

A Semantic, Syntactic, and Pragmatic Analysis of the Khutbah of Al-Ghadir

Asst. Lect : Shaima' Shakir Abdul Al-Zahra

University of Al-Qadissiya , College of Art

shaimaa.shakir@qu.edu.iq.

Date Received : 1/11/2025

Date of Acceptness : 23/12/2025

Abstract

The main gist behind the religious discourse is to accomplish persuasion which allows the audience to accept that the linguistic message of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that conveys truth ultimately. The Prophet utilize a rich conversational rhetorical tools, selecting words that attracted various people effectively. This research investigates the sermon on a significant levels ,i.e, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic so that the power of persuasion can be accomplished successfully. The aim of the study is to display that the message of the Khutbah of Al-Ghadir is not just to remind the audience about the God selective order, but a perfect message that achieve God's command that prophetic message cannot be completed its leadership without Al-Imamah. The adapted Method and analysis of the extracts of the Khutbah follow the qualitative and descriptive analysis of the sermon. The researcher sums up the outcomes of the research to show the successful conveying of the prophetic Muhammed message via employing simple linguistic words that convey a complicated meanings that hide beyond significance of Al-Ghadir's sermon.

Keywords: Religios Discourse Analysis, Semantics, Pragmatics, Persuasion Effect. Al-Ghadir Sermon.

تحليل معنوي , نحوي وتداولي لخطبة الغدير

م.م. شيماء شاكر عبد الزهرة

كلية الآداب / جامعة القادسية

shaimaa.shakir@qu.edu.iq.

تاريخ الاستلام : ٢٠٢٥/١١/١

تاريخ قبول النشر : ٢٠٢٥/١٢/٢٣

الملخص:

ان الخطاب الديني بطبيعته خطاب إقناعي، إذ يسعى إلى إقناع الجمهور بصحة كلام النبي محمد (ﷺ). ولهذا، يستخدم النبي مجموعة من الأساليب البلاغية واللغوية لإقناع الآخرين وجعل خطابه مؤثراً. يقوم الباحث بتحليل خطبة الغدير من الناحية الدلالية (السمانتيكية)، والنحوية (التركيبية)، والبراغماتية (التداولية)، بهدف الكشف عن الأساليب الإقناعية المستخدمة فيها، وذلك من خلال بيان صحة مضمون خطبة الغدير ورسالتها التي تتمثل في تنفيذ أمر الله بأن تكتمل الرسالة بالخلافة والإمامة. تستند منهجية البحث وتحليل البيانات إلى التحليل الوصفي النوعي للخطبة. وفي الختام، يستعرض الباحث النتائج التي تكشف عن استخدام ذكي للغة في إيصال معانٍ معقدة تتجاوز الكلمات المباشرة، وهو ما يتجلى من خلال الفحص اللغوي لخطبة الغدير.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب الديني، الدلالة (المعاني)، التداولية، تأثير الإقناع، خطبة الغدير

1. Introduction

Amini (n.d.) stated that the prophet of Islam Muhammed (peace be upon him) recited Al- Ghadir sermon in his last pilgrimage in Thul-Hijjah ,the second of the Islamic lunar month, and exactly via the farewell sermon on the Ghadir Khumm day. However, Al-Ghadir sermon is not just a religious message, but rich with a crucial rhetoric eloquence that draws linear of the rightness of the leadership. Amini identified the statement "Man kuntu mawlahu fa- 'Aliyyun mawlahu" it means that "Whomsoever I am his mawla, Ali is his mawla" this has been construed in various manners that require the audience to search for the socio-political, figurative and theological purposes of the sermon.

Linguistically, the study explores the sermon from the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic viewpoints, so it explained how the meaning is structured semantically, how linguistic power is shared syntactically, and how pragmatic analysis of implicatures effect on the recipients of the sermon. Thus, the researcher enables to mix the classical Arabic religious discourse with modern linguistic theories.

2. Literature Review

In the fields of theology and history, the Khutbah of Al-Ghadir has been taken a great considerable interest. Amini (n.d.) displays the most outstanding of his works, his encyclopedic heritage which documents the occurrence and events of Al-Ghadir in Sunni and Shia books. Amini in his "Al-Ghadir fi al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah wa al-Adab" supplies a massive descriptions, references, and incidents of the event. However, the khutbah in its historical context have shown a huge significant consideration, the linguistic description and analyzing of the sermon still missing its actual spirit in the eyes of contemporary theoretical associations.

In cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) attempt to explore meaning from a semantic perspectives via the theory of semantic metaphor in which metaphor effect on the human mind and cognition and which in turn has its importance in construing the religious discourse. Thus, the researcher examines that the cultural and cognitive use of the word "mawla" is regarded as a symbolism that supports the analysis and structure of the sermon.

Ryding (2005) supplies a comprehensive reference grammar that treats Arabic linguistics at the disciplinary level and offers a foundational understanding of Modern Standard Arabic's

structure and style. Furthermore, Suleiman (2003) has examined how the Arabic language functions as a medium for both national religious identity and national identity, both of which closely relate to sermons and addresses such as the Khutbah of al-Ghadir. Thus, its use in classical Arabic must be carefully modified.

Chomsky's (1995) Minimalist Program clarifies the economy of language and the significance of structure from a syntactic standpoint, indicating that the conveying meaning of the speech code is affected by the syntactic constructional analysis.

Pragmatically, Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) provide foundational work on speech act theory that illustrates how language itself accomplishes actions, which is vital for understanding the ways in which the ends of the Prophet's utterances in the sermon functioned as performative acts with real-world implications.

Abdel Haleem (1999), in his thematic study of the Qur'an, also highlights the same rhetorical and cohesive power of the language of classical Arabic that reflects the eloquence and seriousness of the Prophet's speech at Ghadir Khumm.

This study analyzes persuasion strategies used in English religious sermons, as well as speech act categories and stylistic devices used. Analysis of the data show that there are three persuasion strategies of ethos, pathos, and logos, as referred to by Aristotle (trans. 2007) and Lucas (2007). The persuasive strategies can be used singly or in combination. Preachers have used the whole range of persuasion in seeking to persuade the congregation's move towards acceptance.

Searle (1975) states that assertiveness is the primary persuasion strategy most used. Sandell (1977) also claims that repetition is the most common stylistic device and appears in persuading contexts, primarily. In some cases, persuasion tactics may not be associated with any of the labeled stylistic devices. In addition, it is hoped that linguists, public readings, preachers, students, researchers, and anyone else who would like to make a persuasive speech will find utility in such a study.

3. Theoretical Framework

This research utilizes an integrated linguistic framework that draws upon semantics, syntax, and pragmatics to analyze the Khutbah of Al-Ghadir.

3.1 Semantics

Cruse (2011) stated that semantics concerns itself with the construction of meaning in formal language. The research investigates a variety of lexical choices, semantic fields, and figurative language in the Khutbah. Amini (n.d.) construed that the definition of "mawla" (مولى) is vague; it may mean gentleman, supporter, or friend, among other meanings. Additionally, the linguistic meaning of the sermon of the Khtbah is constructed by understanding the significant analysis of its lexical ambiguity.

3.2 Syntax

Versteegh (1997) clarifies that there are enormous use of classical Arabic syntax indicated by the use of parallelisms. Notably, this can be showed by subtle use of nominal and verbal structural statements, utilizing the different clauses, grammatical structures and repetitions which give the power to the discourse and support the implication meaning of the legislated right of authority and Caliphate of Imama for Imam Ali.(Amini, n.d.)

Furthermore, Carter and McCarthy (2006) elaborated the investigating of structural analyzing and arrangements of sentences and the use of indirect meaning that is indicated by ambiguity to analyze the structures which lead to their linguistic and implied meanings.

3.3 Pragmatics

Intentionally, Levinson (1983) construes that pragmatics focuses on the usage of language in concerning with context. Yule (1996) provides linguistics with various tactics like implicature, speech acts, persuasion, presupposition, and styles of communication. Amini (n.d.) confirms that The Khutbah is constituted by announcement the performative discourse that proves the rightness of Imama. Thus, the analyzing of the sermon pragmatically clarifies that the speech of the prophet Muhammed conveying not only clues to the audience, but a religious and social issues. Summing up the idea, the researcher tries to display how the language of the khutbah Al- Ghadir portrays the social and theological gist via establishing the three views of analysis.

4. Methodology

This study attempts to analyze the sermon of Al- Ghadir by adapting the descriptive and qualitative method. The major source that is relied on in the analysis of the Al-Ghadir's

sermon is the original Arabic text, with authoritative English interpretations that support the linguistic analysis of the discourse. Thus, the study succeeds to achieve the profoundness and serenity in conveying the God's and prophet's message. Furthermore, a selective extracts that are relevant and suitable are used to sustain and reveal the main purpose behind the sermon.

The researcher follows three levels of analysis that are corresponding to the theoretical framework of the study.

4.1. Semantic level:

A linguistic meaningful expressions are accomplished to show the semantic relevance of powerful words such as: authority, guidance, and religious validity. A diversity of meanings, Polysemy, metaphorical and figurative discourse are explores to maintain the linguistic gist behind the conceptual meaning.

4.2. Syntactic level:

The sermon reveals the structural analysis of the sentences, clauses and words that are indicated by terms such as: repetition and parallelism and which serve the creativity of the author. Therefore, A grammatical selections and words order are investigated to show impact of the power of the discourse on accepting the right of the sermon.

4.3. Pragmatic level:

Searle's (1975) five illocutionary acts of speech are noticed such as: declarative, imperative,.... etc., and also Grice's (1975)a conversational implicatures and maxims of Cooperative Principle. Both the audience's expectations and the performative act of the discourse in the sermon are put in consideration.

The expected outcomes of the analysis of the sermon shed lights on the efficient nature of structure, meaning, and the role of language in the sermon that bring a construing interpretations and comprehensive analysis of the text.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Semantic Analysis

A significant linguistic lexicons in the Al-Ghadir Khutbah are related to the expressions of divine legitimacy, authority, guidance and followship. Semantically the lexical expression, "mawla" (مولى), is widely used in the sermon that holds the meaning of "leader," or "sponsor," or "companion," or even "protector." This ambiguity enables the sermon to maintain an appearance of both authority and proximity. As this is shown in extract (1) reported by Zayed ibn Arqam :(Ibn Hambal, n.d)

Extract(1)

Am I not more entitled (awlā) over the believers than their own selves?" They said: Yes, O Messenger of Allah. He said: 'For whomever I am Mawlā, this 'Alī is his Mawlā. O Allah, befriend whoever befriends him, be hostile to whoever is hostile to him, support whoever supports him, and forsake whoever forsakes him.'

The phrase "Man kuntu mawlahu fa-Aliyyun mawlahu" is semantically rich. First, the conditional "Man" ("whoever") creates a universal statement. Second, the repetition of "mawla" deepens the bond between the Prophet's authority and Ali's charged position. Related to the senses of loyalty (ولاء), leadership (ولاية), and completion of religion (كمال الدين), the terms also create a field of meanings drawn from Qur'anic language, adding depth to the theological nature of the sermon.

Furthermore, metaphorical language frequently appears in lexical expressions of covenant and divine sanction, which elevates the speech from a mere proclamation like a legally binding religious command.

5.2. Syntactic Analysis

The rhetorical devices common to classical Arabic oratory are reflected in the sermon's syntax. With the repeated "mawla," repetition, emphasizes the main idea of the sermon. A memorable and well-balanced sentence rhythm was produced by the sequential structure created by the parallel between the conditional clause and the subsequent declaration, which

in turn produced a parallel between the initial clause and the declaration. Repetition in Al-Ghadir sermon is shown in extract (2):

Extract (2)

«أَلَسْتُ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ؟»

“Am I not more entitled over the believers than their own selves?”

«اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاهُ، وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ، وَانصِرْ مَنْ نصره، وَاخْذِلْ مَنْ خَذَلَهُ»

“O Allah, befriend whoever befriends him, oppose whoever opposes him, support whoever supports him, and forsake whoever forsakes him.”

«إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعَتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي، مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي أَبَدًا»

“I am leaving among you two weighty things: the Book of Allah and my Household. If you hold fast to them, you will never go astray after me.”

Reported in Sunan al-Tirmidhī (Hadith no. 3788) and Musnad Ahmad (Hadith no. 21578).

The overwhelming majority of sentences are nominal, a common Arabic pattern used to convey definiteness and gravity, as in the phrase “al-dīn al-kāmil” (the perfected religion). Only selected verb forms are employed to point and call for action, emphasizing authority.

In addition, we have seen the use of imperative structure and direct address to engage the audience to make connections and accept the designation. The logical relationships in the syntax was then created using conjunctions such as “fa” (so, therefore) to coherently bind clauses to guide the listener towards correct meaning in discourse.

5.3. Pragmatic Analysis

The Khutbah is a pragmatically a performative act. By calling Ali "mawla", the Prophet chose to enact a religious and social transformation, not simply provide the information and command the audience to accept it (von Glasersfeld, 1995). As this is mentioned in extract (3) narrated in (Hadith al-Ghadir, Musnad Ahmad & Al-Amini, Al-Ghadir):

Extract (3)

“مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَهَذَا عَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ”

“Whoever I am his master (mawla), this Ali is his master.”

”اللهم وال من والاه، وعاد من عاداه، وانصر من نصره، واخذل من خذله

“O Allah! Be the friend of whoever is his friend, be the enemy of whoever is his enemy, support whoever supports him, and abandon whoever abandons him.”

”أأست أولى بكم من أنفسكم؟“

“Am I not closer to you than your own selves?”

On the surface, speech acts are classified as declarations (illocutionary acts that performatively generate new realities), imperatives (commands), and benedictions. The use of the second person when addressing the audience indicates both their responsibility for the resulting shared practice, as well as the implicit value in binding themselves with the audience's shared beliefs.

In this case, the pragmatic context of the Khutbah is multiplied with the public assembly of Muslims, which makes the referential evidence of the announcement more powerful. The announcement being a public proclamation will provide authority and enable the establishment of a working rationale for leadership as well as group identification. The Khutbah utilizes ethos, pathos, and logos — in relation to the credibility of the Prophet, the loyalties of emotions, and the logical justification found in Qur'anic reference respectively.

6. Discussion of Findings

The linguistic analysis of the Khutbah of Al-Ghadir illustrates an artistry of language in order to create a complex multiplicity of meaning that goes beyond language. The word "mawla" is semantically selected in a considerable manner that reveals its vagueness to convey various meanings. The way that the Khutbah is established is regarded to be relevant for different theological religion and to a variety of people. Thus, the political and theological purpose of the Al- Khutbah is achieved by the semantic variety.

Syntactically speaking, a remarkable and trustworthy sermon is established by employing the classical Arabic figurative features of repetitions of words, clauses and expressions, parallelisms and the crucial employment of nominalizations. However, syntactic structures are not used haphazardly, but for elaborating and legitimating the aim of the sermon that

effect on the mind and sensibility of the audience. Thus, such sermon will be a moral lesson for belief and loyalty.

The Khutbah pragmatically works as a performative act of speech that activates religious order and acceptable leadership. The discoursed language of the Prophet reveal the power of Islamic religion to master the real policy of acting as obligating communal condition and not as merely a proclamation. The power of persuasion via serenity of the sermon reveal the ability of communicating with audience emotionally and directly.

To keep in consideration, these speech acts display that the sermon regards as a constant legacy among the religious texts. Furthermore, they show how Islamic sermons can mix the classical Arabic rhetoric and linguistic artistry to accomplish the idea of leadership legitimacy.

7. Conclusion

The main core of religious sermon is to achieve the linguistic communicative persuasions that is shown in the Khutbah of Al-Ghadir in which the semantic message is drawn via a vague and a rhetorical language, similarly, syntactic and structural complexity is found to sustain and support the power of the discourse, and lately, pragmatic contextual analysis affirms the fact of the order of Allah through the tongue of the prophet Muhammed that is down by the convergence of political and religious phrases which is considered to be hugely important. Thus, the selection of words, phrases and rhetorical expressions are highly organized that attract the audience positively. Furthermore, the suitable structural statements are used to appeal different colors of performative speech acts that assist the sermon to prove the announcement of Ali ibn Abi Talib's inheritance and authority after the prophet, the cohesion and coherence in the sermon achieve its aim logically.

Throughout the analysis of a linguistic suitable theoretical framework and combining it with the color and the spirit of a classical Arabic text, the researcher seems to be able to portrait the image and the incidence of the sermon. Likely, the researcher grasps and displays the ambiguity and complexity Islamic religious speech that reshape and builds the belief of the audience.

Finally, the study reveals that facts sociologically and historically that should be sincerely conveyed to the later generations in order to be in the future aware of the right of the Islamic agency.

References

- Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. (1999). *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style*. I.B. Tauris.
- Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*. (n.d). *Hadith al-Ghadir*. (vol. 4, p. 281) .
- Amini, M. B. (n.d). *Al-Ghadir fi al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah wa al-Adab* (Vol. 1–11) (1997).. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani.
- Aristotle. (2007). *On Rhetoric*. Kennedy, G.A. (Trans.) New York
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press.
- Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge Grammar of English: A Comprehensive Guide to Spoken and Written Grammar*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1995). *The Minimalist Program*. MIT Press.
- Cruse, D. A. (2011). *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). *Logic and conversation*. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics* (Vol. 3, pp. 41–58). Academic Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lucas, Stephen E. (2009). *The Art of Public Speaking* (10th ed.).The McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Ryding, K. C. (2005). *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sanddell, R. (1977). *Linguistic Style and Persuasion*. London
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1975). "A Taxonomy of illocutionary acts." In: Gunderson, K. (ed.) *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*. Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol.VII. 344-369.
- Suleiman, Y. (2003). *Arabic Language and National Identity*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Versteegh, K. (1997). *The Arabic Linguistic Tradition*. Routledge.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.

