

A Cognitive-Semantic Analysis of Schematic Images in Selected Verses of the Holy Quran

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>The present paper highlights the concept of schema, which is one of the fundamental issues of cognitive linguistics. This concept is so useful since it gives us permission to take shortcuts for understanding the world in general and the idea of paradise. Schema theory explains how individuals use pre-existing mental frameworks to interpret and process information, allowing for conceptual shortcuts in understanding both worldly and spiritual matters. Through a cognitive-semantic analysis of selected verses in Surat Al-Rahman. However, the researcher will investigate this matter in terms of analyzing the notion of paradise mentioned in Surat Al-Rahman, as well as provide a piece of adequate background knowledge for those who are interested in this topic.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Holy Quran, Surat Al-Rahman, Paradise, Schema theory.</i></p>
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Section One

1. Introduction

1.1 The problem of the study

A central concept in cognitive linguistics is schema theory, which explains how previous knowledge and conceptual structures help individuals to recognize new information. So, understanding the Holy Quran involves not only shedding light on linguistic structures but also engaging with deeper conceptual and cognitive frameworks. One such framework is schema theory. Although the Holy Quran is rich with metaphor, imagery, and conceptual depth, little research has been presented on how such theory can shed light on its interpretive process. However, the role of such cognitive structures in forming the understanding of the Quranic meaning is underexplored. The current study shows the gap by applying schema theory to selected verses of the Holy Quran, which focuses on the portrayal of paradise in Surat Al-Rahman, to address how cognitive frameworks aid in meaning-making and interpretation.

1.2 Aims of the Study

The current study aims to:

1. This study concerns selected verses of Holy Quran, and analyzes them cognitively then enhances understanding of interpretive

processes, interdisciplinary dialogue, improved educational strategies, and refined theological analysis.

2. Using schema theory as a useful cognitive linguistic tool for interpreting Quranic texts.
3. to describe how these schemas ease the conceptualizing of abstract or spiritual concepts, particularly the depiction of paradise in Surat Al-Rahman.
4. Include cognitive linguistics with Quranic (conceptualization) interpretation to improve a new dimension to the study of Tafsis.
5. Understand deeper layers of meaning in the Quran by using a cognitive-semantic perspective that supports readers and scholars to understand holy texts.

1.3. Hypotheses of the study

1. The Quran's cognitively driven use of schematic pictures demonstrates how spiritual and metaphysical ideas are transferred onto human corporeal experience.

2. The Quranic language expresses complex meanings through basic spatial and physical patterns, which may be explained by cognitive-semantic frameworks as image schemas of road, container, balance, up-down, etc.
3. It is possible to identify underlying conceptual metaphors that represent the Quranic worldview and its method of meaning production by analyzing the schematic imagery found in particular verses.

1.4. Procedures

To achieve the aims of this study, the following steps are followed:

1. Introduction to Schema Theory. Overview of Schema Theory: defining Schema theory refers to the cognitive framework or mental structure that organizes and interprets information. Discussing how Schema theory can be applied to understanding the Quranic text. This involves how schemas can influence the interpretation and comprehension of the Quran by its readers.
2. Literature Review. Schema Theory in Linguistics: Reviewing existing literature on schema theory, especially within cognitive psychology and linguistics, to provide a solid theoretical foundation.
3. Schema in Religious Texts: Discuss how schema theory has been applied to the study of religious texts and how it might be relevant to the Holy Quran.
4. Theoretical Framework. Schema Theory as a Lens: Establishing schema theory as the main lens for interpreting the selected verses. Consider the cognitive processes involved in reading and interpreting texts.
5. Carrying out the analysis of selected verses and discussing the results.
6. Drawing out conclusions and presenting suggestions for further studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Background

Schema was first of all introduced by Bartlett (1932) in order to explain how people structured the experiences, stories and events stored in memory. The use of Gestalt Theory had a strong impact with schematic theory initially developed by Bartlett who believed that we do not perceive things in isolation, similarities and mediating sensation are part of our cognitive process (173). From that viewpoint,

knowledge is contained in networks of mental structures that help to understand and remember information. Later on, the idea was developed by a number of researchers including Rumelhart (1980) and Rumelhart and Ortony (1977), who extended its application in cognitive psychology. Likewise, Minsky (1975) and Schank and Abelson (1977) were crucial in pushing forward schema theory into computer science where it became an important building block for how knowledge representation in general and information processing particularly were carried out within AI systems (Robinson, 2013:565).

According to Bartlett, comprehension and recall mostly take place in relation to prior experiences and pertinent information stored in memory. He later coined the word "schema" to refer to the arrangement of such earlier occurrences. To demonstrate how people's past knowledge of past events affected their subsequent remembering, Bartlett administered a battery of tests. However, he did not go into detail about what this kind of understanding entailed. Schema theory later emerged as a theoretical framework to describe mental representation of knowledge as a result of advances in computer science and interest in simulating human cognition in the field of artificial intelligence (*ibid*).

Consequently, Carroll (2008: 176) supports Bartlett's theory that when people experience an event that deviates from their typical comprehension, they struggle to fit it into their preexisting schemata and either forget about it or normalize it, altering its specifics until it aligns with their preexisting schemata. According to him (*ibid*), although Bartlett's (1932) theories were not given enough credit at the time, they have recently received new relevance as psychologists have created new instruments to study how individuals remember and understand stories. Despite its allure, Bartlett's concept of a schema was quite vague, and contemporary developments of his work have mostly concentrated on two problems: accurately characterizing schematic knowledge and figuring out how this knowledge is applied during discourse comprehension.

2.2 Schema Theory: Overview

As outlined by Crystal (2011: 424), schema is a mental structure that knows how knowledge is organised in the mind, it has been particularly used in psycholinguistics in research on reading. Schema theory was created in order to explain how people used previous knowledge or experiences (s) and made expectations of what a spoken or written text would be like, the content of the text, and what it means. When reading, one does not simply decode words; instead, they actively construct and use schemata—i.e., mental representations—to interpret, structure, or understand information. These cognitive structures are used to create bridges between new and existing data, allowing

better comprehension and an overall richer understanding of the text.

Furthermore, Bussmann (1999: 1031) demonstrates that schema is generalized knowledge about the sequence of events in specific sociocultural situations, such as going to a restaurant, purchasing a ticket, or reading a book. Because it simplifies the understanding of limited or confusing information, such structured common knowledge is a fundamental foundation for human language comprehension.

According to Crystal (2011: 424), schema is a term that is used in Widdowson (1978:6) clarifies that the learner may simply not feel interested by the text being presented to him on this occasion. As a result, connecting the essence of the passages to real-world language meaning can create a sense of purpose.

In other words, it uses schema to differentiate between the knowledge that an adult has of how a restaurant works in Western society (Tavakoli 2012:303). This kind of schema covers information on waiters or waitresses, menus with meals eaten in a restaurant along with options for appetizers and desserts, bills as well as utensils such as cutlery, glasses, napkins and the chef preparing the food out of sight. At first, you learn this through some kind of experience and it is in the form of episodic memory. As these individuals repeat experiences in similar situations, though, this becomes encapsulated as semantic memory and constructed as a large frame for understanding. Thus, when readers come across the word restaurant, they activate this pre-existing schema—the related cognitive structure that helps you understand what a restaurant is—filling it with information about how one operates and defining functions of the place before we even begin.

Schema theory argues, as Richards and Schmidt (2010: 510) put it, that in order to understand a language someone must have previously activated schemata that are relevant so that the new information is interpreted and processed faster. They act as documents where people direct access to what they have already learned, while crystallizing all theories to complement new information. When we read or listen to something, everyone activates the structure (or schema) concerning the topic and uses that structure to make predictions, inferences, or judgments about what the speaker/author is saying. Schemata are important because they use to guide the understanding and meaning construction in this way. The theory in question has been particularly impactful subsequent as an explanation of second-language reading and listening comprehension due to its specification that prior knowledge is essential in supporting successful language processing and interpretation (ibid).

Additionally, there are two types of stored knowledge that are associated with schema theory which are as follows:

A frame is a module that can be seen as a schema of a class of events and has slots (attributes) that are filled with specific information depending on the context. The concept of the ship, for example, has a frame with general characteristics like that it is a large vehicle afloat in water and massive to be handled by sailors. To fill in those slots as they read or learn more, people use what we know about the ship — its function and origin; its energy source, colour, destination and other attributes. Hence, you might have a warship or a ferry or a merchant ship as well as power generation through diesel engines, steam, sails, etc. When individuals lack specific information, they tend to infer defaults from prior knowledge and experience. As a result, without any further information, most probably think of passenger ships and not warships when they hear about funnel shapes or dark hulls.

A script, by contrast, is the structured sequence of actions associated with a familiar and recurrent situation. It is a structured sequence of events that people normally expect to occur in a given circumstances. As an example, restaurant script describes a familiar pattern of conversations between a waiter and customer — the customer orders for a table, the waiter takes them to their seat, they are given the menu, they order drinks and then we order food. Scripts give us an organized way for processing routine events that people run into commonly in everyday life. They also allow speakers and writers to minimize communication, as they can leave out things that the audience already knows. Field (2004: 255) points out that, given a statement like "Helen ate in a restaurant," the reader can infer what had to have happened before Helen can do this without it being necessary to describe every step of dining out. Scripts help us understand because we can take upon our memories of certain social settings.

To sum up, Tavakoli (2012: 303-304) concludes that a schema (plural: schemas or schemata) can be changed into three ways that are:

1. **Tuning** involves small adjustments made temporarily in order to confront immediate needs.
2. **Accretion** modifies a schema gradually but permanently as new information is acquired or as repeated examples of contrary evidence accumulate. Thus, a child might have to adjust its category of duck to exclude birds that it has come to recognize as belonging to the category swan.
3. **Restructuring** occurs when a sudden insight or

new piece of knowledge leads to a radical reorganization of existing knowledge structures, (ibid).

2.3 Types of schemata

Huang (2009: 139) and Tavakoli (2012: 303), in their view, classify schema into three types according to modern schema theory that are as follows:

1. **Content schema:** the background knowledge of the learner or the world knowledge. It is our background knowledge of the topic and of the text. In other words, it's the familiarity of the text's subject matter.
2. **Linguistic or language schema:** this contains the decoding features needed to understand words, and how those words fit into a sentence. That is to say, it is our linguistic schema which consists of our capacity in language as regards vocabulary, grammar and idioms. If you do not have linguistic schemata, you will not be able to activate the relevant content schemata and formal schemata in the given information.
3. **Formal schema:** Usually referred to as textual schema, it includes the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts. This can consist of knowledge about different sorts of texts and genres and the awareness that different types of texts employ text organization, language structures, vocabulary, grammar etc.

For Robinson (2013: 565), schemata can be formal schema, content schema, and cultural schema that are explained as follows:

- **Formal schemata** refer to the prior knowledge that people have about the formal and rhetorical structure of a text.
- **Content schemata** means the content knowledge and domain of the subject matter of a work.
- **Cultural schemata** are the shared information that people have about a culture. It is on the basis of such schemas that we perceive and interpret certain social and cultural occurrences.

As a result, a distinction is frequently made between content schemata and formal schemata (Richards and Schmidt 2010: 510). Content schemata are concerned with general background knowledge relevant to the issue, e.g. that might be associated with the topic of an earthquake. Formal schemata are concerned with the rhetorical structure of language and with a person's knowledge of the structure of a particular genre, such as news stories or journal articles.

2.4 Functions of Schemata

Four kinds of functions can be distinguished that are, as follows:

1. Supporting background knowledge to interpret a specific event.
2. Supporting background knowledge to infer beyond the information given.
3. Producing predictions of events, actions, and information.
4. Helping the individual identify regularities so that more attention can be allocated to accommodate new information, (Xiao, 2008: 19).

Section Two

Data Analysis and Discussion

1. Introduction

In general, the holy Quran has an inimitable style, as well as heavenly beauty and strength. No man can produce a paragraph that compares to a poem from the revealed Book. This is due, in part, to the literary brilliance of the text and the potency of the words, their matchless changing and saving power, (Internet No.1).

Nevertheless, this section deals with the analysis of some verses of Surat Al-Rahman (سورة الرحمن) which elaborates the notion of paradise (الجنة) by using image schemata's functions. Image schemas, according to Reber & Reber

(2001: 201), allow us to generate impressions. They have an impact on how we perceive, notice, and comprehend information. For better or worse, schemas may bias the encoding of social information.

Actually, Allah created humanity in such a way that we can only be at ease and satisfy our hearts' aspirations in paradise. This is made abundantly plain in numerous verses of the holy Quran. Allah also tells us that the true life is the life of paradise, and that every effort should be made to finish this dwelling of endless good and beauty.

1.2 Data Analysis and Discussion

Allah describes paradise in the Quran with all of nature's attributes, like in the following verse:

(48) (ذَوَاتَا أَفْنَانٍ)

In the preceding verse, Allah demonstrates that the location of paradise is one with trees and green places. It's as though we're gazing at images or paintings of these locations. Trees have been created for the benefit of human pleasure, with their beautiful appearances, kind and color diversity, and the pleasant shade they provide.

(68) (فِيهِمَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَنَخْلٌ وَرُمَّانٌ)

This verse points out that the paradise has everything desired that will be provided, such as, fruit and vegetables which contain no imperfections or deficiencies like those that exist in this world.

(70) (فِيهِنَّ خَيْرَاتٌ حِسَانٌ)

In this preceding verse, there is a reference that the place of paradise has also sweet creatures with so pleasant, wonderful and beautiful appearance. Consequently, He tells that the good slaves will sit in a comfortable places which is obvious in the following verse:

(76) (مُنَكَّبِينَ عَلَى رُفْرَفٍ خُضِرٍ وَعَبْقَرِيٍّ حِسَانٍ)

1.3 Result

The above description of paradise existed in the concerned verses provides image schemata to build full diagram which helps us to comprehend the various properties of paradise in the present surah. This elaboration put an adequate background knowledge to the concept of the term paradise from point of view of cognitive analysis.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper, it is significant to state the following main points which are as follows:

1. Schema theory is basically a theory about knowledge. It is a theory about how knowledge is represented. According to the Schema theories, all knowledge is packaged into units. These units are the schemata.
2. There are three ways in which schemata can be changed that are tuning, accretion, and restructuring.
3. Three types of schema can be distinguished that are as follows: content schema, linguistic schema, and formal schema.
4. Concerning variables of schemata, they can be embedded, active processes, recognition devices, and representing knowledge at all

levels of abstraction.

5. Finally, schema is so useful because it gives us a permission to take shortcuts for understanding the world.
6. Regarding the analysis of the Quranic image of the paradise, it involves the immensity and power of importance for frequently comprehending the lexical elements of the holy Quran.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Comparative Schema Analysis Across Surahs:

Future studies could expand the scope by applying schema theory to multiple surahs that address similar themes, such as paradise, hell, or divine justice. This comparative approach would reveal how the Quran consistently or differently activates schemas across various contexts.

2. Application of Frame Semantics to Quranic Interpretation:

Building on schema theory, a related study could apply frame semantics (Fillmore, 1982) to investigate how specific conceptual frames (e.g., justice, mercy, guidance) shape understanding of divine attributes and laws in the Quran.

3. Educational Implications of Schema Theory in Quran Teaching:

Research could explore how understanding schema theory can improve Quranic pedagogy, especially for non-Arabic speakers or younger audiences, by activating prior knowledge and enhancing comprehension through schematic structures.

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