) should be hinged upon the co-text which has preceded it. Having investigated the semantic co-text, we can claim that the meaning of (khuluq) is (‘adah – a custom) → [in hadha illa {‘adah} al-awwalin – This is not but the custom of the former peoples]. In other words, they have been doing exactly what their forefathers used to do before them. However, for Mujahid (1976:464), the noun (khuluq) means (lying – kadhīb).

Semantic co-text can also be illustrated through the lexical item (fitnah, Q2:193, Q8:39). This lexeme has many meanings where each sense is conditioned by its semantic co-text, such as:

(i) (fitnah, Q6:23) → (ma‘dhirah – excuse), as in:

*thumma lam takun fitnatuhum illa an qalu wallahi rabbina ma kunna mushrikin* – Then there will be no excuse upon examination except they will say: 'By God, our lord, we were not those who associated', Q6:23

where the semantic co-text of (fitnah) is represented by (*wallahi rabbina ma kunna mushrikin* –). Therefore, the accurate meaning of (fitnah) should be (excuse) → [*thumma lam takun {macdhiratuhum} illa an qalu wallahi rabbina ma kunna mushrikin* – Then there will be no {excuse} upon examination except they will say: 'By God, our lord, we were not those who associated', Q6:23]. In other words, the polytheists have provided an excuse for their belief.

(ii) (fitnah, Q6:23) → (kufr – disbelief) (Abu al-Su‘ud (n.d.), 3:120), as in:

*thumma lam takun fitnatuhum illa an qalu . . .* – Then there will be no excuse upon examination except they will say: . . . , Q6:23

(iii) (fitnah, Q85:10) → (al-harq bil-narr – to burn), as in:

*qutila ashabu al-ukhdud. al-nari dhati al-waqud . idh hum calaiha qucud . . . inna alladhina fatanu al-mu'minina wal-mu'minati thumma lam yatubu falahum cadhabu jahannama walahum cadhabu al-hariq* – Destroyed were the companions of the trench containing the fire full of fuel, when they were sitting near it, ... Indeed, those who have tortured the believing men and believing women and then have not repented will have the punishment of hell, and they will have the punishment of the burning fire, Q85:4-6, 10

where the semantic co-text of (fitnah) is represented by (al-nari – the fire), (al-waqud – fuel), (jahannama – hell), and (al-hariq – burning fire). Thus, semantically, the meaning (burning) has occurred five times in Q85:4-6:

(al-nar – fire) + (al-waqud – fuel) + [fatanu – burned] + (*jahannama* – hell) + (al-hariq – burning fire) (Mujahid 1976:748).

Based on the above co-text of (fitnah), we can safely claim that the semantically related surrounding words point to the exegetical meaning of this lexeme as (burning).

Therefore, the accurate meaning of (fitnah) should be (yahriq – to burn).  
*qutila ashabu al-ukhdud. al-nari dhati al-waqud . idh hum calaiha qucud . . . inna alladhina {haraqū} al-mu'minina wal-mu'minati thumma lam yatubu falahum cadhabu jahannama walahum cadhabu al-hariq*

Destroyed were the companions of the trench containing the fire full of fuel, when they were sitting near it, ... Indeed, those who have {burned} the believing men and believing women and then have not repented will have the punishment of hell, and they will have the punishment of the burning fire, [Q85:4-6, 10].

(iv) (fitnah, Q57:14) → (al-nifaq – hypocrisy, double standard) (Ibn ʿAtiyyah 2007, 8:229), as in:

*yawma yaqulu al-munafiquna wal-munafiqatu lilladhina amanu anziruna naqtabis min nurikum qila arjicu wara'akum faltamisū nuran faduriba bainahum bisurin lahu babun batinuhu fihī al-rahmah wazahiruhu min qibalihi al-cadhab. yunadunahum alam nakun macakum qalu bala walakinnakum fatantum anfusakum watarabbastum wartabtum wagharratkum al-amaniyyu hatta ja'a amru allahi wagharrakum billahi al-gharur*

On the same day the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believed: 'Wait for us that we may acquire some of your light.' It will be said: 'Go back behind you and seek light.' And a wall will be placed between them with a door, its interior containing mercy, but on the outside of it is torment. The hypocrites will call to the believers: 'Were we not with you?' They will say: 'Yes, but you afflicted yourselves and awaited misfortune for us and doubted, and wishful thinking deluded you until there came the command of God. And the deceiver (Satan) deceived you concerning God, Q57:13-14

Where the semantic co-text of (fitnah) is represented by (al-munafiquna – the hypocrite men) + (al-munafiqatu – hypocrite women) + (alam nakun macakum – Were we not with you?) + (fatantum – you afflicted) + (tarabbastum – awaited misfortune) + (artabtum – doubted) + (gharratkum al-amaniyyu – wishful thinking deluded you) + (gharrakum billahi al-gharur – the deceiver (Satan) deceived you concerning God). Thus, semantically, the meaning (to be hypocritical) has occurred eight times in Q57:13-14. Based on the above semantic co-text of (fitnah), we can safely claim that the semantically related

surrounding words point to the exegetical meaning of this lexeme as (hypocritical).

(v) (fitnah, Q6:23) → (al-shirk – polytheism) (al-Alusi 2010, vol ????:103), as in:

*thumma lam takun fitnatuhum illa an qalu . . .* – Then there will be no excuse upon examination except they will say . . . , Q6:23

(vi) (fitnah, Q6:23) → (idtirab fi al-ra'i – confusion in opinion) (Ibn ʿAshur 1984, 7:176), as in:

*thumma lam takun fitnatuhum illa an qalu . . .* – Then there will be no excuse upon examination except they will say . . . , Q6:23

(vii) (fitnah, Q6:23) → (al-ikhtibar – testing) (Ibn ʿAtiyyah 2007, 3:335), as in:

*thumma lam takun fitnatuhum illa an qalu . . .* – Then there will be no excuse upon examination except they will say . . . , Q6:23

Ibn ʿAtiyyah (ibid) claims that this meaning is backed up by Q20:40 (*wa fatannaka futuna* – And We (God) tried you with a severe trial) and Q38:40 (*wa laqad fatanna sulaimana* – And We (God) certainly tried Solomon).

Another example of the impact of semantic co-text on figuring out the underlying meaning of polysemous lexical items is the lexeme (rahmah) as shown below:

*wa'imma tucridanna canhum ibtigha'a rahmah min rabbik tarjuha faqul lahum qawlan maisura* – And if you must turn away from them awaiting mercy from your Lord which you expect, then speak to them a gentle word, Q17:28

where the semantic co-text of (rahmah) is represented by the following sentences:

*la tajal yadaka maghlulatan ila cunuqika wala tabsutha kulla al-basti fataqcuda maluman mahsura. inna rabbaka yabsutu al-rizqa liman yasha' wayaqdir . . . wala taqtulu awladakum khashyata imlaqin nahnu narzuquhum wa'iyyakum* – And do not make your hand as chained to your neck or extend it completely and thereby become blamed and insolvent. Indeed, your Lord extends provision for whom He wills and restricts it . . . And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We (God) provide for them and for you, Q17:29-31

Thus, based on the above semantic co-text, we can pin point the co-textual lexemes that have influenced the meaning of (rahmah). These are (la tajal yadaka maghlulatan ila ʿunuqika – And do not make your hand as chained to your neck), (la tabsutha kulla al-basti – do not extend it completely), (al-rizqa – provision), and (imlaqin – poverty). Thus, semantically, the meaning (al-rizq – provision) has occurred five times in Q17:28-31. We can, therefore, argue that the underlying meaning of the lexeme (rahmah) in Q17:28 is (rizq) (al-Tabari 1968, 15:74).

It is worthwhile to note that our claim above is further supported by Q17:100 where the lexical item (rahmah) has occurred:

*qul law antum tamlikuna khaza'ina rahmati rabbi idhan la'amsaktum khashyata al-infāq wakana al-insanu qatura* – Say to them: 'if you possessed the depositories of the mercy of my Lord, then you would withhold out of fear of spending.' And ever has man been stingy', Q17:100

where the semantic co-textual environment lends support to the underlying meaning of (rahmah) as (rizq – provision). The semantic co-text is represented by the lexeme (khaza'ina) which means (al-mal – wealth, amlak – possessions) (ibid:170).

## 5.2 POLYSEMY AND INTERTEXTUALITY

The notion of intertextuality refers to the macro text co-text (linguistic environment). In other words, texts refer to each other. According to Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:10), a text is dependent upon the knowledge of one or more previously encountered texts.

In Quranic semantics, the disambiguation of a polyseme can be achieved through examining the macro semantic co-text of the polysemous lexeme. In other words, we look for a text whose lexical items can function as the semantic co-text for the disambiguation and explanation of a lexeme that has occurred elsewhere in the macro text. The macro semantic co-text can lend support to the desired underlying meaning of a given polysemous word that has occurred elsewhere, as in the following example:

*la yas'amu al-insanu min duca'i al-khair* – Man is not weary of supplication for good things, Q41:49

where the lexeme (khair) is a polyseme whose underlying meaning can be disambiguated through its macro text semantic co-text:

*idha hadara ahadakum al-mawtu in taraka khairan* – When death approaches one of you who leaves wealth, Q2:180

*qul ma anfaqtum min khairin falil-walidain* – Say: 'Whatever you spend of good should be for parents', Q2:215

In the above examples, Q2:180 and Q2:215 are intertextually related to Q41:49. Thus, the underlying meaning of the lexeme (khair) in Q41:49 can be explained through its macro semantic co-texts Q2:180 and Q2:215. Based on intertextuality, we can safely claim that the accurate meaning of (khair) in Q41:49 is (al-mal – money, wealth) (al-Tabari 1986, 2:115). This semantic analysis is backed up by the fact that the semantic co-text of (khair) in Q2:215 is the verb (anfaqa – to spend). Thus, the noun (khair) meaning (al-mal – money) collocates with the verb (anfaqa – to spend). Also, usually people, after their

death, leave money. Thus, the idiom (*taraka khairan* – leave something good) means (*taraka malan* – leave money, wealth).

### 5.3 POLYSEMY AND CONTEXT OF SITUATION

In Quranic semantics, the context of situation is related to the reasons for revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*). The reasons for revelation is an important source for the disambiguation of a polysemous lexeme, as in:

*wala tulqu bi'aidikum ila al-tahlukah* – Do not throw yourselves with your own hands into destruction, Q2:195

where the noun (*tahlukah*) is given the surface structure meaning (destruction). However, having considered the contextual affiliation of the noun (*tahlukah*), the accurate underlying meaning is (to stop donation for the sake of God) (al-Tabari 1986, 2:200). Thus, the accurate translation should be: (Do not destroy yourselves by stopping donation for the sake of God). This meaning is backed up by the context of situation, i.e., the reason for the revelation of this sentence. The context of situation is the battle between the Muslims and the Romans in Constantinople. The companion Abu Ayyub al-Ansari has confirmed the underlying meaning of (*tahlukah*) based on the context of the revelation of Q2:195 (*ibid*:204). Most importantly, the earlier occurrence of the verbal phrase (*anfiq fi sabil allah* – spend in God's cause), Q2:195) lends support to the underlying meaning of (*tahlukah*) as (to stop donation for the sake of God).

The relationship between the context of situation (reasons for revelation) and polysemy can be further explained through the following examples (*qanata* → (*qumu lillahi qanitin*, Q2:238)) and (*iman* → (*ma kana allahu liyudica imanakum*, Q2:143)).

Based on the reasons for revelation, the underlying meaning of the polysemous lexical item (*qanitin*) in Q2:238 should be (*sakitin* – quiet), i.e., the verb (*qanata*) designates the meaning (to be quite). In the view of Ibn Mas'ud, Mujahid, and 'Ikramah, the reasons for the revelation of Q2:238 is concerned with the noise that can be heard while people are praying (al-Tabari 1986, 2:570-571). In other words, Q2:238 is revealed to instruct people that talking is prohibited and one should be quiet during performing one's prayers. Thus, the meaning of Q2:238 is (Stand before God quietly). Similarly, the reasons for the revelation of Q2:143 is concerned with the change of the *qiblah* from the Jerusalem to the Ka'bah. When people asked Muhammad about the Muslims who passed away and who used to pray towards Jerusalem and whether they lost their daily prayer, Q2:143 was revealed. Thus, the context of situation decides the underlying meaning of (*iman*) as (*salat* – prayer). According to Ibn 'Abbas,

the meaning of Q2:143 should be (God would never let your prayer go to waste) (al-Tabari 1986, 2:16).

#### 5.4 POLYSEMY AND CONTEXT OF CULTURE

This is concerned with the semantic analysis of polysemes based on the context of culture and historical background. The relationship between the context of culture and polysemy can be explained through the examples (baʿir → (nazdadu kaila baʿir, Q12:65)) and (zinah → (*ya bani adama khudhu zinatakum cinda kulli masjidin*, Q7:31)).

Based on the context of culture, the underlying meaning of the polysemous lexical item (baʿir) in Q12:65 should be (himar – donkey). This is due to the historical and cultural facts that the lexeme (baʿir) is a dialect (a speech variety) which refers to (himar). Also, Jacob and Joseph's brothers used to live in Kanʿan where there used to be no camels and donkeys were the only means of transport (Ibn Kathir 2007, 2:1198).

Similarly, the underlying meaning of the polysemous lexeme (zinah) in Q7:31 should be (al-thiyab, al-libas – clothes, clothing). In the view of Ibn ʿAbbas, people in pre-Islamic Arabia used to go round the Kaʿbah naked where naked women used to perform this ritual at night time while naked men perform it during daytime. The revelation of Q7:31 instructs the Muslims to wear clothes when performing the same ritual. Based on the context of culture and context of situation, the underlying meaning of (zinah) should be (clothes). Thus, the meaning of Q7:31 is (O children of Adam, wear your clothing at every mosque) (Ibn Kathir 2007, 2:900).

#### 6. COLLOCATION

Through collocation a polyseme can be explained, as in:

*faqad jaʿu zulman wazura* – But they have committed an injustice and a lie, Q25:4

Because (zur – lie) collocates with (kadhib – lying), we can determine the meaning of (zulm) as (kadhib). Our claim that the contextual meaning of (zulm) as (kadhib) is supported by Q25:4, Q34:43, Q46:11 (al-Tabari 1986, 18:182).

Also, in:

*yursalu calaikuma shuwazun min nar wa nuhas* – There will be sent upon you a flame of fire and smoke, Q55:35

we find that (shuwaz – the fire flame, or the flame which has no smoke) collocates with (nuhass – fire smoke, the smoke without fire). Thus, through collocation and semantic entailment, the meaning of (nuhass) as (dukhan – smoke

without fire) is in fact based on the meaning of (shuwaz) as (lahabb – the fire flame without smoke). In other words, the lexical item (lahabb) collocates with (dukhan). Therefore, the word (shuwaz) collocates with (nuhass).

Collocation is also concerned with the modes of reading (al-qira'at). In other words, based on collocation, we can also decide the semantic behavior of a lexical item. Let us consider the following example:

*hatta yaliju al-jamalu fi sammi al-khiyat* – until a camel enters into the eye of a needle, Q7:40

where the lexeme (al-jamalu – camel) has a distinct mode of reading and a different meaning. Ibn ʿAbbas, Mujahid, ʿIkramah, and Saʿid b. Jubair have provided a different mode of reading as (al-jummal) meaning (the thick rope used in ships or used for climbing date palms) (al-Tabari 1986, 8:178). Now, taking collocation into account, we find (jummal – a thick rope) collocates with (sammi al-khiyat – the eye of a needle) but (jamal – camel) does not. This is because (jummal) and (khait – thread) share similar semantic features. Thus, the accurate translation should be (until a thick rope enters into the eye of a needle).

## 7. NOMINALIZATION

This is concerned with the irregular morphological derivation of the nominalized noun (al-masdar) from the verb root that occurs in the same sentence, as in:

*fataqabbalaha rabbuha biqabulin hasanin wa anbataha nabatan hasanan*  
– So her Lord accepted her with good acceptance and caused to grow in a good manner, Q3:37)

where the first verb is (taqabbala – to accept) whose unmarked (usual) nominalized noun should be (taqabbul – acceptance), and the second verb is (anbata –) whose unmarked nominalized noun should be (inbat – good manner) (Ibn ʿAtiyyah 2007, 2:203). Thus, we should have:

[fataqabbalaha rabbuha taqabbulan hasanan wa anbataha inbatan hasanan]

The employment of the morphological form (faʿul) for the nominalized noun (qabul) is semantically-oriented. The lexeme (qabul) has the pragmatic function of affirmation to the verb (taqabbala – accepted). The nominalized noun (qabul) designates the meaning:

- (i) that the Lord has accepted the newly-born baby Mary as a present for the service of the church,
- (ii) that the nominalized noun (qabul) signifies total acceptance by the Lord,
- (iii) that this is an exception since it is only male babies are accepted for the service of the church, and



(iv) that the nominalized noun (qabul) entails the effectiveness of the verb (taqabbala and its abundance as a credit to baby Mary. (al-Alusi year, vol, page ???)

*qul amara rabbi bil-qist wa aqimu wujuhakum cinda kulli masjid* – Say: 'my Lord commands righteousness. Direct your worship straight to Him wherever you pray, Q7:29

However, an imperative verb (aqimu – direct) occurs instead of the expected prepositional phrase (bi'iqamat – with the direction). This is a case of shift (iltifat) whose pragmatic function is to highlight the importance of prayers (al-salat) and to draw the reader's/listener's attention to this pillar of Islam. Thus, the imperative verb is used as a shift and as an order (Abu Musa 2000:262-263).

*inna sakhkharna al-jibala macahu yusabbihna bil-cashiyyi wal-ishraq* – Indeed, We subjected the mountains to praise with him, exalting God in the late afternoon and after sunrise, Q38:18

The stylistic mechanism of shift from the past tense (sakhkharna – subjected) to the present tense (yusabbihna – exalt) is implemented. However, grammatically, an active participle (musabbihat – exalting) is required because the action of exaltation (al-tasbih) in fact took place in the distant past during David's lifetime. Due to the fact that the mountains' exaltation is a highly interesting and strange circumstance which points to God's omnipotence, such an incident is expressed through the present rather than the past tense. Thus, the action of exaltation by the mountains is transferred from the distant past to the present where a vivid imagery is depicted to the reader/hearer, and where the continuity and renewal of the action of exaltation is conveyed. However, if the stylistic mechanism of shift is not adopted and a past tense (sabbahna – (the mountains) exalted) is employed, the action of exaltation would have been done only once in the past and does not take place anymore.

It is interesting to note, however, that, pragmatically, the past tense shift has another illocutionary force, as in the following example:

*wa yama nusaiyiru al-jibala wa tara al-arda barizatan wa hasharnahum falam nughadir minhum ahada* – And warn of the day when We will remove the mountains and you will see the earth prominent, and We will gather them and not leave behind from them anyone, Q18:47

Where (hasharnahum – to gather them) occurs in the past tense which signals a shift from present tense verbs (nusaiyiru – remove) and (tara – see). The employment of the past tense in this context is to achieve the illocutionary force of certainty of eschatology (al-ma'ad, al-ba'ath). In other words, the deniers of resurrection are rebutted and informed that that the day of judgement will certainly take place (Abu Musa 2000:266).

The above examples represent a linguistic phenomenon referred to in Arabic as *mukhalafat muqtada al-zahir* (linguistic deviation).

## 8. UNDERLYING MEANING OF LEXICAL ITEMS

(i) the active and passive participle:

This is concerned with the occurrence of a lexical item whose surface structure grammatical function adopts an active participle form but its underlying meaning is a passive participle and vice versa, as in:

*hijab mastur* – concealed partition, Q17:45

where on the surface structure form, the lexical item (*mastur*) is a passive participle (*ism maf'ul*). However, its underlying meaning is an active participle (*ism fa'il*). Thus, the expected morphological form of the passive participle (*mastur*) should appear as an active participle (*satir* – concealing) → (*hijab satir* – concealing partition) (al-Tabari 1986, 15:93).

Similarly, in:

*cishatin radiyah* – pleasant life, Q69:21

where on the surface structure form, the lexical item (*radiyah*) is an active participle (*ism fa'il*). However, its underlying meaning is a passive participle (*ism maf'ul*). Thus, the expected morphological form of the active participle (*radiyah*) should appear as a passive participle (*mardiyyah* – accepted) → (*'ishatin mardiyyah* – accepted life) (al-Tabari 1986, 29:61).

*inni la'azunnuka ya musa mashura* – Indeed, I think, O Moses, that you are affected by magic, Q17:101

(ii) the non-causative verb: It sounds strange to say an object has occurred with a non-causative (transitive) verb. However, such a lexical behavior has taken place in the Quran, as in:

*qul ya ahla al-kitabi la taghlu fi dinikum ghaira al-haqqi* – Say: 'O People of Scripture, do not exceed limits in your religion beyond the truth, Q5:77

where the non-causative verb (*taghlu* – to exceed) has been used with a direct object (*ghaira al-haqqi* –). However, this direct object is not of the non-causative verb (*taghlu* – to exceed) but rather of the underlying causative (transitive) verb (*taqulu* – to say) or (*tazidu* – to increase). In other words, the non-causative verb (*taghlu*) has an underlying causative verb meaning (*taqulu*) or (*tazidu*) whose direct object is (*ghaira al-haqqi*) (Hassan 2003, 2:79).

## 9. CO-REFERENTIALITY

The dual co-referential pronoun (*damir muthanna*) as reference to a singular addressee (*mukhatab wahid*), as in:

*waqala qarínuhu hadha ma ladaiya catid. alqiya fi jahannama kulla kaffarin canid* – His companion (the angel) will say: 'This record is what is with me, prepared.' God will say: 'Throw into hell every obstinate disbeliever, Q50:23-24

*khalafa al-insana . . . fabiaiya ala'i rabbikuma tukadhdhiban* – (God) created man . . . So which of the favours of your Lord would you deny?, Q55:3, 13

in the view of al-Shawush (2015:564), Although the addressee in Q50:23 is singular (al-qarin – a companion), the imperative verb (alqiya – hurl, throw into (imperative dual, masculine)) is employed in the dual form in Q50:24. Similarly, the addressee is singular (al-insana – man) in Q55:3 and 14, but the co-referential pronoun is employed in the dual form (rabbikuma – your (dual, masculine) Lord).

The use of the dual signifies the double imperative meaning (throw, throw). The use of the dual form provides the illocutionary force of seriousness + double power of the angel who is going to undertake the action of hurling into fire the obstinate disbeliever. In Q55:13, the co-referential dual pronoun (-ma – your (dual)) in (rabbikuma – your (dual, masculine) Lord) refers to a singular noun (al-insana – man, Q55:3). The employment of a co-referential dual pronoun referring to a singular person has the illocutionary force of affirmation (al-tawkid).

The reasons for such a lexical behavior where the imperative or interrogative for a singular takes the form of a dual can be attributed to the following reasons:

- (i) It was a stylistic customary for the speakers of Arabic to use the dual form when referring to a singular or a plural person for the pragmatic function of affirmation,
- (ii) This was a poetic genre, as in (ya sahibaiyah – my two companions, and ya khalilaiyah – my two companions). Such a genre was employed by pre-Islamic poets, and
- (iii) This was the dialect of Bani Tamim.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

This paper attempted to provide an account of the lexical semantic properties of a selected set of lexical items from the Quranic text, the properties of the context in which these lexical items occur, and how the morphosyntactic behaviour of these lexical items conform with these properties. The aim of this investigation was to demonstrate that words in the Quranic text do not act haphazardly but

rather undertake more often than not a particular linguistic function that underlies the text producer's intended (thematic) meaning.

The present paper is an attempt to provide a grammatical, semantic, morphological, and pragmatic analysis of lexical items through a variety of forms based on Arabic. These linguistic forms are analysed from the perspective of European linguistic theories such as the lexical semantic decomposition approach of Levin and Rappaport Hovav (2005). Hence, it provides a rich source for contrastive linguistics. Examples of lexical behaviour that are touched upon in the paper include polysemy, pleonasm, synonymy, morphosyntactic behaviour, collocation, nominalisation, and active/passive participle, among others. This paper's investigation of these grammatical and semantic mechanisms is explored through the context of situation and the context of culture. This is because there are contextual properties that play an important role in the semantic properties that lexical items, which participate in that context, bear. We also examined the semantic primitives of lexical items in Arabic based on the recent views of Talmy, 1985; Pinker, 1989, 1994, 2007; Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 2005, among others, on the lexical semantic determinants of syntactic behaviour of words in order to explore the extent to which the premises of this theory apply to Arabic.

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