



تحليل خطاب توقيعات الإمام المهدي عليه السلام في زمن الغيبة

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ملخص البحث:

لا تنحصر قضية الإمام المهدي عليه السلام في مسألة ولادته السرية الغامضة أو غيبته الصغرى والكبرى. مضامين أخرى يمكن شمولها وأحدها يخص الدراسة اللغوية لكلماته الشريفة وخطاباته وبالتحديد رسائله (أو توقيعاته) الى خواص اصحابه اثناء غيبته، ففي الحقيقة تشكل هذه الرسائل كنزاً عظيماً يمكنُ بحثه بلحاظ العلوم الفقهية والعقائدية والتاريخية وغيرها. تُعنى هذه الدراسة بتوقيعات الإمام المهدي عليه السلام كونها تنقلُ معاني العقائد الاسلامية النبيلة والاخلاق التي حث عليها القرآن الكريم كما تنقلُ ارشاداتٍ وادعيةً وغيرها كثير. إن تسليط الضوء على هذه الرسائل يساعدُ في معرفة الإمام بشكلٍ أدق والتعرف على أوامره ونواهيه وتعليماته. وعليه، تهدفُ الدراسة الحالية الى إيجاد اهم النواحي الخطابية التي تسمُ رسائلُ الإمام المهدي عليه السلام وفقاً لإنموذج باترج (٢٠٠٧) الخاص بدراسة الخطاب وتحليله. تتبع الدراسة المنهج الوصفي النوعي حيث اختيرت ثلاث توقيعات او رسائل للإمام عليه السلام من المحتوى العقائدي لتكون عينة الدراسة والبحث. اظهر التحليل ان "نحو الخطاب" يشتملُ على التماسك والتصافِ واسلوب النداء والاستفهام المجازي والنفي في حين ان "تداولية الخطاب" استضافت تحديداً أفعال الكلام التوجيهية وكذلك الاستخدام المجازي للغة. وخلصت الدراسة الى مجموعة من الاستنتاجات التي من أهمها ان اسلوب الدعاء والامر والنهي هي السمات اللغوية التي تميز رسائل او توقيعات الامام عليه السلام في غيبته.

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A Discoursal Analysis of Imam al-Mahdi's Letters at the Time of Occultation

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Abstract:

Understanding the issue of Imam Al-Mahdi (May Allah expedite his reappearance) is not confined to his secret obscure birth or minor and major occultation. Various perspectives can be included. One of them is the scrutinization of his words or discourse. Specifically, his letters (or Tawqi'at) to some of his close followers during his occultation can be studied in terms of linguistics. It is a truism that these letters constitute a marvelous treasure that needs to be scrutinized in terms of jurisprudence, theology, and history, among others. This research, however, is a discoursal study of Imam's letters during his occultation. His words convey all meanings of the noble Islamic doctrines, morals urged by the Glorious Qur'an, guidance, supplications, and many others. The aim of shedding light on these letters helps in closely knowing Imam al-Mahdi and being introduced to his instructions, orders, and prohibitions. This study aims to find out the basic discoursal aspects of Imam's letters following Paltridge's (2007) presentation of discoursal studies. It is a descriptive qualitative approach. Three letters have been selected randomly from his letters that are classified under the theological content to be under scrutiny. Analysis shows that 'discourse grammar' hosts cohesion, collocation, vocatives, questions, and negation whereas 'discourse pragmatics' houses directive speech acts and metaphorical use of language. The study ends with a number of conclusions the most important of which is that commanding, prohibiting, and supplicating are the distinct features in the data under investigation.

1.Introduction

Many intellectuals and researchers thought of Imam al-Mahdi and the letters he wrote and signed to his followers during the minor and major occultation. These letters are also called (Tawqi'at) as they are tailed by the Imam's signature. Najad (2006) succeeded to collect them in a book entitled The Encyclopedia of Imam Mahdi's Letters. The issue of Imam Al-Mahdi is a lively issue that is associated with every aspect of life. One of them is linguistics. Imam Al-Sadiq (PBUH) said: "Study our discourse because we are the princes of eloquence¹". Yet, their words have been oppressed as they have witnessed and lived all images of oppression and injustice themselves. This study attempts to investigate the discourse of three randomly chosen letters of Imam al-Mahdi. They are all classified under the category of theology. The presentation of Paltridge (2007) for discourse analysis has been chosen to scrutinize the discursal aspects in these letters.

2.Life of Imam al-Mahdi (May Allah expedite his reappearance)

After the passing away of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), his family members underwent the worst torture and injustice by their enemies and those hypocrites who faked their claimed Islam. They commenced their hatred toward the greatest messenger of Allah when Al-Zahraa's inheritance of Fadak was usurped on the day of Saqifah. Imam Ali (PBUH) was deprived of the caliphate and his right to be the ruler of believers after Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was confiscated. Although the Prophet of Allah had appointed him to Imamate on the day of Ghadeer in front of a huge number of his followers and companions, some denied this right. This injustice was copied to the rest of the Imams one after the other. Imam Hasan (PBUH) was secretly administered poison and Imam Hussein (PBUH) was slain openly. Imam Sajjad, Baqir, and Sadiq (PBUT) were poisoned to die. Imam Kadhim (PBUH) spent his life to die poisoned in the prison of Haroon. Imam Reza (PBUH) was displaced and poisoned by Mamun². All the honorable progeny are either killed or poisoned.

1 المازندراني، مولي محمد صالح. شرح أصول الكافي (بيروت: دار احياء التراث، ٢٠٠٠م)، ٢٢٤.

2 الحسنی، هاشم معروف، سيرة الأئمة الاثني عشر (طهران: مؤسسة دار الكوخ، ٢٠٠٤م).

Benu Umayyah followed their ancestors. When Abbasid rulers gained power, they initiated the worst of oppression, atrocities, and tortures on the infallible Imams (PBUT). They considered Ahlul-Bayt (PBUT) and anyone who was of their adherents to be eligible for extreme pressure and restrictions. They were thrown into horrible prisons and then put to death. This is why Almighty Allah kept Imam Al-Mahdi concealed from the Abbasid tyrants so as to remain safe. He is kept as such until Allah would allow him to spread justice and establish peace and security. It is Allah's wisdom to hide the twelfth Imam from the eyes of people and enemies until he appears to spread justice and end people's tortures and pains. The divine secret of his occultation is a test for people³. Four deputies were assigned by the Imam during his minor occultation. After the death of the last one, a major occultation occurred. The absent Imam contacts some of his followers secretly when they urgently need him.

3.Imam al-Mahdi's Letters

Imam's words and letters were scattered in some books and references. They were not collected as complete pieces of discourse in one separate book. Najad (2006) thought of doing so. Najad soon realized that collecting all the letters of the Imam is an arduous and difficult mission to achieve, if not impossible. They are large in number and they are scattered, cut into pieces, and not complete. After thorough investigation and research, he was able to gather them and he decided to classify them into three major groups: the letters which are concerned with theology, those concerned with jurisprudence, and his letters to some trustful men of religion. Najad claims that the letters he collected in his Encyclopedia of Imam Mahdi's Letters are complete and not repeated.

According to Najad⁴, the Imam's discourse can be specifically classified in terms of their contents into the following: letters on theology, letters of jurisprudence, letters to his deputies, letters to trusted men of religion, letters related to his imamate, letters of supplications and his miracles and finally some of the letters that tell the stories of those who were honored to meet the Imam in his major occultation. It is worth mentioning that only believers in Imam certify the ex-

٣. القمي، محمد بن علي. كمال الدين وتمام النعمة الجزء الثاني (طهران: مطبعة الصادق، ٢٠١٨م)، ٢٠، 3

نجد، محمد تقى أكبر، موسوعة توقيعات الإمام المهدي عليه السلام (قم المقدسة: مسجد جعفران المقدس، ٢٠٠٦)، 4٦،

istence of these letters⁵. They are called among intellectuals and men of religion Tawqi'at. In this respect, Tawqi' means a person's name or mark used in signing a letter (signature). It proves that this letter has been written by the Imam. Tawqi'at are defined as the words that Imam al-Mahdi wrote with his own hands in response to the questions, enquires or suspects of his four deputies concerning any field of knowledge⁶. They are sent when needed to the concerned person to respond to a specific issue. These letters bear solutions to critical issues Shiaa face. This is part of his critical role in life as a reformist⁷.

Historically, these letters are similar to what prophet Muhammed (PBUH) wrote and sent to the King of Persia (Kisra) or the King of Rome or his letter to the people of Nijran, among many others. Imam al-Mahdi is different from all other Imams in that he started his minor occultation after the passing away of Imam Askari (PBUH) and continued to the death of his fourth deputy Ali Bin Muhammed al-Samary (329 AD). Imam al-Mahdi wrote to him:

«بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، يا علي بن محمد السمرى أعظم الله أجر إخوانك فيك، فإنك مَيِّتٌ ما بينك وبين سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ، فاجمع أمرك ولا توصِ إلى أحدٍ يقوم مقامك بعد وفاتك، فقد وقعت الغيبة التامة، فلا ظهور إلا بعد إذن الله⁸».

Then the major occultation started and it is continued up to now. The letters of Imam are supposed to have stopped after the death of his deputies. Opinions and evidence, however, argue that the Imam still has contact with some men of religion or some pure persons who are qualified to meet or see or hear from the Imam in a private and secret way⁹. His words deserve to be read, understood, and scrutinized from different perspectives. This research work endeavors to do so in terms of the discursial paradigm.

الابطحي، حسن. الكمالات الروحية عن طريق اللقاء بالامام صاحب الزمان (عج) ترجمة رفاعه، ابراهيم. بيروت: مؤسسة البلاغ، ١١ (د.ت).

المحمداوي، الأساليب الإنشائية في التوقعات المهدوية (النجف الأشرف: مركز الدراسات التخصصية في الإمام المهدي عجل الله تعالى فرجه، ٢٧، ٢٠١٥م).

القرشي، باقر شريف. حياة الإمام المنتظر المصلح الأعظم (بيروت: دار جواد الأئمة، ١٥، ٢٠٠٨م).

القمي، كمال الدين وتمام النعمة الجزء الثاني ١٦، ٨٥.

الابطحي، الكمالات الروحية عن طريق اللقاء بالامام صاحب الزمان (عج)، ٥٨، ٩.

4. Discourse Studies

Widdowson¹⁰ argues that discourse is made up of sentences having the properties of cohesion and coherence. Stubbs¹¹ states that discourse analysis is concerned with language use beyond the boundaries of a sentence/utterance. It is concerned with the interrelationships between language and society. Discourse often implies interaction, according to Stubbs¹². It is worth mentioning that there have been different views in the literature regarding the distinction between 'discourse' and 'text'. They are classified into two distinguishable approaches or they can be used interchangeably. This research adheres to the second view.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method that involves a thorough examination of written, spoken, or visual language in context¹³. It focuses on language in use with the purpose of investigating how meaning is imparted. This can be achieved via studying the vocabulary, use of grammatical structures, paralinguistic features, and language techniques, among others.

In discursial studies, any piece of discourse can be analyzed to understand the world better and how language is used in real life. By examining the social use of language, we can appreciate its multiple functions, such as creating meaning and maintaining certain social norms and common knowledge¹⁴. A thoughtful and deep analysis of any piece of language entails investigating it on the different levels of linguistics¹⁵. This paper is concerned with investigating the discursial aspects of three letters by Imam al-Mahdi (May Allah expedite his reappearance) to find out their discursial aspects. According to Paltridge¹⁶, discourse "looks for patterns of language across texts and considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used". Paltridge's presentation of discursial analysis (2007, p.2-5) investigates texts and discourses in

10 Widdowson, H.G. Teaching Language as Communication (Oxford: oup, 1978), 23.

11 Stubbs, M. Discourse Analysis: The Sociolinguistics Analysis of Natural Language (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 1.

12 Stubbs, 10.

13 Brown G. and Yule, G. Discourse Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

14 Brown and Yule, 20.

15 Mehdi, W. S. "A Linguistic Study of Al-Zahraa's Inheritance Speech," Al-Ameed Journal 12, no. 45 (2023): 299.

16 Paltridge, B. Discourse Analysis: An Introduction (London: MPC Books Ltd., 2007), 2.

terms of contexts, discourse structures (or discourse grammar), and discourse pragmatics. This research work adheres to the last two aspects in its analysis.

4.1 Aspects of Discourse Grammar

As far as text or discourse structures are concerned, a number of discourse aspects are taken into consideration. These are designed according to the Imam's letters which represent the data of this paper. They are cohesion, collocation, vocatives, rhetorical questions, and negation. Here is a brief introduction for the aspects of discourse grammar under investigation:

4.1.1 Cohesion

Cohesion is defined as "the set of linguistic means used for creating texture, i.e., the property of a text to be interpreted as a whole rather than a group of disconnected sentences¹⁷". Cohesion is viewed as a semantic concept that refers to relations of meaning which exist within a piece of discourse. It "occurs where the interpretation of some element in a discourse is dependent on that of another" (p. 4). Cohesion is best understood in terms of reference. Halliday and Hasan¹⁸ explain that reference functions as a semantic link that connects items within any piece of discourse or text. These items are dependent in the sense that, instead of being interpreted in their own right they make reference to something else for their interpretation. The most relative type of reference in this study is that of personal pronouns (we, you, they, etc.).

4.1.2 Collocations

Collocation pertains to lexical items that are likely to be found together within the same piece of discourse¹⁹. It occurs when a pair of words is not necessarily dependent upon the same semantic relationship but rather, they tend to occur within the same lexical environment²⁰. Renkema²¹ avers that collocation has to do with the relationship between words on the assumption that they frequently

17 Halliday, M.A. and Hasan, Ruqaiya. Cohesion in English. (London: longman, 1976), 2.

18 Halliday and Hasan, 32.

19 Van Dijk, T.A. Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse (London: Longman, 1977), 2.

20 Halliday and Hasan, Cohesion in English., 286.

21 Renkema, J. Discourse Studies: An Introductory Textbook (Amsterdam: john benjamins publishing company, 1993), 40.

occur in the same surroundings. For instance, “making coffee” rather than doing coffee or “going shopping” are said to collocate together.

4.1.3 Vocatives

A vocative construction is defined by Quirk et al.²² as an “optional element, usually a noun phrase, denoting the one or more persons to whom the sentence is addressed”. This means that two types of vocatives can be specified. The first can be termed as “general vocatives” when the speaker addresses the whole crowd or a group of people. The second kind of vocative can be called the “specific vocative” where a certain person is called upon²³. Vocatives are usually realized basically by the particle “يا” in the Arabic language. Its main function is to draw the attention of the addressee and emphasize the message the speaker wants the addressee to pay attention to.

4.1.4 Rhetorical Questions

A question that does not expect a direct response is termed as rhetorical²⁴. In terms of syntax, it is an interrogation while semantically, it is a statement (p.804). It is employed to emphasize and draw attention to a specific state of affairs. Mostly, no answer is required for such kinds of questions and the speaker is sure that the addressee knows the state of affairs being questioned. Rhetorical questions are syntactic references to rhetorical uses of language; they denote an ability to use language eloquently and brilliantly.

4.1.5 Negation

People need to communicate about things that are not happening or things that they do not want to happen²⁵. Negation is the reverse of affirmation. According to Quirk et al.²⁶, negation is a grammatical term that is expressed via various ways. Verbs can form negation (e.g., avoid smoking); adverbs (e.g., I have

22 quirk, Jan. randolph greenbaum, sidney leech, geoffrey svartvic, A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, 1st ed. (united states: Longman Group Ltd, 1985), 773.

23 Mehdi, Wafaa “A Stylistic Study of Imam Hussein’s Speech in Ashuraa,” in Al-Ameed Conference (Karbala: Al-Ameed International Center, 2018), 28.

24 quirk, randolph greenbaum, sidney leech, geoffrey svartvic, A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, 824.

25 Gleason, J. The Development of Language (MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2001).

26 quirk, randolph greenbaum, sidney leech, geoffrey svartvic, A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, 183.

never been in London); prepositions (e.g., We can manage it without his help); determiners (e.g., Neither of us wants this); or by some prefixes like “help-help-less”, among others. Generally, any affirmative expression can be negated by using the particles of negation. These particles are different in different languages. English negates affirmatives by adding the particle ‘not’ (e.g., He is not late). Arabic language, on the other hand, resorts to some particles like (لا / لم / لَمْ / ما / ليس) and so on²⁷.

4.2 Aspects of Discourse Pragmatics

As far as the pragmatic paradigm of the data under analysis is concerned, speech acts theory (Searle, 1969) and breaching the cooperative principle of Grice (1975) are put under investigation.

4.2.1 Speech Acts

The functional theory of linguistics shows how language operates within human society as a form of communication²⁸. Austin's theory²⁹ claims that saying is doing. Due to many modifications and elaborations on Austin's work, Searle³⁰ sets four felicity conditions for the successful execution of an illocution: propositional, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions. The classification of basic kinds of meaningful utterances is based on the notion of illocutionary point³¹. A classification of five macro-categories of speech acts has been introduced³² where each one of them constitutes a host of other sub-acts distinguished from each other by their own felicity conditions. These are commissives, declaratives or declarations, directives, expressives, and representatives. Only directives are of relevance to this study.

27 النقيب، محمد حسن. "اللفظ في الجملة العربية وعلاقته بالمعنى"، مجلة الأندلس للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية، العدد ٨٠٣ (٢٠١٤).

28 Muhammed, W. S. "A Critical Pragmatic Study of Racism as Conceptualized in the Glorious Quran," Journal of College of Education for Women 31, no. 2 (2020): 9.

29 Austin, J.I. How to Do Things with Words, 1st ed. (London: clarendon press, 1962), 101.

30 Searle, John R Speech Acts , An Essay in the Philosophy of Language (Cambridge University Press, 1969), 54.

31 Searle, J. A Classification of Illocutionary Acts. Language in Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 3.

32 Searle, J. R. Classification of Illocutionary Acts. Language in Society, 5th ed. (united kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 17_20.

Requests, for example, are directive speech acts asking for something from someone. In the data under scrutiny, requests take the form of supplications. In this context, prayers to Allah can be in two main forms: liturgical (i.e., worship prayer or Salat) and personal prayer (i.e., supplication or Du'aa)³³. A supplication is voluntary and it comes in different forms. Some supplications are fixed, famous, and well-known for people as these are documented and quoted by Imams like Du'aa al-Nudba or Du'aa Kumail. Some others come on the tongue of people and they express their personal feelings and needs. They either relate to the person himself when one prays for Allah to heal him or fulfill one of his needs or they concern others as when a mother prays for Allah to cure her ill child.

Commanding is another speech act that commonly occurs if one has power over others³⁴. When compared with ordering, the speech act of commanding means to give an authoritative order. An order can be given by anyone to anyone, but the word "command", implies a pre-defined hierarchy in a manner that can only be given by a 'superior' to a lower-ranking person. In the army, soldiers are commanded to do things by officers.

Prohibiting speech act is the desire to forbid someone from doing something. Haverkate³⁵ claims that prohibition is performed in order to prevent a certain state of affairs from being brought about. According to Jawad³⁶, the difference between a 'prohibition' and a 'command' is that the first instructs the addressee "not to do a given thing" whereas the second instructs the addressee to do something. In this sense, 'prohibition' is a kind of negative 'command'. Both are directives in Searle's taxonomy (1979). Syntactically, prohibition mainly takes the form of an imperative sentence. For Allan³⁷, prohibition is shaped by the imperatives as in "Keep out". Prohibition might be carried out through the negative verb 'be' with 'to infinitive' as in "You are not to take my dictionary without permission".

33 J. Campo. Encyclopedia of Islam (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 664.

34 Searle, J. and Vanderveken, D. Functions of Illocutionary Logic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 201.

35 Haverkate, H. Impositive Sentence in Spanish: Theory and Description in Pragmatics (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Ltd, 1979), 39.

36 Jawad, F. "A Pragmatic Analysis of Illocutionary Speech Acts in Standard Arabic with a Special Reference to Al-Ashter's 'Epistle,'" Journal of Babylon University 19, no. 4 (2011): 617.

37 Keith, Allan Linguistic Meaning. Vol. 2 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 5.

4.2.2 Breaching Grice's Maxims

Logically, people are required to 'cooperate' in their personal interactions. The cooperative principle, proposed by Grice (1975), states that people adhere to four pragmatic maxims in their communication. These are the maxim of quantity (keeping specific information), quality (saying things with evidence), relation (giving related information), and manner (involving well-sequences). If parties do not follow these maxims, they breach them by violating a maxim or flouting it³⁸. In this respect, by breaching any maxim, a figure of speech may result such as metaphor, hyperbole, and so on³⁹. Breaching the maxim of quality, for instance, gives a metaphor which is a comparison between objects and people of some similar features⁴⁰. Accordingly, the model of analysis is engineered in Figure (1) as follows:

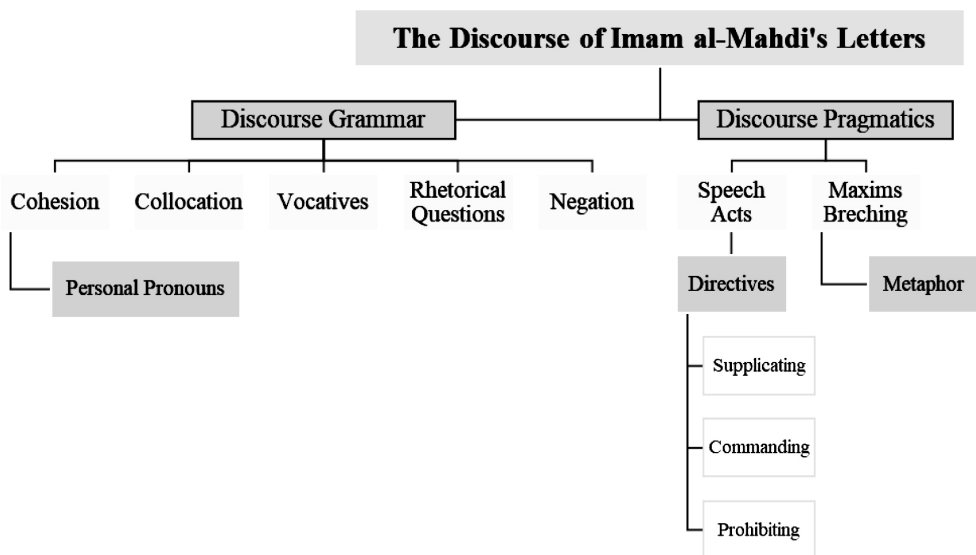


Figure (1): The Analytical Framework of the Discourse of Imam al-Mahdi's Letters

38 Grice, P. Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics*. Vol. 3 (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 45.

39 Grice, Paul. *Studies in the Way of Words*, no edition (London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 34.

40 Wales, K. *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (2nd Ed.) (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 250.

5.Data and Analysis

This section is dedicated to describing and analyzing the data of this research. It starts with data description and then moves to its analysis.

5.1 Data Description

Three letters (or Tawqia't) are selected to be the data of this research. They are quoted from Najad⁴¹. They bear the same content which is that of theology. In Islam, theology is one of the branches of Islamic religious sciences. It is mostly defined as "the science of kalam". Theological discussions use logical argumentation in order to prove some of the principles of religion⁴². The rationale behind choosing such a number and one content type of these letters has been due to space limitations. The length of these letters ranges from 300-450 words for each letter. The three letters of Imam al-Mahdi appear in Appendices 1, 2, and 3, respectively. It is worth mentioning that the discursial aspect under discussion is underlined for clarification.

5.2 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data follows the analytical framework developed by this study after Partridge (2007). It presents the manifestations of each item in the analytical framework from the three letters under investigation. A number of illustrative examples are taken from each letter for each discursial aspect. The analysis dwells first on the aspects of discourse grammar and then on the aspects of discourse pragmatics. It goes as follows:

5.2.1 Aspects of Discourse Grammar

In this part, five discursial aspects related to the grammatical paradigm are examined. These are cohesion, collocation, vocatives, rhetorical questions and negation. They are presented as follows:

5.2.1.1 Cohesion

This aspect is realized by reference. In specific, it appears by the personal pronouns which are found in the following sentences as separate or attached pronouns addressing the addressee or addressor:

فقد نصحت لكم والله شاهد عليّ وعليكم

أ.كبر، موسوعة توقيعات الإمام المهدي عليه السلام⁴¹

42 Anawati,G.C. "The Encyclopedia of Religion XIII," Islamic Theology. 4 (1987): 231.

ونحن صنائع ربنا
ويظهر أمر الله وهم كارهون
فإن أعش فأنا أحق بها، وإن أمت فاتق الله في نفسك أولاً ثم في

As a matter of fact, the three letters are full of personal pronouns because the Imam (PBUH) either talks about himself or addresses the person who is supposed to receive his letter. Moreover, he might refer to others for stating or clarifying a concept.

5.2.1.2 Collocation

The following expressions seem to collocate with each other in the entire data. The meaning is not complete or understood unless each of the first word is followed by the second. They are presented as phrases as they appear in the data:

سوء المنقلب، الشك والحيرة، ولادة الأمر، أعلاما يهتدون بها، أفل نجم، موبقات الأعمال، مرديات الفتن.

5.2.1.3 Vocatives

The vocative aspect is realized by the general and specific vocative expressions where the addressee is not specified in the first whereas it is specified in the second. In the first sentence, the vocative is general as it does not address a specific name. It uses the word ((هؤلاء)) while a specific person is addressed in the second ((محمد بن إبراهيم)):

يا هؤلاء ما لكم في الرّيب تترددون وفي الحيرة تنعكسون
يا محمد بن إبراهيم لا يدخلك الشك فيما قدمت له

5.2.1.4 Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions are found in the data. Here are some illustrative examples. The first is a rhetorical question because it is impossible that those Muslim people have not read the Glorious Quran. The second example is a rhetorical question because all Shia believers have been told by their Imams that they are going to be oppressed and tortured. In the third one, all Muslims have been told by Prophet Muhammed himself that Imams are the equivalent of Allah's Glorious Quran and people need to follow them and their guidance. In the fourth example, again all Muslims have been told since the day of Ghadeer Khum that Imam Ali (PBUH) and his sons are the representatives of Allah after the prophet

Muhammed (PBUH). The “hamza” in the following sentences is the tool for expressing the rhetorical questions in the first three examples whereas it is (أما) in the fourth:

أوما سمعتم الله ﷻ يقول ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ﴾
أوما علمتم ما جاءت به الآثار ممّا يكون ويحدث في أنتمتكم على الماضين والباقيين منهم (عليهم السلام)
أوما رأيتم كيف جعل الله لكم معاقل تأوون إليها وأعلامًا تهتدون بها
أما تعلمون أنّ الأرض لا تخلو من حجةٍ إمّا ظاهرا وإمّا مغمورا

5.2.1.5 Negation

Negation is utilized by Imam in his letters because he needs to negate some of the concepts that are not accepted and clarify the idea for his letters’ receivers. He may resort to negation to reject a concept they are claiming or affirm a concept via negating its counterpart. Different particles are used in the following illustrative examples:

فلن يوحشنا من قعد عنّا ونحن صنائع ربنا
كلّا ما كان ذلك ولا يكون حتّى تقوم الساعة
فغمنا ذلك لكم لا لنا وسأونا فيكم لا فينا
أقدار الله (عزّ وجلّ) لا تغالب وإرادته لا تردّ وتوفيقه لا يسبق
فإنّ الله لا يخلي الأرض من حجةٍ
ولا يبحثوا عمّا ستر عنهم فيأثموا ولا يكشفوا ستر الله (عزّ وجلّ) فيندموا

5.2.2 Aspects of Discourse Pragmatics

Here are the aspects that go under the pragmatic paradigm. These are speech acts and breach Grice’s maxims. It is important to mention that only directive speech acts are specified in the data as a distinct feature. The analysis goes as follows:

5.2.2.1 Speech Acts

Several speech acts are found in the data. However, the most prevalent ones are the directives. These have been inspected in terms of three divisions: supplicating, commanding, and prohibiting.

5.2.2.1.1 Supplication

Imam al-Mahdi commences the three letters under scrutiny with a supplication which is a request to Allah for those people whom the Imam is addressing.

This is an encouraging strategy the imam resorts to so as to show interest and care for his followers. In addition, he realizes well that they are bearing a heavy message and they need this support of supplication from Allah. It is important to mention that these supplications go in harmony with the content of the message. For example, in the first letter which concerns the doubt about the existence of the Imam, we have the following supplication where the Imma supplicates to Allah to help and save them from being skeptical of the existence of the Imam which definitely leads to bad consequences on one's life and destiny:

عافانا الله وإياكم من الفتن ووهب لنا ولكم روح اليقين وأجارنا وإياكم من سوء المنقلب

It is noticed that the letter may end with a supplication as well. Here are some more examples:

عصمنا الله وإياكم من المهالك والأسواء والآفات والعاهات كلّها برحمته
وصلّى الله على محمّد النّبيّ وسلّم تسليماً.
وفّقكما الله لطاعته وثبّتكما على دينه وأسعدكما بمرضاته
وحسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل

5.2.2.1.2 Commanding

This speech act appears in the data because the letters of the Imam entails an answer or a response to an inquiry or an order for the receiver to comply with. All the commands found are achieved via using the imperative verb. Here are the commands that are found in the data:

فاتّقوا الله وسلّموا لنا وردّوا الأمر إلينا فعليّنا
فليدعوا عنهم اتّباع الهوى وليقيموا على أصلهم الذي كانوا عليه
أخرج رحمك الله الدّنانير التي استفضلتها من بين النّقدين من حسابنا
فليقتصروا ممّا على هذه الجملة دون التّفسير ويقنعوا من ذلك بالتّعريض دون التّصريح

5.2.2.1.3 Prohibiting

Those people asking the Imam and waiting for a response from him (PBUH) are prohibited in these letters from doing some things because this is essential to their role in life and their relation with the Imam. Here are the examples:

ولا تحاولوا كشف ما غطي عنكم
لا يدخلك الشكّ فيما قدمت له فإنّ الله لا يخلي الأرض من حجة

5.2.2.2 Breaching of Maxims

Throughout the whole data under investigation, one figurative device has been noticed clearly which is that of metaphor. This can be seen as a rhetorical device that appears in the discourse of Imam due to his eloquent language and because metaphor is a part and parcel of language most of the time. In the following example, the Imam compares himself and the previous Imams to a star. He means that as stars guide people in the dark nights, the Imams guide people to the safe side in this life and the afterlife:

وإذا أفل نجم طلع نجم

In the following second example, the Imam refers to the people of the RIGHT as in the Glorious Quran (واصحاب اليمين ما اصحاب اليمين) because those people follow the right path Allah wants people to obey. In this sentence, the Imam asks the letter's receiver not to leave the Imam since they represent the path of right. The words 'يمين' and 'يسار' refers to the Imams and their opponents, respectively. This metaphoric use alludes to the Imams and specifically to Imam al-Mahdi (May Allah expedite his reappearance).

ولا تميلوا عن اليمين وتعدلوا إلى اليسار

Here are some more metaphors in the data where all the reference is to the Imam himself or to the previous Imams:

معادل يآوون إليها وأعلامًا يهتدون بها

كان نورًا ساطعًا وقمرًا زهرا

فمضى على منهاج آبائه b حذو النعل بالنعل

6. Conclusions

Based upon the previous presentation and analysis, the following conclusions are arrived at:

1. Letters of similar content share similar discursal aspects. This is why it was completely reasonable to classify these letters in terms of content. The three letters are close and similar in terms of their discursal aspects.
2. The theological nature of the letters under scrutiny entails some specific discursal aspects like negating, commanding, or supplicating.
3. All letters start with supplication for the inquirer or the letter's receiver because he faces a difficult time and carries an important mission that needs this supplication from the Imam. It is the blessings of the Imam that his followers always need. His supplication to them is a bliss that all believers in him long for.
4. Commanding is the obvious speech act used in these letters as they are basically a response to an inquiry. These commands are achieved via the imperative verb in the first place because the instruction of the Imam is clear, concise, and direct.
5. The figurative language that arises from the non-observance of the cooperative principle is limited because the message should be clear, obvious, and comprehensible.

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Appendix (1)

احتجاج الحجة القائم المنتظر المهدي لإمامته لمن ارتاب فيه التوقيع الذي خرج فيمن ارتاب فيه (صلوات الله عليه) عن الشيخ الموثق أبي عمر العامري (رحمة الله عليه)، قال: تشاجر ابن أبي غانم القزويني وجماعة من الشيعة في الخلف فذكر ابن أبي غانم أن أبا محمد عليه السلام مضى، ولا خلف له ثم إنهم كتبوا في ذلك كتاباً وأنفذوه إلى الناحية، وأعلموا بما تشاجروا فيه فوراً جواب كتابهم بخطه صلى الله عليه وعلى آبائه:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، عافانا الله وإياكم من الفتن ووهب لنا ولكم روح اليقين وأجارنا وإياكم من سوء المنقلب، إنه أنهي إلي ارتياب جماعة منكم في الدين وما دخلهم من الشك والحيرة في ولاية أمرهم فغمنا ذلك لكم لا لنا، وسأونا فيكم لا فينا؛ لأن الله معنا فلا فاقة بنا إلى غيره، والحق معنا فلن يوحشنا من قعد عنا، ونحن صنائع ربنا والخلق بعد صنائعنا، يا هؤلاء ما لكم في الريب تترددون وفي الحيرة تنعكسون، أو ما سمعتم الله عز وجل يقول: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ﴾، أو ما علمتم ما جاءت به الآثار مما يكون ويحدث في أئمتكم على الماضين والباقيين منهم b، أو ما رأيتم كيف جعل الله لكم معاقل تأوون إليها، وأعلاماً تهتدون بها من لدن آدم إلى أن ظهر الماضي عليه السلام، كلما غاب علم بدا علم، وإذا أفل نجم طلع نجم، فلما قبضه الله إليه ظننتم أن الله أبطل دينه، وقطع السبب بينه وبين خلقه، كلاً ما كان ذلك ولا يكون حتى تقوم الساعة، ويظهر أمر الله وهم كارهون، وإن الماضي عليه السلام مضى سعيداً فقيداً على منهج آبائه b حذو التعل بالتعل، وفينا وصيته وعلمه ومن هو خلفه، ومن يسد مسدّه ولا ينازعنا موضعه إلا ظالم آثم ولا يدعيه دوننا إلا جاحد كافر، ولولا أن أمر الله لا يغلب، وسره يظهر ولا يعلن لظهر لكم من حقنا ما تبهر منه عقولكم، ويزيل شكوككم؛ لكنه ما شاء الله كان ولكل أجل كتاب. فاتقوا الله وسلموا لنا وردوا الأمر إلينا فعلينا الإصدار كما كان منا الإيراد، ولا تحاولوا كشف ما غطي عنكم، ولا تميلوا عن اليمين وتعدلوا إلى اليسار، واجعلوا قصدكم إلينا بالموادة على السنة الواضحة، فقد نصحت لكم والله شاهد علي وعليكم. ولولا ما عندنا من محبة صلاحكم ورحمتكم والإشفاق عليكم؛ لكننا عن مخاطبتكم في شغل مما قد امتحننا من منازعة الظالم العتل الضال المتابع في غيه المضاد لربه المدعي ما ليس له الجاحد حق من افترض الله طاعته الظالم الغاصب، وفي ابنة رسول الله S في أسوة حسنة، وسير ذي الجاهل رداء عمله وسيعلم الكافر لمن عقبى الدار عصمنا الله وإياكم من المهالك والأسواء والآفات والعاهات كلها برحمته. فإنه ولي ذلك والقادر على ما يشاء وكان لنا ولكم ولياً وحافظاً. والسلام على جميع الأوصياء والأولياء والمؤمنين ورحمة الله وبركاته، وصلى الله على محمد النبي وسلم تسليمًا.

Appendix (2)

احتجاج الحجة القائم المنتظر المهدي لإمامته لمحمد بن إبراهيم بن مهزيار ابن الوليد عن سعد عن علان عن محمد بن جبرئيل عن إبراهيم، ومحمد ابني الفرج، عن محمد بن إبراهيم بن مهزيار، أنه ورد العراق شاكاً مرتاداً فخرج إليه. قل للمهزيار: قد فهمنا ما حكيتك عن موالينا بنا حيثكم، فقل لهم أما سمعتم الله عز وجل يقول: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ﴾، هل أمر إلّا بما هو كائن إلى يوم القيامة، أوم تروا أنّ الله عز وجل جعل لهم معاقل يأوون إليها، وأعلاماً يهتدون بها من لدن آدم إلى أن ظهر الماضي (صلوات الله عليه)، كلّما غاب علم بدا علم، وإذا أفل نجم طلع نجم، فلمّا قبضه الله عز وجل إليه ظننتم أنّ الله قد قطع السبب بينه وبين خلقه، كلّما كان ذلك ولا يكون حتى تقوم الساعة، ويظهر أمر الله وهم كارهون. يا محمد بن إبراهيم لا يدخلك الشكّ فيما قدّمت له فإنّ الله لا يخلي الأرض من حجة، أليس قال لك أبوك قبل وفاته أحضر الساعة من يعير هذه الدنانير التي عندي، فلمّا أبطى ذلك عليه وخاف الشيخ على نفسه الوحا قال لك عيرها على نفسك وأخرج إليك كيساً كبيراً، وعندك بالحضرة ثلاثة أكياس وصرّة فيها دنانير مختلفة التقدّ فغيرتها، وختم الشيخ عليها بخاتمه، وقال لك اختم مع خاتمي فإن أعش فأنا أحقّ بها وإن أمت فاتق الله في نفسك أولاً، ثمّ فيّ فخلّصني وكن عند ظنيّ بك أخرج رحمك الله الدنانير التي استفضلتها من بين التّقيدين من حسابنا، وهي بضعة عشر ديناراً واستردّ من قبلك فإنّ الزّمان أصعب ما كان وحسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل.

Appendix (3)

جواب الامام من سؤال العمريّ وابنه في بعض المدّعين توقيع منه عليه كان خرج إلى العمريّ وابنه ، رواه سعد بن عبد الله، قال الشيخ أبو جعفر عليه السلام وجدته مثبتا بخط سعد بن عبد الله عليه السلام : وفّقكما الله لطاعته وثبّتكما على دينه وأسعدكما بمرضاته انتهى إلينا ما ذكرتما أنّ الميثمي أخبركما عن المختار ومناظرته من لقي واحتجّاه بأن خلف غير جعفر بن عليّ، وتصديقه إيّاه وفهمت جميع ما كتبته به ممّا قال أصحابكما عنه. وأنا أعوذ بالله من العمى بعد الجلاء، ومن الضّلالة بعد الهدى ومن موبقات الأعمال، ومرديات الفتن فإنّه عز وجل يقول: ﴿لَمْ يَأْخُصِبِ النَّاسُ أَنْ يَبْزُكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ﴾ كيف يتساقطون في الفتنة ويتردّدون في الحيرة، ويأخذون يميناً وشمالاً فارقوا دينهم أم ارتابوا أم عاندوا الحقّ أم جهلوا ما جاءت به الروايات الصّادقة والأخبار الصّحيحة، أو علموا ذلك فتناسوا أما تعلمون أنّ الأرض لا تخلو من حجة إمّا ظاهراً وإمّا مغموراً، ولم يعلموا انتظام أئمّتهم بعد نبيّهم s واحداً بعد واحد إلى أن أفضى الأمر بأمر الله عز وجل، إلى الماضي يعني الحسن بن عليّ (صلوات الله عليه)، فقام مقام آبائه b يهدي إلى الحقّ وإلى طريق مستقيم كان نوراً ساطعاً وقمراً زهراً، اختار الله عز وجل له ما عنده فمضى على منهج آبائه (عليهم السلام) حذو النّعل بالنّعل على عهد عهده ووصيّة أوصى بها إلى وصيّ ستره الله عز وجل بأمره إلى غاية، وأخفى مكانه بمشيئته للقضاء السّابق والقدر النّافذ وفيما موضعه ولنا فضله. ولو قد أذن الله عز وجل فيها قد منعه وأزال عنه ما قد جرى به من حكمه لأراهم الحقّ ظاهراً بأحسن حلية وأبين دلالة، وأوضح علامة ولأبان عن نفسه وقام بحجّته؛ ولكنّ أقدار الله عز وجل لا تغالب وإرادته لا تردّ وتوفيقه لا يسبق فليدعوا عنهم اتّباع الهوى، وليقيموا على أصلهم الذي كانوا عليه ولا يبحثوا عمّا ستر عنهم فيأثموا، ولا يكشفوا ستر الله عز وجل فيندموا وليعلموا أنّ الحقّ معنا وفيما لا يقول ذلك سوانا إلّا كذّاب مفتر، ولا يدّعيه غريبا إلّا ضالّ غويّ فليقتصروا ممّا على هذه الجملة دون التّفسير، ويقنعوا من ذلك بالتّعريض دون التّصريح إن شاء الله.