Exploring Qur'anic Coherence Through Salwa El-Awa's Pragmatic Framework

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Abstract: This study examines Salwa El-Awa's pragmatic approach to the structural and thematic coherence of the Qur'an, as outlined in her work *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence, and Structure*. Employing a qualitative and descriptive-analytical methodology, this research explores the theories of coherence and relevance to understand the role of paragraph markers in establishing thematic and structural relationships between verses. The analysis focuses on two chapters, Surah al-Ahzab and Surah al-Qiyamah, to identify how these markers delineate paragraph boundaries and ensure the relevance of verses to the overarching message. The findings reveal that Salwa El-Awa's approach surpasses classical methods such as *munasabah*, which are limited to linear connections between verses, and addresses the shortcomings of modern approaches that often overlook the thematic relevance of textual components. Paragraph markers identified by Salwa elucidate structural relationships within the chapters, even when verses appear thematically unrelated. Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of integrating the internal textual context of the Qur'an with historical, social, and cultural dimensions to enhance interpretive depth.

Keywords: *Qur'an, pragmatics, coherence, relevance, Salwa El-Awa*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisis pendekatan pragmatis Salwa El-Awa dalam studi struktur dan koherensi Qur'an, sebagaimana diuraikan dalam karyanya *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence, and Structure*. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif-analitis, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi teori koherensi dan relevansi untuk memahami peran penanda paragraf dalam membangun hubungan tematik dan struktural antar-ayat. Studi ini berfokus pada dua surah, yaitu Surah al-Ahzab dan Surah al-Qiyamah, untuk mengidentifikasi cara penanda ini menentukan batas paragraf dan memastikan relevansi ayat terhadap pesan utama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan Salwa El-Awa melampaui metode klasik seperti munasabah, yang terbatas pada hubungan linier antar-ayat, dan mengatasi kekurangan pendekatan modern yang kurang menekankan kontribusi relevansi tematik. Penanda paragraf yang digunakan oleh Salwa membantu menjelaskan hubungan struktural di dalam surah meskipun ayat-ayat tampak tidak terkait secara tematik. Selain itu, kajain ini menekankan pentingnya mengintegrasikan konteks internal teks Qur'an dengan dimensi historis, sosial, dan budaya untuk memperkaya interpretasi.

Kata Kunci: *Qur'an, pragmatik, koherensi, relevansi, Salwa El-Awa*

Introduction

The epistemology of Qur'anic studies and exegesis has evolved and can be categorized into three main approaches. First, the Qur'an is positioned as a text; second, as a cultural foundation; and third, as an artifact.[1] Among Western scholars, research on the Qur'an as a text has also emerged as a distinct trend, alongside studies on its historicity. Studies focusing on the historicity of the Qur'an primarily analyze its chronological composition and textual arrangement. Unfortunately, interest in the chronological study of the Qur'an among Orientalist scholars has waned. In response to the view that the Qur'anic structure is fragmented and lacks cohesion, a trend has emerged to study the structure and unity of Qur'anic chapters (suras). This trend is favored by both Muslim and contemporary Western scholars and is considered more appealing than the classical method of munasabah.[2] The munasabah method is deemed insufficient to holistically address the concept of chapter unity because it focuses only on sequential verse connections without considering the entire chapter as an integral unit.[3]

In Muslim scholarly circles, this structural approach is epitomized by Hamid al-Din al-Farahi in his work *Nizam al-Qur'an*. Al-Farahi differentiates between munasabah and nazm, asserting that nazm surpasses munasabah.[4] According to al-Farahi, munasabah merely connects sentences in sequential order without recognizing the discourse as more than a collection of its constituent sentences. Munasabah fails to examine discourse in its entirety, whereas nazm views a chapter as a foundational unit connected to preceding and succeeding chapters, thus presenting the Qur'an as a cohesive and intricately woven discourse.[5]

Sayyid Qutb in his seminal work *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, introduced the concept of each Qur'anic chapter having a central theme (mihwar), while all chapters collectively

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[1] M. Endy Saputro, "Alternatif Tren Studi Qur'an Di Indonesia," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 11, no. 1 (May 1, 2011): 1, https://doi.org/10.21154/al-tahrir.v11i1.24.

[2] William Ronald Darrow, "Recent Trends in Historical and Literary Study of The Qur'ân," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 35, no. 1 (June 2, 2011), https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v35i1.128.

[3] Ahmadiy Ahmadiy, "Ilmu Munasabah Al-Qur'an," *Manarul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmiah Studi Islam* 18, no. 1 (July 1, 2018): 77–90, https://doi.org/10.32699/mq.v18i1.932; Muhamad Syaari Ab Rahman and Wan Nasyrudin Wan Abdullah, "Perkembangan Ilmu Munasabah Dan Sumbangannya Pada Konsep Kesatuan Tema Al-Qur'an," 2018, http://spaj.ukm.my/jalturath/index.php/jalturath/issue/view/8.

[4] Miatul Qudsia, "Mufasir Kontemporer Asal India: Hamiduddin Farahi," Tafsiralquran.id, 2021, https://tafsiralquran.id/mufasir-kontemporer-asal-india-hamiduddin-farahi/; Qusyaeri Aziz, Andi Fatihul Faiz Aripai, and Nur Laili Nabilah Nazahah Najiyah, "Penafsiran AL-Qur`an Berbasis Surah: Melacak Konsep Niẓām Al-Qur`an Hamid al-din al-Farahi," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al- Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 8, no. 2 (June 12, 2024), https://doi.org/10.15575/al-bayan.v8i2.30221.

[5] Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an* (The Other Press, 2011).

aim for a coherent objective (hadaf).[6] Similarly, Sa'id Hawa, in his book *al-Asas fi al-Tafsir*, emphasized the integral unity of the Qur'an based on its chapters.[7] Amin Ahsan Islahi, a student of al-Farahi, developed this perspective in his work *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*.[8] Islahi differed from his teacher by dividing the chapters of the Qur'an into seven cohesive groups, while al-Farahi proposed nine groups, each with a central pillar ('amud), applicable to individual chapters, paired chapters, or chapter groups.[9] Mustansir Mir[10] further popularized al-Farahi's 'amud theory, which Islahi extended within the field of Qur'anic structural studies.

Western scholarship has also shifted its discourse from investigating the originality, historicity, and reconstruction of the Qur'anic text to examining its structure and textual coherence using literary and linguistic approaches.[11] Pioneers of this trend include Angelika Neuwirth and Pierre Crapon de Caprona, who analyzed the composition of short Meccan chapters by exploring rhythm, rhyme, themes, and literary genres— elements of historical criticism.[12] Scholars such as Neal Robinson (1996), Mathias Zahniser (2000), David E. Smith (2001), Salwa El-Awa (2006), Raymond K. Farrin (2010), Nevin Reda (2010), and Michel Cuypers (2015) further developed structural and coherence studies, each with unique focal points. Notably, their studies predominantly center on textual structure and meaning as part of the Qur'an's linguistic inimitability (*i'jaz bayani*).

Salwa El-Awa, a prominent modern scholar, offers a distinct approach to textual studies and coherence. While these studies generally fall under textual structural analysis, El-Awa's work *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence, and Structure* addresses the issue of textual relations in the Qur'an using principles of pragmatic

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[6] Siti Mulazamah, "Konsep Kesatuan Tema Al-Qur'an Menurut Sayyid Qutb," *JOURNAL OF QUR'AN AND HADITH STUDIES* 3, no. 2 (December 20, 2014): 203–34, https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v3i2.1156; Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl Al-Qur'ān*, 6th ed. (Kairo: Dar as-Syuruq, 1968).

[7] Said Hawwa, *Al Asas Fi Al Tafsir* (Dar al Salam, 1993).

[8] Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān : Pondering over the Qur'ān* (Islamic Book Trust, 2007).

[9] Shehzad Saleem and Amin Ahsan Islahi, "Tadabbur-e-Qur'an: Pondering Over the Qur'an, Volume One; Tafsir of Surah Al-Fatihah and Surah Al-Baqarah," *Islamic Studies* 48, no. 1 (2009): 119–I, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/tadabbur-e-quran-pondering-over-volume-one-tafsir/docview/288342028/se-2?accountid=33993.

[10] Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an*.

[11] Nicolai Sinai, "Historical Criticism and Recent Trends in Western Scholarship on the Quran: Some Hermeneutic Reflections," 38 , no. 1 (July 2020): 136–46, https://doi.org/10.29117/jcsis.2020.0259.

[12] M Cuypers, *The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

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theory.s[13] She highlights the problem by questioning the assumption that a chapter represents a unified theme, particularly when it contains verses seemingly unrelated to the main theme (out of topic). Pragmatics, often associated with contextual meaning— the meaning intended by the speaker or author considering specific contexts—differs from syntax and semantics, which disregard factors such as who, where, when, and under what circumstances an expression is used.

Previous research on the structure and textual relations in the Qur'an encompasses diverse perspectives, including classical munasabah studies and analyses of scholarly thought, such as Aini's work.[14] However, the author contends that Aini's study lacks clarity regarding the theory and methodology employed by Salwa, as evident from its title emphasizing thematic unity in Salwa's perspective. In contrast, the author's reading indicates that Salwa's methodological focus is not on thematic unity but rather on dividing chapters into multiple paragraphs. Thus, this study aims to examine how Salwa El-Awa's methodology applies pragmatic theory in analyzing textual relations within chapters. The research questions include: How does Salwa define textual relations using a pragmatic approach? To what extent does she apply pragmatic theory in elucidating textual relations in the Qur'an? We argue that Salwa's methodology warrants scrutiny to introduce a new discourse on chapter-based structural analysis with a pragmatic approach, integrating textual and contextual perspectives, particularly for chapters containing verses assumed to address divergent topics.

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on analyzing Salwa El-Awa's thoughts concerning textual relations within Qur'anic chapters. To achieve the research objectives, a descriptive-analytical method is adopted, aiming to uncover facts and systematically explain the interrelationships among elements within the text. This approach allows for the detailed collection, organization, and analysis of data to produce a comprehensive description. The data sources for this study are divided into primary and secondary sources. The primary source is Salwa El-Awa's book, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence, and Structure*, which serves as the main focus for

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[13] Salwa M.S. El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an*, *Textual Relations in the Qur'ān: Relevance, Coherence and Structure* (Routledge, 2006), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203014486.

[14] Adrika Fithrotul Aini, "Kesatuan Surat Al-Qur'an Dalam Pandangan Salwa M.S. El-Awwa," *Syahadah* III No. 1 (January 1, 2015): 67–87.

exploring her ideas and methodology. Secondary sources include various articles and literature relevant to studies on textual structure and pragmatic theory in the Qur'an.

The data analysis process is carried out in three main stages. The first stage involves data reduction, where relevant data is selected and simplified to support the research focus. The reduced data is then presented in a narrative description, facilitating readers' understanding of the structure and patterns identified in Salwa's thoughts. The final stage involves drawing conclusions based on the analyzed findings, aimed at answering the research questions. To enrich the analysis, this study also incorporates unstructured interviews with experts in pragmatic linguistics. This interview approach is chosen for its flexibility in exploring in-depth information from respondents, based on the answers provided. Questions during the interviews are developed dynamically, focusing on the interpretation and understanding of the pragmatic context used in Salwa's analysis.

Discussion

Theories of Coherence and Relevance in Chapter Interpretation

In her book *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence, and Structure*, Salwa El-Awa explains that the field of linguistics provides two primary approaches for studying textual relations: coherence theory and relevance theory. Coherence focuses on the relationships between linguistic units such as expressions or textual elements, while relevance extends beyond the textual expressions to include informational units, assumptions, and ideas. According to Salwa, both coherence and relevance theories fall under the scope of pragmatics. This is because these theories address not only the linguistic forms of a text but also the non-linguistic factors that contribute to understanding its meaning. Pragmatic meaning, in Salwa's view, is derived by observing context as a non-linguistic factor and analyzing contextual implications.[15]

Salwa identifies two types of contexts as essential sources of information for clarifying the meaning of the Qur'an. The first is textual context (internal), which comprises textual information available to the reader, typically found before or after specific verses. This includes what exegetes describe as *al-Qur'an yufassiru ba'dhuhu ba'dhan* ("the Qur'an explains itself"), where one verse clarifies the meaning of another

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[15] El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an*.

without requiring external context. The second type is non-textual context (external), which refers to information outside the text itself that aids in understanding its meaning. This type of context has been commonly used in Qur'anic interpretation, even when not explicitly acknowledged as external information. Examples include the use of *hadith* to elucidate verses or pre-Islamic poetry to explain uncommon or ambiguous terms. Such examples are widely found in tafsir and fiqh literature. From these explanations, Salwa views context as information explicitly derived from surrounding text and external sources, such as *hadith* and pre-Islamic poetry, which are themselves textual in nature.

Linguists describe context in various dimensions. Typically, context encompasses the following aspects: first, intra-textual context (co-text), which refers to the relationship between parts of a text and their immediate surroundings; second, infra-textual context, which examines the relationship between parts of a text and the overall structure; third, inter-textual context, which analyzes connections between the text and other texts; and fourth, extra-textual or situational context, which explores the relationship between the text and the situational factors under which it is produced or interpreted.[16] Hymes outlines these situational criteria with the acronym SPEAKING: Setting and Scene, Participants, Ends, Act sequences, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre.[17] Context is dynamic, shaped by changing situational backgrounds and is never static. Based on this understanding, context and pragmatics are inherently interrelated, as context is necessary for realizing the use of language in a pragmatic perspective. Context serves as a dynamic situational backdrop, enabling interactions among speakers with their surrounding social and cultural conditions. Additionally, context influences the understanding of speech acts and affects how language is interpreted by users.[18]

Salwa further elaborates on the meaning of context and its implications, coining the term "contextual effects" to describe the impact or outcome achieved by an utterance on its audience, based on assumptions within their cognitive environment. Assumptions are defined as representations of the real world within the receiver's mind, which can act

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[16] Rita Finkbeiner, Jörg Meibauer, and Petra B. Schumacher, eds., *What Is a Context?*, vol. 196, Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1075/la.196.

[17] Courtney B Cazden, "Dell Hymes's Construct of 'Communicative Competence,'" *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (December 31, 2011): 364–69, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41410139.

[18] Indrawati, "Context in Pragmatics," *Language Circle: Journal of Language and Literature* 3 (2009), https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:142400426.

as inputs or outputs in the communication process.[19] The greater the effect achieved, the more relevant an utterance is considered to be. Contextual effects can arise through one or more of the following mechanisms: first, an utterance may generate new assumptions or information when it interacts with existing contextual assumptions; second, it may contradict and thus weaken or eliminate prior assumptions; third, it may confirm and reinforce existing contextual assumptions. According to Salwa, these contextual effects determine the relevance of an utterance. [20]

Salwa's explanation divides the notion of context into three categories: (1) internal textual context, which pertains to explicit meanings derived from the text; (2) external textual context, encompassing meanings understood through *hadith* or pre-Islamic poetry; and (3) recipient context, reflecting the degree to which an utterance's effect depends on the assumptions in the recipient's cognitive framework. Based on the outlined pragmatic context, Salwa's interpretation of context can be classified into intra-textual, infra-textual, and inter-textual aspects. Intra-textual (co-text) refers to the explicit meaning derived by considering surrounding sentences. Infra-textual context involves understanding the overall meaning of the text in relation to its broader structure. Inter-textual context is obtained through *hadith* and pre-Islamic poetry, linked to contextual implications.

Paragraphs and Paragraph Markers in Qur'anic Chapters

Salwa El-Awa emphasizes the importance of dividing chapters of the Qur'an into distinct paragraph units, a perspective influenced by her critique of classical and modern approaches. Classical scholars of the medieval period often considered individual verses as the sole units of a chapter, leading to a linear correlation between verses. Meanwhile, modern scholars like Neal Robinson prioritize the subject matter as the primary element of chapter unity. Salwa critiques Robinson's approach, arguing that he provides only descriptive analyses without adequately addressing the lexical contributions and connections between the identified sections and the overall message of the chapter. Furthermore, Salwa finds Robinson's explanations insufficient in clarifying how different sections of a chapter relate to each other to form its cohesive message.

Salwa asserts that the subject matter itself is not the most critical element of textual coherence. She states that even content sharing the same topic may be irrelevant if it fails

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[19] El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an*.
[20] El-Awa.

to effectively contribute to the recipient's understanding of the text's subject. In her words:

> "The subject matter per se is not the most important element of a text's coherence and can even be irrelevant if an item, although it may have the same topic, does not contribute effectively to the recipient's knowledge of the subject of the text, that is, if it is not relevant in the contextual environment to which recipients have access" [21]

According to Salwa, the primary theme should be regarded as an informational contributor, supporting relevance in determining textual relations.

Modern scholars have shifted from viewing Qur'anic text relations as merely linear and partial to emphasizing thematic unity within chapters and the Qur'an as a whole. They achieve this by dividing chapters into sections. However, Salwa argues that their efforts still fail to establish the relevance of these divisions. For instance, Neal Robinson, in his work *The Qur'an as the Word of God*, abandons the linear text relation approach to Surah al-Qiyamah, dividing the chapter into sections based on Pierre Crapon de Caprona's earlier work. Caprona divides Surah al-Qiyamah into two sections (verses 1–19 and 20–40).[22] Salwa, however, introduces the concept of "paragraph markers" to identify section boundaries and considers these markers critical for understanding textual coherence.

In Salwa's framework, a paragraph is an ideational unit whose contribution to the chapter's message can be inferred through the process of deriving an implicature. She stresses that paragraphs within a chapter do not need to have uniform lengths; a paragraph might consist of a single verse or several verses. The essential factor is not the length but the contribution of the paragraph to the chapter's message. A paragraph begins and ends based on a significant and evident shift in content, identifiable through linguistic elements indicating the change. [23] In the Qur'anic context, such linguistic elements include abrupt changes in dominant pronouns, sentence structure alterations, and the use of paragraph markers at the beginning of sentences.

Paragraph markers are a set of particles typically used as sentence connectors but function differently in the chapters analyzed (e.g., Surah al-Ahzab and Surah al-

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[21] El-Awa.

[22] Neal Robinson, "The Qur'an As The Word Of God," in *Heaven and Earth; Essex Essays In Theology and Ethics* (Worthington, 1986).

[23] El-Awa.

Qiyamah). These markers often appear at the beginning of a sentence, signaling a transition and serving as part of a larger discourse unit—a paragraph. Salwa identifies paragraph markers using two criteria: first, their placement at the beginning of a sentence, where they do not affect the sentence's grammatical structure or semantic meaning; second, their scope extends to a discourse unit larger than a single preceding sentence. In her study, Salwa emphasizes paragraph markers at the beginning of sentences, arguing that their initial placement operates differently from markers found in the middle or end of sentences. In Surah al-Qiyamah, for example, paragraph markers predominantly appear at the beginning. Salwa demonstrates that the relationships between sections of a chapter are established and controlled by paragraph markers, which are not explained in terms of Arabic grammar but function as connectors or discourse initials.[24]

In Surah al-Ahzab, Salwa identifies two types of paragraph markers: major paragraph markers, such as *yaa ayyuha*, which appear at the beginning of each paragraph; and minor paragraph markers, which delineate sub-themes within a paragraph. Minor markers include *waidh*, *waw*, *ya*, *laqad*, and *inna*. Additionally, Salwa analyzes a word connecting the entire chapter's paragraphs: *li* (*lam ta'lil*), which provides causal explanations. In Surah al-Qiyamah, Salwa identifies bal and kalla as paragraph markers. The word bal appears in verses 5, 14, and 20 of the chapter, marking transitions between complete sentences and lacking grammatical dependence. In verses 5 and 14, bal functions as a paragraph marker without following the typical Arabic grammar rule requiring negation before bal. In verse 20, bal is preceded by *kalla*, which also acts as a paragraph marker. According to Salwa, bal serves two distinct functions: as an introductory particle for a paragraph and as a secondary paragraph marker following *kalla*.[25]

Salwa defines paragraph markers as words positioned at the beginning of sentences that do not affect the preceding sentence and introduce meaning for the subsequent sentence. Based on this definition, the word *fa* in verse 7 of Surah al-Qiyamah could also be considered a paragraph marker, although Salwa does not analyze this conjunction. In verse 7, *fa* develops the response to the question posed in the preceding

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[24] El-Awa.
[25] El-Awa.

verse about the timing of the Day of Judgment, connecting the conditions outlined in verses 7–9 to this query.[26]

Application of the Theory to Qur'anic Chapters

Context in Q.S. al-Ahzab

Salwa El-Awa applies her theory of coherence and relevance to the analysis of two Qur'anic chapters: Surah al-Ahzab and Surah al-Qiyamah. She argues that both chapters, being lengthy and encompassing various topics, present challenges in textual relations. Surah al-Ahzab represents the Medinan chapters, while Surah al-Qiyamah exemplifies the Meccan chapters. In her analysis, Salwa divides Surah al-Ahzab into ten paragraphs, with several sub-sections identified based on specific markers. The paragraph divisions are summarized in the following table: [27]

Paragraph	Verses	Paragraph Marker
1	1–8	*Yaa ayyuha*
2	9–27	*Yaa ayyuha*
3	28–40	*Yaa ayyuha*
4	41–44	*Yaa ayyuha*
5	45–48	*Yaa ayyuha*
6	49	*Yaa ayyuha*
7	50–52	*Yaa ayyuha*
8	53–58	*Yaa ayyuha* and *Inna*
9	59	*Yaa ayyuha*
10	60–73	Sub-section markers only

Two paragraphs contain only one verse each—paragraph 6 (verse 49) and paragraph 9 (verse 59). Salwa justifies this division based on the common thematic features of these sections, which address rules concerning wives and family. The paragraph markers (*yaa ayyuha*) signal shifts in content, marking the transition to new themes. Verse 49 states:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا إِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ ثُمَّ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَمَسُّوهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ تَعْتَدُّونَهَا فَمَتِّعُوهُنَّ وَسَرِّحُوهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا

"O you who have believed, when you marry believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them, then there is not for you any waiting period to count concerning them. So provide for them and release them in an appropriate manner."

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[26] El-Awa.
[27] El-Awa.

Salwa interprets this verse as addressing a specific issue related to divorce. She notes that this verse was revealed during a complex period in the Prophet's household, marked by rumors and challenges related to marriage. However, Salwa does not elaborate in detail on how the issue of divorce became a pressing concern at that time. She relies on contextual assumptions to explain the verse's relevance, as seen in the following statement:

> "The problem mentioned in v. 49, I assume has to do with the sole incidence of divorce provided in the biographical material of the Prophet's life, that is, he once married a woman but wished to divorce her before the marriage was actually consummated, and did so, although the history is not very clear about the date of the incident, which leaves room for doubt on this interpretation of the reason why the verse is here" [28]

In addition to verse 49, Salwa also does not provide an adequate explanation of the socio-cultural context for verse 59:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُل لِّأَزْوَٰجِكَ وَبَنَٰتِكَ وَنِسَآءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِن جَلَٰبِيبِهِنَّ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَن يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

> "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful."

Salwa questions why a dress code regulation appears within the broader discourse of family and societal matters. She concludes that the dress code relates to protecting women from harm and affirming their identity as Muslims. This connection, she argues, ties the verse to themes concerning family and society rather than individual conduct. Salwa also explains that avoiding harm has relevance to the subsequent paragraph (paragraph 8, verses 53–58). Salwa's analysis of these two verses (49 and 59) indicates her focus on contextual assumptions drawn from the audience's perspective. While this approach aligns with her dynamic concept of context, a more comprehensive explanation could have included the physical context—the situational background bound by time and space in which the text was revealed. For example, the context of verse 49 can be further clarified using the *hadith* narrated by al-Bukhari and cited by Ibn Kathir in his *tafsir*. The narration reads:

> "From Sahl bin Sa'd and Abu Usaid: The Prophet married Umaimah bint Sharahil. When Umaimah entered the Prophet's home, he extended his hand to her, but she

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[28] El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an*.

seemed displeased. The Prophet then instructed Abu Usaid to provide her with two fine garments as a divorce gift and sent her away." [29]

Salwa concludes that these two verses were specifically directed at the Prophet's household, outlining permissible and impermissible actions. However, these rules have since been generalized for the broader Muslim community. This conclusion underscores Salwa's reliance on the internal meaning of the text rather than the external meaning derived from its broader socio-historical context.

Context in Q.S. al-Qiyamah

Salwa El-Awa divides Surah al-Qiyamah, which consists of 40 verses, into seven paragraphs. The paragraph divisions and markers identified by Salwa are summarized in the table below:

Paragraph	Verses	Paragraph Marker
1	1–6	*Bal*
2	7–10	
3	11–15	*Bal*
4	16–19	
5	20–25	*Kalla, Bal*
6	26–35	
7	36–40	

Salwa explains the relevance between these sections by focusing significantly on the two paragraph markers she identifies: *bal* and *kalla*. According to Salwa, *bal* appears in verses 5, 14, and 20, marking transitions at the boundaries of complete sentences, with no grammatical dependency. In verses 5 and 14, *bal* functions as an introductory particle, not following the typical Arabic grammatical rule that requires negation before its usage. In verse 20, *bal* is preceded by *kalla*, which also acts as a paragraph marker. Salwa suggests that *bal* serves two distinct functions: as a paragraph initiator where it does not affect the semantic meaning of the preceding sentence, and as a secondary marker following *kalla*.

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[29] Abu al-Fida' Ismail Ibn Umar Ibn Katsir, *Tafsir Alquran Al-'Adzim* (Riyadh: Dar Thoyibah li an-Nasyr wa at-Tauzi', 1977).

Salwa posits that a paragraph is an ideational unit with a single implicature that contributes to the chapter's overarching message. In paragraph 5 (verses 20–25), she highlights a shift in subject matter: from addressing humans as direct interlocutors (*mukhāṭab*) in verses 20–21 to referring to them in the third person (*ghā'ib*) in verses 22–25. This shift reflects a change in setting, yet Salwa groups these verses into a single paragraph.

Regarding the relationship between the sections, Salwa concludes that verses 16–19 represent an independent paragraph with a topic distinct from the preceding and succeeding verses. She critiques Neal Robinson's approach, which connects the repetition of a particular term across different verses as evidence of textual coherence. Salwa also critiques Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's interpretation, arguing that al-Razi fails to consider these verses as an insertion within the chapter. Salwa underscores that repeated terms alone do not necessarily establish coherence unless they contribute to the recipient's informational assumptions about the chapter's overall message. Furthermore, she argues that the primary theme is not the most critical element of textual coherence if it fails to effectively contribute to the recipient's understanding within their contextual environment.

For example, Salwa interprets verses 16–19 as focusing on the Qur'anic revelation process, noting their broader relevance to the authenticity of the Qur'an as divine speech. According to Salwa, the contextual effect of these verses lies in affirming that Muhammad, as the recipient of revelation, is not its author, thereby emphasizing the Qur'an's divine origin. She argues that this contextual effect supports the chapter's overall message about the resurrection and divine power. [30] However, historical and sociological contexts could enhance this interpretation. For instance, the physical context of these verses pertains to the Prophet's experience during the revelation process. Historical reports indicate that the Prophet would hasten to recite the revelation alongside the angel Jibril, fearing he might forget it. This prompted Allah to reassure him, as narrated in a hadith from al-Bukhari:

> "Imam Ahmad said that Abdurrahman narrated from 'Uwana, from Musa ibn Abu A'isha, from Sa'id ibn Jubair, from Ibn Abbas, who said that the Prophet, at first, felt burdened when receiving revelation, and he would move his lips to follow the angel. Sa'id ibn Jubair added that Ibn Abbas said: 'And I would also move my lips as the Prophet did.' Then Allah revealed, *Do not move your tongue with it, [O Muhammad], to hasten with recitation of the Qur'an. Indeed, upon Us is its*

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[30] El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an*.

collection [in your heart] and [to make possible] its recitation." (Q.S. al-Qiyamah: 16–17). [31]

During an interview with Mardjoko Idris,[32] an expert in pragmatic linguistics, it was noted that pragmatic analysis of Qur'anic verses requires identifying elements such as speaker (*mutakallim*), addressee (*mukhāṭab*), and situational context. Mardjoko highlighted that not all contextual elements need to be systematically present to classify a study as pragmatic. Based on this perspective, the verses in Surah al-Qiyamah fulfill pragmatic criteria, as they involve a clear speaker and addressee relationship.

The sociological context of Surah al-Qiyamah also reflects its thematic focus on resurrection and accountability. This chapter, revealed in Mecca, shares thematic parallels with Surah al-Qari'ah, both addressing the Day of Judgment. However, Surah al-Qiyamah presents its message more abstractly, while Surah al-Waqi'ah provides detailed descriptions of rewards and punishments. These variations correspond to shifts in the Arab society's materialistic tendencies during the revelations of these chapters. Understanding such sociological dynamics could enrich Salwa's framework, particularly for verses perceived as unrelated to the chapter's main theme. Thus, Salwa's analysis relies heavily on internal textual context and contextual assumptions derived from the audience's cognitive environment. While her approach aligns with pragmatic theory, integrating more comprehensive external contexts, including historical and sociological insights, would provide a richer understanding of the chapter's coherence and relevance.

Conclusion

Salwa El-Awa's pragmatic approach to Qur'anic structural studies represents a significant advancement in the field, addressing challenges in interpreting verses that appear thematically disjointed. By employing coherence and relevance theories, her methodology emphasizes the functional role of linguistic markers such as *yaa ayyuha*, *bal*, and *kalla* in establishing thematic unity and textual coherence. This research highlights that coherence in the Qur'an extends beyond thematic analysis, requiring each section to contribute meaningfully to the overarching message of the chapter.

The study's findings contribute to the broader field of Qur'anic studies by demonstrating the applicability of linguistic pragmatics to classical texts. It bridges the

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[31] Ibn Katsir, *Tafsir Alquran Al-'Adzim*.
[32] Interview with Mr. Mardjoko Idris

gap between traditional methods, such as munasabah, and modern linguistic approaches, offering a novel framework that integrates textual and contextual analysis. Future research could expand this framework by incorporating socio-historical and cultural contexts, enriching the understanding of Qur'anic coherence. This study not only deepens the understanding of Qur'anic chapters as cohesive units but also lays the groundwork for further interdisciplinary exploration. The application of pragmatic theory reinforces the Qur'an's position as a linguistically sophisticated and thematically interconnected text, providing valuable insights for scholars in tafsir, linguistics, and theology.

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