

Cementing Markers in the Holy Quraʿan: The word *sawaaʿ* ‘whether’ as a model

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Abstract: This paper reports on the use of *sawaaʿ* ‘whether’ as a cementing marker in the verses of the Holy Quraʿan. The verses containing *sawaaʿ* as a cementing marker are chosen from 28 instances employing this word. Analysis of the data suggested that *sawaaʿ* ‘whether’ in the provided verses has the meaning of the sameness with the preceded clause and the meaning of the subordinate conjunction "whether or" with the following clause. Therefore, this word has proved a discourse function which facilitates the perception of the discourse thus reducing the effort of the hearer to follow the speaker, achieving ultimately the optimal relevance (see Sperber and Wilson 1986; 1995). Such plays a significant role in maintaining the flow of the speaker-hearer communication, conveying a sense of connectivity in that it connects the stretches of the discourse altogether.

Keywords: Speaker-hearer communication, Connectivity, Conjunctions, Cementing marker *sawaaʿ* ‘whether’.

1. Introduction:

Cementing markers are the common words used between two sentences or phrases that gives a certain meaning to the preceding sentence or phrase and another meaning to the following sentence or phrase (Al-Rawajfeh and Al-Khalafat: 2019). Figure (1) clarifies the notion of the cementing marker *sawaaʿ*.

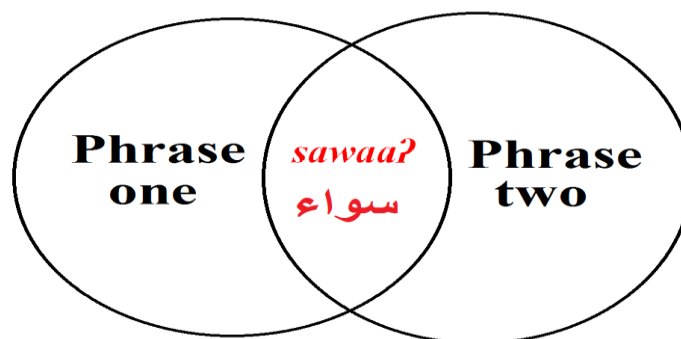


Figure 1: The notion of the cementing markers (common)

The following examples clarify the notion of the cementing markers:

1. *ġalika al kitabo la raiba fiihi hudan lilmutaqiin.* (Al-Baqarah: 2)

‘This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah ’.

The first sentence "*ġalika al kitabo la raiba fiihi*" delivers a complete meaning; this book which God sent to us contains no doubt. The second sentence "*fiihi hudan lilmutaqiin*" delivers another independent meaning; this book guides those who are conscious of Allah.

2. *inna Allaha la yastaġi an yaġriba mathalan ma baġoġatan fama fawoqoha faġama allaġiina ġamano fayaġlamona annaho alhaqo min rabihim wa amma allaġiina kafaro fayaqolona maġa arada Allaho bihaġa maġalan yaġillo bihi kaġiiran w yahdi bihi kaġiiran w ma yoġilo bihi illa al fasiqiin.* (Al-Baqara: 26)

‘Indeed, Allah is not timid to present an example - that of a mosquito or what is smaller than it. And those who have believed know that it is the truth from their Lord. But as for those who disbelieve, they say, "What did Allah intend by this as an example?" He misleads many thereby and guides many thereby. And He misleads not except the defiantly disobedient.’

This verse contains four sentences which are; "*inna Allaha la yastaġi an yaġriba mathalan ma*", "*ma baġoġatan fama fawoqoha*", "*faġama allaġiina ġamano fayaġlamona annaho alhaqo min rabihim wa amma allaġiina kafaro fayaqolona maġa arada Allaho*", and "*arada Allaho bihaġa maġalan yaġillo bihi kaġiiran w yahdi bihi kaġiiran w ma yoġilo bihi illa al fasiqiin.*"

Every sentence conveys a complete meaning; the first sentence means that Allah not timid to present an example. That is to say, Allah is able to drive any example he wants. The second sentence is seen as a question that invokes the minded to think about. What is the mosquito, what is above and below it? In the third sentence, the disbelievers are questioning what Allah intends by driving such an example. The response to this question comes in the fourth sentence that is by driving such an example Allah misleads many thereby and guides many thereby. And He misleads only those which are defiantly disobedient.

2. Literature Reviews:

Traditionally, a conjunction in English is a part of speech that is used to connect two words, phrases, clauses or sentences altogether (Lester, 1990; Leech and Svartvik, 1994; Aarts, 2001; Leung, 2005; Crystal, 2008; Burton-Roberts, 2011). To this end, Eckhard-Black (1992: 97) stated that “A conjunction stands between two words, phrases or clauses and links them”. Carnie

(2007: 90) noted that “Coordinate structures are constituents linked by conjunctions like *and* or *or*”. Similarly, Kirkpatrick (2007: 173) states that “A conjunction is a linking word used to join words, word groups or clauses”. In addition, a conjunction, in the words of Murthy (2007: 212), is “A word which joins together sentences or words and clauses”. Furthermore, Baskerville and Sewel (2015: 1) mentioned that “Unlike adverbs, conjunctions do not modify but they are just solely for the purpose of connecting”. Therefore, it is safe to claim that conjunctions are most generally conceived as a linker or connector.

Conjunctions have been the topic of interest by many researchers (Quirk et al., 1985; Schiffrin, 1987; Leech & Svartvik, 1994; Ball, 1996; Altenberg, 1996; Greenbaum & Quirk, 1993; Fraser, 1998, 1999). Scholars over time have conceived them by various labels Leung (ibid: 11). For instance, Halliday and Hasan (1976: 13) treat them as “linguistic devices that create cohesion”, Sanders and Maat (2006:1-2) describe them as a “semantic relation that is explicitly marked” while Schiffrin (1987), treats conjunctions as discourse markers. Fraser (1998, 1999) considers them as a “pragmatic class of lexical expressions”, that is to say pragmatic markers. Throughout the research we will term conjunctions as cementing markers.

Conjunctions are significant devices in writing or speech. They facilitate the speaker-hearer communication achieving as such the optimal relevance (see Sperber and Wilson 1986; 1995). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 226-227) that conjunctive relation is important in the “specification of the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before”.

As explained by Caron (1994: 706) conjunctions are used “to express various kinds of relations between utterances”. Rouchota (1998:2) also states that conjunctions “encode different meanings, and that they can be a procedural device”.

This research paper contributes to this line of research, exploring the discourse function of *sawaa?* ‘whether’ in the Holy Qur’aan. This word being used as a lexical signal develops a certain discourse meaning as a cementing marker which helps in maintaining the flow of the speaker-hearer communication (Siddiqui, 2014) and hence structuring the discourse efficiently. This argument implies that there is no conflicting implication that conjunctions are both used as coherence markers and facilitators of the speaker-hearer communication, in which case the given cementing marker is vital for ‘the hearer’s search for optimal relevance’ (Blakemore, 2002: 170).

3. Data Collection and Methodology

The data were collected from translated copy of the Holy Qur’aan. Twenty eight instances were found. Only six occurrences are examined with respect to their discourse function. In the next section, descriptive analysis of this data is presented.

4. Sawaa? as a cementing marker

According to our corpus, *sawaa?* has shown a discourse function as a connector “cementing marker” that is quite different from its usual use as a lexical marker meaning “the same”. In this verse, *sawaa?* is used before the verb. It works as a connector that connects the stretches of the discourse altogether. Using Schourup's (1999) terminology, *sawaa?* is a connecting textual element. Under this use, *sawaa?* is better translated as whether or. Consider the following verses:

1. inna allađiina kafaro sawaa?on ?alayhim ?a?anđartahom am lam tonđirhom la yo?minoon.
Al-Baqarah, verse 6
‘Indeed, those who disbelieve - it is all the same for them **whether** you warn them **or** do not warn them - they will not believe’.

In the first sentence "inna allađiina kafaro sawaa?on" means that all the disbelievers are the same. In the second sentence "sawaa?on ?alayhim ?a?anđartahom am lam tonđirhom la yo?minoon", *sawaa?* here means "whether". That is to say, whether you warn the disbelievers or not they will not believe. Also, "inna allađiina kafaro sawaa?on" has a complete proposition which is the meaning of sameness, stating that all the disbelievers are the same. *Sawaa?on* in the second sentence "sawaa?on ?alayhim ?a?anđartahom am lam tonđirhom la yo?minoon" has another complete meaning which is the meaning of ‘whether or’ being a connector or a conjunction. We can see that *sawaa?* works as a connector between the previous subpart of the discourse and the following subpart of the discourse. The following subpart of the utterance is based on the preceding discourse. It connects the clause that precedes it with the one that follows it. That is to say, ‘the disbelievers’ with ‘they will not believe’. Meaning whether you warn the disbelievers or not they will not believe. The clause they will not believe refers back to the disbelievers; the preceding utterance. In another sense, *sawaa?* has a meaning with the first sentence and another meaning with the second sentence.

2. w barazo lilahi jamii?an fa qala ađo?afa?o lilađiina istakbaro inna kuna lakum taba?an fahal antom mođnona ?anna min ?aðabillah min shay?in qallo law hadana Alaho lahadaynakom sawaa?on ?alayna ajazi?na am ?abarna ma lana min mađii?. (Ibrahim: 21)

And they will come out [for judgement] before Allah all together, and the weak will say to those who were arrogant, "Indeed, we were your followers, so can you avail us anything against the punishment of Allah?" They will say, "If Allah had guided us, we would have guided you. It is all the same for us **whether** we show intolerance **or** are patient: there is for us no place of escape

In this verse *sawaa?* binds the discourse that precedes it with the one that follows it. It connects those who were arrogant with "there is for us no place of escape". The hearer cannot tell the referent of this discourse without going back to the preceding discourse. The arrogant said we do not have any place to escape to whether we show intolerance or patience. In addition, *sawaa?on* in the sentence "qallo law hadana Alaho lahadaynakom *sawaa?on*" has a complete proposition disclosing that if Allah had guided us, we would have guided all of you. Therefore, we can tell that *sawaa?on* here means 'all of you'. In the second sentence "*sawaa?on* Ṣalayna ajaziṢna am ṣabarna ma lana min maḥiis", *sawaa?on* here means 'whether'.

3. inni axafo Ṣalaikom Ṣaḏaba yawmin ḏaziim. qalo sawaa?on Ṣalaina awaṢazta am lam takun min al waṢiziin. (Ash-Shu'araa: 135- 136).

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 advisors."

The sentence, "qalo sawaa?on" is informative. It means that what you say is all the same for us. In the second sentence, "sawaa?on Ṣalaina awaṢazta am lam takun min al waṢiziin", "sawaa?on" here means "whether". It reveals a sense of connectivity with the preceding sentence. That is to say, it is all the same to us whether you advise or are not of the advisors.

4. w sawaa?on Ṣalaihim ?a?anḏartahom am lam tonḏirhom la yo?minoon.

And it is all the same for them **whether** you warn them **or** do not warn them - they will not believe. ya-sin 10

The marker *sawaa?on* in this verse connects the first sentence which is "w sawaa?on Ṣalaihim ?a?anḏartahom am lam tonḏirhom" with its predicate; the second sentence which is "la yo?minoon". Meaning, both ways those people will not believe whether you warn them or not. Without the use of *sawaa?on*, the first sentence would be as "Ṣalaihim ?a?anḏartahom am lam tonḏirhom" thus showing no connectivity with the predicate which is "la yo?minoon". Therefore, it is clear that there is something missing related to the connection between the two sentences. In another sense, "w sawaa?on" has a complete proposition which is the meaning of sameness, meaning it is all the same for them. *Sawaa?on* in the second sentence has another complete meaning which is the meaning of 'whether or' being a connector or a conjunction.

5. sawaa?on Ṣalaihim ?istaḡfarta lahom am lam tastaḡfir lahom lan yaḡfira Allho lahom inna allaha la yaḡfir lilqaom il fasiqiin. Al-Munafiqun 6

It is all the same for them whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; never will Allah forgive them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.

Likewise, in this verse *sawaaʔon* is used to connect the first sentence which is "sawaaʔon ʕalaihim ʔistaġfarta lahom am lam tastaġfir lahom lan yaġfira" with its predicate which is "lan yaġfira allho lahom". Meaning that Allah will not forgive them whether you ask forgiveness for them or you do not. In another sense, "sawaaʔon ʕalaihim" has a complete proposition which is the meaning of sameness, stating that it is all the same for them. *Sawaaʔon* in the second sentence has another complete meaning which is the meaning of 'whether or' being a connector or a conjunction.

In the verses above, it is noticed that *sawaaʔ* is important for the so-called local discourse coherence (see Schiffrin, 1987). It functions as to signal discursal relations between subunits of the discourse, thus contributing to discourse coherence. This analysis of *sawaaʔ* as a cementing marker goes in lines with Lewis' (2006) characterizations of discourse markers, a term that relies basically on the notion of connectivity.

6. wa in tadʕhom i-lal-hoda la yatabiʕokom **sawaaʔon** ʕalaykom adaʕawtomohom am antom ʕamitooon.

And if you [believers] invite them to guidance, they will not follow you. It is all the same for you whether you invite them or you are silent.

sawaaʔon in this verse connects the clause that followed it; "ʕalaykom adaʕawtomohom am antom ʕamitooon" with the clause that precedes it; "wa in tadʕhom i-lal-hoda la yatabiʕokom". They will not be guided whether you invite them to guidance or not. Also, *sawaaʔon* has a complete proposition with the first clause; "wa in tadʕhom i-lal-hoda la yatabiʕokom **sawaaʔon**" and another complete meaning as a connector "whether or" with the second clause; "sawaaʔon ʕalaykom adaʕawtomohom am antom ʕamitooon". *sawaaʔon* with the first clause means "all of them the same" will not be guided if you invite them to guidance. With the second clause it means "whether you invite them or you are silent".

4. Conclusion

This study is intended as a contribution to the discursal development research. In particular, it has explored the use of *sawaaʔ* as a cementing marker in the Holy Quraʔan. Analysis of the data indicated that *sawaaʔ* in the provided verses has the meaning of the sameness with the preceded clause and the meaning of the subordinate conjunction "whether or" with the following clause. Once it is used as a connector/conjunction it connects the

following subpart with the preceded subpart so to complete its meaning. Accordingly, it is save to claim that *sawaaʔ* being used as a cementing marker plays a significant role in organizing the stretches of the discourse in that it thematically connects the previous discourse with the following discourse, hence strengthening what is so-called discourse coherence or textuality.

5. Suggestions and Recommendations

It is recommended that further research studies conducted on other markers in the Holy Qura'an used as cementing markers. Further, it is recommended to study the discursal use of other lexicon in Arabic language.

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