A Linguistic Approach to Understanding Religious Texts and The Qur'An

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Abstract

Linguistics (language) in Islamic studies has long been practiced by classical scholars, only there has been no definition that what they do is a linguistic approach, just look at how Ibn Kathir presented his tafsir book, which is still a reference to this day. It was only in modern times that it was formulated that what these scholars did was a linguistic approach in an effort to study Islam. This article will discuss the meaning of language (linguistic), the division of linguistic fields, the language approach (linguistic) in the study of the Qur'an to the application of the linguistic approach in Islamic studies. The results of this article are that the linguistic approach (language) plays a very large role in providing an understanding of religious texts so that the phenomenon of sterility of teachings can be overcome intelligently and wisely so that it can minimize misunderstandings and wrong understandings in understanding religion and religion.

Keywords: Approach, Linguistics, Religion, Al-Qur'an

1. Introduction

Humans are the only creatures that speak, whatever humans do, whether when gathering with friends to play, arguing, flirting or digging graves, they definitely speak. The ability to speak or use language is a gift and distinguishes humans from other creatures of God's creation, we often hear the term that humans are speaking animals.

In fact, the use of linguistics (language) in Islamic studies has long been practiced by classical scholars, it's just that there has been no definition that what they do is a linguistic approach, just look at how Ibn Kathir presented his tafsir book, which is still the main reference to this day. It was only in modern times that it was formulated that what these scholars did was a linguistic approach in an effort to study Islam.

We cannot deny the role of western scientists in understanding the Qur'an as a source of Islamic teachings. Their approach and findings often amaze people who live in traditions that were born or influenced by the Qur'an. Like it or not, we must admit the phenomenon of the sterility of religious teachings in dealing with contemporary problems. Although we do not deny the perfection of the Qur'an and hadith as a solution to every problem, but again people will experience a dead end when the methods and approaches used are not appropriate. for that reason, it is very interesting to dig deeper into the linguistic approach in understanding religious texts and the Qur'an.

2. Results and Discussions

Definition of Language (Linguistics)

Basically, humans are social beings who interact with each other, so that communication between them runs well and smoothly, a medium is needed that can bridge the desires and intentions to be conveyed, in this case the most influential communication media in human life is language. Several experts have tried to provide a definition of language. [1]

Ibn Jinni, an Arab linguist defines language as sounds used by each group to convey their intentions. According to Plato, the sounds of language implicitly contain certain meanings. Aminuddin defines language as a system of arbitrary symbols used by a society to work together, interact and identify themselves. As a medium of communication, language must be understandable and comprehensible, for that language must be systematic and systemic. Language must be systematic because language has certain rules or regulations, and is systemic because it has subsystems, namely, phonological subsystems, grammatical subsystems and lexical subsystems. [2]

In searching for the meaning of a word, the three language subsystems become the object of semantic study. Linguistics is the scientific study of language with its main focus being the structure of language, while its main goal and object is how people use language to communicate. Linguistic experts called linguists according to Verhaar do not deal with language as a means of expressing affection or emotion, or language as a characteristic of a social group or language as a tool for court procedures, these are the affairs of psychologists, social and legal experts while the specialty of linguistics is

language as language. [3]

Division of Linguistic Fields (Language)
In general, linguistic fields are divided into:
1. According to the object of study, it is divided into two large parts, micro and macro linguistics. The object of study of micro linguistics is the internal structure of the language itself which includes the structure of phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. While macro linguistics studies language in relation to factors outside the language such as sociological, psychological, anthropological and neurological factors.
2. According to the purpose of the study, it is divided into theoretical linguistics and applied linguistics. Theoretical linguistics aims to find or discover linguistic theories alone while applied studies are aimed at applying linguistic rules in practical activities such as language teaching, translation, dictionary compilation and so on.
3. Historical linguistics and linguistic history. Historical linguistics studies the development and changes of a language, while linguistic history studies the development of linguistics regarding its figures, theoretical flows, and the results of its work.

Verhaar formulated the basic fields of linguistics which concern certain basic structures in various parts: sound and language structure (phonetics and phonology), word structure (morphology), inter-word structure in sentences (syntax), meaning or significance(semantics), concerning communication strategies between people (parole), language use and the relationship between language utterances and what is being discussed (pragmatics).

Linguistic (language) approach in the study of the Qur'an

Apart from Ferdinand De Saussure who is often called the father or pioneer of linguistics, there are several figures who focus on linguistic studies such as Leonard Bloomfield, John Rupert Firth, Noam Chomsky and others. In Islam there are several names such as Abu Aswad ad-Duali, Imam Khalil, Sibaweh, Ibnu Jinni, Ibnu Faris and others. Islam, the Qur'an and Linguistic Phenomena Islam is often defined by the revelation revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW as a guide for the happiness of life in this world and the afterlife. Revelation consists of two types: revelation in the form of the Qur'an and revelation in the form of hadith, the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad saw, strengthens this. Baidan stated a hadith narrated by Al-Hakim from Abu Hurairah: I have left you two inheritances. You will not go astray as long as both are (taken as guidance), namely the Book of Allah and my Sunnah.

Related to revelation which means the word (kalam) of Allah, it is interesting what Toshihiko Izutsu expressed, according to him Allah revealed through language, and not in a mysterious language but with a clear and understandable human language. That is why humans can study the Qur'an from various aspects, including language or linguistics.

The Qur'an as a holy book revealed to the prophet Muhammad has a very large role in the lives of mankind. Not only intended for humans, even creatures other than humans feel the importance of the presence of the Qur'an Quran. As a perfect holy book, the Quran contains all things related to humans, animals, plants, the universe, the supernatural world and what is more interesting is that the Quran is able to speak beyond its time.As a miracle, the Qur'an is able to talk about the life to come, reviewing scientific phenomena that had never been thought of by humans who lived at the time the Qur'an was revealed, therefore it is not wrong to say that the Qur'an an is a miracle at the end of time. [4] Al-Qur'an as hudan (guidance) can be studied and explored in the ocean of wisdom and knowledge from various aspects, as a perfect holy book, of course the Qur'an can be understood from any angle. As Izutsu said, the Qur'an can be approached from a number of different points of view, such as theology, psychology, sociology, grammar, interpretation and so on. In understanding the contents of the Qur'an, Muslims always hold fast to their belief that there is no doubt in the Qur'an. The assumptions that are built in understanding the Qur'an are based on belief in the truth of the Qur'an, not based on... doubt. As the orientalists did in studying the Qur'an, the assumptions they built were based on doubts about the truth of the Qur'an. To be able to understand the contents of the Qur'an well and true, according to Doctor A'isyah Abdurahman or commonly known as "Bintusy Syathi" at least the ability is needed in understanding the mufradat (vocabulary) of the Qur'an and its uslub (language style), with an understanding that is based on methodological-inductive studies and tracing the secrets of its expressions. Issa J. Boullata in his foreword to the book of interpretation of Bintusy-Syathi' explains that, in studying the Qur'an Bintusy-Syathi' uses four methods, one of which states, "because Arabic is the language used in the Qur'an, then to understand the meaning of the words contained in the holy book, the original linguistic meaning must be sought which has a sense of familiarity with the word in its various material and figurative uses". [5]

The Qur'an as the source of all sources, a guide to life and life, cannot be separated from the lives of Muslims. Therefore, many experts try to explore

and dive into the ocean of knowledge contained therein. To be able to understand it requires expertise and ability, one of which is language mastery. It is a problem for Muslims to understand the Qur'an which was revealed using Arabic, Islam has spread to all corners of the world, embraced by all nations with diverse languages. Language is a fairly basic problem for those who want to study the Qur'an. even a Faaqih and an expert in interpretation are required to master Arabic. In accordance with the word of Allah SWT which reads: [6]

Meaning:
"Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand it." (QS. Yusuf: 2) And Allah also says again in another verse: Meaning: "And thus, We have sent down the Koran as a (true) rule in Arabic. . . "(QS. Ar-Ra'd: 37)

Repeating what Shihab said, there are at least several things that make the Qur'an special besides its miracles and depth of meaning, namely:
1. Its tone and style. The letters of the chosen words create harmony of sound, the collection of words also creates harmony of rhythm and the sequence of sentences of the verses.
2. Short and concise. The arrangement of the sentences looks short but is dense in meaning.
3. Satisfies thinkers and most people because of the depth of its meaning.
4. Satisfies the mind and soul.
5. The beauty and accuracy of its meaning.

Throughout the history of Islamic thought, from the past to the present, the question of whether revelation came down in verbal or idea form continues to cause debate, Sugiyono calls it a theological mystery, because it is something mysterious, difficult to understand by the human mind but must be believed. As a verbal phenomenon, revelation is difficult to understand because the speaker is God and the listener is actually human. [7]

Al-A'zami also expressed a similar thing that the acceptance of the revelation of the Qur'an is beyond the reach of human reasoning so that in understanding the reasoning of revelation we only refer to authentic reports from the Prophet Muhammad and the people of faith who witnessed his life. However, in connection with the revelation of the Qur'an which has reached us in the form of text, the study of the Qur'an cannot be separated from the linguistic approach. Allah SWT has given blessings to the Arab nation by sending a prophet who brought the message of Islam, with the Qur'an as its holy book so that Arabic automatically became the language of instruction for the Qur'an. With the spread of Islam throughout the world, Arabic has become a language that is studied and taught with the aim of understanding the Koran more deeply. The use of Arabic as the language of the Koran is not without reason, Arabic is part of a large language family namely the Samiyah (Semitic) language group, which is divided into Syarqiyah (East) and Gharbiyah (West), Syamiyah Gharbiyah is divided again into Gharbiyah Syimaliah and Gharbiyah Janubiyah, while Syamiyah Syarqiyah is divided into Akadiyah with its branches, namely Babiliyah (Babylonian) and Asy-Syuriyah (Syria). From the Gharbiyah Janubiyah path, the Arab and Habasyah nations were born.

Initially, the Arab nation was not a well-known nation and there was nothing to be proud of from it, even its history is unclear. However, its existence has existed since ancient times and it can be found in various sources, such as in the Old Testament and in the works of classical Arab literature. In this case, Sayid Muzaffaruddin, there are four sources of reference that he uses in viewing the history of the Arab nation, namely Islamic literature, Jewish literature, Classical literature, and archaeological discoveries. [8]

As the function of language in general aims as a means to express feelings and thoughts that are poured into symbols of sound, movement, letters and words. Likewise with Arabic, but Arabic which is the medium of the language of the Qur'an has been processed into a religious language that has a function and role that is more than just a human language in general.

Related to the term "religious language", Komaruddin Hidayat said that religious language is divine speech which is then immortalized in the holy book. Here God and His words are emphasized more, so that the most basic understanding of religious language is the language of the holy book. The second understanding, religious language is the expression and religious behavior of a person or a social group. So religious language according to the second understanding is religious discourse carried out by religious people and religious scholars, although it does not always refer to and use expressions of the holy book.

Komaruddin further explained that the presence of the text of the Qur'an among Muslims has given birth to a center of Islamic discourse that never stops. In other words, the Qur'an which contains various kinds of scientific treasures has become the axis of science. The Qur'an has given birth to various kinds of disciplines science so it is not wrong to say that the Qur'an is like a nuclear explosion whose radiation radiates to all corners of life.

The language of religion, in this case the Qur'an, is

something that is transcendent and universal. It has its own advantages and privileges compared to existing languages. Syed M. Naquib al-Attas, as quoted by Sugeng, stated that Arabic is not included in the category of other languages regarding its semantic structure due to the following facts.

1. Its linguistic structure is built on a system of firm word roots.
2. Its semantic structure is regulated by a certain semantic field system that determines the conceptual structure contained in its vocabulary and is permanently established by the things mentioned above
3. Its words, meanings, grammar, and rhymes have been recorded and established scientifically in such a way that its semantic fixity can be maintained

The structure of the language of the Qur'an contains elements of the beauty of Divine language that can make humans amazed and fascinated when they hear or read it because the language of the Qur'an is harmoniously integrated between its content and meaning. With the existence of the Qur'an, the Arab nation has benefited, at least in three aspects, First, the language aspect, by using Arabic as the language of the Qur'an, Arabic is protected from extinction and becomes a world language so that Doctor Ramdan Abu Tawab wrote a chapter in his book, law la al-Qur'an ma kanat arabiyah (If it were not for the Qur'an, the Arabic language would have been destroyed). Second, the political aspect. Where before the arrival of Islam, the Arab nation was meaningless, they were still a backward nation, a barbaric nation until Allah raised their status with the coming of a prophet who brought the teachings of Islam. Along with the spread of da'wah, Islam has introduced the Arab nation to the whole world and made it a nation that has glory with Islam. If not Islam, the Arab nation is more despicable than an uncivilized nation, third, the economic aspect.

With the issuance of the Hajj pilgrimage, Muslims flock to the Baitullah so that economically it provides a large foreign exchange income for the Saudi Arabian kingdom every year. This is not to mention the Umrah pilgrimage. In addition, thanks to prayer Prophet Ibrahim, the Arab land has been blessed with abundant oil resources, and thanks to the prayers of the Prophet Muhammad, the Arab land at the end of time will not be touched by the Dajjal.

Application of Linguistic Approach in Islamic Studies

Linguistics in this case plays a fairly important role in understanding religious texts. Not only those contained in the Qur'an but also the hadith of the prophet. In Islamic teachings, there are many religious rules and rituals related to linguistic terms, such as the concept of belief represented by the terms, faith, Islam, mukmin, kafir, fasik, apostate and so on. Then there are also religious terms related to the relationship between God and humans, such as the concept of Worship, jihad, hijrah, hajj, zakat and so on.

Understanding religious concepts begins with an understanding from a linguistic perspective, which is very necessary, such as the word zakat, initially the word zakat referred to food growing/developing in general, but after Islam came, the word zakat had a narrower meaning referring to the limits that have been required to be issued and given to those entitled from wealth that has reached the predetermined lineage.

In linguistic theory, a language can experience development, shifts or even changes in meaning, this can be in the form of expanding or narrowing. Changes in meaning can also mean replacing references, existing references are replaced with new references. The word hijrah, for example, lexically has the meaning of "leaving one country to another". However, when the word hijrah is connected to the words faith and jihad in a sentence, the meaning contained in it is not just an activity of moving the body from one place to another.

In this context, the word hijrah will experience a development of meaning that can lead to expansion or narrowing. Islam as a revealed religion has provided enlightenment and renewal in all areas, be it culture, belief, social order, state and also including renewal in terms of language.

Several key terminologies of Jahiliyah ethics have undergone specific semantic transformations, such as karīm which is a derivative of karam and the opposite of bakhīl found in the Qur'an 47 times with various derivations. Initially karīm was the highest ideal of Jahiliyah in terms of generosity without calculation as a direct manifestation of nobility. Then facing a transformation into something deep semantics, at the same time, and in relation to it, the word karim was then applied to someone who truly believed and obeyed, who instead of spending his wealth blindly, without thinking and merely to show off, but did not hesitate at all to use his wealth for a clear and truly noble purpose based on a new concept, namely spending his wealth in the way of Allah. There are many more religious concepts that must be understood completely and deeply, this aims to prevent misunderstandings that will result in errors in practice. It can be imagined, for example, if Muslims understand the word prayer as it was understood in the days of Jahiliyah. The word

prayer was originally interpreted by the Arabs as "prayer", even though after the word prayer was used and included in the very basic term in Islamic teachings, the word prayer has experienced a more specific meaning more than just prayer, namely an activity that begins with takbir and ends with greetings. Prayer is also the main point or pillar of the Islamic religion, as conveyed by the hadiths of the Prophet SAW. In order to understand the meaning of the terms in worship, mua'amalah and aqidah in depth and correctly, it is not an exaggeration to say that language plays a very big role.[9]

3. Conclusion

Islam is not a religion that tightly closes the truth contained in it. The latest studies that have been conducted by scientists, although with different orientations, do not reduce the essence of the truth in Islam, but instead make people who think positively more convinced of this religion. Although this article reveals more about the Qur'an, it does not deny that the linguistic (language) approach can also be used for the hadith. The linguistic (language) approach plays a very large role in providing an understanding of religious texts so that the phenomenon of sterility of teachings can be overcome intelligently and wisely so as to minimize misunderstandings and wrong understandings in understanding religion and religiousness. Thus, the originality of the texts in the Qur'an, hadith, ijma and qiyas remains authentic.

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