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Lexical and Conceptual Language Compression/Decompression through Antonymic Construals in the Qur'ān

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Abstract

This study investigates the lexical and conceptual compression/decompression of the Arabic language brought about by means of antonymic construals in the selected category 'Signs of Allah's Magnanimity and Omnipotence' of the Qur'ān. It aims to have an insight into the usage based and context dependent functions of antonymy in creating compression and decompression of language through dynamic construal approach to antonymy. The data were gathered by using purposive sampling technique. 861 verses were selected as the universe for this research. Eighty four verses were then taken as the content or population for the study. Further, through two tiered sampling we selected eight verses as the sample to answer the research question i.e., to what extent the context affects language compression and decompression that take place in the selected category i.e., 'Signs of Allah's Magnanimity and Omnipotence' through antonymic construals? The study finally concluded that the context plays a central role to cause language compression and decompression through the antonymic pairs in the Qur'ān.

Keywords: Antonymic construals, language compression, language decompression, context dependent, non-gradables

Introduction

Contrastive lexical items are a crucial and inevitable element of any language. The absence of them may put the survival of any language in jeopardy. In the field of semantics, propositions are recognized in terms of their *truth* or *falsity*. Words have the capability of carving up the field of semantics into two distinct complementary (antonymic) concepts. In the field of research, some discourse conditions have been investigated that lead to the construction of incompatibles.¹

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¹M. Lynne Murphy, Carita Paradis, and Willners Caroline, "Introduction: Lexical Contrast in Discourse," *Journal of Pragmatics*, no. 41 (2009): 2137-2139.

In the presence of affixations and rules of sentential negation,² language itself and its users bother about lexical antonyms.³ For example, if we talk about affixations in English language, the word *believable* can be negated by adding a prefix “*un.*” On the other hand, in terms of the rules of sentential negation, a sentence can be negated by adding a separate morpheme “*not,*” e.g. “*This is true*” can be made negative by adding “*not*” before *true* as “*This is not true.*” Despite the presence of such elements of negation, a word, concept or a situation is discussed and made comprehensible by the introduction of its opposite.⁴

Words alone cannot convey the complete meanings because their actual essence in terms of meanings can be obtained only by taking into consideration their association and relevance with other words. In shaping exceptionally organized, highly disciplined and well-regulated system of language, lexical-semantic relations hold a paramount importance. Antonymy, among these relationships, is viewed as an extraordinarily vital lexical-semantic-relationship. Its significance is also emphasized by the view that among the semantic relationships, antonymy is an important and fundamental relation that plays a pivotal role in organizing the semantic lexicon.⁵ In the same manner, the Qur’anic antonyms also portray both sides of the picture simultaneously that helps in arranging our vocabulary and making us know the pros and cons of both extremes e.g. *فمن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ* (so, whoever does any *good* act (even to the weight of a particle will see it).⁶ *وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ* (and whoever does *evil* (even to the weight of a particle will see it).⁷

2. Functions and Classification of Antonymy

Antonymy has multifarious functions, e.g., it plays a central role in the analysis of sentiments and dialogue system.⁸ Moreover, its importance is affirmed by the

²Sentential Negation is to make a sentence negative by adding a separate morpheme “not” after the verb.

³Murphy et al., “Introduction: Lexical Contrast in Discourse,” 2137.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Enrico Santus, Qin Lu, Alessandro. Lenci and Chu-Ren Huang, “Taking Antonymy Mask off in Vector Space. Paper presented at the 28th Pacific Asia Conference on Language, Information and Computation, 2014. <https://www.aclweb.org/anthology/Y14-1018>

⁶Al-Qur’ān: al Zilzaal 99:7.

⁷Ibid., al Zilzaal 99:8.

⁸Michael Roth, and Sabine Schulte Walde, “Combining Word Patterns and Discourse Markers for Paradigmatic Relation Classification,” In *Proceedings of the 52nd Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL)*, no. 2 (2014): 524, Saif

fact that antonymy, in the field of semantics, is plays a pivotal role in detecting and making paraphrases.^{9/10} Furthermore, antonymy is equally important in creating rhetorical effects, e.g., “keep your *friends* close and your *enemies* closer”. It is a significant semantic relationship in the understanding of contradictions¹¹ and in detecting humor.¹² It is now being used to process natural languages, e.g., Information Retrieval, Machine Translation, and Ontology Learning.¹³

In regard to the classification or types of antonyms, generally they are divided into three main categories, i.e., gradable antonyms, non- gradable antonyms and converses. Antonymy is adjudicated as the binary relationship between two complementary terms.¹⁴ At the level of intuition, the disparity between antonymic pairs *large/small*, and *single/married* is prominent. The first antonymic pair *large/small* denotes subjectivity of the entity involved which can be measured on a scale or continuum and there can be various levels in between largeness and smallness. These types of antonymic pairs are termed as gradable antonyms. Contrary to this, the second pair *single/married* is not gradable, a person is either single or married at a given point in time. So these type of antonyms are regarded as non-gradable antonyms or complementaries.¹⁵ Another type of oppositeness is based on converses. These opposites characterize reciprocity,¹⁶ e.g., *husband/wife*, *doctor/patient*, *parent/child* etc. The Qur’anic antonyms are also divided into

Mohammad, Bonnie J. Dorr, Graeme Hirst, and Peter D. Turne, “Computing Lexical Contrast,” *Computational Linguistics* 39, (2013):555–590.

⁹Yuval Marton, Ahmed El Kholly, and Nizar Habash, “Filtering Antonymous, Trend-Contrasting, and Polarity-Dissimilar Distributional Paraphrases for Improving Statistical Machine Translation,” *In Proceedings of the Sixth Workshop on Statistical Machine Translation, Edinburgh*, (2011): 238.

¹⁰Paraphrases involves equivalence or sameness of meaning by using different words.

¹¹Marie-Catherine de Marneffe, Christopher D. Manning, and Christopher Potts, “Was it Good? It was Provocative. Learning the Meaning of Scalar Adjective,” *In Proceedings of the Conference on Human Language Technology and Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing* (2010): 170.

¹²Rada Mihalcea, and Carlo Strapparava, “Making Computers Laugh: Investigations in Automatic Humor Recognition,” *In Proceedings of the Conference on Human Language Technology and Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*, (2005): 531-538.

¹³Roth, “Combining Word Patterns and Discourse Markers for Paradigmatic Relation Classification,” (2014): 525; Mohammad, et al., “Computing Lexical Contrast,” (2013): 555–590.

¹⁴Edward Finegan, *Language: Its Structure and Use* (Cengage Learning, 2014), 185.

¹⁵Ibid, 185.

¹⁶Ibid, 185.

gradables, non gradables and converses. Although, all the types are present in the Qur'ān, but for the present study we focused only on the non gradables.

Albeit, much has been debated and wrangled about the types and functions of antonyms, this study is undertaken to bring to the fore the crucial role that antonymy plays in the meaning making process that involves language compression/decompression particularly with reference to Qur'ān; where these antonymic pairs create a linguistic and conceptual balance and harmonize the text at numerous levels.

2.1. Compression/Decompression of Language

The present study focuses on the compression/decompression of language which is effectively created by the antonymic pairs in the Holy Qur'ān. An investigation into the verses of the Qur'ān reveals that a pair of antonyms, incorporating two contrastive elements, helps compressing two lengthy sentences into a compact contrastive pair of antonyms. For example, Allah declares His majestic power by asserting that: "Have they not seen that Allah who has created the *heavens* and the *earth*."¹⁷ It is quite pertinent to mention here that the language compression and decompression occurs at two levels i.e. lexical and conceptual. The compression of the language takes place when the pair of antonyms occurs in the same sentence. The members of the pairs are separated with the help of one, two or three lexemes¹⁸ and they may appear without any gap e.g.,

1. فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى.¹⁹ So, We said strike him with a part of it. This is how Allah *revives the dead*.²⁰
2. قَالَ أَيْ يَحْيِي اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا.²¹ He said: "How shall Allah *revive* this after it is *dead*."²¹
3. أَوْ قَالُوا إِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرِفَاتًا ءَأَنَا لَمُبْعَثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا.²² And said "Is it that once when we *reduced to bones and dust*, is it then that we shall be raised, *created anew*?"²²

¹⁷Al-Ahkāf 46:33.

¹⁸A collection of words that are related to each other in meaning through inflection: that means from one basic core meaning, several forms of words are made e.g. from the verb 'come' other forms can be made e.g. came, coming. Similarly, in the Qur'ān from one core meaning of موت, other forms can be figured out e.g. امواتا، يموت، اموت. (they all are related to one core meaning i.e., death).

¹⁹The lexemes that are not underlined denote the gap between the members of a pair.

²⁰Al-Baqara 02:73.

²¹Al-Baqara 02:259.

²²Al-Isra 17:98.

4. رَبِّ ارْنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى. “My lord, show me how you give *life* to the *dead*.”²³

On the other hand, language decompression happens when a member of an antonymic pair comes in a verse and the other member comes in the same verse but not right after its counterpart but after the gap of some lexemes, in the coming verse or after the gap of few verses, e.g.,

1. “And two seas are not alike, this one is *sweet*, saturating, pleasant to drink and that one is salt, *bitter*.”²⁴
2. “and made the *night* a covering,”²⁵ “وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا” and made the *day* a source of livelihood.²⁶”
3. “of course, اِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا (It is) abode for *rebellious* people,²⁷ the *God fearing* will have great achievement.”²⁸

In the process of decompression Allah Almighty mentions, a member of an antonymic pair in a verse then stretches this concept in detail in the following verses prior to the introduction of its counterpart. Likewise, after mentioning the other member of that pair, its elaboration comes in the following verses. In some cases both members of the pair come in the same verse but in the subsequent few verses their elaboration grasps the attention of the reader, e.g., ‘those who were *guilty* used to laugh at those who *believe*,²⁹; *guilty* and *believe* come in the same verse and they are elaborated in the following five verses.

The Qur’ān, the linguistic miracle, the prime source of human guidance in the course of life, is the best example of antonymic binary canonical constructs in which Allah Almighty conveyed His commandants, the code of conduct, concepts of *jaza* (reward) and *saza* (punishment) to guide humans to choose the right path. The concept of contrast and oppositeness is as old as the universe itself and even Allah Almighty has written in the skies:³⁰ “Verily, My *Mercy* prevailed over my *Wrath*” (Bukhari and Muslim). By keenly observing the verses it can be seen that

²³Al-Baqarah 02:260.

²⁴Al-Fātir 35:12.

²⁵An-Naba 78:10.

²⁶An Naba 78:11.

²⁷An-Naba 78:22.

²⁸An Naba 78:31.

²⁹Al-Mutaffifin83:29.

³⁰We took this Hadīth from English translation of *Riyad us-Saliheen* which is compiled by Abu Zakariya Yahya Ibn Sharaf Al-Nawawī (Hadith no: 419).

the concept of duality and oppositeness is ubiquitous in the Qur'ān. Allah Almighty created Adam (peace be upon him) and ordered Satan to prostrate before Adam (peace be upon him), but he transgressed and rebelled against Allah by saying: "I am better than him. You have created me of *fire*, and created him of *clay*." ³¹ That was perhaps the first notable occasion from which the concept of *virtue/evil* and *reward/punishment* generated. Allah Almighty declares that there are two paths that He has shown to humans: "and showed him the two ways"? ³² With the creation of Adam and Eve (peace be upon them), Allah Almighty created a binary pair of male/female, perhaps the first concrete opposites of the universe.

Building on the aforementioned background this study is specifically undertaken to emphasize the usage of antonyms in Qur'ānic verses to highlight language compression/decompression. It will be seen how antonyms help in producing meanings of words, ideas or concepts through traditional and contextually provoked binary pairs like *day* and *night*, *this world/hereafter*, *feed/hunger*; to clarify concepts, for example, *illiyeen/ sijjeen*; to explain way of life to *believers/disbelievers*; to intensify the reality of existence of *heaven/hell*, and to delineate and depict the true portrayal of signs of Allah's majestic power like *sky/earth* and so forth.

It seems logical to think that humans are born with an innate propensity to conceptualize, think and comprehend through opposites. There is no controversy among researchers about the fact that children show preference and inclination toward binaries and incompatibles. ³³ In this regard, it is also suggested that binary sets play a very significant role in regard to cognitive development of children. ³⁴ These studies are helpful for us to think that dichotomization is natural to humans and Allah Almighty made humans to think and conceptualize in this way. That is why, children show natural tendency for learning things through opposites. This function of antonymic pairs can also facilitate the understanding and conceptual grasp of the Qur'ān for its current and prospective readers and learners.

There are various topics or categories to study the Qur'ānic antonyms e.g. Oneness of Allah, Messenger-hood, the Day of Judgment and Allah's orders regarding all walks of life that range from worship of Allah to the various rights of

³¹Al-Arāaf 07:12.

³²Al-Balad 90:10.

³³M. Lynne Murphy, *Semantic Relations and the Lexicon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 10.

³⁴Arlene Eisenberg, Heidi Eisenberg Murkoff, and Sandee Eisenberg Hathaway, *What to Expect the First Year* (New York: Workman, 1989).

people upon others. In a single study, all these categories are impossible to discuss, hence we selected only one category to explore i.e., “Signs of Allah's Magnanimity and Omnipotence.”

Although this lexical-semantic relationship has been studied with different perspectives but to the best of our knowledge no significant study has explored antonymy with reference to the Qur’ān. The study sets out to answer the question: To what extent the context affects language compression and decompression that take place in the selected category i.e. 'Signs of Allah's Magnanimity and Omnipotence' through antonymic construals? The scarcity of insight into Qur’ānic verses from linguistic perspective, particularly in terms of antonymy, led us to take up research in this direction. In the Qur’ānic text Allah Almighty claims and challenges: “Say, If all the *humans* and *jinnns* join together to produce anything like this Qur’ān, they will not (be able to) come up with anything like it, even if they assist one another.”³⁵ So, this incomparable Book is worth exploring linguistically. Moreover, this thought provoking Verse of the Holy Qur’ān: “Do they not, then, ponder about the Qur’ān,”³⁶ acted as a constant inspiration and guided us to accomplish our research goals.

3. Research on Antonymy

It is indicated that binary antonyms are also termed as complementaries in which two terms are divided into discrete classes. Resultantly, not only the positivity of one implies the negativity of the other but if one is negated, the other appears as positive. For example, in the pair *true/false*, if a statement is agreed upon to be a true statement, it means that the statement cannot be false at the same time.³⁷ Non-gradable antonyms are not used in comparative constructions.³⁸ Antonymy is also described from the perspective of entailment³⁹ and it is also concluded that in between two complementary terms, there is no remainder,⁴⁰ e.g., if a person is dead, it entails that he is not alive and if a person is single, it entails

³⁵Al-Isra 17:88.

³⁶An-Nisa 04:82.

³⁷Ronnie Cann, “Sense Relations,” *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning. vol. 1* (2011): 456-478.

³⁸William B. McGregor, *Linguistics: An Introduction* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011).

³⁹In semantics entailment the truth of one statement ensures the truth of the other statement too e.g. if we say ‘Maria is in Lahore today,’ it entails that the same person, Maria is not present in any other city today.

⁴⁰Patrick Griffiths, *An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

that he is not married. Same is the case with the Qur'ānic antonyms. Allah Almighty maintains the preeminence of *truth* and subservience of *falsehood* in the following verse: “*Truth* has come and *falsehood* has vanished.”⁴¹ It is obvious in this verse that there is no mid-way between *truth* and *falsity*. Similarly, there are numerous examples in the Qur'ān about *success of believers* and *failure of disbelievers* and there is nothing between *belief* and *disbelief*.

The subconscious predisposition of human beings for imposing dichotomies is underscored by the researchers. It has been also explained that the existing opposition in the world is reflected with the help of language.⁴² The naturalness of human inclination to shape the world by oppositeness can be dated back to the creation of Adam (peace be upon him) and Eve (peace be upon her). Allah Almighty said in the Qur'ān: *وخلقناكم أزواجاً* “And We have created you in pairs.”⁴³ So, nothing more is needed as an evidence in the favor of the argument that humans are born with the tendency to see and perceive the world in opposition.

A general pragmatic rule of ‘Relation’ by contrast has been advocated that governs all semantic relationships including antonymy. This rule defines relations that are based on trivial differences.⁴⁴ In antonymy the contrastive relation exists between pairs only when they share all contextually relevant characteristics except one, e.g. if we take the antonymic pair *long/short*, both the members describe the dimension of length and share all properties of that dimension except that one denotes length and the other denotes shortness.⁴⁵ However, later a more inclusive perspective was developed that proposed that when we use two meanings as antonyms in any context, we construe these two meanings as the representation of two dimensions. During this process, the binary opposition is expressed with the help of comparison.⁴⁶ Furthermore, given that the antonyms are utilized to depict binary opposition, any alignable meanings in terms of dimension can be termed as the construal of antonyms, e.g., *quiet* can be the antonym of *riot*.⁴⁷

Endorsing the point that two dimensions of meanings are construed by the means of representing a binary pair in any context, it can be said that if antonymy

⁴¹Al-Isra 17:81.

⁴²Steven Jones, *Antonymy: A Corpus-based Perspective* (London, Routledge, 2002).

⁴³An-Naba 78:08.

⁴⁴M. Lynne Murphy, *Semantic Relations and the Lexicon*, 24.

⁴⁵Ibid., 45.

⁴⁶Carita Paradis, “A Dynamic Construal Approach to Antonymy,” *19th Symposium for Applied Linguistics*, (2011): 36.

⁴⁷Richard Wilbur, *Opposites, More Opposites and a Few Differences* (Houghto, 1973), 8.

represents opposition of the entities in a pair, then any sequencing of opposite meanings in regard to dimension will be taken as antonymic construal,⁴⁸ e.g., in the verse: “They had been inflicting on you grievous torment, slaughtering your *sons* and leaving your *women* alive,”⁴⁹ the word *sons* is accepted as the opposite of *women*.

It is argued that in lexical relations if there is a contrast in word concepts and not in lexical entries, then we must acknowledge that the concept of a word exhibits the same sort of characteristics as the other concepts exhibit.⁵⁰ Given the fact that concepts of the words are a subcategory of the concepts of the objects (since words represent objects), we must expect that these concepts are organized with a specific reference to prototypes⁵¹ and they might involve various layers of categorization.⁵² Furthermore, the conceptualization of words is also taken as the conceptualization of objects. This notion originates from the idea that humans unknowingly categorize words in nonlinguistic ways. For the words like *die*, *death* and *dead*, the lexicon have separate entries despite the fact that they all look and sound alike and this kind of information can be represented as concepts that are metalinguistic.^{53/54} Hence, our linguistic repertoire may not accept any kind of morphological relation among *die*, *death* and *dead*, but our conceptual apparatus guides us about the relationship of these words and resultantly a larger category of these conceptually related words is formed. The relationship of semblance between the conceptualization of words and the conceptualization of objects is logical. If we talk about our conceptual apparatus, it is certainly not bound to acknowledge *die*, *dead* and *death* as separate entries in the lexicon. Comparably, in regard to the present study, in the Qur’anic text, it is observed that the words مات (Maata) (he

⁴⁸Carita Paradis, “A Dynamic Construal Approach to Antonymy,” 36.

⁴⁹Al-Baqarah 02:49.

⁵⁰M. Lynne Murphy, *Semantic Relations and the Lexicon*, 15.

⁵¹Prototypes are defined by Griffiths (2006) as the “clear and central members of the denotation of a word”. For example, a prototypical face has two eyes, a nose and a mouth, 14.

⁵²Murphy, *Semantic Relations and the Lexicon*, 17.

⁵³Pertaining to a branch of linguistics that has association with society and culture: thereby it means that these words are present in our culture and society regardless of their presence in dictionaries as different entries.

⁵⁴Murphy, *Semantic Relations and the Lexicon*, 23.

died) and ⁵⁵ يموت *Yamutu* (He dies/ He will die) are conceptually related with the word / concept موت (*Mawta*) (death).

The researches mentioned above helped us explore the least investigated area of the sense relation of opposition i.e. antonymy. Furthermore, Arabic language is also given less focus, particularly in Pakistani linguistics research body. This exiguity of importance gave us an inspiration and paved a way for us to bring to the fore the antonymy and its usage in the Qur'ān that is the prime source of Arabic language

4. Theoretical Framework

For the theoretical support of the present study we adopted dynamic construal approach to antonymy.⁵⁶ In previous researches, for a very long time, antonymy has been studied from structuralist point of view. According to that, sense relations are taken as the relationship between words only, not between concepts.⁵⁷ The novice observational methods and conceptual techniques in the linguistic body of research are invisible to structuralist approach. With the increased sophistication in the field of cognitive approach to semantics, the antonymy is now being treated differently. A new outlook is proposed to antonymy by configuration as well as by content.⁵⁸ Moreover, a dynamic usage dependent approach that has the capability for accommodating all types of pairs of antonym construals that range from conventional antonymic pairs to the pairs that are contextually motivated has been proposed.

According to Saussurean structuralist⁵⁹ school of thought every language is a system of relationship of words with other words of the same language. Therefore, a language is not a substantive rather a relational entity. The construal approach has emerged from Cognitive Semantics that considers meanings as mental entities within the conceptual space. Meanings are present in the minds of people rather than as relational entities within a language.⁶⁰ Words as well as expressions

⁵⁵In Arabic language the “imperfect tense” is used to refer to both the present and future tenses; *Lisaan ul Qur'ān* volume 2 that is compiled by the teachers of Madrassah Ayesha Saddiqua in the year (2009).

⁵⁶Carita Paradis, “A Dynamic Construal Approach to Antonymy,” 36.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁸Carita Paradis, “A Dynamic Construal Approach to Antonymy,” 35.

⁵⁹A school of thought in which it is considered that language is based on signs made by convention. According to this point of view meanings can never be understood in isolation.

⁶⁰Carita Paradis, “A Dynamic Construal Approach to Antonymy,” 35.

themselves have no meanings but they are cues to make inferences that give rise to adequate reasoning along with understanding.⁶¹

The approach in which antonymy was viewed as merely a relationship between words met with criticism.⁶² It is now suggested that conceptual meanings play a significant role in antonymy. Furthermore, the notion that co-occurrence alone has the capacity of explaining how words are likely to be associated was also negated.⁶³ It is pointed out that there are several instances where two words co-occur but they are not antonyms,⁶⁴ e.g., *sick/tired*. Moreover, the suggestion that semantic relations must be defined in regard to conceptual relationships seems more significant, because if antonymy is just a relationship of words then the semantic component will lose its significance, whereas indeed, it is a very important element and the meanings of words are mentally exhibited via concepts.⁶⁵

It is quite rational that if the importance of concepts is neglected, then words alone will be empty and hollow slots. In fact, when we utter a word or a sentence to make our reader or listener understand our view point, it carries with it the concept which we want others to understand. Similarly, when we use an opposite pair in an utterance to explain the pros and cons of a thing, our utterance is not only a grammatical arrangement of some word rather there is always a purpose behind it. If our words are devoid of conceptual meanings, there will be no need to communicate even. Owing to the reason that words convey concepts, this study focuses upon the conceptual meanings of antonymic pairs in the Qur'ān. Indeed the conveyance of Allah's commandments and messages to the mankind cannot be merely the conveyance of words alone.

The dynamic construal approach holds that word's meaning always takes its true interpretation in a particular context where it occurs. In human communication, language comes about by means of construal operations. These operations are forced upon the concepts at the particular time of use by speakers as well as addressees, hence a true or definitive kind of context dependent

⁶¹Arie Verhagen, *Constructions of Intersubjectivity: Discourse, Syntax and CognitFion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 22.

⁶²George Murphy, and Jane M. Andrew, "The Conceptual Basis of Antonymy and Synonymy in Adjectives," *Journal of Memory and Language* 32, (1993): 301-319.

⁶³Walter G. Charles, and George A. Miller, *Contexts of Antonymous Adjectives, Applied Psycholinguistics* 10, (1989): 357-375.

⁶⁴Murphy et al., "The Conceptual Basis of Antonymy and Synonymy in Adjectives," 301-319.

⁶⁵Ibid.

meanings are constructed.⁶⁶ By the means of this approach the configuration is made free from content meanings. This also enables us to exercise various configurations of single content meaning, e.g., different parts of speech are construed on the base of “length” in case of *long*, *lengthen* and *length*.⁶⁷ The real advantage of using this approach is that it encapsulates all kinds of conventionalized pairs as well as other *ad hoc* pairs in between configuration and content.⁶⁸ Likewise, the Qur’ānic antonyms also take their true meanings and interpretation in a particular context and from one content meaning many configurations can be made e.g., in the Qur’ān from *صغير/كبير* ‘*Sagheerun/ Kabeerun*’ (*small/big*), the configurations *اصغر/اكبر صغيرا/كبيرا، صغيرة/كبيرة*، (Sagheeratun / Kabeeratun, Sagheeran / Kabeeran, Asghar / Akbar) are made.

5. Universe, Population and Sample

We have benefitted from *Qur’ān e Azīz*⁶⁹ in which Ahmad Ali Lahori has classified various topics of the Qur’ān into different chapters or categories. These categories are further subcategorized under different headings. Owing to the scarcity of space allowed for this study we selected only one category for the present study i.e. 'the Day of Resurrection' as the universe that contains eight hundred and sixty verses. The category 'the Day of Resurrection' is further divided into fifteen classes in *Qur’ān e Aziz*. After separating 203 verses that contain antonymic pairs from the above mentioned universe, we have renamed the fifteen subdivided categories in the following manner:

- a. Signs of Allah's magnanimity and omnipotence e.g. heavens/earth
- b. Belief and disbelieve of humans e.g. believers/disbelievers
- c. Gender e.g. male /female
- d. Relational entities e.g. father/mother
- e. Prepositional and directional antonyms e.g. over/beneath
- f. Antonyms related to the senses and the body parts e.g. dumb/deaf

After renaming the categories, we selected the category (a) 'signs of Allah's Magnanimity and Omnipotence' as the content or population for this research that contains 84 verses. We then applied two tiered sampling and selected 8 verses as the sample (four to show language compression and the other four to manifest

⁶⁶Carita Paradis, “Ontologies and Construal in Lexical Semantics,” *Axiomathes*, no. 15 (2005): 54; Carita Paradis, “Configurations, Construals and Change: Expressions of DEGREE,” *English Language and Linguistics* 12, (2008): 317-343.

⁶⁷Paradis, “Ontologies and Construal in Lexical Semantics,” 554.

⁶⁸Paradis, “A Dynamic Construal Approach to Antonymy,” 36.

⁶⁹Ahmad Ali, Ahmad. *Qur’ān e Aziz*, 1974.

decompression of the language) for this study. The data for the study is manually gathered from the selected category i.e., 'Signs of Allah's Magnanimity and Omnipotence' using purposive sampling technique that is widely used to manifest diversity as well as symbolic representation of the sample. In purposive sampling the researcher chooses the units of sample that have particular characteristics or properties which enable the researcher to accomplish the task of exploring and understanding the main themes which he/she wants to investigate.⁷⁰ So, according to this schema, in this study, the antonymic pairs having specific properties or characteristics i.e., the binary pairs having relevance to the above mentioned renamed category ('signs of Allah's Magnanimity and Omnipotence'), are chosen.

6. Data Analysis

Category: Signs of Allah's Magnanimity and Omnipotence

Steps for the Analysis

Note 1: The order of the steps taken to analyze the selected category is as under:

1. The first step constitutes the context of the verse.
2. The second step denotes lexical and conceptual language compression or decompression through antonymic construals.

Note 2: For contextual interpretation the *Maariful Qur'ān*⁷¹ volume 1-8 and *Tafseer e Usmani*⁷² volume 1-2 are followed where needed in the analysis.

Before starting the analysis, it would be appropriate here to discuss what is meant by lexical compression/decompression, conceptual compression/decompression. In this study, from the lexical compression we mean the location of the members of an antonymic pair. For example, if in a sentence, the instances where both the members conveying the opposite concepts are present after the gap⁷³ of one lexeme, two or three lexemes, and without any gap, it is taken as lexical compression, e.g. وَقَالُوا إِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا, مَخْرَجَ مَا كُنْتُمْ نَكْتُمُونَ, السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ. وَرَفَاتًا أَنَا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا. مَحَى الْمَوْتَى. Contrary to this view point, lexical decompression is created where both the lexical items occur far from each other

⁷⁰Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Nicholls, Carol McNaughton. and Rachel Ormston, *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (Sage publishers, 2013).

⁷¹Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi, *Ma'ariful Qur'ān*, 1998.

⁷²Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, *Tafseer e Usmani*, 2009.

⁷³The underlined Arabic lexemes show the gap between the members of the opposite pairs.

within a sentence, or in the next sentence, or the members occur after the gap of few verses, e.g. ، وَنَقَرَفَى الْاِرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ اِلَى اَجَلٍ مَّسْمُومٍ ثُمَّ نَخْرِجُكُمْ، الْمُتَّقِينَ (١٩:٨٥) ، لِلطَّاعِينَ مَا بَا (٤٨:٢٢) لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا (٤٨:٣١)⁷⁴ and الْمُجْرِمِينَ (١٩:٨٦).

According to the fact that the lexemes carry concepts, if there is lexical compression/decompression present in an antonymic pair then obviously the conceptual compression/decompression will also be there.

Sample verses of Lexical and conceptual Compression of Language

Sample Verse 1 and the Antonymic Pair1: يحيى/الموتى (Yuhyī/Al mawtaa) revives/dead

(٢:٧٣) فقلنا اضربوه ببعضها كذالك يحيى الله الموتى (٢:٧٣) So, We said strike him with a part of it. This is how Allah *revives* the *dead* (2:73).

Step 1: This verse is the continuation of the previous verse in which Allah enunciates the way in which He brings to the fore the truth of the murder of that man by ordering the concerned people to sacrifice a cow. After that Allah ordered them to strike the murdered with a part of that sacrificed cow. As soon as they did the required, the murdered man came back to life (was revived) and revealed the name of the murderer. In this way the real culprit was traced. In this verse Allah makes us realize that in the same manner He has the sole power to bring the dead to life in the Hereafter.

Step 2: The context of this verse makes lexical and conceptual language compression happen. Though the whole event of the murdered man is explained, two opposable concepts are given after the gap of only one word, i.e. الله (Allah), which are enough to pack the whole story.

Sample Verse 2 and the Antonymic Pair 2 الغيب/الشهادة (Al ghaib/ Ash shahaadah) unseen/seen

وهو الذى خلق السموات و الارض بالحق و يوم يقول كن فيكون قوله الحق وله الملك يوم ينفخ فى الصور عالم الغيب والشهادة (٦:٧٣) He is the one who created the *heavens* and the *earth* with purpose. On the day He says “be”, it (the Resurrection) will come to be. His word is the truth, and His is the kingdom on the day the Horn shall be blown. He is the Knower of the *unseen* and the *seen*.⁷⁶

⁷⁴The first member is given in the verse 85, while the other is given in the verse 86.

⁷⁵In this example second member of the pair came after the gap of nine verses.

⁷⁶Al-Anaam 06:73.

Step 1: The context of this sample verse is related to the previous verses, in which Allah Almighty forbids the company of those who indulge themselves in blasphemous conversation. If the sitting with such people happens due to the influence of Satan, then when the thoughts are controlled one should leave the bad company. The God fearing has no responsibility of the evil deeds of infidels except advising them to come towards the right path. Allah directs the believers to avoid those who take the faith as mere fun and play. He asks His prophet to preach them through Qur'ān so that he/she might fear that he/she has no helper and intercessor except Allah lest he/she might refuse to do what he/she has done.

Moreover, it is also stated that no ransom will be accepted from anyone. Disbelievers will be caught on what they reaped. They will be caught in the painful punishment of drinking boiling water owing to their disbelief. Allah asks His prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) peace be upon him to inquire if they should call other than Allah who does not harm and benefit us? Should we turn our heels after Allah has made us see the right path? In such case, there will be no difference in those whom Allah has guided (believers) and those who have been abducted by Satan (disbelievers). The real guidance is in fact the guidance of Allah and He demands submission. He has also given commanded us to establish prayers and ultimately we will return to Him.

Step 2: The context of this verse galvanizes language compression via both the antonymic pairs at both the levels.

Sample Verse 3 and the Antonymic pair 3: عظاما ورفاتا / خلقا جديدا (Izaamanw wa rufaata/ Khalqan jadeeda) reduced to bones and dust/created anew

And said “Is it that اذا كنا عظاما ورفاتا ء انا لمبعوثون خلقا جديدا (١٤:٩٨) once when we reduced to bones and dust, is it then that we shall be raised, created anew”?⁷⁷

Step 1: This verse has contextual concord with the previous verses (i.e., 94, 95, 96 and 97) in which Allah indicates a misconception nurtured by the polytheists and other common disbelievers pertaining to their question why Allah Almighty selected and sent a human as His messenger to people. Allah rationalized His answer by justifying the fact that the guidance of humans can best be carried out sending a human messenger on the earth, not the angels. In addition, if the angels had been inhabiting the earth then Allah must have sent angels to guide them.

In the next verse Allah points out that He alone is sufficient as the prime power to decide the truth between His messenger and disbelievers. Allah elucidates that

⁷⁷Al-Isra 17:98.

the real guided one is the one whom Allah guides and whom Allah Himself lets go astray from the right path, there can never be any guide for him other than Allah.

In this sample verse Allah further explicates that the digressers will be penalized in the aforesaid way because of their claim that after their death they will be no more than bones, then, how will Allah make us raise from the dead state?

Step 2: The context of this verse promotes lexical and conceptual language compression.

Sample Verse 4 and the Antonymic Pair 4: ميت/حيًا (Mittu/ Haiyaa) die/alive

(٦٦ : ١٩) حيًا و يقول الانسان ا اذا ما مت لسوف اخرج حيًا (٦٦ : ١٩) Man says, is it that, once I die I shall be brought forth alive?⁷⁸

Step 1: In this verse Allah declares that the refusal of the disbelievers is nothing else but the consequence of not understanding the reality of the Day of Judgment. Had they just thought of their first creation, there would have been no confusion. Allah apprises by swearing Himself that on the Day of Judgment, He will congregate them all around Jahannam (hell) in a condition that they will be falling on their knees. It will be the Day when all will be given reward and punishment according to their deeds.

Step 2: This antonymic pair causes language to compress in regard to lexemes and concepts as both the members are positioned after the gap of two lexemes.

Sample Verses of Lexical and Conceptual Decompression of Language

Sample Verse 1⁷⁹ and the Antonymic Pair 1: السماء/الارض (As samaaa'/ Al arda) sky/earth

افلم ينظروا الى السماء فوقهم كيف بنيناها و زينناها و مالها من فروج (٥٠ : ٦) والارض مددناها (٥٠ : ٤) و القينا فيها رواسي و انبثنا فيها من كل زوج بهيج (٥٠ : ٤) Did they not, then, look to the sky above them, how We have built it and beautified it, and it has no cracks (50:6). As for the earth, We had spread it out, and cast on it firm hills, and caused to grow therein every kind of delightful things.⁸⁰

Step 1: The context of both of these verses is congruent with the previous verse from where this surah starts and also with the coming verses in which the destruction of different nations e.g. *Nuh, Ad, Thamud, Pharaoh, Tubba, Lūt* and so

⁷⁸Maryam 19:66.

⁷⁹Both the verses are written together owing to the containment of the first member in the verse no 6, and the other is in the verse seven of Surah ق.ق.

⁸⁰Qaaf 50:07.

on, is narrated. Allah Himself swears by the Qur'ān that He has sent Muhammad (SAW) as His messenger. But, the disbelievers wonder on the sending of a man as Allah's messenger. Furthermore, they were also skeptic of the life after death. Allah clarifies that He has preserved all in a Book and He is well known to each and every thing. Allah calls the rejecters to see how He has made the sky crackless and beautiful. The earth is no exception; Allah has spread it out and it grows different kinds of bounties for mankind. Allah created humans and He is very much aware of all the thoughts that generate in the inner self of man. He is very much near to man even nearer than the jugular vein.⁸¹

Step 2: At lexical and conceptual levels, through this pair, the language decompresses. It is observed that Allah portrays the making of His two largest creations.

Sample Verse 2 and the Antonymic Pair 2: واقع/دافع (Waaqi'/Daafi') going to befall/there is no one to avert it.

سال ساعل بعذاب واقع (٤٠:١) للكافرين ليس له دافع (٤٠:٢) A demanding person has asked for the punishment that is going to befall⁸² the disbelievers; there is no one to avert it.⁸³

Step 1: The contextual link of these verses is with its following verses. The disbelievers asked who would be punished. Allah replies that the disbelievers will be treated according to their deeds and there will be nothing to avert their punishment. This punishment will be given to them from Allah Who is the owner of the ascending ways through which the angels and the spirit ascend to Him during a day, the measurement of which is 50,000 (fifty thousand) years. The disbelievers assume that the Day of Judgment is very far from them but in reality it is very near. In the next two verses Allah narrates the condition of the seas and mountains on that day. In the next five verses it is elaborated that no ransom will be taken from anyone and even the blood relations will run away from each other and will extend no help. In the next four verses the Hell is portrayed. It will call those who have turned their backs from the truth. Allah announces that man is busy in this life in accumulating wealth and hoarding it, but in fact, he is weak. He becomes suddenly upset whenever touched by evil, but niggard when any fortune reaches him.

⁸¹Jugular veins are located in the neck that culvert blood from the parts like the head, the brain, as well as the face and the neck and make it reach to the heart. In Urdu it is termed as **شاه رگ**.

⁸²Al-Maa'rij 70:01.

⁸³Al Maa'rij 70:02.

However, those who establish prayers regularly and spend from the riches given to them by Allah are exceptional. They are the ones who know that the accountability is mandatory. Thus they are fretful of the punishment by their Lord. They do not exceed the limits fixed by *shariyah* (شريعة)⁸⁴ in regard to sexual relationships. They are very much conscious and careful about the fulfillment of their promises and are righteous in the testimonies. They all are those who would be honored in the gardens (heaven). On the other side are the disbelievers. They are the ones who aspire to enter in the Jannah (garden, Paradise) but can never be allowed to enter. They are those who used to indulge themselves in pass time activities; having belief in Allah's verses and His commandments was merely a fun for them. On the Day of the Judgment they will be hurriedly moving towards idols after coming from the graves with down cast eyes. That will be the day about which they were told and promised.

Step 2: This antonymic pair causes language decompression in both the domains i.e. lexical and conceptual.

Sample Verse 3 and the Antonymic Pair 3: صعب/قيام (Sa'iqā/ Qiyamun) faint/stand up,

ونفخ في الصور فصعق من في السموات و من في الارض الا ما شاء الله ثم نفخ فيه اخرى فاذا هم قيام ينظرون (39:68) And Horn will be blown, all those in the heavens and all those in the earth will faint except the one whom Allah wills (otherwise). Thereafter, it will be blown again, and suddenly they will stand up, looking around.⁸⁵

Step 1: This verse has contextual link with the verse 60, where Allah Almighty mentions those who forged lies against Him. Allah edifies His prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) peace be upon him) that on the Day of Resurrection, their faces will be black and their abode will be Jahannam (hell). On the other hand, the God fearing will be saved from the hell. They will not be touched by any evil or be grieved in the least. He is the only Creator as well as the Guardian of everything and the keys of the heavens and the earth only belong to Him. Then Allah asks His Prophet to tell the ignorant not to worship any other than Allah. Allah says to His prophet that He has revealed to him and to the prophets before him that if they consort partners with Allah, all of their deeds will be rendered ineffectual and in the end they will be among the losers. Allah continues to say that the ignorant did not hold Him in the esteem they should. On the Doomsday the earth will be in the single grip of

⁸⁴Prescribed way of religion.

⁸⁵Az Zumar 39:68.

Allah and the heavens will be rolled on in His right hand. He is far higher than what they associate with Him.

Step 2: The pair causes decompression at the lexical and conceptual level.

Sample Verse 4 and the Antonymic Pair 4, اهتزت و ربت وانبتت, (al ard haamida/ Ihtazzat wa rabat Wa anbatat) *dry land/stirs, swells, put forth*

و ترى الارض هامدة فاذا انزلنا عليها الماء اهتزت و ربت و انبتت من كل زوج بهيج
Then We send water on it, it *stirs* and *swells* and *puts forth* every pleasant pair (of vegetation) -

Step 1: In this part of the verse Allah Almighty calls our attention again towards the dry land which He revives through rainy water to grow all types of vegetation that is among one of the biggest human need for sustenance.

In the Construal Approach, all form and meaning pairs are taken as antonyms when they are used in binary opposition in discourse whether they are canonical or contextually provoked. So, *اهتزت و ربت* stands in binary opposition to *انبتت و انبتت* simultaneously.

Step 2: On both the levels, the language decompression is brought about via this pair.

7. Results and Discussion

To answer the research question, the effect of the context on the lexical and conceptual language compression and decompression was explored. After a thorough scrutiny, it is found that the context is significant and affects the compression/decompression of the language either lexically or conceptually. By uttering merely context-less words or by introducing an opposite pair without context, the real meanings of the word cannot be obtained. Even the phenomenon of antonymy relies on the meanings gleaned from the context. Same is true for the Qur'ānic antonymic pairs. The context plays a pivotal role in construing the antonymic pairs in the discourse and to convey the two opposite concepts in a comprehensive way. Moreover, it is also revealed that all the antonymic pairs in the discourse occur at a particular occasion of use which is the true essence of the construal approach. It is very obvious from the evaluation of the data that the verses are revealed to serve a specific purpose.

Moreover, the significance of the context is very obvious from the fact that the same opposite pairs which are found to cause lexical and conceptual compression, also cause lexical and conceptual decompression. For example the pair *السموات/الارض* comes several times in the Qur'ān and two times in the data, once to

show the compression of the language, and the second time to manifest language decompression. So, it is the context that gives rise to the compression or decompression of language not the members of an opposite pair. Same pairs can react differently in different contexts.

It has been discussed that according to the cross categorical construal approach, various configurations from one content meaning can be constructed. It is noted that from one content meaning of the noun *حي* (*Hayyun*) two configurations are made in the present sample i.e. a verb *يحي* (*Yuhyī*) and a noun *حيا* (*Hayya*) (all of them are related to the core meanings of life, first and the last is a noun whereas the central one is a verb).

8. Conclusion

The study concludes that the antonymy plays a significant role in compressing and decompressing the language at various instances in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is the primary source of human guidance and the use of antonymy in the Qur'ān is to make the humans select the right course to lead a successful life. Moreover, it also alerts human beings to those elements which should be avoided for the best reward in the Hereafter. On the other hand, for those who lead a life of disobedience and disbelief, the second member of the antonymic pair portrays the whole scene of punishment in the Hell. The antonymy is used ubiquitously in the Qur'ān to show both sides of the picture. It conveys the meanings more comprehensively. The category that was chosen for this study i.e. Signs of Allah's Magnanimity and Omnipotence, revealed that Allah Almighty claims His authority by means of constructing antonymic construals in the Qur'ānic discourse. These antonymic construals sometimes create language compression by reducing a lengthy sentence into a short and meaningful sentence. Contrary to this, these construals sometimes elaborate the whole concept by causing decompression of the language where the illustration is needed and intended by Allah Almighty. Further, all the pairs in the data were context dependent that indicate the significance of the context without which two opposite morphemes carry no weight and meanings. Thus, the meaning generation in the Qur'ān is directly associated with the construction of canonical and contextually motivated antonymic pairs.

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