




The Significance of the Use of Absolute Honorifics in Some Verses of the Holy Quran (Sura Al Waqiah)

Dr. Wael Adel Mohammed

Lecturer of Applied Linguistics, English Department

Faculty of Arts, Port Said University, Egypt

waeladelonly1@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper tried to examine the use of absolute honorifics in Sura Al Waqiah of the Holy Quran. The paper tried to unveil the reasons behind God's use of absolute honorifics. It tried to investigate the significance of the use of absolute honorifics in Sura al Waqiah. By absolute honorifics the researcher meant the use of plural pronouns by the speaker to refer to himself. God used extensively absolute honorifics in this sura to refer to Himself in relation to mankind. God wanted to compare His power with the powerless human beings. One of the manifestations of God's power in Sura Al Waqiah is that He has created mankind. Also God created the semen out of which humans reproduce. Furthermore, God predestined who is going to die and who is going to live among human beings. Moreover, God brought the crops humans cultivate into beings and He could turn the crops into ashes if He wanted to. Also, God brought drinking water to the humans and He could turn this water bitter so it became unsuitable for drinking. God also created the trees out of which the humans make fire. So, God provided mankind with the resources of living. The paper utilized a descriptive-qualitative approach in analyzing the sample verses of sura Al Waqiah. The study was conducted because of the rarity of the analyses of absolute honorifics in the language of the Holy Quran.

Keywords: honorifics, deixis, absolute, power, relational.

مغزى استخدام التكريم المطلق فى بعض آيات القرآن الكريم (سورة الواقعة)

د/ وائل عادل محمد

مدرس اللغويات التطبيقية، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

كلية الآداب، جامعة بورسعيد

مستخلص

يحاول هذا البحث دراسة استخدام التشرifications المطلقة فى إحدى سور القرآن الكريم، وتحديدأ سورة الواقعة ويقصد الباحث بالتشريف المطلق استخدام المتكلم لضمائر الجمع للإشارة إلى نفسه. لقد استخدم الله تشرifications مطلقة على نطاق واسع (فى هذه البحث الضمير "نحن") فى هذه السورة للإشارة إلى نفسه فيما يتعلق بالبشر. لقد أراد الله أن يقارن قدرته بالبشر الذين لا حول لهم ولا قوة. أمثلة القدرة و القوة الالهية هي أنه سبحانه خلق الإنسان، كما خلق الله السائل المنوي الذي منه يتكاثر البشر، وقد عيّن الله من سيموت ومن سيعيش بين البشر، علاوة على ذلك، انبت الله البذور التي يزرعها البشر إلى مجاصيل، وهو قادر على ذلك كما أن الله جلب للبشر مياه الشرب، و هو قادر سبحانه على جعل هذه المياه مرة حتى تصبح غير صالحة للشرب. كما خلق الله الأشجار التي يصنع منها البشر النار، فزود الله البشر بالموارد التي تعينهم على الحياة. وقد استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي الكيفي فى تحليل الآيات المختارة من سورة الواقعة. وقد أجريت الدراسة بسبب ندرة تحليل التشرifications المطلقة فى لغة القرآن الكريم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التكريم، كلمات الإشارة، المطلق، السلطة، العلانقية.

Introduction:

The objective of this paper is to examine the use of absolute honorifics by God in referring to himself in Sura Al Waqiah. The research question to be answered is:

Why did God use absolute honorifics in referring to Himself in Sura Al Waqiah?

This paper is an attempt to fill in the gap in the area concerning the use of absolute honorifics in the language of the Holy Quran. By absolute honorifics the researcher means that the speaker uses plural pronouns like "we" in referring to himself instead of using the singular pronoun "I".

Honorifics is defined as "Politeness formulas in a particular language which may be specific affixes, words or sentence structures (Richards et al. 1992, p.169). Crystal (2003) also defined it as

A term used in grammatical analysis of some languages (e.g. Japanese) to refer to SYNTACTIC or MORPHOLOGICAL distinctions used to express LEVELS of politeness or respect, especially in relation to the compared social status of the participants. The pronoun system of several European Languages expresses a contrast of this kind, e. g. French tu versus vous. (p. 167)

Brown and Gilman (1966) were the first to conduct research on the use of honorifics. They noticed the use of two different pronouns in the European languages. They are T pronouns (second person singular pronouns) and v pronouns (second person plural pronouns). They found out that T pronouns are used to communicate with intimates and inferiors while V pronouns are used with strangers and superiors. They came to the conclusion that the employment of pronouns is influenced by power and solidarity between the speaker and addressee.

Fillmore (1971) referred to the concept of honorifics under the category of social deixis. He pointed out that social deixis include the tools for referring to persons such as the pronouns of English and many other languages. He also clarified that there are different ways in which names, titles and kinship terms differ in form and usage depending on the relationship among the speaker, the addressee, the audience and the person referred to.

Levinson (1983) discussed the concept of honorifics. He restricted honorifics to the cases in which the relationships between speaker-referent, speaker-addressee, speaker-bystander reflect specific positions in society or show respect. He pointed out that there are two types of social deixis; namely relational deixis and absolute deixis. Under the category of relational deixis he included four sub-categories. They are (1) speaker and referent (2) speaker and addressee (3) speaker and bystander and (4) speaker and setting. The first sub-category which is speaker-referent has to do with the relation of speaker to things or persons referred to (e. g. referent honorifics). He explains that referent honorifics includes relative position and respect. Levinson explained that the second sub-category i. e. speaker and addressee has to do with the relation of speaker to hearer. As for the third sub-category, i. e. speaker and bystander it has to do with the relation of the speaker with bystanders or over-hearers. The fourth sub- category has to do with the formality of the setting which affects language choice. As for the second type of social deixis i.e. absolute honorifics, Levinson (1983) indicated that there are certain linguistic forms allocated for specific speakers and he called those speakers authorized speakers. He gave an example of the Thai language in which the morpheme *khrab* is a polite form that can be used by male speakers. He pointed out that there is a form of the first person pronoun specially reserved for the use of the Japanese Emperor. Furthermore, Levinson talked about forms reserved for authorized recipients such as your honour and Mr. President.

Parkinson (1985) conducted a research on the use of terms of address in Egyptian Arabic. He analyzed the conversations of

different individuals from different social classes. He found out that the terms of address in Egyptian Arabic are employed based on the type of addressee and the type of relationship between the addressee and the speaker.

Dickey (1997) conducted a similar research on the use of terms of address and reference in English, Italian and German. He interviewed and observed 28 native speakers. He found out that relations of power and solidarity between the speaker and addressee affect the choice of terms of address and terms of reference.

Keshavarz (2001) conducted a study on the effect of social context, intimacy and distance on the choice of Persian terms of address. He found out that Persian language has two addressee pronouns. The pronoun "to" which shows inferiority and informality and the pronoun "some" which indicates distance and respect. He concluded that education, age, gender, social status and occupation have an overwhelming impact on the choice of terms of address.

Afful (2007) examined the address system among university students in Ghana. He focused on spontaneous and deliberative spoken discourse. He discovered that there is a strong connection between the use of address terms and differences in mood, gender, domain, purposes and setting.

Salihu (2014) examined the use of the address system of the Hausa society. He made a list of the Hausa terms of address and found out that each class of address terms has its specific use for certain class of people under specific conditions. He clarified that the use of address terms in the Hausa society is influenced by factors such as personality, gender, age, social status, religion and family relations.

Method: The methodology employed will be a descriptive-qualitative approach. The verses will be analyzed in order to show the significance of using absolute honorifics by God in sura Al Waqiah. The study came as a response to the rarity of the studies

conducted on the use of absolute honorifics in the language of the Holy Quran

Limitations of the Study:

This study tried to investigate the significance of one type of honorifics, namely absolute honorifics which is the use of plural pronouns by the speaker. So its findings can only be generalized in relation to the use of absolute honorifics.

Analysis and Discussion:

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ (57) أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تُمْنُونَ (58) ءَأَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ (59)

Translated as "we, (only) we created you. Will you then not sincerely admit (the Truth)? (57) (Ghali, M., 1997, trans.). In verse (57) God used the plural pronoun "نحن" translated as "we" which is called an absolute honorific to refer to Himself in order to glorify Himself and to show his power and his ability to create and stressed this ability by using the past verb "خَلَقْنَاكُمْ" in relation to the powerless humans. In verses (58) and (59) translated as "So, have you then seen what you ejaculate?"(58) "Is it you who create it, or even are we the creators?" (59) (Ghali, M. 1997, trans.) God emphasized his power by again using the plural pronoun "نحن" translated as "we" which is an absolute honorific to stress his power to create the semen out of which humans reproduce. Moreover, the rhetorical question " ءَأَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ" reinforced God's power to create and denied the human ability to create like God.

In verse (60) نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ, translated as "we (only) we have determined among you Death, and we (only) are in no way outstripped" (Ghali, M., 1997, Trans) God moves to another topic. He talks about Death, specifically about his ability to decide who dies and who lives. He used the plural pronoun "نحن" "we" which is an absolute honorific to emphasize his power and He

used the negative article "ما" to stress that nobody has decided who dies and who lives before but Him.

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ (63) ءَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الَّذِينَ نَحْنُ لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطْمًا فَظَلَّمْتُمْ نَفْسَكُمْ هُونَ (65)

In the above verses translated as "have you seen (whatever) you till? (63) Is it you who plant or are We ever the planters? (64) If We had (so) decided we would indeed have made it crushed to pieces; then you would linger on (bitterly) exclaiming." (Ghali, M., 1997, Trans) (65) God used the absolute honorific plural pronoun "نحن" to show his power to bring the crops humans cultivate into being and to deny the human ability to cultivate without God's will. God also employed a rhetorical question "ءَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الَّذِينَ نَحْنُ" to emphasize his power in cultivating and creating the plants which were planted by human beings.

Furthermore, God used a threat in verse (65) to emphasize his power over humans because if God wanted to destroy the crop He would do so very easily "لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطْمًا فَظَلَّمْتُمْ نَفْسَكُمْ هُونَ".

The same honorific use continues in verses (69)

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ (68) ءَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ (69) لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ (70)

These verses are translated as "Have you seen the water you drink?" (68) Is it you who have sent it from the rainy clouds or are We even the (ones) Who sent it down? (69) If we had (so) decided, we would have made it bitter; so will you only thank (Us)! (Ghali, M., 1997, Trans). In verse (69) God used the honorific term "نحن" which is a plural pronoun to glorify Himself and at the same time the rhetorical question in the same verse "ءَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ" emphasized God's ability as He is the only one who sends drinking water to human beings. Furthermore, in verse (70) God used a threat to remind the human beings of his power as He is able

to make the drinking water bitter and thus it becomes unsuitable for drinking. "لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ"

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِي تُورُونَ (71) ءَأَنْتُمْ أَنْشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنشِئُونَ (72) نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا تَذْكَرَةً وَمَتْعًا لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (73)

In the above verses translated as "Have seen the fire you strike out?" (71) Is it you who brought its tree into being, or are We The Ones Who brought it into being?"(72) We, even We, have made it for a Reminder, and an enjoyment for the denizens in the desert (Ghali, M., 1997, Trans.). In verse (71) God used a rhetorical question to show his ability in creating even the fire humans strike out. He also utilized the plural pronoun "نحن" which is an absolute honorific to show his power in creating even the tree humans strike out for fire.

Conclusion:

The present study examined the use of absolute honorifics by God in some verses of Sura Al Waqiah. The reasons behind the use of absolute honorifics manifested in the pronoun "نحن" were many but center around showing God's power in relation to the powerless humans. First, God reminds human beings that He created them. Then, God reminds human beings that He created the semen which comes out of men and which results in human reproduction. Furthermore, God reminds them that He predestined who will die among human beings. Moreover, God reminds human beings that he is the one who brings their crops into being and that he could turn their crops into ashes if He wanted to. Also, God refers to the drinking water and reminds humans that He is the one who brings this water out of the clouds; adding that he could turn this water bitter so that humans can not drink it. God also reminds humans that He created the trees out of which humans make fire.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

سورة الواقعة مكتوبة بالتنكيل

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ (57) أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تُمْنُونَ (58) ءَأَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ
 الْخَالِقُونَ (59) نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوبِينَ (60) عَلَيَّ أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ أُمَّتَكُمْ
 وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (61) وَلَقَدْ عَلَّمْتُمُ النَّشَأَ الْأُولَىٰ فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (62) أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا
 تَحْرُثُونَ (63) ءَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ (64) لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطْمًا فَظَلَمْتُمْ
 تَفَكَّهُونَ (65) إِنَّا لَمُعَزِمُونَ (66) بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ (67) أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي
 تَشْرَبُونَ (68) ءَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ (69) لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا
 تَشْكُرُونَ (70) أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِي تُورُونَ (71) ءَأَنْتُمْ أَنْشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ
 الْمُنشِئُونَ (72) نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا تَذَكِّرًا وَمَنْعًا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (73)