Cementing Markers in the Holy Qur’aan: The word sawaa? ‘whether’ as a model

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Abstract: This paper reports on the use of sawaa? ‘whether’ as a cementing marker in the verses of the Holy Qur’aan. The verses containing sawaa? as a cementing marker are chosen from 28 instances employing this word. Analysis of the data suggested that sawaa? ‘whether’ in the provided verses has the meaning of the sameness with the preceded clause and the meaning of the subordinate conjunction "whether or" with the following clause. Therefore, this word has proved a discourse function which facilitates the perception of the discourse thus reducing the effort of the hearer to follow the speaker, achieving ultimately the optimal relevance (see Sperber and Wilson 1986; 1995). Such plays a significant role in maintaining the flow of the speaker-hearer communication, conveying a sense of connectivity in that it connects the stretches of the discourse altogether.

Keywords: Speaker-hearer communication, Connectivity, Conjunctions, Cementing marker sawaa? ‘whether’.

1. Introduction:

Cementing markers are the common words used between two sentences or phrases that gives a certain meaning to the preceding sentence or phrase and another meaning to the following sentence or phrase (Al-Rawajfeh and Al-Khalafat: 2019). Figure (1) clarifies the notion of the cementing marker sawaa?.

![Figure 1: The notion of the cementing markers (common)](image-url)
The following examples clarify the notion of the cementing markers:

1. ḍalika al kitabo la raiba fīihī hudan lilmutaqiīn. (Al-Baqarah: 2)

‘This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah’.

The first sentence "ḥalika al kitabo la raiba fīihī" delivers a complete meaning; this book which God sent to us contains no doubt. The second sentence "fīihī hudan lilmutaqiīn" delivers another independent meaning; this book guides those who are conscious of Allah.

2. inna Allaha la yastaḥī an yaḍriba mathalan ma baṣ‘oqatīnam fama fawqoqoḥa faʔama allaḍīina ṭamano faṣa‘īlamīna annaho alhaqo min rabīhīn wa amma allaḍīina kafaro faṣa‘qolona māda arada Allaho bīhaḍa maθalān yaḍillo bihi kaθīiran w yahdī bihi kaθīiran w ma yoqīlo bihi illa al fasīqīn. (Al-Baqara: 26)

‘Indeed, Allah is not timid to present an example - that of a mosquito or what is smaller than it. And those who have believed know that it is the truth from their Lord. But as for those who disbelieve, they say, “What did Allah intend by this as an example?” He misleads many thereby and guides many thereby. And He misleads not except the defiantly disobedient.’

Every sentence conveys a complete meaning; the first sentence means that Allah not timid to present an example. That is to say, Allah is able to drive any example he wants. The second sentence is seen as a question that invokes the minded to think about. What is the mosquito, what is above and below it? In the third sentence, the disbelievers are questioning what Allah intends by driving such an example. The response to this question comes in the fourth sentence that is by driving such an example Allah misleads many thereby and guides many thereby. And He misleads only those which are defiantly disobedient.

2. Literature Reviews:

Traditionally, a conjunction in English is a part of speech that is used to connect two words, phrases, clauses or sentences altogether (Lester, 1990; Leech and Svartvik, 1994; Aarts, 2001; Leung, 2005; Crystal, 2008; Burton-Roberts, 2011). To this end, Eckhard-Black (1992: 97) stated that “A conjunction stands between two words, phrases or clauses and links them”. Carnie
(2007: 90) noted that “Coordinate structures are constituents linked by conjunctions like and or or”. Similarly, Kirkpatrick (2007: 173) states that “A conjunction is a linking word used to join words, word groups or clauses”. In addition, a conjunction, in the words of Murthy (2007: 212), is “A word which joins together sentences or words and clauses”. Furthermore, Baskervill and Sewel (2015: 1) mentioned that “Unlike adverbs, conjunctions do not modify but they are just solely for the purpose of connecting”. Therefore, it is safe to claim that conjunctions are most generally conceived as a linker or connector.

Conjunctions have been the topic of interest by many researchers (Quirk et al., 1985; Schiffrin, 1987; Leech & Svartvik, 1994; Ball, 1996; Altenberg, 1996; Greenbaum & Quirk, 1993; Fraser, 1998, 1999). Scholars over time have conceived them by various labels Leung (ibid: 11). For instance, Halliday and Hasan (1976: 13) treat them as “linguistic devices that create cohesion”, Sanders and Maat (2006:1-2) describe them as a “semantic relation that is explicitly marked” while Schiffrin (1987), treats conjunctions as discourse markers. Fraser (1998, 1999) considers them as a “pragmatic class of lexical expressions”, that is to say pragmatic markers. Throughout the research we will term conjunctions as cementing markers.

Conjunctions are significant devices in writing or speech. They facilitate the speaker-hearer communication achieving as such the optimal relevance (see Sperber and Wilson1986; 1995). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 226-227) that conjunctive relation is important in the “specification of the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before”.

As explained by Caron (1994: 706) conjunctions are used “to express various kinds of relations between utterances”. Rouchota (1998:2) also states that conjunctions “encode different meanings, and that they can be a procedural device”.

This research paper contributes to this line of research, exploring the discourse function of sawaaʔ ‘whether’ in the Holy Qurʔaan. This word being used as a lexical signal develops a certain discourse meaning as a cementing marker which helps in maintaining the flow of the speaker-hearer communication (Siddiqui, 2014) and hence structuring the discourse efficiently. This argument implies that there is no conflicting implication that conjunctions are both used as coherence markers and facilitators of the speaker-hearer communication, in which case the given cementing marker is vital for ‘the hearer’s search for optimal relevance’ (Blakemore, 2002: 170).

3. Data Collection and Methodology

The data were collected from translated copy of the Holy Qurʔaan. Twenty eight instances were found. Only six occurrences are examined with respect to their discourse function. In the next section, descriptive analysis of this data is presented.
4. Sawaaʔ as a cementing marker

According to our corpus, sawaaʔ has shown a discourse function as a connecter ‘‘cementing marker’’ that is quite different from its usual use as a lexical marker meaning ‘‘the same’’. In this verse, sawaaʔ is used before the verb. It works as a connecter that connects the stretches of the discourse altogether. Using Schourup's (1999) terminology, sawaaʔ is a connecting textual element. Under this use, sawaaʔ is better translated as whether or. Consider the following verses:

1. inna allaḏiina kafaro sawaaʔon ?alayhim ?aʔanḏartahom am lam tonḏirhom la yoʔminoon. Al-Baqarah, verse 6
   ‘Indeed, those who disbelieve - it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them - they will not believe’.

   In the first sentence "inna allaḏiina kafaro sawaaʔon" means that all the disbelievers are the same. In the second sentence "sawaaʔon ?alayhim ?aʔanḏartahom am lam tonḏirhom la yoʔminoon", sawaaʔ here means "whether". That is to say, whether you warn the disbelievers or not they will not believe. Also, "inna allaḏiina kafaro sawaaʔon" has a complete proposition which is the meaning of sameness, stating that all the disbelievers are the same. Sawaaʔon in the second sentence "sawaaʔon ?alayhim ?aʔanḏartahom am lam tonḏirhom la yoʔminoon" has another complete meaning which is the meaning of ‘whether or’ being a connecter or a conjunction. We can see that sawaaʔ works as a connecter between the previous subpart of the discourse and the following subpart of the discourse. The following subpart of the utterance is based on the preceding discourse. It connects the clause that precedes it with the one that follows it. That is to say, ‘the disbelievers’ with ‘they will not believe’. Meaning whether you warn the disbelievers or not they will not believe. The clause they will not believe refers back to the disbelievers; the preceding utterance. In another sense, sawaaʔ has a meaning with the first sentence and another meaning with the second sentence.

2. w barazo lilaḥi jamiiʕan fa qala aḍoʃafaʔo ilaḏiina istakbaro inna kuna lakum tabaʔan fahal antom moʔnona Šanna min Ša-daʔillah min shayʔin qallo law hadana Alaho lahadaynakom sawaaʔon Šalayna ajaziʕna am Šabarına ma lana min maḥliʔis. (Ibrahim: 21)

   And they will come out [for judgement] before Allah all together, and the weak will say to those who were arrogant, "Indeed, we were your followers, so can you avail us anything against the punishment of Allah?’ They will say, ‘If Allah had guided us, we would have guided you. It is all the same for us whether we show intolerance or are patient: there is for us no place of escape
In this verse sawaaʔ binds the discourse that precedes it with the one that follows it. It connects those who were arrogant with "there is for us no place of escape". The hearer cannot tell the referent of this discourse without going back to the preceding discourse. The arrogant said we do not have any place to escape to whether we show intolerance or patience. In addition, sawaaʔon in the sentence "qallo law hadana Alaho lahadaynakom sawaaʔon" has a complete proposition disclosing that if Allah had guided us, we would have guided all of you. Therefore, we can tell that sawaaʔon here means ‘all of you’. In the second sentence "sawaaʔon ʕalayna ajaziʔna am ʕabarina ma lana min maʕiiʔ"; sawaaʔon here means ‘whether’.

3. inni a xafo ʕalaikom ʕaðaba yawmin ɗażiim. qalo sawaaʔon ʕalaina awaʕaʃta am lam takun min al waʕiiziin. (Ash-Shu’ar’aa: 135-136).

Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a terrible day. They said, "It is all the same to us whether you advise or are not of the advisors."

The sentence, "qalo sawaaʔon" is informative. It means that what you say is all the same for us. In the second sentence, "sawaaʔon ʕalaina awaʕaʃta am lam takun min al waʕiiziin", "sawaaʔon" here means “whether”. It reveals a sense of connectivity with the preceding sentence. That is to say, it is all the same to us whether you advise or are not of the advisors.

4. w sawaaʔon ʕalaihim ʔaʔanɗartahom am lam tonɗirhom la yoʔminoon.

And it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them - they will not believe. ya-sin 10

The marker sawaaʔon in this verse connects the first sentence which is "w sawaaʔon ʕalaihim ʔaʔanɗartahom am lam tonɗirhom" with its predicate; the second sentence which is "la yoʔminoon". Meaning, both ways those people will not believe whether you warn them or not. Without the use of sawaaʔon, the first sentence would be as "ʕalaihim ʔaʔanɗartahom am lam tonɗirhom" thus showing no connectivity with the predicate which is "la yoʔminoon". Therefore, it is clear that there is something missing related to the connection between the two sentences. In another sense, "w sawaaʔon" has a complete proposition which is the meaning of sameness, meaning it is all the same for them. Sawaaʔon in the second sentence has another complete meaning which is the meaning of ‘whether or’ being a connector or a conjunction.

5. sawaaʔon ʕalaihim ?istaʔgorta lahom am lam tastaʔgir lahom lan yaʔgifira Allho lahom inna allaha la yaʔgifir liqam il fasiqiin. Al-Munafiqun 6
It is all the same for them whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; never will Allah forgive them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.

Likewise, in this verse sawaaʔon is used to connect the first sentence which is "sawaaʔon ʕalaihim ?istaʔfarta lahom am lam tastaʔfir lahom lan yaʔfrica" with its predicate which is "lan yaʔfrica allho lahom". Meaning that Allah will not forgive them whether you ask forgiveness for them or you do not. In another sense, "sawaaʔon ʕalaihim" has a complete proposition which is the meaning of sameness, stating that it is all the same for them. Sawaaʔon in the second sentence has another complete meaning which is the meaning of ‘whether or’ being a connector or a conjunction.

In the verses above, it is noticed that sawaaʔ is important for the so-called local discourse coherence (see Schiffrin, 1987). It functions as to signal discoursal relations between subunits of the discourse, thus contributing to discourse coherence. This analysis of sawaaʔ as a cementing marker goes in lines with Lewis’ (2006) characterizations of discourse markers, a term that relies basically on the notion of connectivity.

6. wa in tadʔhom i-lal-hoda la yatabiʔokom sawaaʔon ʕalaykom adaʔawtomohom am antom ṣamitoon.

And if you [believers] invite them to guidance, they will not follow you. It is all the same for you whether you invite them or you are silent.

sawaaʔon in this verse connects the clause that followed it;"ʕalaykom adaʔawtomohom am antom Ṣamitoon" with the clause that precedes it; "wa in tadʔhom i-lal-hoda la yatabiʔokom". They will not be guided whether you invite them to guidance or not. Also, sawaaʔon has a complete proposition with the first clause; "wa in tadʔhom i-lal-hoda la yatabiʔokom sawaaʔon" and another complete meaning as a connecter "whether or" with the second clause; "sawaaʔon ʕalaykom adaʔawtomohom am antom Ṣamitoon". sawaaʔon with the first clause means "all of them the same" will not be guided if you invite them to guidance. With the second clause it means "whether you invite them or you are silent".

4. Conclusion

This study is intended as a contribution to the discoursal development research. In particular, it has explored the use of sawaaʔ as a cementing marker in the Holy Quraʔan. Analysis of the data indicated that sawaaʔ in the provided verses has the meaning of the sameness with the preceded clause and the meaning of the subordinate conjunction "whether or" with the following clause. Once it is used as a connector/conjunction it connects the
following subpart with the preceded subpart so to complete its meaning. Accordingly, it is save to claim that sawaaʔ being used as a cementing marker plays a significant role in organizing the stretches of the discourse in that it thematically connects the previous discourse with the following discourse, hence strengthening what is so-called discourse coherence or textuality.

5. **Suggestions and Recommendations**

It is recommended that further research studies conducted on other markers in the Holy Qura'an used as cementing markers. Further, it is recommended to study the discoursal use of other lexicon in Arabic language.

6. **References**

The Holy Qur'an


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