

Applying SFL to the Qur'ān: Textual Metafunction in Some of the Qur'ānic Narratives of  
Abraham

Zaid Shihab Alamiri

BSc (University of Baghdad, Iraq)

MSc (Universidad Austral de Chile, Chile)

A Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Philosophy

Department of Linguistics

School of Humanities

Faculty of Arts

University of Adelaide

Australia

June 2016

## **Table of Contents**

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	v-vi
DECLARATION.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	viii
DEDICATION.....	ix
LIST OF TABLES.....	x-xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 objectives.....	13
1.2 Methodology.....	14
1.3 Structure & arrangement of thesis.....	19
<b>CHAPTER 2 THE QUR'ĀN: STRUCTURE, LANGUAGE AND TEXT.....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Meaning of word Qur'ān.....	21
2.2 Structure of the Text.....	21
2.3 Ayah concept and structure.....	22
2.4 Language of Qur'ān.....	23
2.4.1 General features.....	23
2.4.2 Orality of the Qur'ān.....	24
2.4.3 The Qur'ān: text and context.....	25
2.4.4 Coherence in the Qur'ān: two points of view.....	25
3.1 Metafunctions: modes of meaning.....	27
3.2 Theme: definition, function, and limitation.....	30
3.3 Register: language and context of situation.....	33
3.3.1. Context of situation.....	33
3.3.2 Relationship of text and context of situation.....	34
3.3.3 Mode of discourse.....	36
<b>CHAPTER 4 ARABIC CLAUSE: CONCEPT AND TYPES.....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	39

<b>4.2 Sentence concept.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.3 Type of clauses.....</b>	<b>40</b>
4.3.1 Grammarians approach: nominal and verbal .....	40
4.3.1.1 Nominal clause.....	40
4.3.1.2 Verbal clause.....	41
4.3.2 Rhetoricians approach to the clause analysis.....	43
<b>4.4 Some points on thematic structure in Arabic Linguistic Tradition.....</b>	<b>44</b>
4.4.1 General considerations .....	44
4.4.2 Sibawayh contribution.....	46
4.4.3 Jurjani: Functional aspects of language.....	47
<b>CHAPTER 5 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>5.2 Textual and Interpersonal Themes .....</b>	<b>49</b>
5.2.1 Textual Themes .....	49
5.2.1.1 Wa (and).....	51
5.2.1.2 'fa' .....	52
5.2.1.4 Concluding remarks .....	54
5.2.2 Interpersonal Themes .....	54
5.2.2.1 'inna and its sisters .....	54
5.2.2.2 Qad and laqad ( قد، لقد ) .....	55
5.2.2.3 Vocatives.....	56
5.2.2.4 Concluding remarks .....	56
<b>5.3 Analysis of Topical Themes.....</b>	<b>57</b>
5.3.1 Introduction to the analysis of thematic structure.....	57
5.3.2.1 Q. 6:74-82 .....	64
5.3.2.2 Q. 19:41-50 .....	71
5.3.3 Group 2:Q.11; Q.15.....	76
5.3.3.1 Q.11.....	76
5.3.3.2:Q. 15:51-60 .....	81
<b>5.4 Discussion of the topical theme findings .....</b>	<b>85</b>
5.4.1.1 Theme in declarative clauses.....	85
5.4.1.2 Marked and unmarked Theme.....	87
5.4.1.3 Separation pronoun (ضمير الفصل).....	88
5.4.1.4 Pronoun of issue (ضمير الشأن).....	88
5.4.1.5 Themes in interrogative clauses .....	89
5.4.1.5.1 Polar questions .....	89
5.4.1.5.2 Elementary questions.....	89
5.4.1.6 Themes in imperative clauses .....	90
5.4.1.7 Longer Theme units .....	91
5.4.2 Frequent use of the speech denoting verb: projection .....	91
5.4.2.1 Projection in Arabic linguistic theory .....	91
5.4.2.2 SFL approach on projection .....	92
5.4.2.3 Results and discussion of projecting clauses.....	93
<b>5.4.3 Concluding remarks on Theme .....</b>	<b>96</b>

<b>CHAPTER 6: COHESIVE SYSTEM.....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>6.1 Cohesive system: Reference .....</b>	<b>102</b>
6.1.1 Domain of reference .....	104
6.1.2.1 Personal reference .....	105
6.1.2.2 Demonstrative reference .....	107
6.1.2.3 Discussion .....	108
<b>CHAPTER 7 MODE OF DISCOURSE: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>111</b>
7.1 Group one: Q.6; Q.19 .....	111
7.1.1. Rhetorical mode .....	111
7.1.2 Medium: Spoken and written mode .....	112
7.2 Analysis of Mode of discourse in Group two: Q. 11; Q.15. ....	114
7.2.1 Rhetorical mode .....	114
7.2.2 Medium: spoken and written mode .....	114
7.2.3. Concluding remarks.....	114
<b>CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>8.1 Summaries of theoretical and methodological points .....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>8.2 The principal findings of the present study .....</b>	<b>117</b>
8.2.1 Thematic structure points .....	118
8.2.2 Cohesive relation of reference .....	121
8.2.4 Other related points .....	122
<b>8.3 Limitations of the study .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>8.4 Further research.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>9 REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Appendix 1 Themes types in Q.6.....</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Appendix 2 Themes types in Q.11.....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Appendix 3 Themes types in Q.15.....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Appendix 4 Themes types in Q.19.....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Appendix 5 Number &amp; percentage of all themes in each Sura with the total number and percentage in the whole four stories.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Appendix 6 Number and percentage of conjunctions in each Sura.....</b>	<b>121</b>

## Abstract

This study is an endeavor to apply SFL to the Qur'ān. Its focus is to analyze the textual metafunction in some passages of Abraham's story mentioned in four Suras (Q.6, 11, 15 and 19). The textual metafunction domain is the text internal relationships and the context in which it is produced. It does so by managing the linguistic resources of the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions that are reflected in the thematic, information and cohesive systems.

The study examined principally two elements of this metafunction, i.e., the thematic structure (Theme-Rheme), and the cohesion system. As to the first, the text made use of the multiple types of the textual, interpersonal and topical themes. In the latter, the study showed the thematisation of the verbal group (process) in the declarative VS clause type, which represented the unmarked type of theme in the majority of the clauses; and within that the 'saying' verbs are prevalent, establishing a projection relation. The results showed that the paratactic relation between the projecting and projected clauses made possible the separate analysis of thematic structure of both clauses.

Related to the thematisation of the verbal group is the presence of the Subject, through the verbal inflection, in different pronominal forms. Therefore, a reconsideration of theme limit is needed to reflect this fact of Arabic, and extends its range. The interrogative and imperatives clauses fit well the SFL theme considerations.

The cohesion was partially analyzed focusing only on the reference as a grammatical cohesive device. The ties established by both the personal and demonstrative pronouns, as components of reference relation, hold the text parts together, contributing thus to its cohesion. To better understand the controversial issue of the Qur'ānic cohesion, we believe other devices such as ellipsis and conjunctions as well as the lexical devices (repetition for example) need to be examined.

As the text unfolds in a context, the contextual factors were examined, in particular, the mode of discourse as being the element that correlates with, and activates, the textual meanings. In this regard, language represents the whole activity, and its role then is a constitutive. The mode orientation is more towards the tenor of the discourse than to the field of the discourse, reflecting more the interpersonal than the experiential meanings. Finally, the medium of the language is particular in that it combined both features of the spoken and the written.

This study showed that the Qur'ānic Arabic, so different from other Arabic varieties, actually lent itself to SFL analysis. And a promising area to improve understanding the text would be the translational studies. An extensive research in Arabic Linguistic Tradition is required to get more insights regarding other alternatives of considering the Theme in the Qur'ānic Arabic. Finally, it should be remembered this is an old Semitic text (Arabic) that had been shaped and created within its own grammatical and rhetorical realms; and our study is but an approximation in terms of SFL.

## Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Acknowledgment

I have two people to express my gratitude to; they are my supervisor and co-supervisor. They both contributed to the consummation of this study. I am highly appreciative of my supervisor for facilitating my journey in the field of linguistics, as he generously accepted that I choose the subject that fits my inclination. He always believed in me along all the stages of developing the thesis offering his relentless support in many different ways; his help is enormous that words actually fall short of expressing. As regards my co-supervisor, I am also indebted to his contribution when he accepted co-supervising this study. Also his lovely prompt facilitating the references I needed whether in the beginning or the very last days of the study is duly acknowledged and appreciated. They are both friendly, humble and believers in knowledge socialization.

In what concerns me, it was an enjoyable journey in both SFL as well as Arabic Linguistic Tradition, in particular the theoretical aspects; a challenge I like much because, for me, philosophizing things, in any area of knowledge, gives a flavor not encountered in the 'barren' treatment of things, as well as it semanticizes the essence of our existence as *Homo sapiens*. The searching in, and digging up, these both sources gratify my taste of immersing in linguistics, a long held desire since the days of high school when 'winds' went against the sailor wishes, as AlMutanabbi (915-965 AD), the grand poet of Arabs, put it. Never the torch of this desire died out yet it fainted as my mother used to say. Therefore I am really grateful to all people who in one way or another facilitated this little and small dream 'project' comes true.



## Dedication

To the memory of my father and mother.

To my son Ali who is fond of watching 'adventure time' and playing 'Shark evolution' games than reading. He keeps asking me what are you writing, dad? I replied I am writing a sort of a short novella, like the one you are reading as a home assignment, to share with you in years to come.

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Transcription of Arabic alphabet
Table 5.1	Separate personal pronouns
Table.5.2	attached personal pronouns
Table 5.3	Personal pronouns markers indicating Subject in Arabic in past tense
Table 5.4	Personal pronouns markers indicating Subject in Arabic in present tense
Table 5.5	Spanish pronominal subject (morpheme) in the theme position in past tense
Table 5.6	Spanish pronominal subject (morpheme) in the theme position in present tense
Table 5.7	ayah 74
Table 5.8	ayah 75
Table 5.9	ayah 76
Table 5.8	ayah 77
Table 5.10	ayah 78
Table 5.11	ayah 79
Table 5.12	ayah 80
Table 5.13	ayah 81
Table 5.14	ayah 82
Table 5.15	ayah 41
Table 5.16	ayah 42
Table 5.17	ayah 43
Table 5.18	ayah 44
Table 5.19	ayah 45
Table 5.21	ayah 46
Table 5.22	ayah 47
Table 5.23	ayah 48
Table 5.24	ayah 49
Table 5.25	ayah 50
Table 5.26	ayah 69
Table 5.27	ayah 70
Table 5.28	ayah 71
Table 5.29	ayah 72
Table 5.30	ayah 73
Table 5.31	ayah 74
Table 5.32	ayah 75
Table 5.33	ayah 76

Table 5.34 ayah 51

Table 5.35 ayah 52

Table 5.36 ayah 53

Table 5.37 ayah 54

Tale 5.38 ayah 55

Table 5.39ayah 56

Table 5.40 ayah 57

Table .5.41 ayah 58

Table 5.42 ayah 59, 60

Table 5.43. Speech denoting verb: numbers and its occurrence in Thematic structure

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Mode of discourse components

Figure 3.1 Relation of the text to the context of situation

Figure 4.1 Types of sentences according to rhetoricians