

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ELEMENTS OF BALAGHAH AND NARRATION IN THE STORY OF MOSES

M. Anas (Corresponding author)

Faculty of Languages and Communication, Sultan Zainal Abidin University
21300 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia
Tel: +60199810909 Email: muzammir@unisza.edu.my

B.N. Zubir

Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia
50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: +60193860670 Email: badri@iium.edu.my

E.S. Engku Atek

Faculty of Languages and Communication, Sultan Zainal Abidin University
21300 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia
Tel: +60129009449 Email: esuhaimi@unisza.edu.my

Abstract

This study intends to unravel the balaghah aspect which supports the narrative structure of the story between Moses with the Pious Man in Surah al-Kahf as an effort to highlight the aesthetic value of the story. The two main elements of discussion are given the focal attention in the analysis, namely the balaghah aspects and the narrative structure to demonstrate the coordination between the two elements. This study applies the analytical method by extracting the aspects of balaghah through the conventional approach practiced and introduced by the Abd Al-Qāhir Al-Jurjānī. This approach explains the existence of the close relationship between the balaghah aspect and the narrative technique. The balaghah aspect is the element being analysed however this study attempts to relate the approach with the narrative structures. In analyzing Quranic texts related to Moses with the Pious Man, this study unravels the narrative structure found in the text by examining the balaghah aspects that support the structures. This analysis does not cover other available narratives which are not related to this particular story. This analysis also focuses on the word choice, the arrangement in

the text, the rational of using the word and its implication, and the lesson and example derived from the narrative. Hence, with this approach, the analysis is expected to provide answers especially to the priority given by the Quran to certain utterances in supporting the narrative structure of this story in an effort to highlight the compatibility and harmony between the balaghah aspects and the narrative structure, which lure the readers towards the beauty and uniqueness of the language found in the Quran, while simultaneously contribute new findings from different aspects.

Keywords: balaghah, narrative, structure, al-Kahf, Moses

Introduction

Beginning with verse 60 of Surat al-Kahf, the Quran narrates the story of Moses with his servant, who went in search of the Pious Man. It reads:

And [mention] when Moses said to his servant, "I will not cease [traveling] until I reach the junction of the two seas or continue for a long period." (al-Quran: 18: 60).

And it ends at the 82nd verse:

And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father had been righteous. So your Lord intended that they reach maturity and extract their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord. And I did it not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience.” (al-Quran: 18: 82).

In this story, the Quranic verses brought the readers directly to the journey taken by Moses and his servant without any introductory episode. Hence, at this moment, the Quran does not mention the factor that caused Moses to go out on a journey to find the Pious Man.

At the beginning of the story, there is also an element of suspense where the Quran merely mentions the place chosen as a destination for Moses and his servant (the place where ‘two seas’ meet), however it does not explain why the particular destination is chosen. It is only in the 65th verse where the readers are able to make conclusion on the factor of choosing the destination, which is where the Pious Man was found:

And they found a servant from among Our servants ... (al-Quran: 18: 65).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study aims to analyse the interplay between the narrative structure of a Quranic story and the rhetorical (hereafter balaghah) aspects of the expressions used in narrating the story. The story selected for analysis is the story of Moses and the Pious Man in Surah al-Kahf. The analysis focuses on how the balaghah elements support the narrative structure of the story and contribute toward the overall aesthetic effectiveness to the reader.

For the balaghah elements, the method of analysis employed is derived primarily from

the principles developed by Abd Al-Qāhir Al-Jurjānī (d. 470 AH). In this method, particular attention is accorded to the choice of word and syntactical features as well as the text arrangement in order to ascertain how these elements contribute toward layers of meaning that enrich the narrative and allude to the points or lessons that the story is meant to drive home. Thus, in this article, the narrative structure is first elucidated and then the analysis of the balaghah elements follows in order to demonstrate how the latter supports the former.

CHRONOLOGY OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

After the episode of the beginning of Moses’ journey, the narrative chronology in the Quran is as follows:

The arrival of Moses with his servant at the place where two seas meet was initially inadvertent. Moses was only aware of it after his servant told him a story where they saw a dead fish coming back to life while they took a rest to eat;

But when they reached the junction between them, they forgot their fish, and it took its course into the sea, slipping away. (al-Quran: 18: 61). So when they had passed beyond it, [Moses] said to his boy, “Bring us our morning meal. We have certainly suffered in this, our journey, [much] fatigue.” (al-Quran: 18: 62). He said, “Did you see when we retired to the rock? Indeed, I forgot [there] the fish. And none made me forget it except Satan - that I should mention it. And it took its course into the sea amazingly”. (al-Quran: 18: 63). [Moses] said, “That is what we were seeking.” ... (al-Quran: 18: 64).

After Moses returned with his servant to the place where two seas meet and after meeting the Pious Man;

... So they returned, following their footprints. (al-Quran: 18: 64). And they found a servant from among Our servants to whom we had

given mercy from us and had taught him from Us a [certain] knowledge. (al-Quran: 18: 65).

Moses' dialogue with the Pious Man which explains his intention of meeting the man to gain knowledge from him;

Moses said to him, "May I follow you on [the condition] that you teach [me] from what you have been taught of sound judgement?" (al-Quran: 18: 66). He said, "Indeed, with me you will never be able to have patience. (al-Quran: 18: 67). And how can you have patience for what you do not encompass in knowledge?" (al-Quran: 18: 68). [Moses] said, "You will find me, if Allah wills, patient, and I will not disobey you in [any] order." (al-Quran: 18: 69). He said, "Then if you follow me, do not ask me about anything until I make to you about it mention." (al-Quran: 18: 70).

Moses accompanied the Pious Man after he agreed, and three conflicts occurred along the way, and all the actions of the Pious Man in handling the three conflicts were objected by Moses;

So they set out, until when they had embarked on the ship, the Pious Man tore it open. [Moses] said, "Have you torn it open to drown its people? You have certainly done a grave thing." (al-Quran: 18: 71). [The Pious Man] said, "Did I not say that with me you would never be able to have patience?" (al-Quran: 18: 72). [Moses] said, "Do not blame me for what I forgot and do not cover me in my matter with difficulty." (al-Quran: 18: 73). So they set out, until when they met a boy, the Pious Man killed him. [Moses] said, "Have you killed a pure soul for other than [having killed] a soul? You have certainly done a deplorable thing." (al-Quran: 18: 74). [The Pious Man] said, "Did I not tell you that with me you would never be able to have patience?" (al-Quran: 18: 75). [Moses] said, "If I should ask you about anything after this, then do not keep me as a companion. You have obtained from me an excuse." (al-Quran: 18: 76). So they set out, until when they came to

the people of a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to offer them hospitality. And they found therein a wall about to collapse, so the Pious Man restored it. [Moses] said, "If you wished, you could have taken for it a payment." (al-Quran: 18: 77).

The Pious Man explained why they had to part, and his explanation on his actions regarding the three conflicts they had seen along the way;

[The Pious Man] said, "This is parting between me and you. I will inform you of the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience. (al-Quran: 18: 78). As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working at sea. So I intended to cause defect in it as there was after them a king who seized every [good] ship by force. (al-Quran: 18: 79). And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared that he would overburden them by transgression and disbelief. (al-Quran: 18: 80). So we intended that their Lord should substitute for them one better than him in purity and nearer to mercy. (al-Quran: 18: 81). And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father had been righteous. So your Lord intended that they reach maturity and extract their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord. And I did it not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience." (al-Quran: 18: 82).

Among the incidents in this story that are interesting to be analysed from the aspect of narrative is the delay of explanation by the Pious Man towards the three incidents and his actions taken during the conflicts which are considered odd and questionable.

Ironically, each time a conflict arises, and Moses expressed his disagreement, the Pious Man did not explain to Moses of his actions. Furthermore, the readers have to wait until the end of the third conflict where it is only then the Quran gives an explanation on the matter. Thus, one good technique for creating slow-

paced time is the flashback, where characters are removed from the story present and reappear at some earlier time in their lives. (William, 1999, p. 154). It can be inferred that each story is narrated with certain narrative technique, using certain utterances which highlights its own balaghah value, strengthens the aesthetic value and supports the structure of narrative in a story.

Results And Discussion

Balaghah Aspects Supporting the Narrative Structure

The use of utterances which support the place, time and character;

And [mention] when Moses said to his servant, "I will not cease [traveling] until I reach the junction of the two seas or continue for a long period." (al-Quran: 18: 60).

The use of the word [**junction**] which supports the place as the meeting place and the beginning of the act. However, what is not stated specifically is the location of the meeting place, and it is only stated as being situated between two seas. This kind of presentation style features the element of suspense to the readers.

The use of the utterance [**a long period**] which supports the time setting and Moses' perseverance. According to Ibrahim Mustafa et al., (1972, p. 187), [**a long period**] carries the notion of 'staying at a place for a long duration which is 80 years or more'. Based on the definition, it can be derived that Moses showed a respectable level of tenacity where he and his servant travelled to the meeting place for a very long time in order to fulfil Moses' resolution to meet the Pious Man.

Besides, the use of simple dialogue tags identify speakers and imply pauses. Descriptive dialogue tags describe a character's action and/or state of mind (Monica, 1999, p. 82). For instance, the utterance [**Moses said**] in this scene keeps the

action going while the characters are conversing without having to make a full-scale description of place or event (Monica, p. 83).

The use of letter [did] refers to asking for clarification and reminder;

He said, "Did you see when we retired to the rock? Indeed, I forgot [there] the fish. And none made me forget it except Satan - that I should mention it. And it took its course into the sea amazingly". (al-Quran: 18: 63).

It can be deduced that the questioning style using the letter [**Did**] at the utterance [**Did you see**] in this situation is to seek clarification from Moses on the occurrence, further, it also acts as a reminder from Moses' servant to not forget what was happening previously, referring to the situation at the rock location. It is a crucial reference to the place of the rock which was situated at the sea as the intended destination. At the location, the fish which was brought by Moses' servant as their food supply had come back to life and swam to the sea without them realizing it, because they were heedless about it.

Preceding and generalizing utterances to highlight the character and strengthen the element of suspense;

And they found a servant from among Our servants to whom we had given mercy from us and had taught him from Us a [certain] knowledge. (al-Quran: 18: 65).

Preceding the utterance [**mercy**] on the utterance [**knowledge**] which intends to foreground the extraordinary character of the Pious Man. It is observed that the utterance [**knowledge**] is generalized in the Quran as an intriguing element of suspense which allures the readers' attention, which makes the readers wonder the Pious Man's mysterious ability. The mysterious ability is undeniably the ability to predict the future, a special gift from Allah to the Pious Man. Therefore, it will supply the dynamic force to make the reader want to keep reading and

go to the effort of sorting out all the different people, settings and situations. (Ansen, 1999, p. 39).

Generalizing the utterances [*mercy*] and [*knowledge*] also demonstrates the mercy of knowledge from Allah which is abundance for all His vicegerents.

The use of modal verb [may] which supports the solicitous character and to ask for permission;

Moses said to him, "May I follow you on [the condition] that you teach [me] from what you have been taught of sound judgement?" (al-Quran: 18: 66).

Based on this situation, the modal verb [*may*] demonstrates the characters soliciting love and respect for each other. It also depicts the students' discipline and admiration towards his teacher during a lesson.

The omission and retention of letters [personal pronoun] in certain utterances have different impacts on characterization;

Moses' dialogue with the Pious Man in the 66th verse omits the personal pronoun [*me*] in the utterance [*that you teach me*]. It is inferred that the omission is a symbol of the rights between humble human beings (Marwan, 2006, p. 105). This means that the absence of the [*me*] pronoun in this context symbolizes the modest and self-effacing characteristics, where Moses was in the situation where he wanted to acquire knowledge from a respected teacher.

[Moses] said, "Do not blame me for what I forgot and do not cover me in my matter with difficulty." (al-Quran: 18: 73).

Moses' dialogue with Allah in 73rd verse, which retains the personal pronoun [*me*] on the utterances [*do not blame me*] and [*do not cover me*]. In this study, it is observed that the narrative style in the aforementioned situation

demonstrates the supplication and love towards Allah by retaining the personal pronoun [*me*] in this context displays the characterization of a guilty and impatient vicegerent in matters concerning Allah. (Marwan, 2006, p. 105).

However, in the 69th verse, by retaining the personal pronoun [*me*] in the utterance [*you will find me*];

[Moses] said, "You will find me, if Allah wills, patient, and I will not disobey you in [any] order." (al-Quran: 18: 69).

Moses leans his mistake back to Allah, by saying that if Allah wishes for him to be patient, then he will be patient in handling the matter. This sentence is an articulated complex sentence.

The interrogative pronoun [how] carries the meaning of uneasiness and curiosity;

And how can you have patience for what you do not encompass in knowledge?" (al-Quran: 18: 68).

It is observed that the interrogative pronoun [*how*] in this example demonstrates the Pious Man's anxiety towards Moses who often questioned his actions in solving the conflicts they encountered during their journey.

The use of letter [have] to demonstrate crisis, seriousness level of an issue and stress on the second party;

So they set out, until when they had embarked on the ship, the Pious Man tore it open. [Moses] said, "Have you torn it open to drown its people? You have certainly done a grave thing." (al-Quran: 18: 71).

So they set out, until when they met a boy, the Pious Man killed him. [Moses] said, "Have you killed a pure soul for other than [having killed] a soul? You have certainly done a deplorable thing." (al-Quran: 18: 74).

Based on the verses 71st and 74th, the strength of Moses' characters by stating his disagreement on the solution of a conflict was stated by using letter [*have*] on the utterances [*have you torn it open*] and [*have you killed*] as displaying crisis, concern of the issue and an attempt to put a pressure on the Pious Man. Therefore, in this study, it can be observed that the students' action of questioning a teacher's action and behaviour which are objected by the students is conditional.

The use of demonstrative pronoun [this] highlights the priority;

[The Pious Man] said, "This is parting between me and you. I will inform you of the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience. (al-Quran: 18: 78).

In this climatic situation of the story, where the conflict between the Pious Man and Moses was heightened, it needed something to solve it, and the best solution is separation. According to Jack, (1999, p. 53), the description of emotion means just what it says. In this instance, the approach taken by the Pious Man to explain his dispute with Moses, where he used the demonstrative pronoun [*this*] in his conversation as a sign of respect, love, closeness and priority towards Moses. The utterance [*parting*] which is presented with the short vowel diacritic/u/, and not the nunation (duplicate vowel of the last consonant)/un/, as a symbol of peace and harmony of Moses who was going to experience an unexpected separation.

The repetition of utterance which induces psychological effect; (Al-Khalidi, 1998, p. 53-54, Bani Dumi, 2006, p. 204-206; Al-Qaisi, 1996, p. 98)

"... about which you could not have patience." (al-Quran: 18: 78).

"... about which you could not have patience." (al-Quran: 18: 82).

The repetition of the utterance [*you could not have*] for two times; first by retaining the letter [tā] and the second by omitting the similar letter. By retaining the letter [tā] on the utterance [*you could not have*], the retainment is the symbol of the mistake committed by Moses, which was being impatient. Meanwhile, the omission of the letter [tā] on the utterance [*you could not have*] refers to his second mistake, and there is no requirement to stress repeated mistake. Other than that, the omission is also meant to give psychological effect which is to lessen the stressful condition Moses was having at that time.

The omission of the adjective which highlights the element of suspense;

As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working at sea. So I intended to cause defect in it as there was after them a king who seized every [good] ship by force. (al-Quran: 18: 79).

It can be observed that the ships were in good condition, which is the reason why the dictator king decided to seize them. Therefore, the Pious Man's quick and wise decision to destroy the ships had managed to avoid the ships from being seized. Thus, the omission of the adjective [*good*] on the ships leaves a deep element of suspense towards the readers. Furthermore, it also acts as further clarification where not all ships were seized, because only the ones in good condition were being seized based on the singular utterance of [*the ship*] in this narrative. (Al-Khudri, 1993, p. 85).

Conclusion

The story of Moses with the Pious Man is an exemplary narrative. The al-Quran is undoubtedly a divine revelation which guides every inch of the universe. Through the exploration of the narrative structures and the balaghah aspects that support the structure, it is observed that the story not only focuses on the aspects of lesson and reminder, but it is also a model of narrative incorporating expression,

suspense, conflicts and portrayal which are formed by magnificent order of utterances. Besides, it is also observed that the narrative structure of the story is profoundly delineated, supported by its skilfully structured sentences. Furthermore, the techniques of narrative in this story are highlighted with many variations. Each plot is crafted with specific techniques that justify the contexts and situation.

It is also found that the use of first-person point of view in this story is at the minimum. This is so because, the unconceivable incidents which were narrated in this story between the Pious Man and his dialogue with Moses at the end of the story is evident of the existence of a strong connection between the Creator and His creations.

The Pious Man's unusual and exceptional ability to foretell the future is an element of suspense which is expressed using specific utterances aimed at strengthening the structure of the character and his characterization as a wise man in this story. Ironically, the character and characterization of Moses who carries the role of the messenger of the Creator, bestowed with many supernatural events were not carried out and highlighted in this story. From the aspect of time setting, the sentence arrangement and the vocabulary choice in the plot order are very dynamic according to the order of incident.

Hence, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the balaghah aspects and the time setting because the longer a story the more time it takes to retell, and undeniably it needs a stronger element of suspense to maintain the readers' momentum towards the story which is delivered through accurate sentence arrangement and vocabulary choice. In short, there exists a strong relationship between the aspect of balaghah and the narrative structure in this story. Both the balaghah aspect and narrative structure exists in a reciprocal relationship. Therefore, the axis of this study, as stated before, is intended to convince the readers of the harmony between the two elements in

an effort to highlight the aesthetic value of the narrative of the story.

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