

A Formalist Approach to Surah al-Kahf from the Perspective of Non-Normativity

Ezzat Molla Ebrahimi ¹

Professor, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

Abdolvahab Kamali Chahooi ²

Master's student in Arabic language and literature, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

Article History: Received 12 March 2024; Accepted 20 July 2024

ABSTRACT:

Original Paper

Non-normativity, understood as departures from linguistic norms and standards, has been notably articulated in modern linguistics and, in a serious scholarly manner, by formalists. The Qur'an, as the preeminent symbol of manifestations of beauty, perfection, and coherence of the Arabic language, transcends the framework of norms and standards, thereby placing itself at the apex of eloquence and rhetoric. This sacred text, aimed at institutionalizing monotheistic rationality, eradicating manifestations of polytheism, and instilling thoughts contrary to pre-Islamic (*al-jāhili*) norms, has crossed the boundaries of pre-Islamic tradition with a distinctive literary language, generating a revolution in Arabic language. The present study, adopting an analytical-descriptive approach, examines non-normativity in Surah al-Kahf at three levels: phonological, syntactic, and semantic. The findings indicate that at the phonological level, devices such as *al-ikhfā'* (concealment), *al-idghām* (assimilation), and *al-madd* (prolongation) serve to harmonize sound and musicality with meaning and the situational context of the surah. It is as if the scenes and events are unfolding and the audience perceives them with the faculty of hearing. At the syntactic level, phenomena such as *al-ḥadhf* (ellipsis), *al-taqdīm* (preposing), *al-ta'khīr* (postponing), *al-taḍmīn* (conflation), and *al-iltifāt* (shifts in person) enable the reader to apprehend God's focal points with the most complete concepts expressed in the briefest phrases. At the semantic level, non-normativity manifested through metaphors and figurative language fosters vivid imagery of various situations and dynamic reader cognition; so much so that the reader appears

1. Corresponding Author. Email Address: mebrahim@ut.ac.ir

2. Email Address: Abdolvahab.kamali@gmail.com

to observe all these elements and finds themselves in the scene of events. Consequently, with these aesthetics, the sacred text of the Qur'an is better understood, and its sweetness is savored.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an, Surah al-Kahf, Semantic implication, Phonological non-normativity, Syntactic non-normativity, Semantic non-normativity.

1. Introduction

One of the most significant characteristics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the division of knowledge into distinct academic disciplines. These disciplines became so specialized that their integration seemed nearly impossible (Scholes 1974). Among these sciences is linguistics, which has now assumed a leading role in the foundational movements of human knowledge—particularly in the humanities (Fađl 1998). This privileged position is not merely due to its foundational status in many intellectual schools or its contributions to their development, but because it has made language itself the object and material of inquiry.

Modern scientific perspectives continuously sow new seeds within the fertile grounds of linguistics, nourishing it with philosophical insights and methods. One of the most fragrant blossoms of this field is non-normativity, which was systematically cultivated by Russian Formalists. Non-normativity, a form of defamiliarization, was first theorized by Russian Formalist thinkers (Ahmadi 2001). They distinguished between normative language and literary language (Bennet 1979), analyzing texts through the lens of aesthetic principles and literary devices.

The Qur'an, as an eternal and inimitable text, occupies the pinnacle of linguistic expression with its miraculous vocabulary, sound patterns, and rhetorical structures. Within the Qur'an, various forms of non-normativity at phonological, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic levels are employed to subtly guide the reader toward layered meanings. Through these techniques, the divine nature of the text becomes perceptible, offering humanity a roadmap to salvation. Accordingly, this study explores instances of non-normativity in Surah al-Kahf, attempting to address the following research questions: What types of linguistic non-normativity are employed in the Qur'an as a rhetorically elevated text? What semantic implications are conveyed through deviation from standard linguistic norms in the verses of Surah al-Kahf?

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have investigated non-normativity in both literary and Qur'anic texts. Given the scope of the field, only the most relevant examples are mentioned here. Hamrit (2017) examined non-normativity at phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic levels in Surah Maryam, illuminating the rhetorical beauty of the Qur'an. Qelich Pase et al. (2021) analyzed syntactic and semantic non-normativity in the 27th juz' of the Qur'an, elucidating rhetorical devices such as metaphor, allegory, and repetition. Al-Azzam & al-Quran (2014) studied deviations from normative gender morphology in Qur'anic Arabic, interpreting them from an aesthetic-linguistic perspective. Rajaei & Khaqani (2014) demonstrated how attention to non-normativity in selected Qur'anic verses can reveal new interpretive meanings. Anari Bozchallouei et al. (2019) investigated *foregrounding* in Surah Tāhā, analyzing the structural-semantic alignment of the surah's composition with its title and message. Misaghian et al. (2023) explored how the grammatical non-normativity of objects in the first three *ajzā'* of the Qur'an contributes to both verbal and semantic beauty and opens the way for new conceptual formations. Despite these extensive efforts, the field remains open to further investigation. In particular, the non-normativity analysis in Surah Al-Kahf remains underexplored.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the late nineteenth century, with the rise of linguistic schools such as structuralism and stylistics, a call for transformation through breaking normative language conventions emerged. Yet, the dominance of the classical school, which emphasized strict adherence to established rules and formal unity, initially resisted this shift. Later, with the advent of Romanticism and subsequently the Symbolist movement, deviation from normative linguistic usage came to be accepted—eventually becoming a criterion for distinguishing poetry from non-poetry (Rāji' 1987).

Roland Barthes (1975) was among the first theorists to highlight this issue. He viewed the text as a transformed entity in which deviation from conventional norms is not only possible but essential. For Barthes, such non-normativity manifested through alteration of form, structure, and conventional expressions results in the creation of beauty. Non-normativity plays a crucial role in contemporary literary criticism and has revitalized the field of rhetoric. Known by various terms such as non-normativity, norm-deviation, and norm-violation, it is often categorized within the domain of *al-badī' al-ma'nawī* (semantic rhetoric) (Shamisa 1999).

Formalist theorists divided language into two types: Ordinary (referential) language: normative, informational, referential, and everyday; Literary (poetic) language: affective, humanistic, introspective, and non-normative. Both forms arise from the combinatory capacity of words in syntagmatic chains and structural cohesion. However, literary language often abandons conventional rules, embracing creative, non-normative structures (Alavi Moqaddam 1998).

Even the classical scholars of Arabic grammar addressed linguistic non-normativity, often referring to it as *al-ittisā'* (extension) or *al-majāz* (figurative expression), recognizing its role in departing from literal form to convey meaning through unconventional means (Jārallāh 2007). Pioneers like 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī paved the way for such linguistic creativity with his *naẓm* theory (arrangement), which emphasized not only lexical meanings but also the contextual and syntactic arrangement of words. According to al-Jurjānī (2001), such constructions, termed *al-'udūl* (deviation), give rise to two types of eloquent speech: that which derives its beauty from diction, and that which does so from composition.

Clearly, these departures from normative structures result in astonishing rhetorical effects, revealing layers of textual precision and sophistication. The All-Knowing and All-Wise God employs this miraculous technique to unveil profound meanings to those who contemplate the divine word.

4. Typology of Non-Normativity in Surah al-Kahf

In this section, we examine the various forms of non-normativity in Surah al-Kahf, and we analyze them at three levels: phonological, syntactic and semantic.

4.1. Phonological Non-Normativity

Understanding and identifying phonemes constitutes the initial axis of entry into a literary text. Indeed, sound constitutes one of the fundamental elements in the construction of literary text. Accordingly, linguists begin their analyses at the level of sound, the smallest linguistic unit (Khan 2002). The abstract and suggestive power of sound can create a vivid mental image, moving the listener from stillness to motion (Abū Rughayf 2008). Human nature finds auditory variation pleasing (Rāfi'ī 1965), and thus, phonological non-normativity carries significant aesthetic potential, aligning sound with meaning.

Phonetic features in Arabic are traditionally classified as either strong or

weak. Strong features include *al-jahr* (voicing), *al-shiddah* (intensity), *al-isti'ālā'* (elevation), *al-iḥbāq* (closenes), *al-iṣāmt* (voicelessness), *al-ṣafīr* (sibilance), *al-qalqalah* (echoic burst), *al-inḥirāf* (deviation), *al-takrār* (repetition), *al-tafashshī* (diffusion), and *al-ghunnah* (nasalization). In contrast, weak features include *al-hams* (whispering), *al-rikhwah* (softness), *al-istifāl* (lowering), *al-infitāḥ* (openness), *al-idhlāq* (fluidity), and *al-līn* (laxness) (Qari 1993).

In Surah al-Kahf, various verses exemplify this interplay of phonetic features. For instance, the phonetic composition of the words *yundhir* (to warn) and *yubashshir* (to give glad tidings) in verse Q. 18:2¹ is analyzed in table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Phonetic Features in the terms *yundhir* and *yubashshir* in the verse Q. 18:2

	Phoneme	Strong Features	Weak Features	Strong Count	Weak Count
Yubashshir	Y	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-līn</i>	2	4
	B	<i>al-jahr, al-shiddah, al-qalqalah</i>	<i>al-infitāḥ, al-istifāl, al-idhlāq</i>	3	3
	Sh	<i>al-iṣmāt, al-tafashshī</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-infitāḥ</i>	2	4
	Sh	<i>al-iṣmāt, al-tafashshī</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-infitāḥ</i>	2	4
	R	<i>al-jahr, al-inḥirāf, al-takrār</i>	<i>al-istifāl, al-infitāḥ, al-idhlāq, al-tawassuṭ</i>	3	4
	Total			12	19
Yundhir	Y	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-līn</i>	2	4
	N	<i>al-jahr, g al-hunnah</i>	<i>al-istifāl, al-infitāḥ, al-idhlāq, al-tawassuṭ</i>	2	4
	Dh	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-infitāḥ</i>	2	3
	R	<i>al-jahr, al-inḥirāf, al-takrār</i>	<i>al-istifāl, al-infitāḥ, al-idhlāq, al-tawassuṭ</i>	3	4
	Total			9	15

As the table shows, both words are dominated by weak phonetic features, particularly those associated with *al-hams*, *al-rikhwah*, *al-infitāḥ* and *al-līn*. The word *yubashshir* contains 12 strong and 19 weak features, while *yundhir* includes 9 strong and 15 weak features. This numerical dominance of weak traits contributes to the gentle and persuasive tone of both divine

1 - قَدْ أَفْضَلْنَا بِأَسْمَاءِ شَدِيدًا مِنْ لَدُنْهُ وَيَنْبَغِي لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ... (الكهف/ 2)

[a Book] upright, to warn of a severe punishment from Him, and to give good news to the faithful ... (Q. 18:2).

actions: *al-indhār* (warning) and *al-tabshīr* (gladtiding). The believers, who are recipients of *al-tabshīr*, are addressed with gentleness, and even opponents are guided through eloquence without any coercion. Another example appears in verse Q. 18:74,¹ in which Prophet Moses describes the child slain by al-Khiḍr using the word *zakīyyah* (pure), a term rich in weak phonetic traits (table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of Phonetic Features in the term *zakīyyah* in the verse Q. 18:74

	Phoneme	Strong Features	Weak Features	Strong Count	Weak Count
Zakīyyah	Z	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt, ṣaḡīr</i>	<i>al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-infitāḥ</i>	3	3
	K	<i>al-shiddah, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-infitāḥ, al-istifāl</i>	2	3
	Y	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-līn</i>	2	4
	Y	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-līn</i>	2	4
	<i>tā' marbūṭah</i>	<i>al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-infitāḥ, al-istifāl</i>	1	4
	Total			10	18

The word *zakīyyah* contains 10 strong and 18 weak phonetic features. This imbalance is neither coincidental nor stylistically neutral. The dominance of weak sounds creates a sound pattern that aurally mirrors the innocence, delicacy, and moral purity of the child being described, creating an emotive and semantic harmony between sound and meaning.

4.1.1. Types of Sound in Surah al-Kahf

4.1.1.1. Al-Madd (Vocal Prolongation)

Al-Madd is a salient phonological and rhetorical feature in Arabic, evoking varied semantic resonances through elongated articulation. In literary terms, *al-madd* refers to the prolongation of a vowel sound within a word (Naṣr 2003). This device not only carries aesthetic weight but also functions as a form of non-normativity, pushing the text into the realm of foregrounding. The prolonged sound can signify *al-ta'ẓīm* (magnification) or *al-mubālaghah* (exaggeration). For example, in the phrase *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, the extended pronunciation emphasizes the exclusive divinity of God. Ibn al-Jazarī (n.d., 1:345) refers to this as *al-madd al-mubālaghah*, underscoring

1 - فَأَنطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ قَالَ أَقْتَلْتَنِي بِكَ كَذِبًا بَغَيْرِ نَفْسِي لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا (الكهف/ 74)

So they went on. When they encountered a boy, he slew him. He said, "Did you slay an innocent soul, without [his having slain] anyone? You have certainly done a dire thing!" (Q. 18:74)

intensified negation of all deities besides God. In this respect the *al-madd* aligns with the context and the text in order to produce a secondary signification. For example, in verse Q. 18:15,¹ the demonstrative pronoun *hā'ulā'i* contains two types of *al-madd*, *al-madd al-muttaṣil* (connected) and *al-madd al-munfaṣil* (separated), both contributing to the depiction of distance between the referent and the speaker. This distance may be spatial or ideological, suggesting how far the polytheists have strayed by worshipping other than God. It may also imply the multitude of those engaged in idolatry (Qari 1993). Another example is Q. 18:42,² in which the *al-madd* of the word *rabbī* prolongs the vocal transition to *aḥadan*, emphasizing the separation between the concept of divinity and association. As Mayyas (2020) notes, this vocal elongation dramatizes the theological and emotional distance. This prolongation highlights the incompatibility between God and any potential partner; they are not only unequal—they are ontologically separate.

4.1.1.2. *Al-Ikhfā'* (Concealment)

Al-Ikhfā' refers to the partial concealment of the first phoneme into the second, while retaining the nasal resonance (Qari 1993). This phonetic concealment produces a form of phonological non-normativity, contributing to the aesthetic soundscape of the Qur'an and aligning the sonic structure with the semantic content. An instance of *al-ikhfā'* appears in verse Q. 18:65.³ In the phrase *min 'indinā* (from Our presence), *al-ikhfā'* occurs between the letters *nūn* and *'ayn*. From a normative perspective, a more straightforward expression would have been *minnā* (from Us), which appears in other verses such as Q. 7:72 and Q. 11:9. These instances convey a universal or general divine mercy, applicable to all of humanity, however, in Q. 18:65, the expression *min 'indanā* signals a specific and concealed type of divine mercy, granted to al-Khiḍr (al-samerai 2016). Moreover, one can say that in cases of *minnā*, the mercy is manifest and evident for the audience, but in Surah al-Kahf, Moses did not know what mercy God had bestowed upon al-Khiḍr. The use of *'indanā* emphasizes the personal,

1 - هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً لَوْلَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِمْ أَفَلَمْ يَأْخُذُوا بِاللَّهِ كَذِبًا (الكهف/ 15)

These our people have taken gods besides Him. Why do they not bring any clear authority touching them? So who is a greater wrongdoer than he who fabricates a lie against Allah? (Q. 18:15)

2 - ... يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا (الكهف/ 42)

... He was saying, "I wish I had not ascribed any partner to my Lord" (Q. 18:42).

3 - فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عَيْنِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا (الكهف/ 56)

[There] they found one of Our servants whom We had granted a mercy from Ourselves, and taught him a knowledge from Our own (Q. 18:65).

inaccessible origin of this mercy. Unlike other blessings that may be learned or cultivated, this *rahmah* is non-acquirable, infused directly by divine will, an interpretation corroborated by the exceptional acts performed by al-Khiḍr in the narrative. Through *al-ikhfā'*, the Qur'an mirrors this semantic concealment in phonetic form, producing a stylistic unity between sound and meaning.

Another example of *al-ikhfā'* occurs in the phrase *min dūnihimā* (Q. 18:93),¹ that harmonizes the wording with the meaning. That is, the people in question were not apparent; they were hidden among the two barriers from the view of others. Thus this concealment in sense is also mirrored in the wording. In this verse *al-ikhfā'* *al-'ulyā* (higher-level concealment) is effected, because the place of articulation of the letter /d/ is close to that of /n/ (Ḥaṣrī 1995). In this type of *al-ikhfā'*, the proximity of the articulatory organs for the two sounds produces a greater degree of concealment. Consequently, God does not use the expression *min ghayrihimā* and thereby sets aside that normative option. As a result, by aligning meaning and phonetic texture and by enhancing comprehension, the text resorts to non-normativity.

4.1.1.3. *Al-Idghām* (Assimilation)

Al-Idghām (assimilation) refers to the complete merging of the first letter's sound into the second, so that they are pronounced as a single geminated (doubled) consonant (Qari 1993). This process usually occurs between letters of similar articulation or closely positioned points of articulation, particularly when distinct pronunciation would be burdensome or dissonant. From this perspective, *al-idghām* is employed for the sake of facilitation.

A notable instance of *al-idghām* occurs in Q. 18:45.² The deep (underlying) structure of this verse could have permitted an alternative phrasing: *wa kāna Allāhu muqtadiran 'alā kulli shay'*. However, a non-normative phonological shaping takes place that serves specific rhetorical aims. One such aim is to create *al-idghām* in order to beautify the expression and to harmonize wording with meaning. By *al-idghām* of the word *shay'* into the predicate *muqtadiran*, the proposition "God is capable over everything" is rendered more aesthetically and semantically striking, since *shay'* is absorbed into *muqtadiran*. This phonetic merging conveys the idea that anything that can properly be called a "thing" falls entirely within God's power, and that nothing—not even the slightest particle—lies outside God's

1 - حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا (الكهف/93)

When he reached [the place] between the two barriers, he found between them a people who could hardly understand a word (Q. 18:93).

2 - ... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا (الكهف/45)

...And Allah is omnipotent over all things (Q.18:45).

dominion. Thus, the immersion of one word into another transfers the semantic content into the phonetic shape of the text.

4.1.1.4. *Al-Tafkhīm and al-Tarqīq*

Among the phonological non-normativities that contribute to the aesthetic richness of the Qur'anic style is the strategic use of *al-tafkhīm* (emphatic pronunciation) and *al-tarqīq* (soft or thin pronunciation). *Al-Tafkhīm* refers to the full and heavy articulation of certain phonemes—specifically those possessing the feature of *al-isti 'lā'* (elevation), namely: *kh, ṣ, ḍ, gh, ṭ, q, and z*. In contrast, *al-tarqīq* denotes the light and delicate articulation of phonemes, characteristic of those with *al-istifāl* (lowering), which includes all letters except those with *al-isti 'lā'*.

In Q. 18:19,¹ the phrase *wal-yatalaṭṭaf* showcases a notable phonetic progression from *al-tarqīq* to *al-tafkhīm* and then back to *al-tarqīq*. This verse recounts the deliberations of the Companions of the Cave upon awakening from their miraculous sleep. Needing sustenance, they resolved to send one of their group into the city, but cautiously, lest their presence be revealed. Accordingly, the word begins with four thin (*al-tarqīq*) segments—*l, y, t, l*—so that the person who will leave does so furtively and without drawing attention. Then, the insertion of the emphatic *ṭ* introduces a tonal shift, indicating the necessity of temporarily emerging into the public sphere to procure food. However, the word ends again with *f*, a softened phoneme, reinforcing the need to immediately retreat and avoid detection. God, as the narrator, does not use alternative formulations such as *liyab 'ath* or *liyadaqq*, which would follow normal narrative expectation, instead He chooses *wal-yatalaṭṭaf*, effecting a deliberate non-normativity so that the phonetic colouring of the word matches perfectly the meaning and the situation in which the Companions of the Cave find themselves.

Similarly, in the verse Q. 18:107,² all the letters of *firdaws* are articulated with *al-tarqīq*. Even the letter *r*, which is commonly realized with *al-tafkhīm*, is rendered thin here because of the preceding *kasra* (the /i/ vowel) (Qari 1993). This thin, gentle sonority and rhythm evoke the condition of paradise—softness, pleasure, and serenity—free from heaviness, hardship, or distress. For this reason God does not use the

1 - ... فَأَبْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكىٰ طعاماً فليأْتِ بَعْضُكُمْ يَري مِنهُ وَلْيُنْذِرْ بَعْضُكُمْ أَعَدَّا (الكهف/19)
... Send one of you to the city with this money. Let him observe which of them has the purest food, and bring you provisions from there. Let him be attentive, and let him not make anyone aware of you (Q. 18: 19)

2 - إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا (الكهف/107)
As for those who have faith and do righteous deeds they shall have the gardens of Firdaws for abode (Q. 18:107).

term *al-na'im* here; the phonetic non-normativity renders the meaning more tangibly in the sound itself. Furthermore, in the verse Q. 18:53,¹ the letter *r* in *al-nār* is given a thickened articulation. This *al-tafkhīm* is employed to manifest in the phonetic plane the intensity, harshness, and density of the fire (Mayyas 2020).

4.1.1.5. *Al-Jinās (Paronomasia)*

Another dimension of phonetic beauty is *al-jinās* (paronomasia), which creates a melodious rhythm in speech. What enhances the aesthetic value of *al-jinās* is the interpretive levels that accompany it; otherwise, *al-jinās* alone does not play a decisive role in beauty (al-Jurjānī 2002). In technical usage, *al-jinās* refers to the similarity of two words in pronunciation while differing in meaning (Hashemi 2012). In the verse Q. 18:14,² an incomplete *al-jinās* (*ghayr tāmm*) occurs between the two words *qāmū* and *qālū* (Harrari 2000, 16: 324). Through this *al-jinās*, God creates a pleasant harmony imbued with emphasis; namely, when these individuals awoke from that extraordinary sleep and rose up, they were endowed with firm spiritual strength (Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 15: 29). Thereafter, with the same strength and determination, they declared that their Lord is One. Likewise, in the verse Q. 18:104,³ an incomplete *al-jinās* is established between *yaḥsabūn* and *yuḥsinūn* (Harrari 2000, 17: 77). Just as these two words share identical sound and rhythm, so too in their content and ultimate outcome they are alike: even the good deed they presume to perform is but conjecture, far removed from reality and divine acceptance.

4.1.1.6. *Al-Takrār (Repetition)*

The recurrence of similar elements in different places within a literary work is called *al-takrār* (repetition). Repetition constitutes the very principle and foundation of order and harmony in the text (Majdi & Muhandis 1984, 2: 117). The stylistic device of repetition has a remarkable impact on the musical and semantic richness of the text, thereby contributing to its aesthetic creation. In Surah al-Kahf, various types of repetition, both verbal

1 - وَ رَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ مُوَاقِعُوهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَلَيْهَا مَصْرِفًا (الكهف/ 53)

The guilty will sight the Fire and know that they will fall into it, for they will find no means to circumvent it (Q. 18: 53)

2 - وَزَيَّنَّا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ فَلْنَا إِذَا سَطَطَا (الكهف/ 14)

And fortified their hearts, when they stood up and said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We will never invoke any god besides Him, for then we shall certainly have said an atrocious lie (Q. 18:14).

3 - الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا (الكهف/ 104)

Those whose endeavour goes awry in the life of the world, while they suppose they are doing good (Q. 18:104).

and semantic, can be observed. In the verses Q. 18:72¹ and Q. 18:75,² verbal repetition occurs for the purpose of reminder and admonition, in that al-Khidr recalls the condition he had set with Prophet Moses. In the second verse, the addition of the word *laka* serves as a rebuke to Moses, reminding him of the condition he had disregarded (Ibn Jamā'ah 1989, 1: 242). Similarly, in the verse Q. 18:82,³ repetition indicates Moses failure to uphold that condition. It is as though al-Khidr intends, through this repetition, to convey that no blame attaches to him, since the condition had already been neglected. The repeated phrase serves to forestall any objection by Moses during his explanation. Thus, the sentence, by way of emphasis, also carries an implicit reproach of Moses for his hastiness and failure to remain patient with the condition (Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 15: 119). In the verse Q. 18:71,⁴ as well as Q. 18:74,⁵ Moses, in his disapproval of al-Khidr, employs the same phrase (al-Zuhaili 1997, 15: 295). In the Q. 18:1-2,⁶ God removes crookedness from this Book and bestows upon it uprightness and rectitude. Thus, immediately after negating *'iwaj* (crookedness), He employs the word *qayyiman*, which conveys the same meaning as *wa-lam yaj'al lahu 'iwajan*. Here a form of semantic repetition occurs, leaving no room for any doubt concerning non-normativity (Harrari 2000, 16: 323).

4.2. Syntactic Non-Normativity

Observance of the rules, styles, and grammar of any language ensures its cohesion and prevents disintegration. However, at times, departing from these forms and syntactic structures produces the opposite effect, drawing greater attention from the audience and conveying a secondary message. Syntactic non-normativity refers to a departure from the conventional syntactic system and a breaking of its principles, thereby opening up new possibilities in language and creating novel expressions. In this way, the audience is exposed to a broader sphere of beauty and aesthetic experience (Yasrī n.d.). Syntactic non-normativity concerns the combination of a word

1 - قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (الكهف/ 72)

He said, "Did I not say, indeed you cannot have patience with me?" (Q. 18:72)

2 - قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (الكهف/ 75)

He said, "Did I not tell you, indeed you cannot have patience with me?" (Q. 18:75)

3 - ... ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِيعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا (الكهف/ 82)

... This is the interpretation of that over which you could not maintain patience" (Q. 18:82).

4 - ... قَالَ أَخَرَقْتُهَا إِفْغَرَقَ أَهْلَهَا لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا إِمْرًا (الكهف/ 71)

... He said, "Did you make a hole in it to drown its people? You have certainly done a monstrous thing!" (Q. 18:71)

5 - ... قَالَ أَقَتَلْتُ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا (الكهف/ 74)

... He said, "Did you slay an innocent soul, without [his having slain] anyone? You have certainly done a dire thing" (Q. 18:74)

6 - الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا • قَيِّمًا لِّيُنذِرَ بَأْسًا شَدِيدًا مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ ... (الكهف/ 1-2)

All praise belongs to Allah, who has sent down the Book to His servant and did not let any crookedness be in it, • [a Book] upright, to warn of a severe punishment from Him, ... (Q. 18:1-2).

with its collocates within the context in which it appears. Words and expressions are safeguarded by lexicon and syntax, which, by their norms and principles, regulate these combinations and normally prevent non-normativity. Yet this very transgression, in the realm of poetry and ornate prose, leaves a profound impact on the listener and leads to innovation and creativity in the form and structure of the text (al-Kharshah 2014), thereby generating fresh significations and beauties. Accordingly, any alteration or rearrangement in the collocation of sentence components or their adjuncts, and any departure from established rules, falls within the domain of syntactic non-normativity, whose various types are outlined below.

4.2.1. *Al-Iltifāt (Grammatical Shift)*

The secret of eloquence in *al-iltifāt* (grammatical shift) in Arabic lies in its capacity for variety and transition from one mode of expression to another, producing freshness for the listener and prompting heightened attentiveness to the discourse (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 1: 10). In general, there is a psychological and affective relationship between *al-iltifāt* and meaning, since meaning conveys the feeling or state of mind that the speaker seeks to impress upon the audience with the clearest and most proximate words (Barakāt 1984). *Al-Iltifāt* is among the most evident instances of deviation from the norm, as it introduces an unexpected shift within the conventional style of a text, compelling the reader to reflect upon the rupture.

Various examples of *al-iltifāt* occur in Surah al-Kahf. The first is *al-iltifāt* in pronouns, whereby the speaker—often for rhetorical reasons—shifts from one pronoun to another, diverging from the main pronoun of the discourse, whether from the third person to the second, from the second to the first, or vice versa. Arabs, in general, grow weary of prolonged use of a single pronoun; thus, they vary pronouns for stylistic freshness, sometimes switching to the vocative or the absent third person. This variation prevents monotony (Qartājī 1966, 1: 115). For instance, in the verse Q.18:46,¹ the phrase *inda rabbika* employs the third-person reference; but in the continuation, the discourse shifts to the first-person plural: *wa-yawma nusayyiru al-jibāla wa-tarā al-arḍa* (Q. 18:47).² The reason for this shift from third person to first person is that when God speaks of altering the order of existence, human intellects cannot fully grasp it (Abū Ḥayyān 1983, 6:

1 - ... وَ الْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَ خَيْرٌ أَمَلًا (الكهف/ 46)

... but lasting righteous deeds are better with your Lord in reward and better in hope (Q. 18: 46).

2 - وَ يَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالُ وَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ... (الكهف/ 47)

The day We shall set the mountains moving and you will see the earth in full view ... (Q. 18: 47).

134). Thus, He turns to the first person, which signifies the grandeur and magnitude of His power (Ibn 'Aṭīyyah 2001, 3: 520).

In another example, the verse Q. 18:48¹ initially uses the third person in *rabbika* so that the possessive *-ka* (your) might draw greater attention, impressing upon the addressee the terror and severity of the situation. Later in the verse, non-normativity occurs through a shift from a manifest noun to the first-person plural pronoun: *laqad ji'tumūnā kamā khalaqnākum*. This construction functions to threaten, reproach, and induce remorse in those who denied the Resurrection (Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 15: 79). The use of the first person in the context of divine threat intensifies the gravity of the warning and humiliates the deniers, who must now stand before the very God who had bestowed upon them innumerable blessings.

In another vers Q. 18:45,² God speaks of rain and its descent, referring to Himself with the first-person plural pronoun *nā*. Then the discourse shifts from the first person to the third person through the divine name *Allāh*, thereby impressing upon the audience the lesson that they must constantly remember their benefactor and show gratitude to Him. The shift to the third person through the majestic name serves to magnify, exalt, and affirm divine uniqueness, since such connotations cannot be conveyed by pronouns alone (Abū Ḥayyān 1983, 2: 236). Moreover, the manifest name encompasses all divine attributes and unambiguously signifies the lordship of the Creator who governs existence and exercises mastery over all things (Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 2: 144).

In some instances in Surah al-Kahf, *al-iltifāt* occurs in grammatical forms (*ṣiḡhah*). By *ṣiḡhah* is meant the morphological pattern upon which a word is constructed. Verbs and nouns, according to their structure, fall into various categories: simple trilateral (*thulāthī mujarrad*), augmented trilateral (*thulāthī mazīd*), simple quadrilateral (*rubā'ī mujarrad*), augmented quadrilateral (*rubā'ī mazīd*), and nouns of trilateral, quadrilateral, or quintilateral roots. *Al-Iltifāt* in *ṣiḡhah* occurs when, within a single unit of discourse, two different forms of verbs or nouns—or one verbal form alongside a nominal form—appear unexpectedly for rhetorical reasons.

1 - وَ غَرَضُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ صَفًّا لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ... (الكهف/48)

They will be presented before your Lord in ranks: "Certainly you have come to Us just as We created you the first time" ... (Q. 18: 48).

2 - وَ اضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلِ الْخَيْاءِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا أَنزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيحُ وَ كَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا (الكهف/45)
Draw for them the parable of the life of this world: [It is]like the water We send down from the sky. Then the earth's vegetation mingles with it. Then it becomes chaff, scattered by the wind. And Allah is omnipotent over all things (Q. 18: 46).

Such deviation falls within the sphere of grammatical non-normativity.

In the verse Q. 18:78,¹ the phrase *lam tastafī* ' employs a verb in the imperfect form with the augmentative particle *-ta*. Thus one would expect the same form to continue. Yet God deviates from this form in the subsequent verse, employing *tastī* ' (Q. 18:82).² The reason for this non-normativity is that in *lam tastafī* ', al-Khiḍr had not yet revealed the reasons behind his actions, and thus these actions still weighed heavily upon Moses. The heavier form matched the burden of incomprehension. By contrast, in *lam tastī* ', the reasons for al-Khiḍr's actions had already been disclosed, thereby alleviating the weight upon Moses. Accordingly, a lighter form was employed (Ibn Kathīr 1998, 5: 169).

Another form of *al-iltifāt* in this surah concerns particles (*al-adawāt*). By *al-adawāt* is meant, in a broad sense, particles of condition, conjunction, emphasis, and the like. What is intended by deviation from the norm in this context is that within a phrase or expression, a particle may sometimes be mentioned and at other times omitted (Tabl 1997). In the verse Q. 18:71,³ the phrase *kharaqahā* serves as the apodosis for *idhā*. Yet, unlike the two other examples of *idhā* in Q. 18:74⁴ and Q. 18:77,⁵ the apodosis is not preceded by the particle *fa* '. This constitutes a departure from the norm and thus falls within grammatical non-normativity. It is as if, in the cases where *fa* ' is used, the consequence of the condition occurred immediately upon the arrival of Moses and al-Khiḍr at the scene (Shihab n.d.). In contrast, in the instance where *fa* ' is omitted, the action did not take place immediately but only after some time had elapsed; al-Khiḍr did not pierce the ship at once, but rather after they had sailed into the sea, he made the hole.

4.2.2. *Al-Ḥadhf* (Ellipsis)

The phenomenon of *al-ḥadhf* (ellipsis) is one of the most significant issues in language, bearing rhetorical functions and implications in

1 - ... سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا (الكهف/78)

I will inform you about the interpretation of that over which you could not maintain patience (Q. 18:78).

2 - ... ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا (الكهف/82)

This is the interpretation of that over which you could not maintain patience" (Q. 18:82).

3 - فَأَنظَلْنَاهَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا ... (الكهف/71)

So they went on. When they boarded the boat, he made a hole in it... (Q. 18:71).

4 - فَأَنظَلْنَاهَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ ... (الكهف/74)

So they went on. When they encountered a boy, he slew him... (Q. 18:74).

5 - فَأَنظَلْنَاهَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَىٰ أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَطْعَمُوا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبَوْا أَن يُضَيِّقُوا لَهُمَا ... (الكهف/77)

So they went on. When they came to the people of a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to extend them any hospitality... (Q. 18:77).

discourse. As al-Jurjānī (2001) remarks: Ellipsis is a field whose path is subtle, a phenomenon wondrous and akin to magic; for sometimes omission is more eloquent than mention, and silence yields greater effect than speech. In technical usage, ellipsis means the deliberate omission of a part of the sentence for a specific rhetorical purpose, while the omitted element can be inferred through verbal or contextual indicators (Hashemi 2012).

This surah contains multiple examples of ellipsis. In the verse Q. 18:25,¹ the noun *al-tamyīz* following the number *tis ‘an* is omitted. The normative structure would be *tis ‘a sinīn* (nine years). The non-normativity is justified by the fact that the omitted word is already clear from the preceding phrase, where *sinīn* is mentioned. In Q. 18:23–24,² a verb is omitted, its presence being understood through the context. Similarly, in Q. 18:14,³ contrary to the usual norm, both the conditional verb and its particle are omitted, leaving only the apodosis expressed.

4.2.3. *Al-Taqdīm & Al-Ta’khīr* (preposing & postponing)

Another rhetorical device frequently employed by eloquent speakers for diverse purposes is *al-taqdīm* and *al-ta’khīr*, which consists in placing a word before or after its usual position in order to achieve exclusivity, emphasis, or rhetorical necessity (Şarşarī 1988). In this device, the arrangement of speech is altered so that by advancing or delaying a word, phrase, or meaning, a specific aim or wisdom may be conveyed (‘Awn 2005).

In Surah al-Kahf, various instances of this stylistic feature occur. In Q.18:5,⁴ the normal word order is not observed, as the subject *‘ilm* is delayed and the predicate *lahum* advanced—contrary to the standard Arabic sentence structure. This non-normativity, on one hand, serves as a reproach for their ignorance and, on the other, intensifies the negation (Ṭantāwī 1997, 8: 468). Thus, the inversion generates an additional layer of meaning.

In Q.18:26,⁵ the normative order is altered so as to emphasize that

1- وَ لَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَ اِذْ ذَا ذُكِرُوا تَبَعُوا (الكهف/ 25)

They remained in the Cave for three hundred years, and added nine more [to that number] (Q. 18:25).

2- وَ لَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا كُنَّا عَمِلَا إِنَّا فَاعِلُونَ ذَلِكَ غَدًا * إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ... (الكهف/ 23–24)

Do not say about anything, "I will indeed do it tomorrow," (23) without [adding], "if Allah wishes" (Q. 18:23–24).

3- ... لَنْ تَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذًا شَطَطًا (الكهف/ 14)

We will never invoke any god besides Him, for then we shall certainly have said an atrocious lie (Q. 18:14).

4- مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ... (الكهف/ 5)

They do not have any knowledge of that... (Q. 18:5).

5- قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ ... (الكهف/ 26)

knowledge of the unseen of the heavens and the earth belongs exclusively to God. Later in the same verse, another inversion appears in Q. 18:26,¹ where the subject *walī* is delayed and the predicate *lahum* advanced, thereby underscoring that the only true guardian and sovereign of affairs is God (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 1: 527). Another example occurs in the precedence of the second object over the first in verbs of cognition, as in Q. 18:94.² Here, the people of the region request Dhū al-Qarnayn to erect a barrier between them and Gog and Magog (Ṭanṭāwī 1997, 8: 573). Their non-normativity in word order reflects urgency, indicating their desire for Dhū al-Qarnayn to give immediate priority to solving their problem.

In Q. 18:22,³ the norm is likewise altered by advancing *minhum* before *aḥad*. Two reasons account for this non-normativity: a) to establish absolute generality of negation, meaning the prohibition applies to all individuals without exception (‘Atīq 1984). If *aḥad* had been advanced, the meaning would have been restricted, implying that the Prophet was only forbidden from inquiring about certain individuals, while others would remain permissible. By inverting the order, the prohibition is universal. b) Another rhetorical purpose is observance of rhythmic spacing, which maintains stylistic balance. Finally, in Q. 18:82,⁴ the usual surface structure is modified to emphasize that the treasure buried beneath the wall belonged solely to the orphans, with no one else sharing a claim.

4.2.4. *Al-Taḍmīn* (Conflation)

Through *al-taḍmīn*, the eloquent speaker conveys abundant meaning within a concise expression, saturating the audience with depth while using the fewest words. This device falls under the category of elliptical brevity (*al-ījāz bil-ḥadhf*). *Al-Taḍmīn* consists in injecting into a word the meaning of another word and assigning to it the function of that second word, such that a single expression bears two meanings simultaneously. The principal aim of *al-taḍmīn* is therefore to convey dual signification through one utterance (Ibn Hishām 1979, 2: 897). It serves both conciseness and

Say, "Allah knows best how long they remained. To Him belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth..." (Q. 18:26).

1- ... مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ ... (الكهف/26)

... They have no guardian besides Him ... (Q. 18:26).

2- ... فَهَلْ تَجْعَلْ لَكَ خَرْجاً عَلَى أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا (الكهف/94)

... Shall we pay you a tribute on condition that you build a barrier between them and us? (Q. 18:94)

3- ... وَلَا تَسْأَلْ فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (الكهف/22)

... and do not question about them any of them (Q. 18:22).

4- ... وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا ... (الكهف/82)

...Under it there was a treasure belonging to them...(Q. 18:82).

semantic expansion (Ibn Qayyim n.d.). By definition, then, *al-taḍmīn* is a kind of deviation from linguistic norm employed for rhetorical purposes, designed to enhance the aesthetic force of speech. An example occurs in the verse Q. 18:28.¹ The verb *ʿadā* is normally transitive without a preposition, meaning “to cross, to pass over.” Here, however, it is made transitive with the preposition *ʿan*, thereby conveying an additional sense: “to disdain, to disregard.” This non-normativity achieves conciseness with expansion of meaning, combining both senses: one must not turn one’s gaze away from them, nor should one disdain them in favor of others (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 2:716). In Q.18:37,² the verb *sawwā* incorporates the meaning of *ṣayyartuka* and *jaʿaltuka* (I made you/I rendered you), and thus requires two objects (al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī 1993, 4: 456). Consequently, *sawwāka* here conveys not merely “to shape” but also “to constitute, to render” (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 2: 722).

4.3 Semantic Non-Normativity

Semantic non-normativity represents another level of norm-breaking, whereby the reader or listener is led to the intended meaning in a way that departs from habitual usage. This stylistic device disrupts expectations in order to draw greater attention and create surprise (Riffaterre 1993). At this level, discourse transcends its primary denotations, suppressing conventional associations in favor of novel, non-habitual signification (al-Rawashidah, 2004).

4.3.1. *Al-Istiʿārah (Metaphor)*

In technical usage, metaphor is the employment of a word in a sense other than that for which it was originally coined, on the basis of a relation of similarity between the original and borrowed meaning, accompanied by an indicator (*al-qarīnah*) preventing the literal sense from being intended (Hashemi 2012). Metaphor is abundantly present in Surah al-Kahf, producing striking imagery that enables the audience to penetrate more deeply into the divine message. As a form of non-normativity, metaphor conveys a concept contrary to its literal norm, thereby intensifying perception. It removes the word from its conventional range and ushers it

1 - ...وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ... (الكهف/ 28)

...and do not loose sight of them, desiring the glitter of the life of this world...(Q. 18:28).

2 - ... ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ رَجُلًا (الكهف/ 37)

then fashioned you as a man? (Q. 18:37)

into a greener field, or rather pours it into the valley of figurative speech, where it flourishes beyond its original capacity (Nasif 1981).

For instance, in Q. 18:6,¹ the tireless effort of the Prophet to guide the idolaters is expressed through an *al-isti'ārah al-tamhīlīyyah* (allegorical metaphor), likening him to one who has lost a loved one and wishes to destroy himself out of grief (Sabuni 1997, 2: 173). This expression consoles the Prophet while simultaneously underscoring his intense devotion to human guidance. In Q. 18:51,² although *'aḍud* in Arabic literally refers to the upper arm between elbow and shoulder (al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī 1991), here it is used metaphorically to signify “supporter, ally” (Harrari 2000, 16: 428). Since the arm symbolizes strength, the metaphor emphasizes that no matter how powerful the misguided may be, God does not take them as helpers. In Q. 18:63,³ the verb *ra'ā* departs from its basic meaning of visual perception. Through an *al-isti'ārah*, it comes to signify full knowledge and awareness (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 2: 733). Thus, complete recognition is likened to complete visual seeing. Here *ra'ayta* is the borrowed term (*musta'ār minh*), while cognition is the intended referent (*musta'ār lah*). The unifying factor is the acquisition of knowledge, as though the matter were so vividly observed that no doubt remained (Harrari 2000, 16: 459).

4.3.2. *Al-Majāz (Metonymy)*

Metonymy refers to the attribution of an action, or that which implies action, to something other than its true agent, on the basis of a semantic association (*'alāqah*), accompanied by a contextual indicator that prevents the literal meaning from being intended (Sultani 2005). Classified into *al-majāz al-'aqlī* and *al-majāz al-mursal*, this rhetorical device represents a type of non-normativity that enriches discourse with aesthetic effect. It stimulates the imagination to substitute an analogous meaning for the original, thereby broadening interpretive horizons (al-Jurjānī 2002).

An instance appears in Q. 18:77,⁴ where *al-majāz al-'aqlī* attributes volition to an inanimate object, portraying the wall as if endowed with will

1 - فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاغِعٌ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا (الكهف/ 6)

You are liable to imperil your life for their sake, if they should not believe this discourse, out of grief (Q. 18:6).

2 - ... وَ مَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّينَ عَضُدًا (الكهف/ 51)

... nor do I take those who mislead as assistants (Q. 18:51).

3 - قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوْتِينَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ ... (الكهف/ 63)

He said, "Did you see?! When we took shelter at the rock...(Q. 18:63).

4 - ... فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقَضَ ... (الكهف/ 77)

... There they found a wall which was about to collapse ...(Q. 18:77).

and sensation (al-Saghir 1999). This non-normativity harmonizes with the verse's context, in which Moses encountered extraordinary phenomena. The image of a wall "desiring to collapse" aptly reflects the pattern of wondrous events that characterized his journey with al-Khidr. The use of the imperfect verb *yurīdu*, conveying continuity, intensifies the imagery by suggesting repeated tremors that drew attention, prompting their repair of the wall. In Q. 18:57,¹ the word *yad* (hand) functions metonymically, representing the human being as a whole. The hand is employed because of its vital role in human activity, standing here for the totality of human deeds (Harrari 2000, 16: 428).

4.3.3. *Al-Kināyah (Allusion)*

Al-Kināyah constitutes another striking manifestation of harmony between form and meaning in Arabic rhetoric. It involves expression through imagery whose apparent meaning is not intended, yet unlike metaphor, it lacks an explicit contextual indicator redirecting the reader toward the hidden sense (Shamisa 2002). In Q. 18:42,² the gesture of "turning one's palms" is an allusion to deep regret and remorse. The physical act symbolizes the inner state of one who, out of despair, strikes one hand against the other in grief.

5. Conclusion

Deviation from conventional linguistic norms engages the reader more profoundly with the text, drawing attention to secondary meanings alongside primary ones, and allowing for a fuller apprehension of the speaker's intent. As the Qur'an employs diverse stylistic and formal strategies to saturate its audience with guidance while presenting ever-renewed linguistic artistry. The analysis of Surah al-Kahf yields the following findings:

In phonological level, a wide range of sound patterns, including strong and weak phonetic features, concealment (*al-ikhfā'*), assimilation (*al-idghām*), prolongation (*al-madd*), emphatic and soft articulation, repetition (*al-takrār*) (lexical and semantic), and paronomasia (*al-jinās*), creates a musical harmony between sound and meaning. This interplay generates a dynamic, sensorially rich atmosphere in which the audience not only comprehends the meaning but also experiences it aurally and visually,

1 - ... وَ نَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ ... (الكهف/ 57)

... and forgets what his hands have sent ahead?... (Q. 18:57)

2 - ... فَأَصْبَحَ يَلَّغُلْ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَى مَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا ... (الكهف/ 42)

... and he began to wring his hands for what he had spent on it... (Q. 18:42).

enhancing their grasp of Qur'anic eloquence. In syntactic level, numerous rhetorical non-normativities appear, such as ellipsis (which demonstrates that the omitted element is contextually evident and enhances brevity), preposing and postponing (for emphasis and specification), syntactic incorporation (*al-taḍmīn*, which conveys multiple meanings simultaneously), and various shifts of references (*al-iltifāt* in pronouns and particles), which maintain textual freshness and prevent monotony. Collectively, these features intensify eloquence, brevity, and rhetorical force, ensuring the audience's undistracted focus on the divine message. In semantic level, devices such as metaphor, metonymy, and allusion provide vivid mental imagery of diverse situations, stimulating the reader's imaginative faculties. Thus, reciting the surah evokes the sensation of witnessing its events directly, immersing the reader in its dramatic scenes, and deepening appreciation of the Qur'an's aesthetic and miraculous qualities. In sum, the linguistic structure of Surah al-Kahf, particularly its systematic non-normativities from ordinary usage, serves as an effective medium for deepening comprehension, anchoring meaning in the reader's mind, and amplifying receptivity to its divine teachings.

Acknowledgements

The authors declare that there are no competing interests. This research did not receive any specific funding from any public, commercial, or nonprofit funding bodies

References

- Abū Ḥayyān, M. (1983). *Al-Baḥr al-muḥīt fī al-tafsīr*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
- Abū Rughayf, N. (2008). *Al-Mustawayāt al-jamālīyah fī Nahj al-Balāghah*. Baghdad: Dār Shu'ūn al-Thaqāfah al-Āmmah.
- Ahmadi, B. (2001). *Structure and interpretation of the text* (in Persian). Tehran: Nashr Markaz.
- Alavi Moqaddam, M. (1998). *Contemporary theories of literary criticism (formalism and structuralism)* (in Persian). Tehran: SAMT.
- Al-Azzam, B. & Al-Quran, M. (2014). Inflectional Deviation of Gender in the Qur'an. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 8(2), 132–140.
- Al-Jurjānī, 'A. (2001). *Dalā'il al-i'jāz*. Cairo: Dār al-Madani.
- Al-Jurjānī, 'A. (2002). *Asrār al-balāghah fī 'ilm al-bayān*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah.
- Al-Kharshah, A. G. (2014). *Uslūbiyyah al-inziyāh fī al-naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī*. Amman: al-Akāḍimiyyūn lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzī'.

- Al-Rāfi 'ī, M. (1965). *I'jāz al-Qur'ān*. Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyyah.
- Al-Rāghib al-İsfahānī, H. (1991). *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār al-Qalam.
- Al-Rawashidah, A. (2004). *Shi'rīyah al-inziyāh: Dirāsah fī tajribah Muḥammad 'Alī Shams al-Dīn al-shi'rīyyah*. Jordan: Dār al-Yāzūrī.
- Al-Saghir, M. H. (1999). *Majāz al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār al-Mu'arrikh al-'Arabī.
- Al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, A. (1993). *Al-Durr al-maṣūn fī 'ulūm al-kitāb al-maknūn*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah.
- Al-Zamakhsharī, M. (1987). *Al-Kashshāf*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī.
- Al-Zuhaili, W. (1997). *Al-Tafsīr al-munīr fī al-'aqidah wa al-sharī'ah wa al-manhaj*. Beirut: Dār al-fikr al-mu'āṣir.
- Anari Bozchallouei, I., Rasouli, E., Sajjadi, A. & Omidali, A. (2019). Formalism Investigation and Analysis of Taha Surah from Leech's point of view. *Arabic Literature Bulletin*, 10(19), 151-178.
- 'Atīq, 'A. (1984). *Fī al-balāghah al-'Arabīyyah: 'Ilm al-ma'ānī wa al-bayān wa al-badī'*. Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyyah.
- 'Atīq, 'U. (2010). Al-Uslūbīyyah al-ṣawṭīyyah fī al-fawāṣil al-Qur'ānīyyah. *Al-Manār*, 3(16), 165–188.
- 'Awn, 'A. (2005). *Balāghah al-taqdīm wa al-ta'khīr fī al-Qur'ān al-karīm*. Beirut: Dār al-Madār al-Islāmī.
- Barakāt, M. (1984). *Dirāsāt fī al-balāghah al-'Arabīyyah*. Amman: Dār al-Fikr.
- Barthes, R. (1975.). *The Pleasure of the Text*. Hill and Wang.
- Bennet, T. (1979). *Formalism and Marxism*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Faḍl, Ş. (1998). *Nazarīyyah al-binā'īyyah fī al-naqd al-adabī*. Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq.
- Hamrit, H. (2017). *The Phenomenon of Linguistic Shift in the Noble Qur'an-Surat Maryam*. Master's Thesis, University of M'sila, Algeria.
- Harrari, M. A. (2000). *Tafsīr ḥadā'iq al-rūḥ wa al-rayḥān*. Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāh.
- Hashemi, S. A. (2012). *Jawāhir al-balāghah*. Qom: Nashr Uḍabā'.
- Ḥaṣrī, M. K. (1995). *Aḥkām qirā'ah al-Qur'ān al-karīm*. Riyadh: Al-Maktabah al-Makkīyah.
- Ibn al-Jazarī, M. (n.d.). *Al-Nashr fī al-qirā'āt al-'ashr*. Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Tijārīyyah al-Kubrā.
- Ibn 'Āshūr, M. (1999). *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-tanwīr*. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Tārīkh.
- Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, 'A. (2001). *Al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-'azīz*. Beirut:

Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah.

Ibn Hishām. ‘A. (1979). *Mughnī al-labīb ‘an kutub al-a‘ārīb*. Tabriz: Bani Hāshim Publications.

Ibn Jamā‘ah, M. (1989). *Kashf al-ma‘ānī fī al-mutashābih min al-mathānī*. Cairo: Dār al-Wafā’.

Ibn Kathīr, I. (1998). *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyyah, M. (n.d.). *Badā’i‘ al-fawā’id*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī.

Jārallāh, L. (2007). *Al-Baḥṭh al-dalālī fī kitāb Sībawayh*. Jordan: Dār Dijlah.

Khan, M. (2002). *Al-Lahajāt al-‘Arabīyyah wa al-qirā’āt al-Qur’ānīyyah: Dirāsah fī Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*. Cairo: Dār al-Fajr.

Majdi, W. & Muhandis, K. (1984). *Mu‘jam al-muṣṭalaḥāt al-‘Arabīyyah fī al-lughah wa al-adab*. Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān.

Mayyas, K. F. (2020). Al-Dalālāt al-ṣawṭīyyah fī Sūrat al-Kahf. *Qirā’āt*, 12(1), 29–45.

Misaghian, A., Khosravi, K., Moradian Ghobadi, A.A. & Mahdian Torghabeh, R. (2023). Deviation of Objects in the Holy Qur’ān Based on Jonathan Cohen's Theory: The Case Study of Ajza One to Three. *Literary Qur’anic Researches*, 11(1), 1-17. <http://doi.org/10.22034/paq.2023.708143>

Nasif, M. (1981). *Al-Ṣūrah al-adabīyyah*. Beirut: Dār al-Andalus.

Naṣr, ‘A. Q. (2003). *Ghāyat al-murīd fī ‘ilm al-tajwīd*. Cairo: Dār al-Qāhirah.

Qarai, A. Q. (2004). *Translation of the Holy Qur’an*. London: ICAS.

Qari, A. (1993). *Al-Tajwīd al-muyassar*. Medina: Maktabat al-Dār.

Qartājī, Ḥ. (1966). *Manāhij al-bulaghā’ wa-sirāj al-udabā’*. Tunis: Dār al-Kutub al-Sharqiyyah.

Qelich Pase, A., Yadgari, M., Tafreshi, M., & Bavan Puri, M. (2021). Deviation and departure in the Qur’an: the 27th Juz as a case study. *Journal of the Babylon for Humanities Studies*, 11(1), 691-714. <http://doi.org/10.33843/1152-011-001-025>

Rajae, M. & Khaqani Isfahani, M. (2014). The use of replacement axes in the discovery of new discourse analysis in the holy Qur’an. *Linguistic Research in the Holy Qur’an*, 3(2), 117-134.

Rāji‘, ‘A. (1987). *Al-Qaṣīdah al-maghribīyyah al-mu‘āṣirah: Bunyat al-shahādah wa al-istishhād*. Manshūrāt ‘uyūn.

Riffaterre, M. (1993). *Ma‘āyīr taḥlīl al-uslūb*. Transl. Ḥamīd Ḥamdānī. Morocco: al-Dār al-Bayḍā’.

Sabuni, M. A. (1997). *Ṣafwat al-tafsīr*. Beirut: Dār al-Qur’ān al-Karīm.

- Şarşarî, S. (1988). *Al-Iksîr fî 'ilm al-tafsîr*. Beirut: al-Dâr al-Awzâ'î.
- Scholes, R. (1974). *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction*. Yale University Press
- Shamisa, S. (1999). *Naqd adabî*. Tehran: Firdaws.
- Sultani, M. A. (2005). *Al-Mukhtâr min 'ulûm al-balāghah wa al-'arûḍ*. Damascus: Dâr al-'Uşmâ'.
- Tabl, H. (1997). *Uslûb al-iltifât fî al-balāghah al-Qur'ânîyyah*. Cairo: Dâr al-Fîkr al-'Arabî.
- Ṭanṭāwî, M. (1997). *Al-Tafsîr al-wasîṭ lil-Qur'ân al-karîm*. Cairo: Dâr al-Nahḍah.
- Yasrî, S. (n.d.). *Shi'rîyyat al-inzîyâḥ fî dîwân "Şamt al-sinîn" li-Bushrâ Zarwâl* M.A. thesis. Algeria.