

QURAN AS THE BEST TOOL OF COMMUNICATION: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED VERSES OF QURAN

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this article is to look into the role of the Quran as a tool of communication by doing critical discourse analysis of the selected verses of the Quran. The Holy Quran is not just a religious book rather it is a complete code of life. In the Holy Quran Allah has clearly manifested for a man how to spend life and how to communicate with one another. For finding the teachings of the Holy Quran for effective communication Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model (2015) is used as a model for doing critical discourse analysis. The results of the study reveal that the Holy Quran is the best tool of communication. Allah has clearly given the principles for effective communication in the Holy Quran and has ordered the human beings to follow these principles of communication so that they can develop relationships with one another and make the society as a one unit.

Key Words: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), communication, discourse, tools of communication, Quran.

1. Introduction:

Allah Almighty is the single creator, lord and maintainer of this whole world. He has created the human beings and all the creations of the whole universe. After creating man Allah has conferred wisdom and the art of language to man so that a man can express his thoughts, feelings and ideas. It is this faculty of language that makes human beings much superior to all the other creatures of this universe. Though animals also communicate with each other but they do not have the faculty of language. In this way language bestowed to man is God-given. The purpose of language is explained by many philosophers and linguists. For instance, Sapir (1921) one of the leading linguists takes language as a purely "human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires always done by means of voluntarily produced symbols". About this distinctive attributive of language given to human beings Allah says in the 3rd and 4th verse of Surah Al Rehman in the Quran in the following words:

خلق الانسان، علمه البيان

"He created the man. He taught him distinctness."

In the above verses Allah is making it clear that the man is the unique creation of Allah and He has bestowed man with the faculty of speech so that he can use this attribute for exchanging knowledge, communicating ideas, expressing beliefs and for articulating whatever he has in his mind. Since the day of his inception.

2. Communication and Islam:

Communication is the part and parcel of all of the human activities. Islam pays stress on the effective communication and that is why Islam is often regarded as a religion of communication (Olayiwola, 1993). But before looking into the teachings of Islam about communication and ways of communication let us define what is communication.

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Communication is a Latin word derived from the word “communicare” the meaning of which is to share, the act of passing on meanings from one person or group to another person or group by using mutually understood codes, symbols and semiotic rules. Griffin (2012) defines communication as a “relational process of creating and interpreting messages that elicit a response” (p.6). For Miller (2005) communication is a process of conveying or exchanging of information through speaking, writing, or by means of some other medium, the ultimate end of which is the successful transmission or exchanging of thoughts and feelings. Adler, Rodman, & Du Pré (2016) take communication as the action or process of use of words, sounds, symbols, or deeds to express or interchange information or to express thoughts, aims, feelings and emotions. Thus language is an authentic tool of communication which is used by all the human beings in their everyday life and through which they transfer information and argue with others (Rabiah, 2018).

Gintautas (2017) states that here are two forms of communication, the first is verbal communication and the second is the non-verbal communication. The verbal communication needs language and as we know that any expression without language is nothing and futile. But the most important thing here is that for conveying of expressions, ideas, thoughts and thinking, a tool or an encoder is necessary. And when comes the question of best tool of communication most of the scholars and researchers (Abbas, 2009; Khan, Saqlain, Shoaib, & Sher, 2013; Khalil, 2016) highlight the significance of the Holy Quran as the best tool of communication. Allah almighty used Quran as a tool of communication. Allah almighty wants to convey his eternal message through Quran. Quran is a heavenly gift of Allah almighty for all mankind. No doubt Quran is a miracle of Allah almighty. No can think to change the contents of this eternal tool of communication. Because Allah says in Quran:

نحن نزلنا الذكر و انالحفظون

“We (Allah) sent this (Quran) and surely we will protect it”.

The above aya shows the authenticity of Quran. Different scholars worked on Quran and took the Holy Quran as a tool of communication. Yahya (2017) in his book “Communication and argument in the Quran” quoted Quranic aya 18 of Surah Az-Zumar for explaining the authenticity and validity of the Holy Quran as a tool of communication as Allah says in the following words:

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“Those who listen well to what is said and follow the best of it, they are the one whom Allah has guided, they are the people of intelligence”.

In the above verse of the Holy Quran Allah Subhanu ta’ala is assuring the human beings that those who will listen to the sayings of Allah and will follow His paths they are always guided by Allah and they are the people of wisdom and intelligence. This aya makes it evident that the Quran is the real source of knowledge for all the human beings and the Holy Quran is the best tool of communication for the human beings.

Izutsu (2008) carried a study on the representation of God and man in the Holy Quran. He has extensively presented the relationship between God and man by quoting the various verses of the Holy Quran. His work showed that there is a close relation between God and man. Gheituri, & Golfam, (2009) did their research on God-Man communication depicted in the Quran. They gave two communication models of sending and communication reading. They negated the concept of death of author given by. Al-Khatib (2012) did the analysis of the Holy Quran with reference to the ethics of communication. He is of the view that the Holy Quran has used the words of politeness more often than the rest of the words and it shows that politeness and kind words are the part and parcel of the teaching of the Holy Quran.

3. Critical Discourse Analysis:

There are many approaches to the study of language. Critical discourse analysis is one of those approaches to language. It is a multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach to the study of language. It investigates the relationship between language, ideology and distinctiveness. This approach to the study of language is the latest form of Critical Linguistics and Discourse Analysis. The term “critical” in the analysis of discourse is in fact the search for the hidden relations between text and ideologies. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an established branch of Critical Linguistics (CL) that appeared as a new subdivision of linguistics in late 1970s (Van Dijk, 2008). This subdivision of linguistics is also termed as Critical Language Awareness and Critical Language Studies. All of these branches intent to investigate language in critical way. Systemic Functional Grammar given by Halliday is the core of Critical Linguistics. The chief forefathers of this branch of knowledge are Norman Fairclough, Teun Van Dijk and Ruth Wodak. Thus CDA aims at highlighting those exploitations that are done through the power of discourse. According to Fairclough (2013, p. 5) the aim of critical discourse analysis is to elaborate what is happening through discourse.

Critical discourse analysis is taken by its founders as an approach having multiple and competing methods and theories. The aim of all these methodologies and theories is to address social problems and to show discourse as a form of social action. For Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 271-80) the major objectives of CDA are to show the discursive nature of discourse and to do such type of discourse analysis which is both interpretative and explanatory. Fairclough major impact in CDA is the three dimensional model that he first presented in (1989). In 2015 he revised this model. In this model data is analyzed in three stages which are also called as three dimensions of his model. The first phase of analysis is text which is the description of the “formal properties of the text”, the second stage is the interpretation of the text and the third stage is the explanation of the text (Fairclough, 2015, p.58-59). This model is the theoretical basis of the current study. Through this model the selected verses of the Holy Quran are analyzed for highlighting the relevance of Quranic verses for communication and the significance of the Holy Quran as the tool of communication.

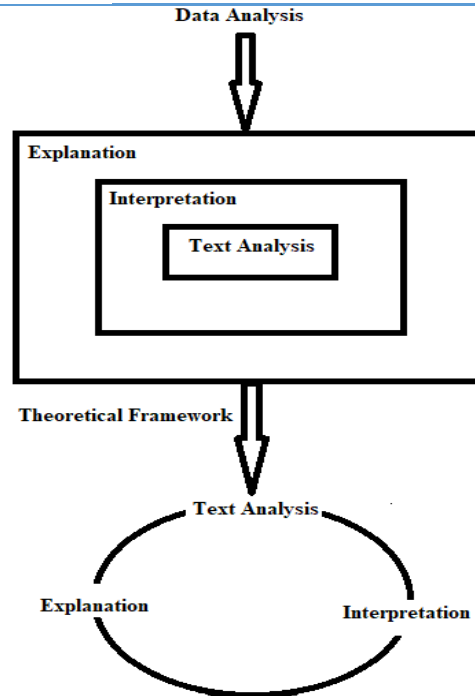
4. Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the present study are as follow:

1. Use of Fairclough’s Three Dimensional Model to know about the communication strategies used in the Holy Quran.
2. To investigate the role of the Holy Quran as the tool of communication.

5. Methodology:

The present study is a qualitative research that focuses on doing the critical discourse analysis of selected verses of the Holy Quran. The theoretical framework used in the current study is Fairclough’s Three Dimensional Model (2015). This model is based on three steps of data analysis. The first step is the text analysis; the second step is the interpretation of the text and the third is the explanation of the text. The model below is the theoretical framework of the present study for doing critical discourse analysis:



6. Analysis and Discussion:

Allah almighty has used the Holy Quran as an effective tool of communication. Through the Holy Quran, Allah has not only communicated with man but also has showed the right and effective ways of communication. The critical discourse analysis of the selected verses of the Holy Quran reveals that Allah Almighty has always put stress on the use of highly effective and effectual communication strategies which if are utilized by human beings they will definitely bring about a positive result. 'قول' Qawl is the key word in the Holy Quran for the act of speaking and saying. It is used as a verbal noun in Arabic. The meanings of this word are to talk, to say, to express, to articulate, to state, to teach to report, and to utter something. This word is used in two ways. The first as 'قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا' "Qawlan Kareema" and second as "Qawlan Sadeed". The meaning of is a kind and polite word and the meaning of is a straightforward saying. These two are the basic principles of communication in Islam. Islam has presented the ethics of communicating with different relations in society. The first and the most important worldly relationship in Islam is of parents. The following verse of the Holy Quran clearly instructs human beings about the ethics of communicating and talking with parents in the following words:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۗ إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا (Surah Bani Israel: Verse 23).

“And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], “uff,” and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word.”

The above verse shows the best way of communication with our parents. The critical discourse analysis of the above verse reveals that there are three instructions for communicating with parents. The first instruction to the Muslims is that it is the moral obligation of the children that they must speak in polite way with their parents. Allah has forbidden the use of the word “uff” to parents. “Uff” is a word that is the synonym of every such word as showing displeasure or anger. Thus any word showing anger or even displeasure is forbidden in the Holy Quran and anyone who uses such words will be punished by Allah. This shows that in the Holy Quran Allah

has clearly instructed the children about their way of communicating with parents and elders. This verse can be further explained with reference to a Hadith related by Sayyidna `Ali (رض) that the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Had there been some other degree of hurting lesser than the saying of uff, that too would have certainly been mentioned." In this way any word that hurts parents, is forbidden by Allah and the Muslims are instructed to use kind and generous words with their parents.

The second instruction in the selected verse about the ethics of talking with the parents is they should not be scolded "do not scold them": وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا. The word: نهر (nahr) in the selected verse means scold or reproach. It is quite obvious that such words as are used for scolding or reproaching cause pain for the parents and the parents are the most respectable and the noblest relationship in the world. Thus the Quran clearly prohibits the use of such words as show reprimand and admonishment. In this way the first two orders are concerned with the negative aspects in which Allah has prohibited the children from putting least emotional pressure on their parents and the act of using such words comes under the category of major sin. So in the selected verse Allah has given the instructions about talking with parents and has set a way of communication between parents and children.

The third part of the selected verse says about talking to parents in these words:
”وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا“.

“Address them with respectable words”

This is the third instruction. In this section of the verse of the Holy Quran Allah has ordered the Muslims to use respectable words when they speak with their parents and even use respectable words for addressing parents. The word “كريمًا” means respectable and kind so the Holy Quran clearly sets out the way and ethics of communication for the children while communicating and interacting with parents. In Islam parents are the means of getting heaven or hell. If the children treat their parents according to the instructions given by Allah He will reward the children with “Jannah” means paradise and if they treat their parents in bad manners Allah will put them in hell. Thus the Holy Quran teaches us the ways of communication and it is the best source of communication. Islam is a complete code of life. It guides us in every path of life. Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala through His Holy Book Holy Quran has given the instructions about the different activities of life. As communication is one of the major and primary activities of human life so the Holy Quran instructs the human beings about the ways of communicating with others. As Islam is a religion of honesty and straightforwardness thus it instructs this honesty and truthfulness in speech as well. While at another place Allah almighty guides us how to talk with people: “

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

“O you who believe! Guard your duty to Allah, and speak words straight to the point”.

The above aya which is the part of Surah Al-Ahzab states that it is the duty and responsibility of all the believers of Allah that whenever they speak they must speak straightforwardly. There should be no ambiguity, no vagueness and no haziness in their speech. In this way Islam is strictly against beating about the bush. It teaches openness and fairness in dealing with people. It is the moral and religious obligation of a Muslim to use appropriate and proper words in their communication and interaction. Playing with words is not the teaching of the Holy Quran. The words used in communication must be free from confusion and dual meaning. They must have clarity and transparency. In the Qur'an, Qawlan Sadeeda comes at two places. One is at Surah al Ahzaab: 70 while the other is at Surah An-Nisaa: 9. Look at the use of this word Qawlan Sadeeda in the aya 9 of Surah An-Nisaa:

وَلْيَحْشَنَّ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعْفًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

“And let those [executors and guardians] fear [injustice] as if they [themselves] had left weak offspring behind and feared for them. So let them fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice”.

Allah Subhanu ta’la has given the principles of communication while talking with the enemy in the Holy Quran. The Muslims are instructed by Allah that they must use appropriate and polite words in their communication when they are taking even with their worst enemy. In Surah Ta-Haa Allah Subhanu ta’la orders to His believers that if they want to talk to their enemy they should speak in a gentle way. They must use soft and kind words and their way of communication should be free from pride and anger. As in the following aya of Surah Ta-Haa Allah is instructing about the way of communicating with the enemies:

قُولًا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيْسَ لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى (20:44)

“And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]”

In the above ayah Allah is instructing to Prophet Musa and Haroon (peace be upon them) about the way of talking to Phir’oun, their enemy, and when they speak to him they must use gentle words so that their words can win his heart. When we look at the present era and the Muslim leaders of the contemporary world we come to realize that most of the Muslim leaders in general and the Muslim Youth in particular have forgot the lesson of the Holy Quran which teaches the use of polite words in their communication even with their enemy. Thus there is need of reading and using the Holy Quran as the guider and the best tool of communication.

Through communication we also do the act of promising something. Promising is part and parcel of our daily activities. But what sort of words should be used while promising are not clear to all the people. We often use vague and improper words while doing promise. Here in the Holy Quran Allah almighty, our best tutor teaches us how to use proper words when we do the act of promising with other. In the Surah Al-Baqara Allah Subhana ta’ala says:

وَلَكِنْ لَا تُؤَاعِدُوهُمْ سِرًّا إِلَّا أَنْ تَقُولُوا قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا (2:235)

“But do not promise them secretly except for saying a proper saying”

This aya shows that how we have to use some honorable words while saying something. These are the teachings of Allah almighty that we should always use words of appropriate kindness and words having clarity, precision and fastidiousness when we make promise with other people. In this way Islam through the Holy Quran is setting the ethics of communication for the Muslims.

In the Holy Quran, the words قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا are used at four different places with different backgrounds and different situations. In Surah al Baqarah: 235, these words are used when the instruction are given about the way of proposing a woman for marriage. Allah Subhana ta’ala has ordered the use of good and kind words when a Muslim man wants to propose a woman. The logic behind this ethic of communication is that Islam gives respect to all the human beings irrespective of their gender and before Islam women were treated as slave and there was no concept of prestige and honorable words for them. That is why the Holy Quran clearly educates the Muslims to use honorable and kind words for women when the men want to propose them and a woman must be addressed in an honorable way. The words “قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا” are used in Surah An-Nisaa aya 5, where the Muslims are taught about the way of talking and dealing with children, women and all of those who are under one’s care. The Muslims are commanded to communicate with them in a good way by using words of compassion and kind heartedness. The third place where these words of “قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا” are used is in Surah An-Nisaa, aya 8, where the Muslims are ordered to use gentle and honorable words while executing property division among the relatives, poor or needy. In Surah al Ahzaab: aya 32, Allah Subhana ta’ala has commanded

the Muslims to use appropriate and respectable words while addressing the noble wives of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

In daily routine of life, we have also to interact with such kind of people about whom we know that they are hypocrite and selfish. Most of us when talk with such type of people, we lose our temperament and use harsh and impolite words with them. When talking to the hypocrites, Muslims are instructed to scold them by using piercing words so that these hypocrites get a chance to ponder on their attitude and hence they may change their hearts. We are guided that if we have to criticize someone then it is our moral and religious obligation to correct gently his or her fault and to bestow a pleasant and earnest advice to such people. Such as in the upcoming aya of Surah Al-Israa Allah almighty is teaching us us that how we confront the situation, when someone ask you for money and you don't have, then how to speak with them gently.

(17:28) وَإِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُل لَّهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا

“And if you [must] turn away from the needy awaiting mercy from your Lord which you expect, then speak to them a gentle word”

Life is not just the name of praise and use of kind words. Sometimes in our life we have to admonish and rebuke someone because at that place we do not have any other option. The Holy Quran also teaches the way of admonishing other. The critical discourse analysis of the selected aya i.e. 63 of Surah An-Nissa is about the instructions of Allah Subhana ta'ala about how to communicate with non-believers and tyrants. Allah teaches that if we have to admonish non-Muslims then we must use far-reaching words as in Quran Allah says:

(4:63) فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُل لَّهُمْ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا

“Those are the ones of whom Allah knows what is in their hearts, so turn away from them but admonish them and speak to them a far-reaching word”.

The above selected aya reveals that it is the order of Allah Subhana ta'ala to the Muslims that when they talk with non-Muslims and rude people they must chose such words as are not as much bitter in their tone and meaning rather they must use far-reaching words if they want to admonish someone. Thus the critical discourse analysis of the selected aya of the Surah An-Nissa makes it evident that the Holy Quran is a very effective and significant tool of communication.

7. Conclusion:

From all of the above discussion based on the analysis of the data we can easily conclude that the Holy Quran is the best tool of communication for all the Muslims of the world. The Holy Quran is the Divine Book of Allah Almighty and He has instructed the human beings through it. In the Holy Quran Allah Subhana ta'ala has given the ethics and principles of communication. Allah has instructed to use appropriate and apt words in the communication. The Muslims are prohibited to use flowery and ambiguous language in their communication. Islam lays stress on the use of kind and generous words even for the enemies. the Holy Quran teaches the use of courteous and polite words while talking with the women, children and the people belonging to minorities. In the present era there is a dire need of implementing the instructions of the Holy Quran in the everyday communication. So there is need of teaching Quran as the best tool of communication and of using Quranic verses for showing the ethics of communication.

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