

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20747492

ASPECTS OF SYNTACTIC INIMITABILITY IN THE STYLE OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

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Received: 04/04/2026
Accepted: 20/05/2026

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to uncover the manifestations of syntactic inimitability (al-i'jāz al-tarkībī) in the stylistic structure of the Holy Qur'an. Utilizing a descriptive-analytical approach, it examines selected models of Qur'anic structures in light of classical grammatical orientations (tawjīh naḥwī), exegetical traditions, and rhetorical requirements. The research reveals diverse dimensions of syntactic inimitability, namely: the departure of Qur'anic structures from the constraints of conventional lexical co-occurrence; its divergence from familiar syntactic paradigms; the convergence of structural relations to attain a profound level of conciseness; the latitude of structural frameworks to accommodate multiple grammatical functions; the absolute structural and thematic cohesion of the text across its entire expanse; and the unique structural approaches to ellipsis (ḥadhf). The study concludes with a recommendation to expand integrated linguistic inquiries – encompassing syntax, morphology, semantics, and phonology – since historical scholarship on Qur'anic inimitability has disproportionately favored abstract rhetorical dimensions at the expense of rigorous syntactic analysis.

KEYWORDS: Holy Qur'an; Qur'anic Eloquence; Inimitability (I'jāz); Syntax (Naḥw); Syntactic Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

God Almighty supported His Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) with the Holy Qur'an as a supreme linguistic and rhetorical miracle. **He challenged the Arabs – the masters of eloquence and articulate expression – to produce anything resembling this miraculous text, declaring:**

﴿قُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا﴾ (سورة الإسراء: 88)

"Say, 'Even if all mankind and jinn came together to produce something like this Qur'an, they could not produce anything like it, however much they helped each other.'" (Al-Isrā': 88).

Confronted with their absolute inability, the divine discourse scaled down the challenge, demanding they produce merely ten fabricated chapters like it:

﴿أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَاذْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَضَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾ (هود: 13)

"If they say, 'He invented it himself,' say, 'Then produce ten invented suras like it, and call on anyone you can other than God, if you are telling the truth.'" (Hūd: 13).

When their incapacity persisted, the progressive challenge culminated in demanding a single chapter of its caliber:

﴿وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَاذْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾ (البقرة: 23)

"If you have doubts about what We have sent down to Our servant, then produce a sura like it, and call your witnesses besides God, if you are truthful." (Al-Baqarah: 23).

And further stated:

﴿أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَاذْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَضَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾ (يونس: 38)

"If they say, 'He invented it,' say, 'Then produce a sura like it, and call on anyone you can besides God, if you are telling the truth.'" (Yūnus: 38).

The linguistic elite of Arabia conceded to this total incapacity. While the facets of Qur'anic inimitability (i'jāz) are manifold – including historical, scientific, numerical, and metaphysical dimensions – its linguistic core remains unyielding. Syntactic inimitability is fundamentally predicated upon observing the specific properties of a structural framework, its strategic positioning within the discourse, and its contextual adaptation. It constitutes a primary pillar of the overarching linguistic miracle of the Qur'an.

1.1. Research Problem

The core problem lies in the conceptual ambiguity surrounding syntactic inimitability within modern scholarship. Very few contemporary studies isolate this phenomenon as an independent linguistic

mechanism or comprehensively map its applied structural dimensions.

1.2. Research Questions

What constitutes "syntactic inimitability" within the stylistic architecture of the Qur'an?

What are the primary structural manifestations of this inimitability in the sacred text?

How can classical tools of grammatical orientation (tawjih naḥwī) be leveraged to systematically uncover this phenomenon?

Research Objectives

To systematically conceptualize the paradigm of syntactic inimitability in Qur'anic style.

To demonstrate how syntactic structures and rhetorical choices interlock to produce this structural miracle, using rigorous grammatical tools.

1.4. Materials And Methods

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology. It isolates carefully selected textual models from the Qur'an, subjecting them to thorough grammatical and syntactic analysis in light of classical linguistic commentaries, grammatical treatises, and rhetorical standards, thereby highlighting the exceptional nature of the text's composition.

The Qur'an models and examples were selected with complete objectivity, based on the consensus of Qur'anic rhetoricians and exegetes who frequently pointed out the distinctiveness of the Qur'anic syntactic structure compared to other styles, thereby moving beyond isolated individual opinions.

1.5. Literature Review

Linguistic scholarship addressing Qur'anic inimitability has historically maintained a heavy bias toward abstract rhetorical classification. Consequently, the purely syntactic and structural dimensions have rarely received integrated, systematic treatment, despite brilliant insights scattered throughout classical philological exegeses.

To date, one of the few focused attempts is that of Fathi Abdel-Fattah al-Dajani (1984), titled *Grammatical Inimitability in the Holy Qur'an* (Al-Dajānī 1984, p48). However, al-Dajani limits his investigation to a single phenomenon: the suspension of the standard temporal dimension within certain Qur'anic verbs. He analyzes numerous textual instances where verbal structures detach from their conventional time-bound constraints to signify eternal realities. Thus, a clear academic gap remains regarding the broader structural typology of syntactic inimitability. This study aims to bridge that

gap by mapping the overarching structural typologies of syntactic *i'jāz* and providing a coherent framework for its analysis.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONCEPTUALIZING SYNTACTIC INIMITABILITY

Classical scholars define a miracle (*mu'jizah*) as "an act that shatters natural laws, coupled with a challenge, and remaining entirely unassailable" (Al-Suyūṭī 1996, p.87). The Qur'an represents a supreme linguistic miracle that "encompasses both humankind and jinn, endures across epochs, and maintains its binding proof from the moment of its revelation until the Day of Resurrection" (Al-Suyūṭī 1996, p.136).

In their service to the text, classical authorities sought to uncover the underlying secrets of this linguistic miracle. Abu Ubaidah (d. 209 AH) captured numerous structural features in his seminal *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, as did al-Jahiz (d. 255 AH) in *Ḥujaj al-Nubūwwah*. Similarly, Al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar (d. 415 AH) explored these features in *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd*. Dedicated treatises soon emerged, notably al-Rummānī's (d. 385 AH) *Al-Nukat fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, al-Khattabī's (d. 388 AH) *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, and al-Baqillānī's (d. 403 AH) *I'jāz al-Qur'ān* (Al-Rummānī, n.d., p.55). This trajectory culminated in Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjānī's (d. 474 AH) monumental work, *Dalā'il al-I'jāz* (Al-Jurjānī 1992, p. 98). Furthermore, invaluable syntactic insights remain embedded within classical grammatical commentaries, such as al-Zamakhsharī's (d. 538 AH) *Al-Kashshāf* (Al-Zamakhsharī 2024, p.45), Ibn Atiyyah's (d. 546 AH) *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, Abu Hayyan's (d. 745 AH) *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* (Ḥayyān & Yūsuf 2001, p. 32), Abu al-Su'ūd's (d. 951 AH) *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm* (Abū al-Su'ūd n.d.), and al-Alusi's (d. 1270 AH) *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*.

Despite these extensive efforts, historical scholarship consistently favored rhetorical frameworks over a holistic analysis of syntax, morphology, semantics, and phonology. Yet, classical authorities recognized that syntax is the foundational layer of textual beauty. Al-Khattabī remarked: "Know that the Qur'an is inimitable because it utilizes the most eloquent words within the most sublime patterns of compositional arrangement, embodying the truest meanings" (Al-Rummānī n.d., p. 63). Al-Baqillānī noted that its inimitability stems from "its magnificent arrangement, marvelous composition, and absolute eloquence that surpasses human capacity" (Al-

Rummānī n.d., p. 48).

Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjānī solidified this by arguing that true *i'jāz* must be a distinct compositional quality introduced by the Qur'an itself, completely absent from prior human speech (Al-Jurjānī 1992, p.113). Consequently, he dismantled the notion that inimitability resides in isolated words, phonetic cadences, or basic metaphors.

Instead, he argued that it lies in the systematic tracking of grammatical meanings and rules:

"If the quality that rendered them incapable does not reside in the isolated components we enumerated, it must inevitably reside in the composition (*al-naẓm*)... If it is established that it resides in composition and structural arrangement, and we know that composition is nothing other than tracking the meanings and rules of grammar (*ma'ānī al-naḥw*) between words... then it is clear that anyone attempting to discuss composition and its superiority without applying these foundational rules is wandering in absolute darkness." (Al-Jurjānī 1992, p.147).

Al-Jurjānī's "Theory of Composition" (*Naẓariyyat al-Naẓm*) serves as the baseline for structural analysis. Syntactic inimitability can therefore be defined as: a compositional attribute wherein the structural arrangement of words achieves a level of perfection that defies human replication, evaluated through the precise interaction between syntactic frameworks, contextual placement, and grammatical rules. Unlocking this requires a deep understanding of structural dependencies, the properties of syntactic phenomena, and the alignment of composition with grammatical intent and contextual requirements.

This foundation equips the grammarian with the analytical tools needed to expose the mechanics of structural *i'jāz*. For example, an investigator can observe how the Qur'anic text eliminates standard temporal constraints from verbal structures—a primary feature of human language. As al-Dajānī concluded, this creates "eternal, timeless verbal structures that surpass standard human descriptive constraints" (Al-Dajānī 1984, p.42), as seen in imperative verbs addressed to the Prophet but binding upon the entire community across all generations.

The study operationally defines the concept of syntactic inimitability as the distinctiveness of the linguistic structure of the Holy Qur'an compared to other styles in expressing meaning.

The most critical analytical tool is grammatical orientation (*al-tawjīh al-naḥwī*), defined as: "the determination of grammatical cases and structural

positions, the delineation of their variant implications, and the identification of underlying structural triggers, justifications, and evidence—whether formulated as systematic rules or left as contextual explanations" (Al-Khūlī 1997, p.245). Guided by precise methodological parameters, this process identifies the optimal interpretation of a structure, determining the most authoritative reading (al-wajh) (Al-Khūlī 1997, p.148). Applying this approach reveals how the sacred text transcends conventional human speech. Through detailed text analysis, this study identifies six primary manifestations of syntactic inimitability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed Manifestations of Syntactic Inimitability Based on Grammatical Orientation:

3.1. Deviation Of Structure from Lexical Co-Occurrence Constraints

In standard Arabic speech, words must achieve a state of semantic compatibility known as "structural alignment" (al-taḍāmm), where words naturally require and accept one another within a clause (Ḥassān 1994, p.247). This compatibility ensures that lexical items can comfortably co-occur without violating basic semantic boundaries—a concept analogous to Sibawayh's classic chapters on textual rectitude and semantic absurdity (al-istiḳāmah wa-al-iḥālah) (Sibawayh 1980, p.97), and modern generative linguistics' "selection restrictions" (Ullmann 2023, p.198).

Lexical co-occurrence is typically a prerequisite for meaningful composition. When words lack this shared semantic boundary, they create a lexical mismatch that renders the structure unacceptable in literal discourse (e.g., writing "the book felt triumphant" is inadmissible outside of figurative speech). While standard communication requires a baseline of semantic compatibility, the composition of the Qur'an establishes perfectly coherent syntactic relations between words that share no conventional lexical affinity. It achieves this on a literal level without compromising clarity, delivering profound meaning at the peak of eloquence.

Consider the verse:

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ﴿البقرة: 60﴾

"Remember when Moses prayed for water for his people and We said, 'Strike the rock with your staff.' Twelve springs gushed out from it..." (Al-Baqarah: 60).

The syntactic inimitability here lies in attributing the physical gushing of water directly to the rock as

a literal reality driven by divine decree. In conventional human language, the relationship between this specific predicate and its subject lacks ordinary semantic co-occurrence.

Grammatical orientation proves this connection through the exact dependency of the prepositional phrase (minhu / from it) and its pronominal reference back to the rock. Abu Hayyan observes:

"The phrase (minhu) is syntactically dependent on (fanjarat / gushed), and the preposition (min) functions here to denote the point of origin (ibtidā' al-ghāyah). The pronoun refers directly to the struck rock, confirming that the water erupted from the stone itself, not the ground beneath it, as reinforced elsewhere: {...for there are some stones from which rivers gush...} (Al-Baqarah: 74). Had this structure appeared in ordinary human speech, one could argue that the pronoun refers to the act of striking itself as an underlying source, treating the preposition as a marker of causality. However, such strained interpretations are entirely inadmissible here; the text must be understood through its most pristine and elegant structural alignment, as it represents the zenith of eloquence." (Ḥayyān & Yūsuf 2001, p.75).

Another example occurs in the divine command:

{وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكَ وَياسماءُ اَلْبَلْعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءِ} (هود: 44)

"Then it was said, 'Earth, swallow your water! Sky, hold back!' The water subsided..." (Hūd: 44).

The syntactic links binding these lexical items disregard standard co-occurrence constraints. In ordinary human speech, assigning active imperatives like "swallow" and "hold back" to geological and atmospheric phenomena is strictly figurative. Here, however, the structure operates on a literal plane, as the Creator possesses absolute authority to command, address, and receive obedience from inanimate creation. The composition bypasses standard human lexical constraints to achieve a unique communicative force.

Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani details these exact syntactic relationships and their miraculous impact:

"It is clear that the majesty of this passage begins with the direct address to the earth, followed by an explicit command, utilizing the definitive vocational particle (yā) rather than the compound variant (yā ayyatuhā). This is heightened by attaching the pronominal suffix (ki / your) directly to the water, rather than using a detached form like 'swallow the water.' This address to the earth is immediately balanced by a corresponding command to the sky, before concluding with the passive structure (ghīḍa al-mā' / the water subsided) ... Do you honestly believe that these structural merits—which

overwhelm the soul with a profound sense of awe – are a product of the mere phonetic sounds of the words or the linear sequence of their letters? Or is it entirely due to the sublime, perfect alignment of their underlying grammatical meanings?" (Al-Jurjāni 1992, p.354).

3.2. Structural Deviation from Familiar Syntactic Patterns

Every language possesses standard structural patterns that grammarians classify as the baseline for typical usage. The Qur'an occasionally departs from these highly frequent patterns, employing less common structures to deliver a majestic cadence and layer of meaning that would dissolve if forced into standard human conventions. For instance:

﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقُوا لَمَكُنَّا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرًا لَّو كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (البقرة: 103)

"If they had believed and been mindful of God, their reward from God would have been far better, if they only knew." (Al-Baqarah: 103).

In this verse, the particle (*law*) functions as a conditional operator expressing an unfulfilled condition (*ḥarf shart̄ imtināʿi*) according to most commentators (Al-Ṭabarī 1985, p.28). The standard structural convention dictates that its apodosis (*jawāb*) should be a verbal clause featuring a past-tense verb or a continuous verb negated by (*lam*) (Mālik 1990, p.65). The text deviates from this pattern by introducing a nominal clause instead: (*la-mathūbatun min ʿindi Allāhi khayrun / Their reward from God would be far better*). Grammatical authorities have offered two primary structural orientations for this deviation, both revealing an intentional rhetorical purpose.

The first orientation treats the nominal clause directly as the apodosis of (*law*), a view held by Makki bin Abi Talib, al-Zamakhshari, and Ibn Malik (Makkī bin Abī Ṭālib 1985, p.148; Mālik 1990; Al-Zamakhsharī 2024, p.65). Al-Zamakhshari highlights the purpose of this structural shift: "If you ask why a nominal clause was preferred over a verbal clause to answer the conditional particle (*law*), the answer is: to signal the absolute permanency, stability, and unyielding reality of the divine reward" (Al-Zamakhsharī 2024, p.169).

The second orientation identifies a different structural asset: extreme conciseness (*ijāz*). It assumes the literal apodosis of (*law*) is omitted, leaving the nominal clause to fulfill a distinct functional role that broadens the text's semantic scope. Here, the initial (*la-*) in (*la-mathūbatun*) functions as an introductory particle of emphasis (*lām al-ibtidāʿ*), making the entire sentence a fresh, independent statement (Al-ʿUkbarī 1997, p.158).

Alternatively, it can be viewed as the response to an implicit oath (*jawāb qasam maḥdḥūf*) that precedes the conditional clause, effectively fulfilling the role of the conditional response (Al-ʿUkbarī 1997, p.66). By stepping away from the expected pattern, the composition accomplishes a far more durable statement.

Consider another example:

﴿وَإِنْ أَدْرِي أَقْرِبُ أَمْ بَعِيدٌ مَا تُوعَدُونَ﴾ (الأنبياء: 109)

"I do not know whether what you are promised is near or far." (Al-Anbiyāʿ: 109).

Standard grammatical conventions state that when using the alternative conjunction (*am*), separating the particle from its direct disjunctive counter-item is preferred or even mandatory. The structure of this verse deviates from this common practice, a point Ibn Malik uses to challenge rigid grammatical mandates: "Whoever claims that separating these elements is strictly forbidden or structurally weak is entirely incorrect, as such a claim contradicts textually verified usage and defies the views of Sibawayh and the rigorous scholars among his peers" (Mālik 1990, p.164).

The underlying reason for choosing this less common pattern over standard human usage is an exacting contextual requirement: the unique phonetic and rhythmic architecture of the chapter. The vast majority of the verses in this Surah conclude with a prolonged vowel cadence (*madd ʿarīd li-al-sukūn*), necessitating the placement of the structural element (*mā tūʿadūn*) at the very end of the clause. Abu Hayyan confirms this: "The subject of the interrogation was placed at the end to preserve the verse's terminal rhyme (*fāṣilah*); had the clause followed the standard baseline—*a-qaribun mā tūʿadūna am baʿīd*—the established rhythmic cadence would have broken" (Ḥayyān & Yūsuf 2001, p.136). These structural end-points, as Professor Tammam Hassan notes, represent "a distinct phonetic value carefully preserved across Qur'anic verses, often requiring the strategic fronting or delaying of standard grammatical elements" (Ḥassān 1991, p.114).

Similarly, Arabic syntax generally establishes that an elliptical or "empty" exception (*al-istithnāʿ al-mufarragh*) cannot occur within an affirmative, positive clause. The rationale, as Ibn al-Sarraj notes, is that "it leads to logical absurdity; writing 'I saw except Zayd' implies you witnessed the entirety of humanity with the sole exception of Zayd, which is factually impossible" (al-Sarrāj 1999, p.76).

The Qur'an consciously steps outside this baseline across multiple passages. Through an exhaustive study of exception structures, Professor Azaymah

observed: "Numerous verses feature empty exceptions immediately following fully affirmative statements, many of which are reinforced with heavy markers of emphasis, rendering any attempt to re-read them as implicit negations entirely implausible" (Muhammad 'Abd al-Khāliq 2004, p.92).

A clear instance is found in the verse:

﴿وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ﴾ (البقرة: 45)

"Seek help with steadfastness and prayer—though this is hard indeed for anyone but the humble," (Al-Baqarah: 45).

Attempting to twist this affirmative clause into a negative meaning—the standard strategy grammarians use to preserve their rule—is unsustainable due to the strong presence of emphasizing particles (inna and lām). As Azaymah concludes: "If we permit such forced reinterpretations here, no affirmative statement in the Arabic language could ever retain its true value" (Muhammad 'Abd al-Khāliq 2004, p.71). The structure deliberately departs from standard human paradigms to achieve its unique emphasis.

A final instance involves the standard behavior of the apodosis of demand (jawāb al-ṭalab). In human speech, the response to a command or request must be a logical, predictable consequence of the preceding demand, justifying its grammatical jazm (apocopation).

However, the Qur'an occasionally introduces an un-extended, metaphysical consequence that remains perfectly coherent to human reason:

﴿دَرَهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا وَيُلْهِمُ الْأَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (الحجر: 3)

"Let them eat, enjoy themselves, and be diverted by false hopes: they will come to know." (Al-Hijr: 3).

Al-Akhfash illuminates this transition: "The apocopation of the verb does not imply that their distraction is a direct, mechanical result of the Prophet leaving them alone. Rather, it signals that God has decreed this state will unfold; the words adopt the standard grammatical inflection as if stating: 'If you leave them, their false hopes will consume them.' This reality remains constant whether they are left alone or not" (al-Awsaṭ 1985, p.149). The passage maintains standard human verbal forms while expanding the underlying relationship between a demand and its outcome, illustrating how the text governs the language as a whole (Ḥassān, 1994, p.33; Al-Rummānī n.d., p.80).

3.3. Convergence of Syntactic Relations to Achieve Conciseness

The interlocking relationships within Qur'anic structures allow a minimal number of words to carry immense meaning, achieving a dense level of

conciseness (ijāz). This compression is uncovered by evaluating the precise grammatical dependencies operating within the text.

Consider the following legislative verse:

﴿فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ﴾ (المائدة: 6)

"...wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, wipe your heads, and wash your feet up to the ankles..." (Al-Mā'idah: 6).

In the canonical reading of Ibn Kathir, Abu Amr, and Hamzah, the word "feet" is recited in the genitive case (وَأَرْجُلِكُمْ), which superficially suggests it falls under the command to "wipe" rather than "wash."

However, a rigorous grammatical analysis reveals that this structural choice delivers a precise legal ruling while simultaneously embedding a moral command for resource conservation. Al-Zamakhshari explains this convergence:

"If you ask: how do you address the genitive reading that groups the feet with the wiped head? I reply: among the three limbs requiring washing, the feet are uniquely prone to excessive water usage. By syntactically linking them to the misused member—the head—the text does not change their legal requirement to washing, but instead delivers a sharp warning against wasting water during purification. The text then immediately confirms the requirement of washing by specifying a clear boundary—(ilā al-ka'bayn / up to the ankles)—since the ritual act of wiping is never bound by exact physical borders in Islamic law." (Al-Zamakhshari 2024, p.92).

A further example of this structural efficiency occurs in the prayer of Zechariah:

﴿قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَتِيًّا﴾ (مریم: 4)

"He said, 'My Lord, my bones have weakened and my hair has ashen grey with age. My Lord, I have never been disappointed in my prayer to You,'" (Maryam: 4).

The inimitability of this composition is anchored in shifting a deep-structure subject into an adverbial qualifier of specification (tamyiz). Instead of utilizing a standard, non-compressed format like "the grey hair of my head ignited," the predicate is attached directly to the whole noun—(ishta'ala al-ra'su / the head ignited)—before specifying the exact nature of this expansion through the word (shayban / with grey hair).

Al-Jurjani strongly defended the purely syntactic nature of this miracle, critiquing critics who ascribed its beauty entirely to general metaphor. He argued that the true brilliance stems from how the verb is predicated:

"They did not look past the presence of the metaphor, assigning all credit to it without

recognizing that the structural framework itself drives this distinction. The superiority arises because the text rejects the standard subject-predicate line, choosing instead to attach the verb to a broader noun before introducing the actual subject as a specifying noun (*tamyīz*) that clarifies the relationship... This specific pattern creates an absolute sense of inclusion, proving that the grey hair has completely covered the head, leaving no trace of black hair untouched—a comprehensive meaning that completely vanishes if one relies on standard expressions like 'the hair of the head turned grey.'" (Al-Jurjānī 1992, p.68).

3.4. Latitude of Syntactic Structures for Multiple Grammatical Functions

Qur'anic vocabulary frequently exhibits a structural flexibility where a single phrasing can simultaneously fulfill multiple legitimate grammatical functions. Each valid orientation uncovers a distinct rhetorical layer, enriching the text's overall meaning without being a product of superficial disagreements between grammatical schools. As Azaymah highlights: "The style of the Qur'an is inherently miraculous; it cannot be trapped within a single interpretive trajectory, allowing its structures to comfortably carry multiple layers of truth" (Muḥammad 'Abd al-Khāliq 2004, p.149). This flexibility is illustrated in the description of the Day of Judgment:

(يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ)(الحديد: 13)

"On that Day, the hypocritical men and women will say to the believers, 'Wait for us! Let us have some of your light!' They will be told, 'Go back behind you and look for a light.' A wall with a door will be placed between them: inside it there is mercy, but outside it, in front of it, lies torment." (Al-Ḥadīd: 13).

The structural element (*warā'akum*) can fulfill two distinct grammatical functions, both contributing to the scene's rhetorical impact. It can serve either as a standard spatial adverb dependent on the verb (*irji'ū / go back*), or as an imperative verbal noun (*ism fi'l amr*) meaning "stay back" (Al-'Ukbarī 1997, p.140; Ḥayyān & Yūsuf 2001, p.70).

If treated as a spatial adverb linking directly to the command to retreat, it underscores the complete humiliation of the hypocrites. The command mockingly directs them to return to the initial gathering area where the light was distributed, or to return to the earthly life to seek faith, knowing full well that no light exists behind them (Al-Zamakhsharī 2024, p.226). Rhetoricians classify this

technique as a devastating statement of reality ('Abbās 1997, p.37).

Conversely, analyzing (*warā'akum*) as an imperative verbal noun brings a different layer of meaning, leveraging the brevity and emphasis inherent to verbal nouns in classical Arabic syntax (Ḥassān 1994, p.314). The structural framework accommodates both functions, with each enhancing the emotional weight of the scene.

A similar dual functionality appears in Pharaoh's command:

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا هَامَانَ ابْنِ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَبْلُغُ الْأَسْبَابَ الْأَسْبَابَ السَّمَاوَاتِ فَأَطَّلِعُ إِلَى آلِهِ مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لأَظُنُّهُ كَاذِبًا(غافر: 36-37)

"Pharaoh said, 'Haman, build me a tower so that I may reach the pathways—the pathways of the heavens—and look upon the God of Moses, though I think he is a liar.'" (Ghāfir: 36-37).

The modal particle (*la'allī / so that I may*) can be oriented around two distinct functions. First, it can act as a substitute particle for expressing an impossible wish (*tamannī*), a reading supported by various grammarians and commentators (Ḥayyān & Yūsuf 2001, p.296; Al-Zamakhsharī 2024, p.87). This indicates that Pharaoh internally recognized the impossibility of scaling the heavens to see Moses' Lord, especially given his concluding remark: "though I think he is a liar." By choosing a particle associated with achievable expectation (*tarajjī*) to voice an impossible wish, the structure exposes his calculated deception to manipulate his audience (Mūsā & Muḥammad 2008, p.91; Abū al-Su'ūd n.d., p.45).

Second, the particle can be read in its literal sense as an expression of actual expectation, revealing a different aspect of his character: his profound ignorance and arrogance (Al-Zamakhsharī 2024, p.19). The composition sustains both interpretations simultaneously, showcasing a level of structural depth unique to the Qur'an.

3.5. Textual Context Integrity Across the Entire Qur'an

Linguist Stephen Ullmann defines linguistic context as "the structural positioning of a word and its exact placement within a broader compositional arrangement" (Ullmann 2023, p.83). While standard contextual cohesion is manageable within short human compositions, maintaining perfect structural and thematic consistency across an extensive text is exceptionally difficult. This challenge is magnified when a text spans diverse topics, addresses varying audiences, and is revealed progressively over twenty-three years.

The structural landscape of the Qur'an

demonstrates an internal consistency where its linguistic choices remain unified regardless of where chapters were revealed. This overarching cohesion led classical scholars to state: "The entire Qur'an operates with the structural unity of a single word" (Al-Rāzī 2000, p.269).

This macro-level cohesion can be analyzed through grammatical orientation, particularly when tracking the ellipsis of the imperative verb (udhkur / mention/remember) at the introduction of historical narratives:

(وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً) (البقرة: 30)

"Lord said to the angels, 'I am putting a successor on the earth,'" (Al-Baqarah: 30).

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi highlights this cross-textual cohesion by analyzing the hidden dependency of the temporal particle (idh):

"The particle is in the accusative case, triggered by an implied imperative verb: udhkur / mention.

The complete meaning translates to: 'And mention to them when your Lord said to the angels...' This specific verb is omitted for two structural reasons: first, the underlying historical meaning is already clear to the listener; second, the text explicitly states this verb across numerous other passages, such as:

(وَإِذْ نَادَىٰ أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ إِذْ أُنذِرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَحْقَافِ) (الأحqاف: 21)

'Mention [Hud] the brother of Ad...' (Al-Aḥqāf: 21), and

(وَإِذْ نَادَىٰ عِبْدَنَا دَاوُدَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ) (ص: 17)

'Remember Our servant David...' (Ṣād: 17).

Because the Qur'an functions as a single, cohesive utterance, these explicit references allow other passages to omit the verb, relying on the structural integrity of the wider text." (Al-Rāzī 2000, p.279).

This exact mechanic applies to other narrative introductions, such as:

(وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ) (الأنبياء: 76)

"And Noah. Long before that, he called to Us and We answered him; We saved him and his family from the great distress," (Al-Anbiyā': 76).

Supplying the implied verb (udhkur) across these passages is not a forced attempt to satisfy rigid grammatical rules. Instead, it preserves the broader rhetorical purpose of the text: framing these historical narratives as proof of prophetic knowledge while maintaining a streamlined prose style (Al-Rāzī 2000, p.310).

This macro-contextual awareness also guides how classical scholars identify omitted elements within standard subject-predicate relations. The baseline rule states that when choosing between an omitted verb (leaving a remaining noun as its subject) or an omitted subject (leaving a remaining noun as its

predicate), the latter option is preferred (Hishām 1989, p.160).

However, an exception occurs when a corresponding passage provides a clear structural blueprint (Hishām 1989, p.161), as seen here:

(وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ) (الزخرف: 87)

"If you ask them who created them, they are sure to say, 'God.'" (Al-Zukhruf: 87).

The response (Allāhu) is oriented as the subject of an omitted verbal clause – (khalaqahum Allāhu / God created them) – rather than a nominal clause.

This preference is established by an explicit parallel structure elsewhere in the text:

(وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَيَقُولُنَّ خَلَقَهُنَّ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ) (الزخرف: 9)

"...they are sure to say, 'The Almighty, the All Knowing created them.'" (Al-Zukhruf: 9), as well as:

(قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنْبَأَكَ هَذَا قَالَ نَبَأَنِي الْعَلِيمُ) (التحریم: 3)

"...she asked, 'Who told you this?' and he replied, 'The All Knowing, the All Aware told me.'" (Al-Taḥrīm: 3).

3.6. Unique Qur'anic Approaches to Ellipsis

Conciseness through omission (ḥadhf) is a well-documented feature of Arabic syntax. Grammarians have established clear rules for ellipsis, requiring that any omitted element leave a clear contextual clue to ensure effective communication. The Qur'an utilizes this standard feature but elevates it by omitting elements without requiring an explicit clue, or by removing entire clauses without causing ambiguity – a level of structural precision difficult to replicate in standard human compositions. Ibn al-Alawī notes: "The strategic omission of entire clauses to achieve conciseness serves as a major gateway to supreme eloquence, a feature deployed extensively across the divine text due to its structural precision and impact" (Al-'Alawī 1980, p.82).

Professor Fadl Abbas explains the unique nature of this approach:

"You will rarely find the omission of entire clauses outside the text of the Qur'an. A clause naturally carries independent meaning; removing it entirely typically fractures the clarity of human speech. No human speaker can reliably structure a discourse where multiple independent clauses are removed while still conveying the full intended meaning. The divine discourse, however, delivers its complete meaning while leveraging the speed and beauty of ellipsis." ('Abbās 1997, p.39).

An example of omitting a structural element without causing ambiguity occurs in Surah An-Nisa:

(وَيَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ فِي يَتَامَىٰ

النِّسَاءِ اللَّاتِي لَا تُؤْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُونَ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ) (النساء: 127)
 "They ask you [Prophet] for a ruling about women. Say, 'God Himself gives you a ruling about them and you have what has been recited to you in the Book about orphan women to whom you do not give their prescribed due, yet you desire to marry them...' " (Al-Nisā': 127).

The ellipsis here removes the specific preposition that dictates the meaning of the verb (*targhabūn* / you desire). In standard Arabic grammar, this verb requires the preposition (*fi*) to mean "desiring to marry them" (out of attraction), or the preposition (*'an*) to mean "desiring not to marry them" (out of aversion). Standard human usage requires an explicit preposition to prevent confusion between these opposite meanings. The Qur'anic structure, however, intentionally leaves the preposition omitted, allowing the phrase to encompass both motives simultaneously without causing structural confusion: "it captures both attraction and aversion— attraction to marry them for wealth and beauty, and aversion to marry them if they lack those traits" (Al-Zamakhsharī 2024).

The text also demonstrates this capacity when omitting entire sequences of clauses while maintaining narrative clarity, as seen in Surah Al-Furqan:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا مَعَهُ أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ وَزِيرًا فَقُلْنَا اذْهَبْ إِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَدَمَّرْنَاهُمْ تَدْمِيرًا (الفرقان: 35-36)

"We gave Moses the Book and appointed his brother Aaron to help him, and We said, 'Go, both of you, to the people who have rejected Our signs.' Later We destroyed those people completely." (Al-Furqān: 35–36).

The complete narrative sequence implies a series of unstated events: (*fa-atayāhum fa-ablaghāhumā al-risālata fa-kadhhabūhumā fa-dammarnāhum* / So they went to them, delivered the message, were rejected by them, and then We destroyed them) (Al-Zamakhsharī, 2024, p.241). The composition removes

these intermediary clauses, allowing the narrative to jump directly from the initial command to the final outcome without breaking the clarity of the passage.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Syntactic inimitability (*al-i'jāz al-tarkībī*) represents a multi-layered linguistic phenomenon. This study outlines six primary manifestations: structural departure from standard lexical co-occurrence constraints; deviation from highly frequent syntactic patterns; the convergence of internal dependencies to achieve conciseness; the capacity of structures to hold multiple grammatical functions; macro-level textual integrity across the entire discourse; and an advanced approach to ellipsis. These manifestations clearly illustrate what the study noted in its theoretical framework regarding the distinctiveness of the Qur'an's linguistic structure from other styles in expressing meaning.

Grammatical orientation (*al-tawjīh al-naḥwī*) serves as an essential tool for uncovering these structural mechanics. To be effective, it must be applied in conjunction with classical exegesis, rhetorical requirements, and contextual analysis rather than treating syntax as a set of isolated, abstract rules.

Classical grammatical commentaries contain valuable insights regarding these structural miracles. These insights are rarely found in rigid pedagogical grammars, as they require an analytical approach that links form directly to meaning.

This study recommends developing integrated linguistic approaches that analyze syntax, morphology, semantics, and phonology as an interconnected system. Historical scholarship has disproportionately focused on abstract rhetorical theories, highlighting the need for more rigorous, data-driven syntactic analyses of the Qur'anic text.

Acknowledgements: I thank the Deanship of Library Affairs at Umm Al-Qura University and the Saudi Digital Library for providing me with access to knowledge resources.

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