

Research Paper

An Approach to Ahl al-Kitab's Interaction with the Holy Book Using the Structural Semantics of the Word Tahrif (Distortion)

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Abstract

"Tahrif" (distortion) is one of the verbs used in the Holy Quran to describe a part of the Jews' religious attitude towards their holy book. This verb has some substitutions in similar verses that provide more details of this action; "conversion", "concealment", and "denial", as substitutes for Tahrif (distortion), and "hiding" as a substitute for concealment are the most important of these words. Reflecting on the accompanying and substitute words of these verbs leads to a more accurate understanding of the distortion attributed to Jews, extracting the semantic components of each of these verbs, and also understanding how Ahl al-Kitab dealt with the Holy Book. Therefore, this research has used the structural semantics approach and found these semantic components for the word Tahrif (distortion): in the application of the Qur'an, distortion is limited to a specific context and is only relevant in the field of speech. Tahrif (distortion) is often used to refer to an oral change, not a written one, and is associated with disobeying or ignoring divine commands. One of the important indicators in the act of distortion is deviation and marginalization that occurs in relation to the main position of the speech, whether, in this deviation, the speech is replaced by something else or not. The distortion is done consciously and intentionally and is not accidental or by mistake. Distortion is an inappropriate, negative, and reprehensible action and according to the verses of the Qur'an, it was done by Jews.

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1. Extended Abstract

"Tahrif" (distortion) is one of the verbs used in the Holy Quran to describe a part of the Jews' religious attitude towards their holy book. This verb has some substitutions in similar verses that provide more details of this action; "conversion", "concealment", and "denial", as substitutes for Tahrif (distortion), and "hiding" as a substitute for concealment are the most important of these words. Reflecting on the accompanying and substitute words of these verbs leads to a more accurate understanding of the distortion attributed to Jews, extracting the semantic components of each of these verbs, and also understanding how Ahl al-Kitab dealt with the Holy Book. However, these words, especially the word Tahrif (distortion), have become a term with a special definition over time, and it has become difficult to comprehend their intended meaning in the Qur'an and, as a result, to understand what they present in the description of Jewish action. Therefore, it will be helpful to use a method that makes it possible to understand the Qur'anic meaning, regardless of subsequent semantic changes.

2. Method

This research has used the structural semantics approach.

3. Findings

This study has found these semantic components for the word Tahrif (distortion): a) in the application of the Qur'an, distortion is limited to a specific context and is only relevant in the field of speech, but the word conversion is not limited to a specific topic and can be applied to various examples. The verb

'hide' also has more limited examples compared to conversion, and is used to hide valuable things such as "Ma Anzallallah" (what God has sent down), "Ma Atahm Allah" (what Allah has given), and "Haqq" (truth); b) Tahrif (distortion) is often used to refer to an oral change, not a written one, and is associated with disobeying or ignoring divine commands, while the verb 'hide' is also referred to physically hide parts of the book; c) One of the important indicators is the act of distortion is deviation and marginalization that occurs in relation to the main position of the speech, whether, in this deviation, the speech is replaced by something else or not; d) The distortion is done consciously and intentionally and is not accidental or by mistake. Concealment and denial also have this feature; e) Distortion is an inappropriate, negative, and reprehensible action. Concealment and denial also carry the same negative and blameworthy burden, but the word conversion is good in some cases and ugly and unpleasant in others; f) Distortion has taken place by the Jews. Concealment and denial are also human actions; however, conversion occurs both from man and from God. The acts of concealment and denial are both possible and have happened before, but the act of conversion is impossible and will never happen in the case of divine words. Therefore, distortion has the most similarity in meaning with concealment and denial and is different from conversion.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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