

STYLISTIC AND LINGUISTIC VARIATION IN THE QUR'AN: TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

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Abstract. The Qur'an's artful synthesis of linguistic precision and rhetorical eloquence has established it as a foundational text in Arabic linguistics, rhetoric, and theological studies; however, contemporary research frequently remains fragmented, concentrating on isolated stylistic features or individual surahs without sufficiently exploring cross-textual variation or bridging classical rhetorical frameworks with modern linguistic methodologies. To address these gaps, this study proposes an integrative framework that synthesizes classical Arabic stylistics, Systemic Functional Linguistics, and digital methodologies to systematically analyze the Qur'an's stylistic and linguistic patterns, including rhetorical devices, syntactic structures, and morphological trajectories. These features are shown to operate as a coherent, context-sensitive system aligned with theological imperatives and communicative objectives, offering both theoretical enrichment and practical applications in education, translation, and digital humanities. By bridging traditional hermeneutics with contemporary linguistic and computational tools, this framework not only deepens scholarly understanding of Qur'anic discourse but also lays the foundation for future interdisciplinary research, enabling nuanced analyses of stylistic variation across surahs while ensuring broader accessibility and relevance in diverse academic and public contexts.

Keywords: *Qur'anic stylistics, linguistic patterns, rhetorical analysis, systemic functional linguistics, stylometry*

Introduction

The Qur'an's distinctive synthesis of linguistic precision and rhetorical eloquence has firmly established it as a seminal text within Arabic linguistics, rhetoric, and theological studies. Comprising 114 surahs, it presents a complex tapestry of stylistic and linguistic variation that simultaneously achieves aesthetic mastery and communicative efficacy (Baharun et al., 2020). Traditional scholarship, particularly within the disciplines of *balāghah* (rhetorical eloquence) and *i'jāz* (inimitability), has long emphasized the divine artistry manifest in Qur'anic style (Al-Zamakhsharī and Shīhā, 1966). Building upon these classical foundations, contemporary scholarship has expanded the analytical tradition by employing modern frameworks such as Systemic Functional Linguistics and computational stylistics, thereby offering fresh perspectives on the Qur'an's syntactic architecture, morphological patterns, and rhetorical devices (Darwish et al., 2021; Klar, 2020). More recently, scholars have increasingly advocated for a structural and literary re-examination of the Qur'an's stylistic complexity, combining classical rhetorical theories with digital methodologies to deepen understanding of its communicative design.

Despite these advancements, three critical limitations continue to characterize current research. First, there remains a pronounced tendency toward atomistic analysis of isolated stylistic features rather than a holistic examination of cross-textual variation (Abalkheel et al., 2025). Second, insufficient dialogue persists between traditional

rhetorical studies and modern linguistic approaches, limiting interdisciplinary synthesis. Third, an integrative framework that systematically reconciles classical and contemporary analytical paradigms has yet to be fully developed. Although substantial contributions have emerged from both traditional exegetical studies (Abdul-Raof, 2017) and computational analyses (Cuypers, 2011), the absence of a unified theoretical model continues to constrain a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'an's multidimensional stylistic phenomena. To address these analytical gaps, the present study advances Qur'anic stylistic research by proposing a novel integrative framework. Employing a three-dimensional methodological approach that synthesizes classical Arabic rhetoric, Systemic Functional Linguistics, and digital text analysis, it constructs a unified model designed to elucidate the dynamic interplay between linguistic form, discursive function, and theological significance across the Qur'anic corpus. By facilitating more nuanced analyses of Qur'anic eloquence, the proposed framework not only enriches scholarly understanding but also lays methodological foundations for future interdisciplinary research at the intersection of Arabic linguistics, computational stylistics, and religious text studies.

Results and Discussion

Conceptual foundation

The analysis of stylistic and linguistic variation in Qur'anic discourse necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that synthesizes classical Arabic rhetorical traditions, contemporary linguistic theories, and innovative digital methodologies. Such an integrative perspective is crucial for appreciating both the aesthetic sophistication and the functional coherence of the Qur'an's distinctive textual architecture. Classical Arabic stylistics, particularly through the disciplines of *balāghah* (rhetorical eloquence) and *i'jāz* (inimitability), established foundational principles for understanding the artistic and theological dimensions of the Qur'an. These traditions systematically examine rhetorical devices, including metaphor (*isti'ārah*), parallelism (*tawāzun*), *saj'* (rhymed prose), and strategic ellipsis (*ḥadhf*); not merely as decorative features but as deliberate mechanisms that amplify theological messages and evoke profound emotional resonance (Abdul-Raof, 2017; Boullata, 2000). The Qur'an's inimitability, as articulated by classical scholars, is rooted in this inseparable relationship between form and meaning, wherein linguistic choices function as vehicles for divine communication. Building upon these classical insights, modern linguistic approaches, particularly Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), extend the analysis of Qur'anic discourse by conceptualizing it as a dynamic semiotic system (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). SFL's tripartite model, encompassing ideational (content), interpersonal (interactive), and textual (structural) functions; reveals how grammatical variations serve specific communicative purposes. For instance, shifts between verb–subject–object (VSO) and object–verb–subject (OVS) constructions are shown to correlate with thematic emphasis and audience engagement strategies (Mohamed and Khaled, 2021; Sadeghi, 2011). This framework thus connects micro-level linguistic analysis with macro-level discursive objectives, illustrating how syntactic and morphological choices align with the Qur'an's theological and rhetorical aims.

Expanding further, the advent of computational methodologies has enriched stylistic analysis by introducing quantitative approaches such as stylometry and machine learning. These digital tools enable large-scale pattern recognition across the Qur'anic

corpus, uncovering subtle linguistic variations, such as lexical repetition and morphological consistency that might elude traditional qualitative methods (Stewart, 2021; Alqurneh et al., 2016). Stylometric analyses have not only corroborated classical observations regarding the Qur'an's rhetorical cohesion but have also revealed new statistical regularities in its syntactic and lexical distributions (Sadeghi, 2011). Although still developing within Qur'anic studies, computational approaches offer transformative potential for grounding stylistic analysis in empirical data while complementing traditional hermeneutic methodologies. From a comprehensive perspective, the convergence of these analytical traditions, classical balāghah, modern SFL, and computational stylistics, creates a robust, multidimensional framework for Qur'anic analysis. This integrated approach simultaneously honors the Qur'an's historical reception as a rhetorical masterpiece while subjecting its stylistic features to systematic and replicable investigation. By bridging hermeneutic depth with methodological innovation, the proposed framework fosters a deeper and more dynamic understanding of how linguistic variation serves the Qur'an's theological, communicative, and aesthetic imperatives (Cuypers, 2011), thereby opening new pathways for both traditional exegesis and contemporary textual analysis.

Stylistic patterns in Qur'anic discourse

The stylistic richness of the Qur'an constitutes one of its most distinctive and celebrated features, intricately intertwining linguistic form with theological purpose (Ahmad et al., 2024). Among the most prominent stylistic devices are saġ' (rhymed prose), parallelism, metaphor, ellipsis, and rhetorical omission, each contributing significantly to the communicative efficacy and aesthetic resonance of the text. In particular, saġ', or rhythmic prose, serves both structural and mnemonic functions within Qur'anic discourse. Fadila et al. (2024) as well as Klar (2020) underscore that saġ' enhances the rhythm and musicality of the text, thus promoting memorization and facilitating oral transmission, while simultaneously reinforcing thematic parallelism across verses. A striking example appears in Surah Al-Ikhlās, where the repetition of rhyming endings in:

Qur'anic Verse (Arabic)	قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ • اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ • لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ • وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ
Romanization	<i>Qul huwa Allāhu aġad. Allāhu al-ṣamad. Lam yalid wa lam yūlad. Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan aġad.</i>
English Translation (Sahih International)	Say, "He is Allah, [Who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent." (Qur'an, 112:1–4)

“Creates a memorable cadence that resonates emotionally and spiritually.” Through structured rhyme and cadence, saġ' not only embellishes the message but also intensifies its emotional and persuasive impact, particularly in passages addressing eschatological themes or moral exhortations. Similarly, parallelism further augments the Qur'an's rhetorical strength by manifesting in the balanced arrangement of syntactic structures and thematic elements. Al-Ameedi and Al-Tamimi (2022) illustrate how parallel constructions, such as in Surah Al-Isrā', where it is declared:

Qur'anic Verse (Arabic)	وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا
Romanization	<i>Wa-qaḍā rabbuka allā ta 'budū illā iyyāhu wa bil-wālidayni iḥsānan.</i>
English Translation (Sahih International)	And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. (Qur'an, 17:23)

“Create rhetorical symmetry that amplifies theological arguments and strengthens discourse cohesion.” This stylistic device is especially prominent in verses addressing divine authority and human accountability. Metaphor also plays a central role in constructing abstract theological meanings through vivid imagery. As Abdul-Raof (2017) explains, metaphors in the Qur'an transform complex spiritual concepts, such as divine mercy, guidance, and punishment, into tangible and relatable experiences, thereby deepening audience engagement and enhancing conceptual understanding. One of the most celebrated metaphors appears in Surah An-Nur:

Qur'anic Verse (Arabic)	اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
Romanization	<i>Allāhu nūru al-samāwāti wa-al-ard.</i>
English Translation (Sahih International)	Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. (Qur'an, 24:35)

“Vividly conveying the omnipresence and illuminating nature of divine guidance.” Moreover, ellipsis and rhetorical omission further enrich the Qur'an's stylistic texture by fostering deeper interpretive engagement. Mohamed and Khaled (2021) argue that the strategic absence of expected linguistic elements invites readers to reflect more profoundly, thereby enriching the semantic density and deepening the theological nuance of the text. An illustrative example is found in Surah An-Nahl (corrected from earlier mention of Al-A'raf), where the verse reads:

Qur'anic Verse (Arabic)	فَكُلِي مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا
Romanization	<i>Fakulī min kulli al-thamarāti fa-islukī subula rabbiki dhululan.</i>
English Translation (Sahih International)	Then eat from all the fruits and follow the ways of your Lord laid down [for you]. (Qur'an, 16:69)

Here, the omission of explicit directives regarding "ways" encourages the audience to infer divine favor and guidance through contemplation. Taken together, these stylistic devices are not merely ornamental; rather, they function integrally to enhance the Qur'an's communicative precision, emotional resonance, and exegetical depth. As emphasized by scholars such as Stewart (2021) as well as Cuyper (2011), the deliberate deployment of these rhetorical strategies across different surahs reflects a sophisticated

orchestration of form and meaning, carefully calibrated to address diverse themes, audiences, and historical contexts. This dynamic and context-sensitive approach to divine communication underscores the Qur'an's meticulous alignment of stylistic choices with its theological and pragmatic objectives.

Linguistic patterns in Qur'anic discourse

The Qur'an's linguistic artistry is reflected not only in its rhetorical devices but also in its sophisticated use of morphological and syntactic structures. Morphological features and lexical variation reinforce the text's stylistic unity and adaptability, showcasing a deliberate orchestration of word formation that enhances coherence and thematic responsiveness. Complementing this, syntactic variation strategically organizes information flow and accentuates theological imperatives. Through the calculated deployment of diverse sentence structures and syntactic devices, the Qur'an balances aesthetic elegance with communicative precision. The following sections examine these dimensions, beginning with an analysis of morphological patterns and lexical consistency, followed by an exploration of syntactic flexibility and rhetorical function.

Morphological features and lexical variation

Morphological consistency in the Qur'an reveals a structured yet adaptive approach to word formation and lexical variation. Sadeghi (2011) traced morpheme usage across different surahs, identifying a smooth and progressive trajectory that sustains textual coherence. This morphological continuity underscores the Qur'an's stylistic unity, even as it dynamically responds to shifting thematic and situational contexts. Similarly, Stewart (2021) emphasized that although no single lexical pattern predominates across the corpus, an underlying stylistic coherence persists, preserving the Qur'an's rhetorical and aesthetic integrity amidst lexical diversity. Thus, the Qur'an's morphological architecture contributes fundamentally to its cohesive yet flexible textual character. Building upon this morphological foundation, syntactic variation further organizes Qur'anic discourse, guiding the reader's interpretive process and reinforcing the dynamic articulation of theological themes.

Syntactic variation in the Qur'an

Complementing its morphological sophistication, syntactic variation plays a central role in structuring Qur'anic discourse and shaping its communicative resonance. The Qur'an predominantly employs three primary sentence structures-object-verb-subject (OVS), verb-subject-object (VSO), and verb-object-subject (VOS)-each fulfilling distinct rhetorical functions. For instance, OVS constructions frequently serve to foreground specific sub-topics, thereby enhancing thematic organization. A notable example appears in Surah Al-Isra', where the verse reads:

Qur'anic Verse (Arabic)	وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ
Romanization	<i>Wa-qāla rabbukum u 'budūnī astajib lakum.</i>
English Translation (Sahih International)	And your Lord says, "Call upon Me; I will respond to you." (Qur'an, 40:60)

Here, syntactic foregrounding via the OVS arrangement emphasizes the primacy of divine commands, drawing immediate attention to the obligation of worship and supplication. In contrast, VSO structures, representing the canonical order of Classical Arabic, are primarily utilized for declarative exposition, facilitating the smooth transmission of theological and moral knowledge. This default ordering ensures clarity, maintains the narrative flow, and supports the Qur'an's persuasive aims within its broader theological discourse. Furthermore, Al-Heeh (2020) observed that these syntactic patterns are strategically deployed to achieve varying rhetorical objectives across the Qur'anic corpus. In a related vein, Mohamed and Khaled (2021) demonstrated that rhetorical omission a distinctive syntactic device, enhances semantic depth by inviting reader inference, thereby fostering more active interpretive engagement. Collectively, these findings affirm that the Qur'an's syntactic flexibility is not merely ornamental but functionally integral, aligning grammatical structures with its overarching theological aims and communicative strategies. Taken together, the morphological and syntactic patterns examined above underscore the necessity for an integrative analytical framework that can holistically capture the Qur'an's layered stylistic and linguistic complexity.

Toward an integrative model of Qur'anic stylistics

A comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic discourse necessitates an integrative model that synthesizes insights from classical Arabic stylistics, modern linguistic theory, and emerging digital methodologies. While each framework contributes distinct perspectives, their convergence enables a fuller appreciation of the Qur'an's dynamic linguistic and rhetorical architecture. This model illustrates a multi-layered approach to Qur'anic discourse, encompassing micro-level rhetorical devices (e.g., metaphor, *saj'*, parallelism, ellipsis), meso-level syntactic and morphological structures (e.g., VSO, OVS, morphological trajectories), and macro-level discourse strategies (e.g., tone shifts, narrative cohesion) (*Figure 1*). It integrates classical Arabic stylistics (*balāghah*, *i'jāz*, *nazm*), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and digital methodologies (stylometry, corpus-based analysis) into a unified analytical framework. This integration facilitates holistic understanding, enables cross-surah comparisons, supports pedagogical applications, and advances digital humanities research in Qur'anic studies. From the classical perspective, Arabic stylistics, rooted in the traditions of *balāghah* and *i'jāz*—foregrounds the Qur'an's eloquence through the analysis of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, ellipsis, and *saj'* (Abdul-Raof, 2017; Boullata, 2000). These frameworks emphasize that stylistic choices in the Qur'an are profoundly intentional, serving theological, aesthetic, and communicative functions. Nevertheless, classical approaches often analyze stylistic features individually without fully theorizing their systematic interaction across broader textual units.

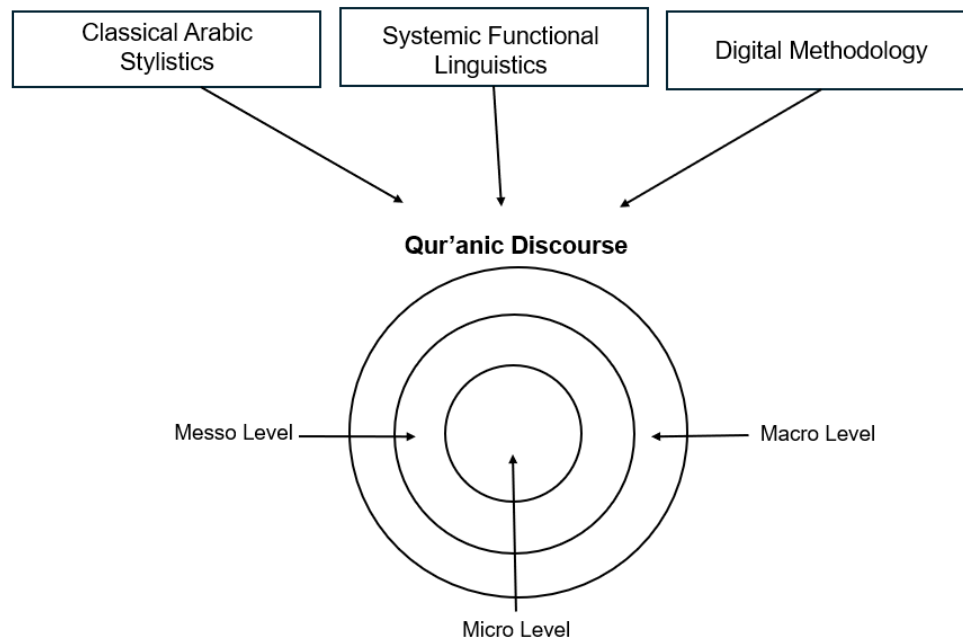


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for analyzing stylistic and linguistic variation in the Qur'an.

Building on this foundation, modern linguistic theories, particularly Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), offer mechanisms for understanding how grammatical structures fulfill ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions (Al-Heeh, 2020; Sadeghi, 2011). SFL-based studies demonstrate that variations in syntactic arrangements, such as VSO, OVS, and VOS constructions correspond to shifts in discourse organization, audience engagement, and thematic emphasis. In parallel, stylometric and digital analyses complement these frameworks by offering empirical validation of stylistic patterns and shifts across the Qur'anic corpus. Techniques such as machine learning, frequency analysis, and corpus linguistics have enabled scholars to detect previously unnoticed rhetorical patterns and morphological trajectories (Stewart, 2021; Alqurneh et al., 2016; Sadeghi, 2011), thereby confirming traditional insights while uncovering subtle dynamics of linguistic variation. Based on the previous discussion, an integrative model of Qur'anic stylistics must therefore operate across multiple layers: rhetorical devices at the micro-level (word, phrase), syntactic and morphological structures at the meso-level (sentence, passage), and discourse strategies at the macro-level (surah, corpus). By triangulating classical rhetorical analysis, functional grammar, and digital stylometry, this model accounts for both the coherence and contextual responsiveness of Qur'anic discourse. It affirms that stylistic features are not isolated ornaments but integral components of the Qur'an's communicative design, theological expression, and rhetorical sophistication.

Theoretical and practical implications

The development of an integrative model of Qur'anic stylistics carries significant theoretical and practical implications for the study of religious discourse, Arabic linguistics, and the digital humanities. By synthesizing classical Arabic rhetorical traditions, such as *balāghah* (eloquence) and *i'jāz* (inimitability) with modern linguistic theories and empirical digital methodologies, this model cultivates a more integrated

comprehension of the Qur'an's communicative strategies. At the theoretical level, the integration of classical principles with frameworks such as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and stylometric analysis enriches existing paradigms for interpreting Qur'anic language (Al-Heeh, 2020; Abdul-Raof, 2017; Alqurneh et al., 2016; Sadeghi, 2011; Boullata, 2000). Classical scholarship offers invaluable insights into the aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions of the Qur'an, while modern linguistic and computational methods reveal that stylistic variation is systematically aligned with communicative, thematic, and theological functions rather than being merely ornamental. This theoretical synthesis challenges disciplinary boundaries, encouraging a more interdisciplinary approach to Qur'anic analysis. Furthermore, it underscores the Qur'an's dynamic interplay between form and meaning, highlighting how linguistic artistry serves both theological imperatives and rhetorical efficacy.

On a practical level, the proposed model offers substantial potential for advancing pedagogical practices in Qur'anic studies and Arabic rhetoric instruction. By systematically framing stylistic features, such as syntactic variation, rhetorical devices, and morphological trajectories; within an integrated communicative framework, educators can cultivate a more profound appreciation of Qur'anic eloquence among students. Observations concerning the stylistic individuality of each surah (Stewart, 2021) underscore the value of training learners to recognize cross-surah patterns, thereby enhancing interpretive competencies and fostering deeper engagement with the Qur'an's layered meanings. Such pedagogical innovations not only enrich traditional tafsir studies but also align with contemporary educational imperatives that seek to balance analytical rigor with reflective spiritual inquiry. Extending beyond pedagogical contexts, the model also facilitates new possibilities within the field of digital humanities. It promotes the incorporation of computational tools, such as machine learning, stylometric modeling, and discourse visualization, into Qur'anic stylistics research. Corpus-based investigations (Alqurneh et al., 2016) have demonstrated how such methods enable scholars to detect and analyze linguistic phenomena at scales previously unattainable through traditional analysis. For instance, machine learning algorithms can uncover recurring rhetorical patterns, while stylometric techniques quantify stylistic consistencies and thematic shifts across surahs. Collectively, these innovations support the development of digital platforms for exploring Qur'anic style, thereby opening new pathways for scholarly inquiry, educational practice, and broader public engagement. By bridging traditional exegesis with contemporary technological methodologies, the integrative model ensures that the Qur'an's linguistic and rhetorical complexity remains both accessible and analyzable across diverse academic and cultural contexts.

Conclusion

This conceptual study has explored the intricate stylistic and linguistic patterns that define Qur'anic discourse, highlighting the dynamic interplay between rhetorical artistry, syntactic variation, and thematic organization. By synthesizing insights from classical Arabic stylistics, modern linguistic theories, and digital methodologies, it proposes an integrative framework that captures the Qur'an's communicative precision, theological depth, and literary sophistication. Significantly, this study advocates for a paradigm shift from fragmented, isolated analyses toward a more cohesive, interdisciplinary approach to Qur'anic stylistics. The integration of classical rhetorical

principles, functional linguistic frameworks, and computational tools not only deepens theoretical understanding but also broadens the scope for practical applications. For instance, educators can incorporate these insights into curricula to cultivate a richer appreciation of Qur'anic style among students, while translators can leverage the framework to preserve the rhetorical nuances of the text in multilingual renditions, thereby maintaining its aesthetic and communicative integrity across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Future directions for research should extend this integrative model by examining how stylistic features are perceived and interpreted across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, particularly among non-Arabic-speaking audiences. Advances in machine learning, natural language processing, and digital visualization offer promising tools for analyzing Qur'anic stylistic patterns with unprecedented precision and scalability. When combined with classical exegetical insights, these technological innovations can foster deeper and more dynamic engagement with the Qur'an's linguistic and rhetorical complexity. In conclusion, this study advances Qur'anic studies as a multidisciplinary field, bridging traditional scholarship with contemporary analytical methodologies. By ensuring accessibility and relevance across both academic and public spheres, it lays a foundation for the sustained exploration of the Qur'an's enduring eloquence, theological profundity, and universal resonance.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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