Research article
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Applying Discourse Analysis to Define the Stylistic Features of Qur’ānic Genres

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Abstract: This article presents an inquiry into the identification of the stylistic features characterizing genres in the Qur’ān. It explores how discourse organization and the articulation of marking foreground and background information convey the intended meaning and topics of Qur’ānic genres and impact their style in terms of lexicon and syntactic structure. Three types of information are shown to emerge in Qur’ānic genres that are captured in the relationship between syntactic form and discourse function: main foreground information, complementary foreground information and background information. Whereas the main foreground information in all genres has its own identifiable syntax, the complementary information is diverse. The background information in all types of genres shares some common thematic, pragmatic and linguistic features which can easily be identified.

Keywords: Qur’ānic genres, discourse analysis, text structure, foreground and background information, stylistic and grammatical features

Introduction
This article is situated within the framework of discourse studies or, more precisely, linguistic text analysis. Text linguistics covers not only the traditional levels of analysis within linguistics (phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and semantics), but also the analysis of textual organization such as cohesion and tense. This article presents linguistic insights into the different genres in the Qur’ān by focusing on the relationship between information structure and linguistic features.

The terms “genre(s)” and “discourse(s)” are both discussed in this paper but are not equivalent. Genre can be defined as “one order of speech style, a constellation of systemically related, co-occurring formal features and structures that serves as a conventionalized orienting framework for the production and reception of discourse. More specifically, a genre is a speech style oriented to the production and reception of a particular kind of text.” Genre has also been defined as “a written discourse or text of sentences that provides information on a common topic.” In this sense, it is characterized by a set of communicative purposes that are identified and mutually understood by members of the professional community in which the genre regularly occurs. Rose (2013) considered genres to be staged, goal-oriented social processes. They are social in that texts are always interactive events; goal-oriented in that a text unfolds to indicate its interactants’ purposes; and staged, because it usually takes more than one step to reach the communicative goal. By contrast, discourse refers to “lan-

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guage in use or stretches of language like conversation or stories.”

Cuipers suggested the term “passages” for these stretches of text which correspond to an autonomous level where form and meaning are shaped and therefore can be read or uttered independently of that which precedes or follows them. Passages can vary in length. Here, the term “genre” is used to refer to five formal distinguishable categories of literary composition in the Qurʾān: eschatology, hymns, narratives, debates (polemics) and laws. “Discourse” refers to stretches of language dealing with these topics.

The linguistic features of a text are also crucial to discourse analysis, although the terms “stylistic features” or “language and style” are also found in the literature. However, as Bakhtin argued, though grammar is essentially different from style, there is no grammatical study without stylistic observations. In other words, if a grammatical structure is only considered within the language system, it is a grammatical phenomenon. However, if it is considered in a genre, it is a stylistic phenomenon. Gee (1999) also noted that, when analyzing discourse, two types of grammar should be distinguished: grammars based on the traditional analysis of a set of units such as nouns, verbs, inflections, phrases and clauses, and grammars that explain how units and nouns, verbs, phrases and sentences are used to create patterns that signal “who is doing what and why” within discourses.

Qurʾānic discourse or genres can be identified in terms of their content, but it is almost impossible to investigate content without referring to lexical-grammatical-structural features. For this reason, researchers also tend to define the discourse type in terms of the lexical and syntactic elements present in the thematic compositional structure. Certain entries in the Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān provide good examples. Neuwirth (2002) argued that eschatological passages are characterized by clusters of ‘īḍā-phrases or the use of the adverb yawmaʾidin. Gilliot (2003) lists some formulaic features of narratives, such as clauses that start with ‘īḍ, which signal that something new has happened or will happen. Other formulas include ‘a-lam tara ʾilā “Did you see?” and hal ʾatāka hadīṭ “Have you heard the story?”.

Introductions to the Qurʾān also provide evidence that content and linguistic features are inseparable from the structure of the Qurʾān. For example, Robinson (2003) described six types of Qurʾānic sections which he calls the eschatological, narrative, sign, revelation, polemic, and messenger. He indicates that in units that describe cosmic catastrophes, the verbs tend to be in the passive, and, like Neuwirth, he also points to the use of the adverb yawmaʾidin and diptychs contrasting the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the unbelievers, which are usually signaled by the syntactic device ‘ammā...’ammā “as for...as for.”

7 Cuipers, The Composition of the Qurʾān: Rhetorical Analysis, 36, 46-47. The division of Cuipers is also applied by Zahniser, “The Miraculous Birth Stories in the Interpretation of Sūrat Maryam (Q 19): An Exercise in a Discourse Grammar of the Qurʾān”, 95-100.
8 Stewart (2021) states as follows: "In his 2006 discussion of Qurʾānic language, Mustansir Mir distinguished five types of text in the Qurʾān: narrative, poetic, hortative, hymnal, and legal (Mir 2006). In my view, these are not proper genres but supra-generic categories.” See Stewart, “Speech Genres and Interpretation of the Qurʾān”, 4.
11 See for example, Lowry, "Law and the Qurʾān".
14 Robinson, Discovering the Qurʾān: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text, 104–105. El-Awa, “Discourse Markers and the Structure of Intertextual Relations in Medium-Length Qurʾānic Surahs: The Case of Sūrat Tāḥā (Q 20)”, p. 233, mentions work by Robinson, “Hands Outstretched: Towards a Re-reading of Sūrat al-Māˈida”. Robinson identified certain textual markers that indicate where a section of the surahs commences. These include the presence of a number of “introductory formulae” such as yāˈ-ayyuhā lladhīna ʾamanū (“O you who believed”), waˈ-ʿid (“and when”), ʾinna (“indeed”), and qul (“say”) that denote verbal cues of section beginnings.
Literary genres in the Qurʾān have been studied extensively in terms of their content, structure and specific linguistic features. This work extends this literature by showing that the linguistic features mentioned above are indeed the typical forms of speech genres, but that they only partially describe the stylistic features of the Qurʾānic genres because a text or discourse associated with a certain genre contains much more information that can define its style. In addition, these linguistic features can describe individual sentences that appear in other discourse types, rather than constituting a speech genre that has definite and relatively stable typical forms manifesting particular thematic content, style and compositional structure. For example, after describing the inhabitants of al-ḥiǧr who rejected the messengers in Q 15:80–84, there is a shift to the issues of monotheism and resurrection. The word as-sāʿa in Q 15:85 (wa-ʾinna s-sāʿata la-ʾātiyatun "And verily the Hour is surely coming"), which characterizes the passages describing Judgment Day, occurs in a single sentence instead of a longer passage.

Argamon et al. (2007) suggested that style can be defined as how the author chooses to express a topic out of a wide range of possibilities. However, the key problem for stylistic text categorization is the choice of textual features that make up the model. While topic-based text categorization can be based on “bags of content words”, style is more elusive. Style is reflected in textual features such as word choice, syntactic structures, and discourse strategy.

To describe discourse or genre from a linguistic perspective, various features such as morphemes and inflection, the lexicon and syntactic structure must be taken into account. However, when describing the stylistic features of Qurʾānic genres, it is not enough to refer to the thematic content by focusing on the generic linguistic features signaling the foreground information, or what Khalil (2000) called the constituents that occur as sentence-initial markers which serve a crucial text-level grounding-signaling function. Rather, the text should be described as an entity consisting of a set of interrelated recursive discourse units that together provide more information about each of their parts. All discourse segments should be identified and considered together when interpreting the coherence relations between discourse units. Rose (2012) noted that each genre can be distinguished by recurrent local patterns, such as the narrative stages of orientation, complication, resolution, or the exposition stages of thesis, arguments, and reiteration. Put differently, the structure of each genre and its parts should be identified first because each has its own specific linguistic features.

This article focuses on the analysis of the main foreground information, the complementary foreground information (or midground information, see Section 1) and the background information. Whereas the main foreground information in each genre has its own identifiable syntax that differentiates it from the other types, the complementary foreground information varies considerably. The background information in every type of genre has some thematic, pragmatic and linguistic features in common which can easily be identified. This suggests distinguishing between two types of genres:

15 For a review see Stewart, “Speech Genres and Interpretation of the Qurʾān”, 12, 3–5; Flowers, “Reconsidering Qurʾānic Genre”, 23–25.
16 A similar argument was put forward by Stewart, “Speech Genres and Interpretation of the Qurʾān”, 4: “One of the text-types is Zusätze ‘Additions’. Another is “idha-series”, what Bell calls ‘when’-passages” (Bell 1953, pp. 76–77). Both terms describe formal features of the text but do not properly describe the genres in which they appear.
20 Khalil, Grounding in English and Arabic news discourse, 91.
23 Abdul-Raof, New Horizons in Qurʾānic Linguistics: A Syntactic, Semantic and Stylistic Analysis, p. 140 also employs the terms “foregrounding and backgrounding” to refer to word order. He states that an in-depth account of these structures is needed when investigating Qurʾānic genres.
those with a schematized structure or a structural model (narratives and laws), in which each component (opening, core, and closure) has its own position and syntax, and those without a structural model, i.e., without an opening or closure, such as hymns, polemical and liturgical discourse.

This article is divided into two sections. Section one overviews analytical methodology based on the principles of discourse analysis, and in particular approaches to dividing utterances into foreground and background information. Section two presents the linguistic features of these three types of information in five Qur'anic genres: eschatology, hymns, narratives, debates (polemics) and laws.

1 Discourse Analysis, Foregrounding and Backgrounding: An Overview

There are numerous approaches to discourse analysis, including the sociolinguistic approach, which deals with the relationships between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. Discourse analysis considers the ways that language presents different views of the world or how views are constructed through the use of language and discourse. It examines how the use of language is influenced by the relationship between interlocutors. Discourse analysts are also interested in how people organize what they say, namely, what they say first and what they say next.

This article takes a linguistic approach to analyzing Qur'anic discourse as embedded in its structural-grammatical features. There are different ways to organize information in discourse. For example, information can be organized in terms of relevance in propositions that have greater or lesser relevance for the language users in their communicative situation. Information can also be organized in terms of importance. This section briefly defines some of the key terms and concepts related to "information structure", a term introduced by Halliday (1976) that is also known as Topic-Comment or Rheme and Theme.

‘Grounding’, also known as the foreground (FG) – background (BG) structure, is yet another way to organize information. Grounding has been widely examined from a variety of literary, psychological, and linguistic perspectives. In linguistics, foreground and background tend to be characterized in terms of event/non-event or state, or in terms of the contrast between sequenced events and non-sequenced events. The assignment of a grounding value to propositions may also be based on the nature of the foreground, midground and background:

(1) The foreground refers to the main speech event that may be the most recent, current or ongoing. It may also be the consequence or result. A foreground proposition may have the effect of updating readers’ knowledge of the world by introducing features of current or new events and developments. Hopper and Thompson (1980) suggested that foreground material supplies the main points of the discourse, while the background material can be defined as the part which does not immediately or crucially contribute to the speaker’s message.

(2) The midground refers to specifics of one or more properties of the same or main speech event.

(3) The background refers to the way the event happened, or the spatio-temporal setting of the event or its circumstances. A background proposition may serve an anchoring function by putting a foreground proposition into perspective.

In other theories (e.g., Danes), foregrounding in linguistics and discourse analysis refers to new information, in contrast to elements in the sentence which form the background that enable the lis-

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24 Schiffin, Approaches to Discourse, 97–132; Vijay, Analyzing Genres: Language Use in Professional Setting, 18–19.
26 Halliday, Intonation and grammar in British English.
27 For more on the development of information structure theory see Von Heusinger, "Information Structure and the Partition of Sentence Meaning", 266, 276, 286.
29 Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse", 280.
tenter/reader to understand these new elements. There are disadvantages to applying the old-new dichotomy to the analysis of Qur’ānic discourse, because in many cases all the information is known in advance or given to the audience because it was mentioned previously.

Propositions are assigned to specific schematic categories and syntactic manifestations that correspond to the function they serve. For example, the interrogative form hal ʾatāka ḥadīṯ “Have you heard the story?” usually characterizes Qur’ānic narratives that point to the introductory section of the narrative where the theme and persons involved are presented. Grounding when communicating the intended meaning depends largely on syntax, which has an important discourse function in signaling differences in grounding values. For example, complex sentences can in some cases mark the distinction between the foreground and the background, when the information coded in the subordinate clause is less important than the information in the main clause. Discourse connectives such as “and” can also serve as linguistic foregrounding markers by signaling the connection between a sequence of events. Hopper and Thompson (1980) considered that foregrounded information is associated with transitive clauses because they are usually bounded in time in the perfective and affirmative.

Foreground-background information nevertheless differs from foregrounded and backgrounded information. In a given context, propositions may be assigned more or less relevance or more or less importance and can then be foregrounded or backgrounded. Hence, foregrounded information can be less important information that was previously expressed in the text in terms of position. This leads to three types of foregrounding and backgrounding: foregrounding in the lead sentence, foregrounding in the initial position of the sentence and backgrounding in text structure. Researchers who consider the binary distinction between foreground and background information usually refer to the main syntactic structures that draw readers’ attention and are positioned in the initial sentence. Clearly the initial syntactic/semantic component in a sentence plays an important role in signaling grounding, but the other text-level features of grounding can also signal the syntactic features in a genre, even if they seem marginal or hard to decode.

2 The Application of Discourse Analysis to Define the Stylistic Features of Qur’ānic Genres

There is a general consensus in discourse-oriented studies in linguistics that because of semantic, syntactic and structural differences, the structure of a well-formed discourse is not always homogeneous. This is also true for the Qur’ān, but as shown in this section, even discourse classified under the same genre can be heterogeneous, which is likely to affect the assignment/use of stylistic features that characterize each genre.

32 Longacre, “The Paragraph as a Grammatical Unit”, 118.
34 Shen, “Two Levels of Foregrounding in Literary Narratives”, 147, 149. Tomlin also examines the hypothesis that independent clauses are associated with the foreground, whereas dependent clauses are associated with background information. See Tomlin, “Foreground-Background Information and the Syntax of Subordination”, 87, 118.
35 Hopper and Thompson, “Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse”, 280-282.
37 Van Kuppevelt, “Main Structure and Side Structure in Discourse”, 33, 809.
2.1 Liturgical discourse

The first example is liturgical hymns or the liturgy, as in Samji (2018). In this context, a hymn is defined as an utterance used to praise God. Samji identifies four liturgical formulas in the Qurʾān: (1) rabbanā “Our Lord”, e.g., Q 3:8–9; (2) The vocative allāhumma (“O God”), e.g., Q 3:26–27; (3) The essential predication (huwa “He is...”), e.g., Q 112:1; (4) subḥāna (“praise,” “glory”), e.g., Q 87:1. Samji also mentions the use of “relative predication” (“God, who...”), which can be considered another type of liturgical formulation, as shown below. He also categorizes various types of liturgical hymns according to their theme, and in some cases discusses how they are structured, as in a hymn to God; e.g., Q 2:255, a hymn to creation, which includes God the creator and God the governor; e.g., Q 16:1–17, a hymn to the creator of humanity; e.g., Q 53:43–49 and a hymn to the creator of the world; e.g., Q 10:3–6.

Samji identified the main forms of Qurʾānic hymns; however, other elements should be included. For example, Samji considered Q 3:8–9 to be a liturgical discourse that preserves the formula of the invocation to prayer (rabbanā “Our Lord”). However, an examination of this liturgical passage shows that it starts with verse 2, which is made up of a mixture of syntactic structures and types of liturgical formulas:

(1) The vocative allāhu followed by a negation clause: allāhu là ‘ilāha ‘illā huwa l-hayyu l-qayyimu “God: there is no god but Him, the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful” (verse 2 and 6).

(2) Verbs in the perfect form followed by a direct object and a qualifier clause: nazzala ‘alayka l-kitāba bi-l-ḥaqqi (...) wa-ʾanzala l-tawrāta wa-l-ʾinġila (...) wa-ʾanzala l-furqāna “He has sent the Scripture down to you [Prophet] (...) He sent down the Torah and the Gospel (...) and He sent down the distinction [between right and wrong]” (verses 3–4). The qualified clause is: (nazzala ‘alayka l-kitāba bi-l-ḥaqqi) muṣaddiqan li-mā bayna yadayhi “(He has sent the Scripture down to you [Prophet] with the Truth), confirming what went before.”

(3) A clause that starts with ‘inna: ‘inna llāha lā yahfā ‘alayhi sayʿun fi l-ʾardī wa-lā fi s-samāʾi “God - Nothing on earth or in heaven is hidden from Him” (verse 5).

(4) The pronoun huwa, which functions as the subject followed by a relative clause serving as the predicate: huwa lilaḏ ṣuṣawwirākum fi l-ʾarḥāmi kayfa yašāʾu “It is He who shapes you all in the womb as He pleases” (verse 6 and 7).

(5) The vocative rabbanā “Our Lord”, followed by là al-nahy “the là of prohibition” and a direct object. rabbanā can also be followed by a verb in the imperative or by a clause that starts with ‘inna: rabbanā là tuzīq quʿībatan baʿda ‘id hadaytan wā-hab laanā min ladunka rahmatan ‘inna ‘anta l-wahhābu rabbanā ‘inna ‘ammi ‘u n-nāsi li-yawmin là rayba fihi ‘inna llāha là yuḥšifu l-miʿāda “Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us. Grant us Your mercy: You are the Ever Giving. Our Lord, You will gather all people on the Day of which there is no doubt: a God never breaks His promise” (verses 8–9).

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38 In Arabic this type of discourse is called duʿā’ “prayer”.
39 Note that not every structure of the vocative rabbanā is followed by a verb in the imperative, nor is the là of prohibition always regarded as a liturgical formula. For example, in Q 2:200 rabbanā does not occur in the initial position, and although there is a reference to God, no praise is involved.
42 Samji, The Qurʾān: A Form-Critical History, 85.
43 The translations of the Qurʾānic verses are taken from Abdel Haleem, The Qurʾān: A New Translation.
44 The là of prohibition expresses a prohibition, but in some cases this structure is considered a speech act expressing a request or wish, as in Q 8–9. For its use as a wish or request, see for example: al-Sarrāǧ, al-ʾUṣūl fi l-naḥw, vol. 2, 170.
45 Other sentence structures that occur in Qurʾānic liturgical phrases which include the preposition li- followed by the subject are: lahu mulku s-samāwāti wa-l-ʾardī “Control of the heavens and earth belongs to Him” (Q 57:2), a verb in the imperfect indicating habituality, e.g., yālīṯu l-layla fi n-nahāri wa-yālīṯu n-nahāri fi l-layli “He turns night into day and day into night” (Q 57:6).
Thus, Q 3:2–9 is a representative example of the main features characterizing Qurʾānic liturgical hymns. It implements schematized types, such as the vocative (O God) and repeated clauses, although the ordering of the string of structures may change. However, as Crystal (1964) noted, the most important stylistic feature is sentence structure and length. In fact, sentence type, length and ordering are exactly what define liturgical hymns and differentiate them from other genres.

In Q 3:2–9, for example, components of the sentence-initial position such as rabbanā, huwa and the verb in the perfect form, along with the complementary unit or the mid-ground information (i.e., a clause or syntactic component such as a predicate or attribute) form the foreground information, which constitutes the dynamic factor of communication that advances the text. These short sentences describe God’s omnipotence, whereas the syntactic simplicity of the clauses may be explained by the fact that people cannot worship in a language whose meaning is opaque; therefore, hymns should not require much effort at interpretation. Liturgical language needs to strike a balance between dignified and intelligible language.

An examination of Q 3:2–9 (and other liturgical hymns) shows that it is difficult to find a schematic structure or a global organizer of the propositional content of these hymns. Many types of text (e.g., narratives, as shown later) have their own stereotypical schema categories that make up their structural hierarchy. In strategies designed to communicate grounding (fore- and background information), each category can be manipulated to show how the FG-BG articulation is organized. Farris (1985) argued that hymns of praise consist of five speech elements: opening-invocation, imperative-summons, motive-sentence, praise-statement, and end-blessing. In terms of the literary structure of hymns, the first and final elements are elective. While the opening invocative is easily identified, it is more difficult to assign a syntactic characterization to the other elements mentioned by Farris (1985). However, there are a number of sentences that stand out in that they do not meet the textual-syntactic criteria that characterize liturgical hymns. Here, they are classified as background information, for example:

\[
\text{‘inna llaḏīna kafarū bi-ʾāyāti llāhi lahum ‘aḏābun ʾāzīzun ŏ ntiqāmin}
\]

“Those who deny God’s revelations will suffer severe torment: God is almighty and capable of retribution” (Q 3:4)

and

\[
\text{fa-ʾammā llaḏīna fi qulābihim zayğun fa-yaṭṭabiʿuna mà tašābaha minhu biṯīqāʾa l-fiṭnati wa-biṭīqāʾa ta-wiliḥi wa-mā ya-ʾalmau ta-wilauh ‘illā l-lāhū wa-r-rāṣiḥa fi l-ʾilmī yaqūlūna ‘āṭannā bihi kullun min ῤindī rabbīnā wa-mā yaḏḏakkaru ‘illā ulū l-ʾalbābī (Q 3:7)}
\]

“The perverse at heart eagerly pursue the ambiguities in their attempt to make trouble and to pin down a specific meaning of their own: only God knows the true meaning. Those firmly grounded in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it: it is all from our Lord’—only those with real perception will take heed.”

Van Kuppevelt noted that the distinction between main structure and side structure (i.e., FG-BG) has primarily been studied in the context of narrative discourse. The foreground is expressed by the events forming the story line; that is, whose order of presentation matches their temporal order, while the background information lacks this characteristic temporal property. These criteria operate solely in discourse narratives and cannot be generalized to other text types (such as hymns).

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46 Crystal, “A Liturgical Language in Linguistic Perspective”, 46, 149.
termination of what constitutes foreground and background in discourse is thus relative to a particular frame.\textsuperscript{54} This suggests that in the case of Qurʾānic liturgical hymns, the criteria for foreground information are the topic and sentence length. The topic of all clauses in the hymns is God. He is described as being omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent. In Q 3:4, however the reference is to those who do not believe the signs of Allah. Readers/hearers can easily deduce the cohesive relationship between verses 2-3 and verse 4. After sending the Qurʾān as guidance to the people, there is no other way to treat those who reject it but by punishment. The same is true for verse 7. The first part of verse 7 is the foreground or main information, and states that Allah sent it down to the people of the Book. There are clear verses referring to the Book, while others are ambiguous. Then, the topic or the reference switches to the unbelievers, those who vacillate, who pick up on an ambiguous part, seeking to foment sedition and aiming to interpret the ambiguous verses, although no one knows their (hidden) interpretation except Allah and those firmly rooted in knowledge. Here, too, the cohesive relationship between the parts of the verse is clear.

The linguistic markers of the FG-BG in Qurʾānic liturgical hymns are thus identifiable. The foreground information is characterized by short clauses describing Allah’s omnipotence, and similar to narratives, they advance the story line or in the present case the liturgical line. Longer sentences comprise the background information which provides the context (description and elaboration) against which the descriptions of Allah in the discourse are presented.\textsuperscript{55}

Is the background information related to a specific unit in liturgical hymns? Specifically, does it occur in a certain position, for example the concluding part of the discourse or is it related to one of the speech elements mentioned by Farris (2013) (imperative-summons, motive-sentence, praise-statement, and end-blessing)? Analysis suggests that no rule can be established as to the integration of background information. There are a few (short) examples of liturgical discourse which do not contain a background, for example Q 59:22-24; Q 112:1–4, Q 3:26–27 and Q 6:101–103, which is a case of inversion in polemical discourse. In addition, the background information can be integrated in various positions. For example, in Q 77:1–11 verse 10 comprises the background and occurs at the end of the discourse; in Q 16:77–81, the background information is found in the middle of verse 77, in the middle in verses 79 and at the end in verse 81. In Q 39:1–7 the background information is found in verse 3 and verse 7.

Thus overall, Qurʾānic liturgical hymns can usually be identified by their opening liturgical forms which correspond to two direct and indirect hymns: believers can address God directly by using the opening liturgical form rabbanā “O our Lord”, followed by verbs in the imperative or the jussive to plead for mercy and guidance; e.g., Q 3:8. Indirect hymns are usually marked by an opening clause where God is explicitly mentioned, for example Q 59:22 huwa lāhu llaḏī lā ʾilāha ʾillā huwa “He is God: there is no god other than Him.” The opening formulas are usually followed by a short sequence of nominal and verbal clauses which comprise the core hymn, but there is no schematic structure of the liturgical discourse. Except for the opening verse, none of the speech elements mentioned in literature such as praise formulas, motive-sentences or enclosures are present. The only sentences that did not correspond to the thematic and syntactic characteristics of the core hymn can be considered as background information in that they concentrate on themes raised in the hymn but do not occur in a specific position and are not related to any part of the hymn.

\subsection*{2.2 Eschatological discourse}

Eschatology is a Greek term that has been used in theology and religious studies since the middle of the nineteenth century to refer to a branch of theology concerned with the issues of the Last Day and related themes such as the apocalyptic end of this world and the end of life on Earth, the judgment

\textsuperscript{54} Givón, ”Beyond Foreground and Background”, 176.
\textsuperscript{55} For more on this function of FG-BG see Ehrlich, Point of View: A Linguistic Analysis of Literary Style, 107.
and resurrection of the dead and their reward or punishment in the afterlife, and the reign of God’s eternal kingdom in the world-to-come.\footnote{56}

There are various terms used in the Qur’an to refer to the Last Day, such as the Day of Doom (yawm al-dīn, e.g. Q. 1:4; 13 times), the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-qiyāma, e.g. Q. 2:85; 70 times), the Last Day (al-yawm al-ʾākhir, e.g. Q. 2:8; 38 times), a mighty/dreadful day (yawm ʿaẓīm, Q. 6:15; 10 times) and a great day (yawm kabīr, Q. 11:3).\footnote{57}

Robinson classified the eschatological sections into two groups. He identified eighteen cases which have a single eschatological section, e.g., 51:13-19 and 52:9–28. Five have two such sections, e.g., 70:8–18, 43–44; 74:8–10, 38–48. Within the eschatological sections, there are four types of smaller units, although in the shorter sections, one or more of these may be absent. Robinson broke these down further according to their theme and characteristic features:

1. Preludes which catalogue the cosmic catastrophes that will precede Judgment Day. These sometimes also mention other preliminaries such as the collection of evidence and the formation of Heaven and Hell. For the most part, the verbs are in the passive voice or are middle-reflexive forms and the first word is invariably ʾiḏā, “when,” which is repeated after each item or each pair of items in the list.

2. Proceedings that are usually brief, consisting of no more than a summary statement about people’s frightful plight when their guilt is exposed. The expression yawmaʾiḏin, “on that day,” usually occurs at least once, as in Q 52:11–14.

3. Diptychs containing contrasting depictions of the rewards of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. The contrast is often signaled by syntactic devices such as: faʾ-ʾammā ... waʾ-ʾammā “Then as for ... but as for ...” or wuǧūhun yawmaʾiḏin ... wuǧūhun yawmaʾiḏin “Faces on that day ... faces on that day ...”.

4. Flashbacks: Many eschatological sections contain one or more flashbacks. Most of the flashbacks depict the earthly life of the wicked and provide the rationale for their punishment.\footnote{58}

Eschatological passages can easily be identified by their specialized vocabulary indicating eschatological context, such as jahannam “Hell”, janna “Paradise” and jannāt “gardens”. In addition, this discourse can also be identified by certain initial-positioned syntactic components such as the adverb yawma “[the] day [when]” and ʾiḏā “when,” and in addition the use of verbs in the past tense depicting a future situation in a vivid and dramatic way as though they had already occurred.\footnote{59}

 Günther, who analyzed the organization of information, claimed that the Qurʾān portrays striking and vivid images of al-sāʾa (the Hour). These themes range from the initial signs of “the Hour,” or the “End of Time,” divine judgment, as well as rewards and punishment in the afterlife. Particularly explicit and evocative portrayals are found in Q 23:101-18; 37:31–49 and 60–6; 39:68–75; 69:13–37; 70:1–35, and 76:12–22. However, no clear chronological order of the final events is provided, although the Qurʾān does indicate that there will be an absolute termination of all life and existence.\footnote{60}

A good illustration of the structure of information within eschatological discourse is Q 52:7–26. The linguistic features in this passage can be used to categorize the discourse as follows:

Verses 9–13, foreground information: These verses start with the adverb yawma followed by a short sentence including a verb in the present tense. These verses refer to the time of the Resurrection, stating that the material world will collapse upon itself and the Hereafter will appear. On that Day the unbelievers will be jettisoned into Hell:

\begin{footnotesize}
57 Günther, "Eschatology and the Qurʾān", 477.
58 Robinson, Discovering the Qurʾān: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text, 103–106.
59 Dror, "The Suffix-Conjugation Designating Eschatological Events in the Qurʾān", 41–43.
60 Günther, "Eschatology and the Qurʾān", 473.
\end{footnotesize}
inqu’a’dabā rabbika la-wāqi’un mā laḥā min dāf‘īn yawma tamūru s-samā’u mawran wa-tasīrū l-ḡībālu sayran fa-waylun yawma’idīn li-l-mukaddābīnīn alladīna hum fi ḫawdīn yal’ābūna yawma yu-dā’ūna ’ilā n-nārī ḡahannama da’ān

"[Prophet], your Lord’s punishment is coming – it cannot be put off – on the Day when the sky sways back and forth and the mountains float away. Woe on that Day to those who deny the Truth, who amuse themselves with idle chatter: on that Day they will be thrust into the Fire of Hell.”

Verses 14–16, background information: These verses are not structured like the characteristic foreground information since they do not describe an event, but rather enrich the text (verse 14 describes the Fire) or present the speaker’s (God’s) perspective. God relates directly to the unbelievers by reminding them that when the Messengers warned them of Hell, they said that it would only occur by magic. Now He asks them: Is this Hell which you are facing just magic, or do you still not see that you have actually met with the same Hell which was foretold to you? He then says to them directly: Go now and burn in it because this is the recompense for your deeds:

hāḏīhi n-nārū llatī kuntum bīhā tuqaddābīnū ‘a-fa-siḥrūn hāḏā ‘am ‘antum lā tašūrinā ʾiṣlawhā fa-šbirū ʾaw lá tašibīrū sawā’ūn ‘alaykum mā laḥīn mā kuntum ta’malūn

"This is the Fire you used to deny. So is this sorcery? Do you still not see it? Burn in it––it makes no difference whether you bear it patiently or not––you are only being repaid for what you have done."

Verses 17–19, 23–26 foreground information: These verses present an enumeration of the bounties bestowed upon the people of Paradise. For example, it states that the people of Paradise will pass a cup brimming with the wine of Paradise from hand to hand or that the people of Paradise will be tended to by servant boys.

There is also a reference to two rewards that both exemplify and challenge the idea of beauty: female companions and male youths. The female companions are called ḥūr (sing. ḥawrāʾ) and in three instances they are qualified with the adjective ʿīn. Qur’ānic commentators interpret these ḥūr ʿīn as “fair women” (ḥūr derives from the root ḥ-w-r which connotes “whiteness”) with beautiful wide eyes (ʿīn). Like the ḥūr, the male youths who are referred to as wildān mukhalladūn (eternal youth) and ḡilmān (slave boys) are also conceptually complex rewards for the believer because they function as beings that populate and objects that fill the garden. The ḥūr provide companionship, and the wildān mukhalladūn and ḡilmān act as servants who pour drinks, offer food, and tend to the running of the believers’ households.61

Verses 21–22 background information: In contrast to the vivid description of Judgment Day, Hell and Paradise in these three verses, God’s attitude toward the believers is simply echoed. In verse 19, He refers directly to the believers, saying: Eat and drink with healthy enjoyment. This is your reward for your deeds. In verses 21–22, God promises that He will unite the believers with their descendants who follow them in their faith and will not deny them any part of the reward for their good deeds. Here, too, God explains this promise by saying that each individual must fulfill his pledges:

wa-lldānī ’āmanū wa-ttaba’athum durrīyyatuhum bi-ʾīmānīn ʿalqānā bīhim durrīyyatuhum wa-mā ’alātnāhum min ’amālihim min šay’īn kullu mārīn bi-mā kasabā rahīnun wa-’amdadnāhum bi-fākīhatin wa-lāhmin mimmā yāṣṭahānūn (Q 52:21–22)

“We unite the believers with their offspring who followed them in faith. We do not deny them any of the rewards for their deeds: each person is a pledge for his own deeds. We provide them with any fruit or meat they desire.”

Q 52:7-26 is one example of the diversity of the Qur’ānic eschatological passages. Images of the last judgment are for example described in Q 39:67–57, Q 69:14–18, while examples of reward and punishment in the Afterlife can be found in Q 56:15–26, Q 69:19–37 and Q 70:23–75. Salvation and

damnation are described in detail in Q 77. Their content and linguistic features are easy to identify. For example, images of doomsday are characterized by consecutive short sentences that include verbs in the future or past tense, as in Q 81. However, the sequence of events is often interrupted by sentences that are syntactically and semantically very different from the sentences characterizing descriptions of doomsday, reward and punishment, and heaven and hell. Defining the linguistic characteristics of eschatological descriptions is possible, but it is challenging to determine the structure of the eschatological passages in general and the structure of each eschatological concept in particular, or even in mixed passages such as Q 82, where there is a transition from cosmic descriptions to references to the punishment of the infidels in Hell.

Though there are opening formulas such as yawa and ʾiḏ marking the thematic content of the passage as well as a main body, it is more difficult to define whether these passages include further components in addition to the "core" of the eschatological description, such as an enclosing or concluding formula which signals that that the discourse has ended.

Günther hinted at the lack of uniformity in the structure of eschatological passages when he noted that there is no chronological order in the descriptions. Thus, once there is no chronological order (similar to the structure of Qurʾānic hymns) it is difficult to find a uniform structure or speech elements that can define the structure of a particular discourse type. This feature is also true of polemic discourse, which is described below.

### 2.3 Polemic discourse

A polemic is defined as "a rhetorical strategy that exceeds simple 'debate' in many ways. In classical rhetoric, 'polemics' (Gk., polemiké téche) stands for an overpoweringly argumentative discourse. Its intent is to undermine of the opponent's position, but often also even the destruction of his or her very person. In so doing, it addresses an audience—which can be fictitious—that offers support for the polemical position." Polemical passages are usually integrated into other discourse. Robinson, for example, mentions that a polemical context is alluded to in eschatological flashbacks, as well as in narrative introductions and conclusion.

There are various types of polemic units, including signs, controversies, criticism of those who reject the revelations and the prophet and the coming of Judgment Day. Among the rhetoric features of polemical discourse mentioned by Robinson are the use of oaths and questions. This consists principally of lamentations, curses, categorical denunciations, reproaches, warnings, lampoons, and apostrophes. Azaiez (2015) observed that polemical discourse associates three types of utterances. The first is the introductory part preceding the introductory verb. The second statement is composed of the reported speech itself. The third statement follows the reported counter-discourse by commenting on it to refute it. This tripartite structure itself has variations that can have simple, intermediate, or complex forms. These three structural parts can be identified in Q 29:50–52. However, as shown in the following analysis, there are other linguistic features characterizing Qurʾānic polemical discourse, such as the lack of an opening formula and the occurrence of various closing formulas.

The polemical discourse in Q 29:50–52 is thematically connected to verses 47–49, where it is said that Allah sent the Book to the prophet and that none deny Allah’s signs except the unbelievers. The Qurʾān states that there are clear signs in the breasts of those who have been granted knowledge, and

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62 For more on the use of verbs in past and present tense in the eschatological descriptions, see Dror, "The Suffix-Conjugation Designating Eschatological Events in the Qurʾān," 41–52.
64 Robinson, Discovering the Qurʾān, 116. Cf. On the topics and features of polemic discourse in the Qurʾān see Azaiez, Le contre-discours coranique, 122–143.
65 Robinson, Discovering the Qurʾān, 116.
66 Azaiez, Le contre-discours coranique, 144–145.
only the unbelievers reject Allah’s signs. In verse 50, it is stated that the unbelievers seek an excuse for not accepting the logical argument of the Qurʾān. This verse also introduces the polemical discourse interwoven in Q 50:

\[\text{wa-qālū law-lā unzila ʿalayhi ʾāyātun min rabbihi qul ʾinnamā l-ʾāyātu ʿinda llāhi wa-ʾinnamā ʿana nadirun mubīnun a-wa-lam yuḥṣīm annā ʿanžanā ʿalayka l-kitābā yulūl ʿalayhim inna fī dālika la-rahmatan wa-ḏikrā li-qawmin yuʾminūna qul kafā bi-llāhi baynī wa-baynākum šahīdan yaʿlamu mā fī s-samāwāti wa-l-ʾarḍi wa-llaḏīna ʾāmanū bi-l-bāṭili wa-kafarū bi-llāhi ʾulāʾika humu l-ḫāsirūna} \]

(Q 29:50–52)

“They say, ‘Why have no miracles been sent to him by his Lord?’ Say, ‘Miracles lie in God’s hands; I am simply here to warn you plainly. Do they not think it is enough that We have sent down to you the Scripture that is recited to them? There is a mercy in this and a lesson for believing people. Say, God is sufficient witness between me and you: He knows what is in the heavens and earth. Those who believe in false deities and deny God will be the losers.’

Three structural elements can be identified in Q 29:50–52. First, there is no opening formula; namely, no fixed formula that signals the beginning of a polemical discourse. It could be claimed that an introductory section which states the issue on which the exchange revolves is an obligatory element. However, the only indication for the transition to an argumentative or exchange passage in the Qurʾān appears to be the use of the verb \(qāla\) (and its inflections), which Azaiez termed the ‘introduc- tory verb’, which is followed by reported direct speech that Azaiez considers to be the second part, whereas the third part follows the reported counter-discourse by commenting on it to refute it.\(^{67}\)

Second, the verb \(qāla\) is one of the most prominent features of Qurʾānic polemical language because it usually revolves around hypocrites/unbelievers who are not fully committed to Allah and who repeatedly challenge Muhammad and the message of the Qurʾān. However, Allah guides Muhammad on ways to respond to their claims. This guidance is usually marked by a \(qul\)-statement (as in Q 29:52) which emphasizes Allah’s omnipotence, the legitimizing of the prophet and his revela- tion, and various themes such as fighting.\(^{68}\) The argumentative element in polemical discourse not only suggests that the verb \(qāla\) is used to signal turn-taking, but also has an illocutionary force and is interpreted by the addressee as “argued”, “claimed” or “stated”.\(^{69}\)

The verb \(qāla|qul\) belongs to the foreground information, since by signaling turn-taking it plays an important role in sequencing the interaction. When turn taking (which here is the use of the verb \(qāla\)), the speaker projects the relevance of the actions accomplished by the next speaker.\(^{70}\) Thus, using the verb \(qāla\) fosters the interactions between participants. The sentences that follow the verb \(qāla\) serve as complementary information which designate the core of the argumentative speech. Though they are syntactically diverse, the analysis points to the linguistic features of polemical discourse, which is made up of two parts called ‘adjacency pairs’; i.e., utterances produced by two successive speakers such that the second utterance is identified as related to the first and is expected to

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\(^{67}\) Azaiez, *Le contre-discours coranique*, 144–145.


\(^{69}\) For the use of the verb \(qāla\) as a speech act in the Qurʾān, see Dror, "Verbs of Saying: The Case of \(qāla\) in the Qurʾān". On the various meanings of the verb \(qāla\) see also Stewart, "Understanding the Quran in English", 34–35.

\(^{70}\) The concept of turn-taking is taken from Conversation Analysis theory. See Clift, *Conversation Analysis*, 65, 69. El-Awa, "Discourse Markers and the Structure of Intertextual Relations in Medium-Length Qurʾanic Surahs", pp. 248, 250–251, mentions that according to Robinson ("Hands Outstretched", 3–5), the verb \(qāla\) “introducing a change in the discourse.” However, El-Awa shows that \(qul\) is used as a discourse marker which can also introduce the surah’s concluding remark (e.g., Q 20:135). Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 43, call this part of a monologue “an exchange”. For example, a question and answer can involve the interplay of units of various sizes.
follow it. The two utterances form a pair\(^{71}\) of argument and response (which is usually denial),\(^{72}\) although each part has its own syntactic features. For example, both the argument and the response can be formulated as an interrogative sentence\(^{73}\) (e.g., Q 5:18). The argument starts with the particle \(law-lā\)\(^{74}\) “why not”? (e.g., Q 6:8) or is formulated as a short nominal sentence (e.g., Q 5:18, 64). It also includes the statement ‘\(in ḥāḍa ʾillā ʾasāṭīru l-ʾawwalīna\) “These are just ancient fables” (Q 23:83). The polemical discourse is also formulated as a conditional sentence, where the protasis refers to God’s action and the apodosis expresses the unbelievers’ reaction (e.g., Q 11:8), or the response begins with the restrictive particle ‘\(innamā\)’ (e.g., Q 41:6).

Discourse is commonly divided into three major phases: an opening, a medial or core, and a closing phase.\(^{75}\) As mentioned above, the opening formula appears to be missing in polemical discourse. The core of polemical discourse is signaled by the use of the verb \(qāla\). The turn-taking model described in the conversation analysis also applies to Qur’ānic polemic passages, because this model produces “one speaker at the time” with no gap or overlap between turns.\(^{76}\) Sometimes the argument of the response can be embedded or extended as shown in Q 29:51, in which Allah wonders why the Book He sent down and is recited to them is not enough for unbelievers. Specifically, He inquires why they ask for physical miracles when the Qurʾān is the greatest miracle. In discourse analysis, this extension can be regarded as the background information expressing Allah’s criticism of the unbelievers. However, such information is not necessarily found in all polemical discourse. It is added according to its relevancy\(^{77}\) and is not related to a specific part in the discourse.

Third, in many cases a closure clause can be identified. For example, in Q 29:50–52 the last clause \(wa-li-llāhi mulku s-samāwāti wa-l-ʾarḍi wa-mā baynahumā yaḫluqu mā yašāʾu wa-llāhu ʿalā kulli šayʾin qadīrun\) (Q 5:17,18) “Control of the heavens and earth and all that is between them belongs to God: He creates whatever He will. God has power over everything.”

The discourse revolves around those who have been misled into believing that the Messiah himself is God. In response, Allah commands Muḥammad to say: Who can hold anything against Allah, if

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\(^{71}\) This concept is taken from the model of discourse analysis in Theodossia-Soula, ”Phases in Discourse”, 356. Cf. Whalen and Raymond, ”Conversation Analysis”, 434; Clift, ”Conversation Analysis”, 69; Stivers, ”Sequence Organization”, 192.

\(^{72}\) There are various types of adjacency pairs, for example: summons and answer, greeting and greeting, invitation and acceptance or declination, accusation, and denial. See Stivers, ”Sequence Organization”, 192.

\(^{73}\) See also Azaiez, Le contre-discours coranique, 147–149.

\(^{74}\) \(law-lā\) belongs to the so-called \(ḥurūf al-taḥḍīḍ\) ”particles denoting urgency”, which are used to urge someone to do something. These particles are usually followed by a verb in the past tense or the present tense. See Ibn Yaʿūs, Ṣarḥ al-mufaṣṣal, vol. 5, 88.

\(^{75}\) Clift, ”Phases in Discourse”, 356.

\(^{76}\) Clift, Conversation Analysis, 95.

\(^{77}\) An assumption is relevant when it has a large contextual effect (e.g., it contradicts, strengthens or explains a previous assumption) and the effort required to process it in this context is small. See Sperber and Wilson, Relevance: Communication and Cognition, 125.

He intends to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone on the Earth? The interaction closes with the assertion that the dominion of the heavens and the Earth and whatever is between them two belongs to Allah. He creates what He pleases; and Allah is All-Powerful over all things. Thus, such a clear statement does not leave any room for further argument.

Hence, polemical discourse is mostly identified by the use of the verb qāla. The complementary part which directly follows it has some specific linguistic features, such as interrogatives and conditional sentences. In addition, there is no opening formula and the closing part can vary syntactically.

2.4 Narratives

Narrative discourse is pervasive in social interactions. Storytelling is integral to people’s understanding of the human condition and experiences. Thus, narratives are considered a genre. The question is what makes stories different from other utterances. Stories have a recognizable form since they have a beginning, a middle, and an end. How they begin, what happens in the middle, and how they end are questions that sociolinguists and discourse and conversation analysts have studied for some time. In Labov’s pioneering work (1972), he puts forward a structural model that has constituted the basis for narrative analysis over the past four decades.\(^{79}\) Labov suggested that in addition to the ‘core’ narrative clauses (or what he terms the complicating action), there are other components that routinely occur in oral storytelling. These include the abstract, orientation, resolution, evaluation, and coda.\(^{80}\) Dror (2016)\(^{81}\) showed that this model is valid for all types of Qur’ānic narratives, in that each component in the narrative has its own syntactic features.\(^{82}\) These components are illustrated below using Q 7:19–27 as a representative example.

The abstract part of the story (verse 19) clearly indicates the interaction between Adam, his wife and Satan. Verse 19 (wa-yā ṭādāmu škin ʾanta wa-zawḥa l-gannata fa-kulā min ḥayṭu ši’tumā wa-lā tagrābā hādīhi š-sağarata fa-takūnā mina ẓ-zālimīna “But you and your wife, Adam, live in the Garden. Both of you eat whatever you like, but do not go near this tree or you will become wrongdoers”) signals that the story is about to begin by using the vocative. This structure occurs alongside structures such as clauses which start with the particles la-qad, which serve an emphatic function (e.g., Q 87:2), īḏ “when” (Q 43:26), clauses in which the word order is OVS (e.g., Q 28:29) and clauses which start with a verb in the imperative (e.g., Q 71:10), all of which signal that a story is about to begin.

It can also be argued that verse 19 includes both the abstract and the orientation, since the ‘who, where and when’ aspects of the narrative all are given here. The orientation helps the listener identify the time, place, person, activity and the situation in the story. We know that Allah (who commands Adam), Adam and his wife are the participants, and the situation is that God permits them to eat whatever and wherever they desire, but they should not approach the tree [of knowledge] to eat from it, because they will deprive themselves of a great reward. Many more details are provided as this story progresses.

The complicating action is the core of the narrative, which supplies the ‘what happened’ element of the story. It is formed linguistically by temporally ordered narrative clauses with a verb in the simple past.\(^{83}\) The clauses are usually characterized by a VS word order, where the verbs are connected by conjunctive particles such as wa “and” and fa “and then”. This is illustrated by the following verbs


\(^{81}\) See Dror, Linguistic Features of the Qur’ānic Narratives.

\(^{82}\) Longacre, 200, An Anatomy of Speech Notions, also observed that narratives are characterized by the use of first/third person, they are agent-oriented, there is an accomplished time and chronological linkage.

\(^{83}\) Usually foreground information in narratives is characterized by verbs in the perfect, whereas verbs in the imperfect are found in the background information. See Weinrich, Tempus: Besprochene und Erzählte Welt, 93-95. Cf. Heinemann, and Viehweger, Textlinguistik: Eine Einführung, 31, 238-244.
which occur in Q 7:19–27: fa-waswasa lahumā š-šayṭānu ”Satan whispered to them” (...) wa-qāla ”He said” (...) wa-qāsamahumā ”And he swore to them” (...) fa-dallāhum “He lured them with lies” (...) fa-lammā ḏāqā “When they had eaten (from the tree)” (...) wa-nādāhum “Their Lord called to them” (...) qāla “They said” (...) qāla hbiṭū ”He said: All of you get out” (...) qāla ”[Allah] said”.

The evaluation makes the point of the story clear. It includes modal verbs, negatives, repetition, evaluative commentary, and embedded speech. The subordinate clause in Q 7:20, li-yubdiya lahumā mā wūriya ʿanhumā min sawʾātihim “[Satan whispered to them] so as to expose their nakedness, which had been hidden from them”, can be classified as an evaluation element since it states the reason for Satan’s action. He took steps towards their banishment from heaven to harm them. In many cases, the evaluation is integrated in the last narrative element, the coda. This is the part of the story that signals the end of the narrative and forms a bridge out of the story time and back into the conversational present.84 Verses 26–27 constitute the coda, as in verse 26 Allah refers to the children of Adam (i.e., all of humankind), stating that He indeed sent down clothing to cover their private parts, and (for) adornment, and the raiment of piety that is the best (yā-banī ʾādama qad ʾanzalnā ʿalaykum libāsan yuwārī sawʾātikum wa-rīšan wa-libāsu t-taqwā ḏālika ḥayrun ḏālika min ’āyāti llāhi laʿal-lahum yaḍḍakkarāna). In verse 27 Allah warns people to be wary of Satan because he seduces the believers and causes them to deviate from the straight path, just as he expelled the forefathers from the Garden, stripping them of their clothing to reveal their nakedness (yā-bani ʾādama lā yaftinan nakumu š-šayṭānu ka-mā ‘aḥrağa ’abawaykum mina l-ġannati yanzī’u ʾanhumā libāsahumā li-yuriyahumā sawʾātihim “Children of Adam, do not let Satan seduce you, as he did your parents, causing them to leave the Garden, stripping them of their garments to expose their nakedness to them: he and his forces can see you from where you cannot see them: we have made evil ones allies to those who do not believe.”) Verses 26–27 not only indicate that the story is over but also the lesson to be learned from this story. The first is a possible explanation for the fact that humans wear clothes. The end of the story includes a warning to humans to heed the lesson of Satan’s actions and intentions and stay away from him.

The evaluation and the coda have no unique syntactic features; however, sentences that describe Allah’s omnipotence are found in the evaluation and coda, for example: wa-llāhu ʿalīmun bi-ẓ-ẓālimīna (Q 2:246) ”God has full knowledge of those who do wrong”, ṯinna rabbaka huwa l-qawiyyu l-ʾazīzu (Q 11:66) ”It is your Lord who is the Strong, the Mighty One”, wa-llāhu ʿalīmun bi-mā ya’-malūna (Q 12:19) ”God was well aware of what they did.”

The Qur’ānic narrative consists of five elements. Abstract, orientation and complicating action can be classified as foreground information and have fixed identifiable linguistic features. The evaluation and the coda are less restricted syntactically.

2.5 Legal discourse

Labov’s model has proven to be robust in terms of providing a starting point for the analysis of narrative discourse in a range of different contexts. This model can also be applied to Qur’ānic legal discourse, since both genres (narrative and law) exhibit universal defining features. A legal text has an accepted structural-linguistic articulation characterized by strict precise and detailed statements, the clarity of its sentences and the proliferation of opposition and conditional phrases. Judicial passages have a fixed structure consisting of three elements, where each element has its own characteristic syntactic structure:

84 Thornborrow, “Narrative Analysis”, 52–53.
(1) An initial sentence presenting those who are subject to the law. This is generally articulated in one of the following structures: yāʾ āyyuhā llaḏīna ʾāmanū "O, believers," yasʾalūnaka "They ask you/will ask you," nominal clauses (e.g., Q 4:24) or clauses with a topicalization structure (e.g., Q 24:2).

(2) The law itself is usually formulated as casuistic or apodictic. 85

(3) Background information which fulfils several purposes, including to emphasize that the law is divine and God is almighty, to explain why the law was given, or to explain the benefits of observing the law. This information is characterized by syntactic structures such as short clauses of the wa-lālāhu bi-mā taʿmalūna ʿalīmun "And God is All-Knowing of all things" type, or can be an extended paragraph or clauses that begin with the anaphoric pronoun dālika "that is," ka-ḏālika "such (is)" “similarly” and tilka “this” or grammatical parallelism. 86

Q 5:95 is a good example of a short legal passage. One of the opening formulas of legal passages is a personal address to believers, where a vocative structure is used: yāʾ āyyuhā llaḏīna ʾāmanū "O, You who have believed." There are a number of possible explanations for the use of this direct address. One is to indicate that the law is directed solely at the believers and not to any other audience. Another is related to textual coherence and establishing a reference, because if the enunciation of the law had started with the prohibition (verb in the second person) lā taqtulū ṣ-ṣayda wa-ʾantum ḥuru-mun "Do not kill game while you are in the state of consecration [for pilgrimage]", the antecedent of the second pronoun would be unclear.

It is also possible that the address has a functional role. Similar to the abstract in narratives, this opening sentence indicates what the law is about. In this verse, the prohibition against hunting while wearing pilgrim garments is issued more clearly and precisely. The core of the law discusses the atonement for hunting in pilgrim garb and is formulated as a conditional sentence beginning with the particle man, which has a generic indication; i.e., it refers to singular or plural feminine or masculine nouns (wa-man qatalahu minkum mutaʿammidan fa-ǧazāʾun miṯlu mā qatala mina n-naʿami "If someone does so intentionally the penalty is an offering of a domestic animal brought to the Kaʿba, or the equivalent.") This statement is immediately followed by a detailed explanation of the form of atonement. Since some people may not be sure about the notion of equivalence, the Qurʾān ordains that this issue should be judged by two people with knowledge of the subject: yaḥkumu bihi ḏawāʾadlin minkum hadyan bāliğa l-kaʿbatiʾaw kaffāratun ṭaʿāru ṣiyāman li-yadīqa wabālaʾamrīhi “[If someone does so intentionally] the penalty is an offering of a domestic animal brought to the Kaʿba, the equivalent - as judged by two righteous men among you- of the one he has killed; alternatively, he may atone by feeding the needy or by fasting an equivalent number of days, so that he may experience the full gravity of his deed.”

The last part of verse 95 (ʿafā lālāhu ʿammā salafa wa-manʿāda fa-yantaqimu lālāhu wa-lālāhu ʿazīzun dī niṭīqāmin "God forgives what is past, but if anyone re-offends, God will exact a penalty from him: God is mighty, and capable of exacting the penalty") may be regarded as the concluding part of the law and has considerable importance, since legal texts deal with human circumstances,

85 These terms are taken from legal precepts of Israelite law and other neighboring cultures of the ancient Near East. The dominant feature of casuistic laws is their impersonal style and their conditional structure. i.e., they begin with the conditional particle ʾim (29) “if”, while those being addressed are usually referred to in the third person. The syntactic construction of casuistic law is composed of a sequence of a prosthesis which describes the case under discussion and an apodosis which states the consequence of the case. Apodictic laws are different from casuistic laws because they usually express a prohibition or a divine command. See Alt, Essays on Old Testament History and Religion, 88–91, 109.


87 yā or yāʾ āyyuhā followed by the subject of the address is a standardized generic convention utilized in much of the Medinan revelatory corpus that signals the beginning of Prophetic communications and states the addressee of that communication. See Flowers, “Reconsidering Qurʾanic Genre”, 31.
both public and private, related to religion, moral and legal matters. The relationship, a covenant between Allah and the people, is the rationale for observing the law, to receive God’s mercy and forgiveness. Therefore, the last part states that Allah is a forgiver. However, if a person does not adhere to these frequent warnings and the ordinance of atonement and hunts while in pilgrim garb, Allah will take vengeance since Allah is Mighty and can take vengeance at the appropriate time.

Q 5:95 represents one type of Qur’anic legislative passage. The other three are: (1) laws that start with the yà-‘ayyuhà llaḏīna ʾāmanū pattern followed by an apodictic/casuistic law; (2) mixed structures, where each law has its own structure; (3) laws formulated as questions and answers where each law starts with a SV clause, an extraposed prepositional phrase or a nominal clause. These four types have the same structure as Q 5:95, namely, they include three elements: (1) an initial clause; (2) a set of conditions/commands which the people must fulfill; (3) a closing clause which gives a valid reason for enacting the commandments, thus demonstrating obedience to God. The laws are expressed with eloquence and clarity because they consist of clauses whose syntactic structure is not complex, which facilitates understanding of the law. Separating laws into short clauses makes them more comprehensible, as complex clauses/sentences can engender ambiguity which may lead to a total lack of understanding.

Conclusion

The identification of Qur’anic genres has been discussed extensively in the literature. Qur’anic genres can be related to each other in various ways, such as through themes, activities, participants, events, type of discourse (e.g., explaining or arguing) and some of the more important basic elements of discourse. This article suggests that determining the way in which information is textually constructed or manifested in semantic and syntactic representations can be useful in defining the stylistic features of each genre. This is premised on the notion that once the schematic and syntactic manifestation of the foreground-background structure in the text is defined, the stylistic features of the various genres can be revealed. Stylistic features refer to the lexical, grammatical, and compositional devices in the text that allow it to flow from sentence to sentence.

Table 1: Qur’anic genres: Their information schema and linguistics features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hymns</th>
<th>Eschatology</th>
<th>Polemics</th>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Laws</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opening formula</strong></td>
<td>sabbīḥ, rabbanā</td>
<td>yayma, ʾidā</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Vocative, word order SV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreground information</strong></td>
<td>Short successive nominal or verbal sentences</td>
<td>Usually marked by verbs in the past and present tense, followed by various sentences</td>
<td>Marked by the verb qāla, followed by various sentences</td>
<td>Marked by use of verbs in the past tense, followed by various sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background information</strong></td>
<td>Various structures do not occur in a fixed position</td>
<td>Various structures do not occur in a fixed position</td>
<td>Same various structures which occur in the evaluation and coda (closure)</td>
<td>Same structures which occur in the coda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closure</strong></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Various structures</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88 See Dror, “The Structure of Legal Passages in the Qurʾān”.

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Table 1 summarizes how the Qur’ānic genres can be determined. It shows how the discourse content is organized and can be divided into foreground and background information. The foreground information includes the opening part and the most important information constituting the core of the discourse, such as successive events. The background information elaborates on the foreground information. The closure can be classified as background information. Thus, there is a specific relationship between syntactic form and discourse function. The distinction between foreground and background can be marked at the sentence level by the use of different syntactic structures.

As shown in table 1, all of the genres have a specific schema, but only two genres (narratives and laws) have a full structure composed of an opening, core, background information and closure. In the other three genres, a speech component is missing. This may be explained by the nature of these genres. Hymns, polemics and eschatological discourse can be regarded as descriptive discourse. Hymns describe why Allah is omnipotent, eschatological discourse describes what will happen on Judgment Day, and polemical discourse describes human thoughts and their interactions. Narratives and laws, however, are involved with cause and effect, which is logically organized in terms of conditions, concessions, purposes and results.

Finally, all the genres include background information constructed through various types of sentences, for example wa-lallaḏīna ʾāmanū bi-l-bāṭili wa-kafarū bi-llāhi ʾulāʾika humu l-ḫāsirūna “Those who believe in false deities and deny God will be the losers.” (Q 29:52); ʾinna fī ḏālika la-ʾāyātin li-qawmin yuʾminūna “There truly are signs in this for those who believe” (Q 16:79); wa-llāhu samīʿun ʿalīmun “God hears and knows everything” (Q 2:224). The information expressed through these constructions refers to past events or people, Allah’s attitude toward the believers’ and unbelievers’ behavior, and Allah’s omnipotence.

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References