

The Role of Pronouns in Understanding the Qur'an: A Research Study in the Context of Long Verses

Yasmeen

Visiting lecturer Government college university Faisalabad

Email: yasmein0237@gmail.com

Naimat Ullah Khan (Corresponding Author)

Department of Qur'ānic Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Email: naimatmphil@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9631-7681>

Hafiz Bilal Ahmad

PhD Scholar, Department of Fiqh and Shariah, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Email: hbilalese@gmail.com

Abstract

The Qur'ān is widely recognized for its linguistic richness, coherence and rhetorical excellence. Among the many linguistic features that contribute to its eloquence, pronouns play a central role in shaping meaning and facilitating interpretation, especially in long Qur'ānic verses. This article examines the linguistic role of pronouns in understanding extended Qur'ānic passages by exploring their grammatical, rhetorical, semantic and interpretive functions. The study highlights how pronouns contribute to textual cohesion, narrative continuity, legal clarification and theological expression within the Qur'ānic discourse. Attention is given to hidden pronouns, pronoun shifts (iltifāt), semantic ambiguity and the use of divine pronouns as expressions of majesty and intimacy. The article also discusses the importance of pronouns in classical Qur'ānic exegesis and Islamic legal interpretation, where identifying the correct antecedent often influences legal and theological understanding. In addition, modern linguistic approaches such as discourse analysis, pragmatics and textual linguistics are examined to demonstrate their relevance in contemporary Qur'ānic studies. The research further addresses the challenges involved in translating Qur'ānic pronouns into English and other languages due to differences in grammatical systems and rhetorical conventions. By combining classical Islamic scholarship with modern linguistic theory, the article argues that pronouns are not merely grammatical elements but essential interpretive tools that preserve coherence, enrich meaning and enhance the stylistic beauty of the Qur'ān. The study concludes that accurate understanding of pronouns is necessary for deeper comprehension of long Qur'ānic verses and for appreciating the linguistic miracle of the Qur'ānic text.

Keywords: *Qur'ānic Linguistics; Pronouns (Ḍamā'ir); Qur'ānic Interpretation; Arabic Rhetoric; Textual Cohesion; Legal Verses.*

Introduction

The Qur'ān is considered one of the most linguistically rich and rhetorically powerful texts in the Arabic language. Among the many linguistic tools used in the Qur'ān,

pronouns occupy a highly significant place because they contribute to coherence, eloquence, continuity of meaning and depth of interpretation.¹ In long Qur'ānic verses particularly, pronouns serve as connecting devices that link different parts of a verse together and help readers understand the relationship between speakers, audiences, actions and theological messages. Arabic pronouns can appear as detached forms, attached forms, hidden pronouns, and implied references, each carrying important semantic and grammatical functions.² Because Qur'ānic verses often contain multiple themes within a single passage, the correct interpretation of pronouns becomes necessary for accurate comprehension. Scholars of Tafsīr, Arabic grammar, rhetoric and linguistics have long emphasized that misunderstanding a pronoun can lead to misunderstanding the intended meaning of a verse. Therefore, the study of pronouns in the Qur'ān is not merely grammatical; it is also interpretive and theological.³ In many long verses, pronouns refer back to previous subjects, anticipate future references, or intentionally create stylistic ambiguity that encourages reflection and contemplation. This linguistic richness demonstrates the precision of Qur'ānic expression and highlights the importance of contextual reading. The role of pronouns becomes especially clear in verses dealing with legal rulings, narratives of prophets, descriptions of divine attributes and discussions concerning belief and morality. In such passages, pronouns create textual harmony while reducing unnecessary repetition. The present article explores the linguistic role of pronouns in understanding long Qur'ānic verses by examining their grammatical, rhetorical and interpretive functions. The discussion also highlights the views of classical and modern scholars regarding pronoun usage and its impact on Qur'ānic interpretation. Furthermore, this article demonstrates how pronouns contribute to thematic unity, semantic coherence and the stylistic beauty of the Qur'ānic discourse.

The Concept of Pronouns in Arabic Linguistics

In Arabic linguistics, pronouns are known as al-ḍamā'ir and they are considered among the most important grammatical elements in sentence construction.⁴ Arabic pronouns perform several functions simultaneously because they indicate person, gender, number and sometimes emphasis. Classical Arab grammarians divided pronouns into different categories, including detached pronouns (ḍamīr munfaṣīl), attached pronouns (ḍamīr muttaṣīl) and hidden pronouns (ḍamīr mustatīr). Each type plays a different role in sentence organization and semantic clarity.⁵ In Qur'ānic discourse, these pronouns frequently appear in complex structures that require careful analysis. Long Qur'ānic

¹M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 45–47.

²Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986), 23–26.

³Aḥmad al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-Balāghah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1999), 118–121.

⁴Sibawayh, *Al-Kitāb*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1988), 1:45–52.

⁵Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī, *Mughnī al-Labīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1985), 77–81.

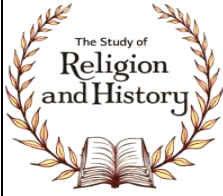
verses often contain multiple verbs, subjects and objects, making pronoun reference essential for maintaining coherence. For example, a pronoun may refer to Allah, prophets, believers, disbelievers, or previously mentioned groups within the same verse. The interpreter must identify the antecedent accurately to avoid confusion. Arabic linguists explain that pronouns are economical linguistic tools because they prevent excessive repetition while preserving fluency and elegance.⁶ The Qur'ān uses this feature extensively to maintain rhythm and rhetorical beauty. In addition, Arabic pronouns can indicate honor, power, nearness or distance depending on the context. The Qur'ān often employs plural pronouns for divine speech to express majesty and greatness, while singular pronouns may emphasize directness and intimacy. The linguistic flexibility of Arabic pronouns therefore allows the Qur'ān to communicate multiple layers of meaning within concise expressions. Furthermore, some pronouns in Qur'ānic verses remain intentionally ambiguous so that several interpretations may coexist. This characteristic enriches Qur'ānic interpretation and demonstrates the depth of Arabic rhetoric. Classical scholars such as Sibawayh and Ibn Hishām devoted extensive discussions to pronouns because of their central role in syntax and semantics. Modern linguistic studies also recognize pronouns as essential devices for textual cohesion and discourse analysis. Consequently, understanding pronouns in Qur'ānic verses requires both grammatical knowledge and contextual awareness.

Pronouns as Tools of Cohesion in Long Qur'ānic Verses

One of the most important linguistic functions of pronouns in the Qur'ān is the creation of textual cohesion. Cohesion refers to the connection between words, clauses and sentences that allows a text to function as a meaningful whole. In long Qur'ānic verses, pronouns serve as links that connect different parts of the discourse without unnecessary repetition. This cohesive role is especially visible in verses that contain narratives, legal rulings or theological discussions extending across multiple clauses. Through pronouns, the Qur'ān maintains continuity of thought and guides readers through complex ideas in a smooth and organized manner. For example, in long narrative verses discussing the stories of prophets, pronouns repeatedly refer back to central characters while new events unfold. Without these pronouns the verses would become repetitive and stylistically heavy. Pronouns therefore preserve both clarity and eloquence.⁷ Modern discourse analysis explains that pronouns are among the strongest cohesive devices because they create referential continuity. In the Qur'ān, this continuity often carries spiritual and rhetorical significance in addition to grammatical function. Some long verses alternate between references to believers, disbelievers and divine speech within a single passage. Pronouns help distinguish these shifts and allow readers to follow the intended meaning. Furthermore, pronouns contribute to thematic unity by connecting earlier and later parts of a verse. A pronoun appearing near the end of a verse may refer to an entity introduced at the beginning, thereby creating a circular structure that reinforces coherence. This stylistic feature demonstrates the precision of

⁶Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 132–136.

⁷Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986), 41–49.



Qur'ānic composition. Scholars of Qur'ānic rhetoric argue that such cohesion is evidence of the text's linguistic excellence because each pronoun is placed deliberately and meaningfully.⁸ The omission or replacement of a pronoun could alter the rhythm, emphasis, or interpretation of the verse. Consequently, interpreters must analyze pronoun references carefully when explaining long Qur'ānic passages. This cohesive function also shows how grammar and meaning interact closely in Qur'ānic language.

The Role of Pronouns in Qur'ānic Narratives

The narratives of the Qur'ān represent one of the richest areas for studying pronoun usage because stories naturally involve multiple characters, actions and dialogues.⁹ Long narrative verses frequently move between prophets, nations, kings, angels and divine speech, making pronouns essential for maintaining clarity. In many Qur'ānic stories, pronouns guide the reader from one event to another while preserving the emotional and rhetorical flow of the narrative. For example, the story of Prophet Yūsuf contains numerous pronoun shifts that reflect changes in speaker, audience and emotional intensity. Pronouns help distinguish between the speech of brothers, the statements of the prophet and divine intervention. This dynamic usage contributes to the vividness of the narrative. Arabic rhetoricians explain that pronouns also create suspense because they sometimes delay the identification of the subject. This stylistic delay encourages readers to focus carefully on the unfolding message.¹⁰ In addition, pronouns in Qur'ānic stories often reflect moral and spiritual themes. When divine punishment or mercy is discussed, pronoun changes may emphasize closeness, distance, authority or compassion. The Qur'ān also uses pronouns to highlight contrasts between believers and disbelievers. Through subtle linguistic shifts, the text distinguishes righteous individuals from rebellious groups. Another important aspect is the movement between singular and plural pronouns. Such transitions can indicate changes in responsibility, collective action or divine majesty. Classical commentators frequently examined these pronoun changes to uncover deeper meanings in the narratives. Long narrative verses therefore require careful grammatical and contextual analysis to identify antecedents correctly.¹¹ Misinterpreting a pronoun may lead to confusion regarding the sequence of events or the intended moral lesson. Modern literary studies similarly recognize pronouns as important narrative devices because they shape perspective and audience engagement. The Qur'ānic narratives demonstrate how pronouns can perform grammatical, rhetorical, psychological and theological functions simultaneously.

⁸.Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1995), 2:214–219.

⁹.Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2003), 4:1985–1992.

¹⁰.Angelika Neuwirth, *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 287–292.

¹¹.Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1999), 18:121–128.

Pronouns and the Interpretation of Legal Verses

Long Qur'ānic verses related to legal rulings often depend heavily upon precise pronoun interpretation. Islamic legal scholars have historically paid close attention to pronouns because legal obligations and rights may change according to the intended referent.¹² In verses concerning marriage, inheritance, trade, fasting and criminal law, pronouns clarify who is being addressed and who is responsible for a particular action. Because Qur'ānic legal verses frequently contain several clauses within a single passage, pronouns function as organizational tools that connect commands, conditions and consequences. The interpretation of these pronouns directly affects Islamic jurisprudence. For example, jurists may differ regarding whether a pronoun refers to a nearby noun or a more distant antecedent, and such differences can lead to varying legal opinions. This demonstrates that pronoun analysis is not a purely linguistic exercise but also a practical necessity in Islamic law. Classical scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* developed detailed principles for interpreting pronouns in legal texts.¹³ They discussed issues such as general and specific references, implied antecedents and contextual indicators. Long verses in *Sūrat al-Baqarah* and *Sūrat al-Nisā'* provide many examples where pronoun interpretation influences legal understanding. In some cases, pronouns determine whether a command applies universally or only to a particular group. Furthermore, the Qur'ān sometimes uses pronouns to soften legal language and maintain rhetorical elegance. Instead of repeating nouns repeatedly, pronouns preserve fluency while ensuring coherence. This stylistic refinement contributes to the beauty of the Qur'ānic legal discourse. Modern scholars of legal linguistics also recognize that pronouns are essential for interpreting legal documents because ambiguity may result in conflicting understandings. In the Qur'ān, however, pronoun usage is carefully balanced between brevity and clarity. The combination of grammatical precision and rhetorical beauty illustrates the uniqueness of Qur'ānic legal language.¹⁴ Therefore, understanding pronouns remains an essential skill for scholars engaged in *Tafsīr* and Islamic jurisprudence.

Hidden Pronouns and Their Interpretive Significance

Hidden pronouns represent one of the most sophisticated aspects of Arabic grammar and Qur'ānic linguistics. A hidden pronoun is not explicitly stated in the sentence but is understood through grammatical structure and context.¹⁵ In Qur'ānic verses, these hidden pronouns often contribute to brevity, fluency and rhetorical elegance. Long verses especially contain numerous hidden pronouns because repeating explicit subjects repeatedly would weaken stylistic beauty and disrupt textual rhythm. The interpretation of hidden pronouns requires strong grammatical knowledge because the reader must infer the intended subject correctly. Classical grammarians considered hidden pronouns a sign of linguistic maturity because they demonstrate the flexibility and efficiency of

¹².A History of Islamic Legal Theories (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 62–67.

¹³.Al-Muwāfaqāt (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1997), 3:114–119.

¹⁴.Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr (Tunis: Dār Sahnūn, 1984), 2:311–318.

¹⁵.Al-Khaṣā'is (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2001), 2:145–149.

Arabic expression. In the Qur’ān, hidden pronouns frequently appear in verbal sentences where the verb itself indicates the subject. This grammatical feature allows the text to remain concise while preserving clarity. However, identifying the intended antecedent may sometimes become challenging, especially in long passages containing multiple possible references. Qur’ānic commentators therefore rely on context, syntax, rhetorical indicators and thematic consistency to determine the correct interpretation.¹⁶ Hidden pronouns can also create stylistic emphasis. In some cases, the omission of an explicit subject directs attention toward the action itself rather than the actor. This subtle rhetorical effect enhances contemplation and emotional impact. Furthermore, hidden pronouns may contribute to universality because the absence of a clearly stated subject allows broader application of the message. The Qur’ān also employs hidden pronouns to maintain rhythm and balance within verses. Arabic rhetoric values brevity combined with richness of meaning and hidden pronouns achieve this objective effectively. Modern linguistic theories concerning ellipsis and implicit reference provide additional insight into this phenomenon. Such studies confirm that omitted elements can strengthen coherence when the context remains sufficiently clear. The Qur’ānic use of hidden pronouns therefore illustrates the harmony between grammatical precision and rhetorical sophistication.¹⁷ Understanding these pronouns is essential for accurate Tafsīr because overlooking an implied reference may alter the intended meaning of the verse.

Pronoun Shifts and the Rhetorical Device of Iltifāt

One of the most remarkable stylistic features of the Qur’ān is the rhetorical device known as iltifāt, which refers to sudden shifts in grammatical form, including shifts in pronouns.¹⁸ The Qur’ān frequently moves from first person to third person, from singular to plural or from direct address to indirect narration within a single passage. These shifts are not random grammatical changes; rather, they serve rhetorical, emotional and theological purposes. In long Qur’ānic verses, iltifāt creates dynamism and keeps the audience intellectually engaged. Arabic rhetoricians describe this feature as a sign of eloquence because it prevents monotony and strengthens emotional impact. Pronoun shifts in the Qur’ān often signal changes in tone, emphasis, or perspective. For example, divine speech may move from “He” to “We” or “I” depending on the intended rhetorical effect. The plural pronoun may express majesty and authority, while the singular form may indicate nearness and intimacy. Similarly, a verse may shift suddenly from discussing disbelievers in the third person to addressing them directly in the second person. This transition intensifies warning and moral accountability. Long verses containing such shifts require careful interpretation because misunderstanding the rhetorical purpose may lead to confusion. Classical scholars of balāghah extensively discussed iltifāt as evidence of Qur’ānic eloquence.¹⁹ They argued that these pronoun

¹⁶.Al-Kashshāf (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 2009), 1:233–237.

¹⁷.Arabic Syntax: A Generative Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 87–92.

¹⁸.Dalā’ il al-I‘jāz (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1992), 201–209.

¹⁹.Al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2000), 2:310–315.

shifts enrich meaning and reflect the emotional movement of the discourse. Modern literary scholars likewise recognize shifts in narrative perspective as important stylistic devices. In the Qur’ān, however, these shifts also carry spiritual and theological significance. They draw attention to divine authority, human responsibility and the seriousness of revelation. The effectiveness of *iltifāt* demonstrates how pronouns function beyond grammar and become instruments of persuasion and reflection.²⁰ Consequently, understanding pronoun shifts is essential for appreciating the rhetorical beauty of long Qur’ānic verses.

Pronouns and Semantic Ambiguity in the Qur’ān

Semantic ambiguity is another important dimension of pronoun usage in long Qur’ānic verses. In some passages, a pronoun may potentially refer to more than one antecedent, allowing multiple interpretive possibilities.²¹ This ambiguity is not necessarily a weakness; rather, many scholars consider it a deliberate rhetorical feature that enriches meaning and encourages contemplation. The Qur’ān often communicates layered meanings through concise expressions and pronoun ambiguity contributes to this depth. Classical commentators sometimes present different opinions regarding the referent of a pronoun, each interpretation supported by contextual or grammatical evidence. These interpretive variations reveal the richness of Qur’ānic discourse and the flexibility of Arabic expression. In long verses, ambiguity may create broader theological or moral significance because the message can apply to multiple groups or situations simultaneously. For example, a pronoun may grammatically refer to a specific community while semantically implying humanity in general. Such interpretive openness enhances the universality of the Qur’ānic message.²² However, semantic ambiguity also requires caution because careless interpretation may distort meaning. Scholars therefore examine syntax, thematic context, rhetorical purpose and intertextual evidence to identify the strongest interpretation. In some cases, the Qur’ān intentionally leaves a pronoun reference broad to stimulate reflection and discussion among readers. This feature contributes to the enduring intellectual engagement of the Qur’ānic text. Modern linguistic theories concerning ambiguity and polysemy provide useful tools for analyzing these phenomena. Such theories explain how a single expression may carry multiple legitimate meanings depending on context. The Qur’ānic use of pronoun ambiguity demonstrates the interaction between brevity and semantic richness. Rather than limiting meaning, ambiguity often expands the interpretive horizon of the verse. Consequently, understanding semantic ambiguity is essential for scholars of *Tafsīr*, linguistics and Qur’ānic studies.²³

²⁰ M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, “Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: *Iltifāt* and Related Features in the Qur’an,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55, no. 3 (1992): 407–432.

²¹ *God and Man in the Qur’an* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002), 54–59.

²² *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur’ān* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 2009), 19–22.

²³ *Discovering the Qur’an* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 96–101.

Pronouns and the Expression of Divine Majesty

The Qur’ān frequently employs pronouns to express divine majesty, authority, mercy and nearness. One of the most discussed examples is the divine use of the plural pronoun “We” instead of the singular “I.”²⁴ Classical scholars explain that this plural form does not indicate numerical plurality; rather, it expresses greatness, sovereignty and honor. In long Qur’ānic verses, the movement between singular and plural divine pronouns often reflects shifts in rhetorical emphasis. When Allah speaks using the singular pronoun, the context may emphasize intimacy, direct communication or personal accountability. When the plural form appears, the emphasis may shift toward power, majesty and the greatness of divine action. These pronoun choices therefore carry theological significance in addition to grammatical function. The Qur’ān carefully balances transcendence and closeness through linguistic expression. Pronouns become essential tools for conveying this balance. In some verses, divine speech alternates between different pronoun forms within the same passage. Such transitions contribute to emotional depth and rhetorical beauty.²⁵ Scholars of Tafsīr have long examined these pronoun changes to understand their spiritual implications. Furthermore, the Qur’ān sometimes refers to Allah in the third person before shifting suddenly to direct speech. This movement creates a powerful effect upon the listener by transforming distant description into immediate communication. Pronouns also help maintain reverence because repeated use of the divine name could reduce stylistic elegance. Instead, pronouns preserve fluency while continuing to direct attention toward Allah. Modern studies in religious language recognize that pronouns play a major role in shaping the relationship between speaker and audience. In the Qur’ān, this relationship is central to the experience of revelation. Therefore, the study of divine pronouns provides valuable insight into Qur’ānic theology, rhetoric and spirituality.²⁶

Pronouns in Classical Qur’ānic Exegesis

Classical Qur’ānic commentators devoted extensive attention to pronouns because they recognized their importance for accurate interpretation.²⁷ Tafsīr literature contains numerous discussions concerning pronoun antecedents, grammatical structures, rhetorical shifts and semantic implications. Scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, and Ibn Kathīr frequently analyzed pronouns when explaining difficult verses. Their discussions demonstrate that pronouns were considered central interpretive elements rather than minor grammatical details. In long Qur’ānic verses, commentators often debated which noun a pronoun referred to and why a particular pronoun form was selected. These debates sometimes reflected broader theological, legal, or rhetorical concerns. For example, one interpretation of a pronoun could support a specific legal ruling, while another interpretation might emphasize moral instruction. Classical commentators therefore combined linguistic analysis with contextual and theological

²⁴.Major Themes of the Qur’an (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 7–12.

²⁵.Nazm al-Durar fī Tanāsib al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1984), 1:92–98.

²⁶.The Qur’an: A New Translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 22-25.

²⁷.Jāmi‘ al-Bayān (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 2000), 1:233–240.

reasoning. Many scholars also examined the rhetorical beauty created through pronoun variation.²⁸ They argued that the Qur’ān’s eloquence becomes especially visible in its ability to maintain clarity despite complex pronoun structures. Furthermore, commentators used principles from Arabic grammar and rhetoric to resolve apparent ambiguities. Their analyses reveal the close relationship between linguistics and Tafsīr in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Some commentators focused heavily on syntax, while others emphasized spiritual and rhetorical dimensions. Despite methodological differences, they agreed that understanding pronouns was essential for proper comprehension of the Qur’ān. Modern researchers continue to benefit from these classical discussions because they preserve detailed linguistic observations. Contemporary Qur’ānic studies often build upon the foundations established by classical exegetes. The extensive attention given to pronouns in Tafsīr literature demonstrates their importance in preserving the precision and coherence of Qur’ānic interpretation.²⁹

Modern Linguistic Approaches to Qur’ānic Pronouns

Modern linguistic studies have introduced new methods for analyzing pronouns in Qur’ānic discourse. Scholars working in discourse analysis, pragmatics, semantics and textual linguistics examine how pronouns contribute to meaning, cohesion and audience engagement. These approaches often complement classical Islamic scholarship while introducing additional analytical tools. Discourse linguistics, for example, studies how pronouns connect sentences and organize information within a text. In long Qur’ānic verses, this perspective helps explain how thematic continuity is maintained across complex structures. Pragmatic studies analyze how pronouns influence communication between speaker and audience. The Qur’ān frequently employs pronouns to establish emotional closeness, moral authority or rhetorical emphasis. Modern linguists also examine deixis, which refers to words whose meaning depends upon context. Pronouns are among the most important deictic expressions because their interpretation changes according to speaker, listener and situation.³⁰ Such analyses provide deeper understanding of Qur’ānic communication strategies. Furthermore, corpus linguistics allows researchers to study pronoun patterns statistically across the Qur’ān. These studies reveal recurring structures and thematic relationships that may not be immediately visible through traditional reading. Modern literary criticism also examines narrative perspective and voice in Qur’ānic passages, highlighting the role of pronouns in shaping reader experience. Although modern methodologies differ from classical Tafsīr, many researchers acknowledge the sophistication of earlier Muslim scholarship. Contemporary studies often confirm observations already made by classical grammarians and rhetoricians. At the same time, modern approaches provide broader theoretical frameworks for understanding language

²⁸. Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999), 2:115–121.

²⁹. Al-Kashshāf (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 2009), 2:88–94.

³⁰. A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 299–304.

and discourse. The combination of classical and modern methods enriches the study of Qur'ānic pronouns and demonstrates their continuing relevance in linguistic research.³¹

Challenges in Translating Qur'ānic Pronouns

The translation of Qur'ānic pronouns presents major linguistic and interpretive challenges because Arabic pronoun systems differ significantly from those of many other languages. Translators must preserve grammatical meaning, rhetorical effect and theological implications simultaneously. In long Qur'ānic verses, pronouns often carry subtle nuances that may not have direct equivalents in English or other target languages. Arabic distinguishes between masculine and feminine forms, singular and plural forms and explicit versus hidden pronouns with greater precision than many modern languages. Consequently, translation sometimes requires explanatory additions that are absent in the original Arabic text. One challenge concerns ambiguous pronouns. A Qur'ānic pronoun may intentionally allow multiple interpretations but translation often forces the translator to choose only one meaning. This process can reduce the semantic richness of the original verse. Another challenge involves divine pronouns. The Arabic plural pronoun used for Allah expresses majesty rather than plurality, yet readers unfamiliar with Arabic may misunderstand this usage in translation.³² Translators therefore frequently include explanatory notes to clarify theological meaning. Pronoun shifts associated with *iltifāt* also create difficulties because abrupt grammatical changes that sound eloquent in Arabic may appear confusing in another language. Some translators preserve the shifts literally, while others smooth the transitions for readability. Each approach involves gains and losses. Furthermore, hidden pronouns in Arabic may require explicit nouns in translation to maintain clarity. This necessity can alter the rhythm and brevity of the original text. Scholars of translation studies emphasize that pronouns are among the most difficult elements to transfer accurately between languages because they depend heavily on context and culture. Qur'ānic translation therefore requires not only linguistic skill but also deep knowledge of Arabic rhetoric and Islamic theology. Despite these challenges, careful translation can still communicate much of the meaning and beauty associated with Qur'ānic pronoun usage.³³

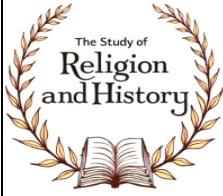
Conclusion

The study of pronouns in long Qur'ānic verses reveals the extraordinary linguistic sophistication of the Qur'ān and demonstrates the close relationship between grammar, rhetoric and interpretation. Pronouns are not merely small grammatical markers; they function as essential tools for cohesion, narrative development, legal clarification, rhetorical impact, theological expression and semantic depth. Through pronouns, the Qur'ān maintains textual harmony while conveying complex meanings in concise and eloquent language. Long Qur'ānic verses particularly depend upon accurate pronoun interpretation because they often contain multiple subjects, actions and thematic transitions within a single passage. Classical scholars of grammar, rhetoric, *Tafsīr* and

³¹.Principles of Pragmatics (London: Longman, 1983), 13–18.

³².Toward a Science of Translating (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 159–164.

³³.The Qur'an: An Introduction (London: Routledge, 2008), 112–116.



THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

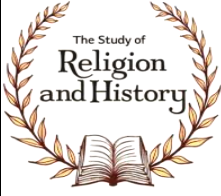
Vol.2, No.4, 2024

ISSN P: [3006-3329](#)
ISSN E: [3006-3337](#)

Islamic law recognized this importance and devoted extensive discussions to pronoun analysis. Their works continue to provide valuable foundations for modern linguistic research. Contemporary studies in discourse analysis, pragmatics, and translation studies further confirm the significance of pronouns in understanding Qur'ānic communication. The Qur'ān employs pronouns with remarkable precision, using them to express divine majesty, emotional intensity, moral responsibility and thematic unity. Features such as hidden pronouns, semantic ambiguity and *iltifāt* demonstrate how pronouns contribute to both clarity and rhetorical beauty. At the same time, these features challenge interpreters and translators to engage deeply with context and linguistic structure. The study of Qur'ānic pronouns therefore requires interdisciplinary approaches combining Arabic grammar, rhetoric, theology, literary criticism and modern linguistics. Such comprehensive analysis helps readers appreciate the richness of Qur'ānic language and prevents superficial interpretation. Furthermore, understanding pronouns enhances appreciation of the Qur'ān's stylistic elegance and interpretive depth. Future research may continue exploring computational, comparative and discourse-based approaches to Qur'ānic pronouns in order to expand scholarly understanding. Ultimately, the linguistic role of pronouns in the Qur'ān reflects the remarkable balance between brevity, coherence and expressive power that characterizes the sacred text.

Bibliography

- The Qur'an: A New Translation. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style. London: I.B. Tauris, 1999.
- The Koran Interpreted. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955.
- Jawāhir al-Balāghah. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1999.
- The Qur'an: An Introduction. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsib al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar. Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1984.
- Al-Muwāfaqāt. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1997.
- Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000.
- Jāmi' al-Bayān. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2000.
- Al-Kashshāf. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2009.
- The Qur'an and Late Antiquity. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Toward a Science of Translating. Leiden: Brill, 1964.
- Major Themes of the Qur'an. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr. Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1999.
- Principles of Pragmatics. London: Longman, 1983.
- Cohesion in English. London: Longman, 1976.
- A History of Islamic Legal Theories. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm. Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999.
- Al-Khaṣā'ish. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2001.
- Mughnī al-Labīb. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1985.
- Arabic Syntax: A Generative Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- The Arabic Language. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.
- The Composition of the Qur'an. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Coherence in the Qur'an. Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986.



**THE STUDY OF
RELIGION AND HISTORY**

Vol.2, No.4, 2024

ISSN P: [3006-3329](#)
ISSN E: [3006-3337](#)

- Discovering the Qur'an. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003.
- Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān. Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2003.
- Al-Kitāb. Edited by 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1988.
- God and Man in the Qur'an. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002.
- Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr. Tunis: Dār Sahnūn, 1984.
- Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1995.
- Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān. Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 2009.
- Dalā'il al-I'jāz. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1992.