Research Article

The Impact of Arabic Literacy on Understanding Quranic Verses

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Abstract.

There are many lots of popping understandings in interpreting the verses of the Quran that gave birth to misleading understandings and teachings. These understandings are caused by their lack of literacy and their inability individually or in groups to understand the rules of Arabic and the science related to the Quran itself. The purpose of this study is to straighten out deviant understandings by relying on Arabic language skills and Quranic sciences through the opinions of previous scholars like Ar-Rasikhun fil Ilm. This type of research is library research, which uses an inductive approach and an analytical approach in interpreting Quranic verses, and collecting information related to them in this context. The results of this study indicate that the literacy of understandings must be based on the ability of trusted scholars in synthesising the science of Arabic and the sciences of the Qur’an such as the book of Mulakhos Qawaid al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah, Mu’jam al-Wasith, the interpretation books of ash-Sya’râwî, and Al- Marâghî so that there is no deviation in understanding the verses of the Quran. The researcher concluded and recommended that the interpretation of the Quranic verses be carried out by experts.

Keywords: Arabic synthesis, misinterpretation, Qur’anic verse

1. Introduction

Proficiency in Arabic is one of the main keys in understanding the verses of the Quran. Currently, there are still many misconceptions and misunderstandings about Islam in Indonesia. This is due to the lack of literacy and the lack of ability and knowledge in the field of Arabic, which has led to misguided teachings of Islam and caused anxiety for some people. These thoughts give the impression that Islam is a religion of violence, a religion that forces people to accept its teachings and does not respect diversity.[1]

It is unfortunate that this misguided and misleading thinking is based on verses of the Qur’an as some people understand them, as if they are the Islamic law that Allah SWT wants. As the words of Allah SWT said in QS Al Maidah verse 44, with the interpretation that the Indonesian government is a kafir government because it does not rule by Allah’s
lack, and this is a misguided and misleading understanding that distorts the image of Islam and its people.

These mistakes are caused by their lack of understanding and familiarity with the sciences of the Quran and the sciences related to it, such as Asbab an-Nuzul, distinguishing between muhkamat and mutasyabihat verses, muthlaq and muqoyyad, am and khos, makkiah and madaniyah, as well as verses intended for all humanity and verses intended for Muslims in particular.

These mistakes are also due to their lack of literacy, understanding and familiarity with the sciences of Arabic, such as nahwu, sharaf, balaghah, science al-ma'ani and science ad-dilalah which explain words according to the situation and context, and do not refer to the explanations of the scholars al-rasikhuna fi al-ilmi.

Furthermore, another cause of these errors is the claim by some that understanding the verses of the Qur'an and ruling on them does not require proficiency in Arabic, but that it is sufficient to understand them using a translation of the Qur'an alone.

Manna' al-Qattan in his book Mabahits fii ulum al-quran explains that the conditions for someone to understand the verses of the Qur'an are as follows:

1. a straight aqidah;
2) free from the interests of lust; 3) to start first with the interpretation of the Qur'an with the Qur'an; 4) look for explanations of the Qur'anic verses from the As-Sunnah; 5) if you do not find an explanation from the as-sunnah, refer to the words of the companions. Furthermore: 6) if not found in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, or the sayings of the Companions, then refer to the tabi'in; 7) knowledge of Arabic and its branches; 8) Knowledge of the basics of sciences related to the Qur'an, such as the science of Qiraat; 9) depth of understanding in order to do tarjih from existing meanings to obtain the right meaning, or to conclude a meaning that is in accordance with sharia texts.

2. Methods

This type of research is library research, and uses the following methods: Data processing methods: The researcher used an inductive approach and an analytical approach. The inductive method by extrapolating the context of interpretation of Quranic verses, and collecting information related to them in this context. Analytical approach by analysing what the researcher extrapolated from the texts and ideas. Information gathering method: The researcher collected scholarly materials from books related to Qur'anic sciences and Arabic sciences. Some previous studies related to this research, such as: research conducted by Karimullah et al who discussed the verses of gratitude in the Qur'an with a thematic interpretation approach and Islamic science studies.
Mahbub Ghozali and Chandra Kartika Dewi who studied various academic responses to the Covid-19 pandemic by linking them to various verses of the Quran;[4] and Hillary Fitri Olganova et al who wrote about the concepts of Makiyah and Madaniyah in the verses of siyasah.[5] The difference between this research and previous research is that the material study of the cases discussed is very different from previous studies.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the researcher presents some of the misconceptions that are rampant among the people in deducing Qur'anic verses and analyzing them with mastery of Arabic and Qur'anic sciences, in addition to the opinions of scholars who specialise in them, and the hatred among Muslims. Among these misconceptions are:

3.1. Definition of Heaven

It is well known that Allah the God Almighty, after creating Adam and Eve from the ground, made them dwell in Paradise, and so He says in QS Al A'raf verse 19, and QS Al Baqarah verse 35. From these two verses, some people have believed since time immemorial that the paradise in which Allah's Adam and Eve lived is the eternal paradise promised by Allah to the pious in the world. The Hereafter, and they cite as evidence the poem Mimiah by Ibn al-Qayyim. For it is your first abode, and in it is the camp. “With the interpretation that the paradise promised by Allah to the righteous in the Hereafter is a dwelling place,” meaning the first dwelling place in which the first man lived, which is the paradise that Adam AS inhabited. This understanding leads to the promised paradise in the Hereafter already feeling soft, but it is humans who inhabit it, namely Adam and Eve. And this understanding contradicts the Prophet’s honourable hadith about Paradise, narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may God be pleased with him, who said: God's messenger, peace be upon him, said: God Almighty said, “I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived, so read if you wish.”

So what was the paradise that Adam and Eve lived in? To answer this question, Shaykh Muhammad Mutawalli Al-Sha'rawi explains this subject in full and explains his thoughts on the Qur'an in general and these two verses in particular, where some say that God Almighty made Adam dwell in it. Paradise and they believe that it is the paradise of eternity that believers will enter in the Hereafter, but some of them say “If it were not for Adam's disobedience, but we would be living in Paradise. Shaykh
Muhammad Mutawalli Al-Shaarawi explains that the Paradise of the Hereafter is for the Hereafter, and a person does not stay in it for a certain period of time, and then after that he is expelled from it.[6] Therefore, the paradise where Adam and Eve lived was not the paradise of eternity, as some people believe, but the paradise of experience or a place on this earth. Paradise comes from the word "الْجَنَّة" which means “to cover”, because there were dense trees that covered its inhabitants so that no one could see them, and there were fruits that provided survival for them, and there was no need to leave it.

3.2. Fixing the Prayer Qibla

Facing the Qibla is one of the obligations of prayer, without which the prayer is not valid, and this is what Allah SWT says in QS Al Baqarah verse 144, from the c Mosques and Musholla facing west do not need to be changed, and some people doubt that this fatwa is valid according to the opinion of astrologers that mosques facing west do not face the Kaaba or Mecca, but rather face Somalia in Africa The correct view is that the direction is west with a slope to the north.

The question arises here, is it true that the prayer is not valid if the Qibla deviates slightly to the right or left from the direction of the Masjidil Haram?

To answer this question, Muhammad Ali Al-Shobuni provides a comprehensive statement in his book “Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam with verbal analysis (part of the Masjidil Haram). Hanafi and Maliki are of the opinion that it is obligatory to face the direction of the Kaaba if the worshipper does not see it, and if he sees it, then his reception is the eye of the Kaaba, and this is confirmed by the hadith: The house is the Qibla for the people of the mosque, and the mosque is the Qibla for the holy people, and the holy objects are the Qibla for the inhabitants of the earth in the east and west of my nation (HR. Bayhaqi in his Sunan, narrated from Ibn Abbas)

Al-Sha'rawi believes that “everyone has a circle according to his vision, so if a person rises, the circle expands, and if his vision is weak, his horizon will decrease, and will be in the centre. A circle, half of which is in front of him and half of which is behind him.” Those who say that the prayer is not valid if the Qibla deviates slightly to the right or left from the direction of the Masjidil Haram are incorrect, because what is meant by “half of the Masjidil Haram”, which means the Qibla of the prayer, does not mean the complete direction, even if it deviates slightly, but rather the direction of the Masjidil Haram or half of the circle towards it.
So for those who do not see the Masjidil Haram, as long as their direction is in the direction of the Masjidil Haram or half a circle in its direction, the Qibla of their prayers is correct, like the Qibla of Indonesian prayers throughout their lives, which is to the west, so their Qibla is correct.

3.3. Definition of Islamic Government

Some people do not recognize the Indonesian government, and they see it as a pagan government that contradicts Islamic Sharia, so they argue that this government should be replaced by an Islamic government. And they quote the Quran QS. Al Maidah verse 44-45. And they point out that the word “who” here describes a general adjective, which includes both Muslims and disbelievers who disobey God's restrictions, for they are disbelievers, disobedient, and unjust. They do not rule by what God has revealed because they distort what God has revealed to them in terms of belief and law.

And they infer from it that any limit that contradicts God's limit is an “ignorant limit” quoting the words of Allah SWT in QS Al Maidah verse 50. And the authorities are brutal, like Pharaoh, so they are infidels, transgressors and oppressors in QS. An Nisa verse 60. From this they understand that “Pancasila” the main source of the Indonesian government is taghut, because it does not adopt Islamic law, such as not implementing the death penalty for thieves, stoning for adulterers, and so on. Therefore, they believe that this government must be replaced with an Islamic government.

The question posed here is whether it is true that Indonesia is a pagan government that contradicts Islamic Sharia? It is agreed that whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed is an unbeliever and a sinner, but it is disagreeable to understand the verse with a superficial and general understanding, especially disagreeable to say that the government of Indonesia since independence in 1945 AD until now is a pagan government that is not allowed for the people. For what they want from it: that these two verses were revealed to the People of the Book from the Jews and Christians before the mission of Prophet Muhammad SAW the last of the prophets and apostles, as they distort what God revealed to them, as God explains in the Qur’an Surah An Nisa verse 46.

And their understanding that the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia known as “Pancasila” as the main source of the Indonesian government is taghut is unhealthy. It should be noted that the constitution agreed upon by the Indonesian people at that time, did not contain anything that contradicts Islam or contradicts what God and His Messenger stipulated from the basic and essential teachings of Islam, as
described in the reason for the revelation of the verse (Al-Ma' idah: 50), which tells of the dissatisfaction of the Banu Nadir with the verdict from God, i.e. the strong and weak position between them and the Banu Qurayza when there was a dispute between them and they wanted to rule by Jahiliyyah rules, and the reason for the revelation of verse (An-Nisa 60) and which tells of a hypocritical man who agreed to come an imam in Juhayna with the Jews to deal with the dispute between them.

3.4. Definition of Murder

It is known that jihad in the cause of Allah has great rewards and high degrees in the sight of Allah, even Allah has forbidden the bodies of mujahideen from hellfire, because Allah SWT said in QS. An Nisa verse 95-96. Today there are still acts of suicide bombing and terror carried out by terrorists in the name of “Islam”, as has happened in Bali, Kunigan, Jakarta, and others, and they are not afraid of death because they believe that their actions are jihad for the ummah. And they conclude the word of Allah which said in Qur’an Surah Al Baqarah verse 191. And the word of Allah SWT in QS. An Nisa: 89.

And the reason for these suicide bombings is because they only understand the context of these verses without scrutinising the reason for their revelation and the reason for their appearance, and they conclude the need to kill those who do not believe in God.

One terrorist who understands the context of this verse is Imam Samudera who in his book “I Fight Terrorists!” divides the stages of jihad into four parts: Stop fighting; permission to fight; the need for a serious war; the need for war against all polytheists and infidels. The question that arises here is whether the suicide bombings carried out by terrorists in the name of “Islam” are valid based on these two verses? This process is due to their understanding of these two verses, which is superficial and general, and the truth is that the verse (Al-Baqarah: 191) was addressed to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and his companions because they feared that the polytheists would break the covenant and fight them when they went to perform Umrah and they hated fighting in the holy month, so this verse was revealed and God Almighty commanded them to kill the polytheists and those who criticised the covenant, wherever they found them in the permitted and prohibited, and in the holy month. And the contract referred to here is the contract between the Muslims and the polytheists that there will be no more war between them for ten years, and it is called the Hudaybiyyah contract, which fell in the previous year, when the Prophet went out
with his companions for Umrah, and he came to Hudaybiyyah near Makkah, but the polytheists prevented him from going home, so he stayed in Hudaybiyyah for a month, and the polytheists made peace with him on condition that he return the next year with his companions.[7]

As for their reasoning with this verse (An-Nisa: 89), it is an incorrect reasoning, because it is addressed to those who left Madinah and went to Makkah, like the nine people who apostatised from Islam at the time of the hijrah, namely the father of immigration, and for that Allah swt ordered that their secrets be found wherever Muslims find them for those who do not repent or return to the immigration house in the city. It should be noted that the Prophet did not fight the disbelievers who did not fight the Muslims, such as dhimmis and disbelievers in safe countries.

3.5. Imitate Everything the Prophet Did

It is known that in the Messenger of Allah there is a good example in words, deeds, and affirmations, and whoever follows his sunnah, then they are the righteous ones in Qur’an Surah Al Ahzab verse 21.

There are some people who understand that marrying more than four as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did is following the Sunnah of the Prophet, and they see the letter "و" in the verse 9 of QS. An Nisa. "و" here is understood as "و" plural, so it is understood that the number is \(2 + 3 + 4 = 9\), and is reinforced by what al-Qasim bin Ibrahim was allowed to marry nine times, but Imam Yahya also denied this news, and they believed that the Qur’an does not prohibit more than four marriages because there is no verse prohibiting it. Is this opinion really one of the followers of the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah? Both of these arguments are absurd, for Allah has made it clear in His Book and in the tongue of His Messenger that this is for him and not for them, and Allah commanded that he should choose his wives to stay with him dan and separate.[8]

And the Prophet Muhammad said: “surely they do not adhere to my sunnah in the least.” This shows that if the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) were in the position of an example, then he would have the characteristics that he allowed as long as he did not forbid people, such as marrying a woman for more than four things, and forbidding her on things that people do not forbid, such as fasting. It is like that Allah, may He be glorified, made it permissible for him from the number of women he wishes, and that he can marry a woman if she gives herself to him, and Allah SWT said:
3.6. Determination of the Beginning of Ramadan

Every year, some Muslims hesitate to prove the beginning of the month of Ramadan because of the differences in it. Some people believe it is enough to prove it by calculation without looking at the crescent moon because of technological advances, with the presence of many astronomers and they master this science and they see that the verse is looking for it by deliberation. The crescent moon was special at the time of the Prophet, due to the lack of technological advances at that time, and they concluded the Word of Allah SWT in Quran Surah Al-Rahman verse 5, QS. Yunus verse 5 and QS. Yassin verse 39-40.

Therefore, they connect Surah Ya-Sin verses 39-40 with Surah Al-Rahman, verse 5, and point out that God has set a stage for the moon to revolve around the earth, and God's laws in the universe portray the quality of certainty, thus coming to the understanding that the circumference of the moon and its position attached to Surah Yunus verse 5 can be calculated, and this is strong evidence of God's command to use calculation.

So how to prove that God Almighty wants it? The reason is their belief that proof by calculation without sighting the new moon is sufficient, because they admit that these verses indicate the calculation of the beginning of the lunar month, and the apparent meaning of these verses indicates the state of time from the difference of night and day and the movement of the sun and moon in their constellations and phases, and the heavenly bodies are under the grip of God Almighty, who regulates the affairs of the creatures of the earth with these things.

It is also clear about the well-established approximate calculations of what the nation can calculate by learning whether it is the sun, such as calculating the solar year and month, and by witnessing whether it is the moon, and which people benefit from their affairs, transactions and worship, such as the dates of sowing and harvesting in agriculture and establishing the times of the five daily prayers, as reported in the past and as they will be in the present, and so on.

Therefore, Professor Ahmed Mustafa Al-Maraghi explains in his book “Tafsir Al-Maraghi” about this topic and says that fasting is based on the calculation of the moon that everyone knows by watching, and the viewer is honest. In order to know by sight, the proof of the beginning of the lunar month is also by sight, that is, looking at the
crescent moon, and as for the calculation, it is only estimated without proof, and this is confirmed by the word of the Almighty in Quran Surah Al Baqarah verse 185.[10]

3.7. Prohibition of Speaking Aloud in Supplication after Prayer

Some people forbid praying in congregation and in public, especially after praying in congregation, and they say that whoever prays in congregation after praying is a heretic who goes against the Sunnah, because the Messenger of Allah and the Companions did not do that, and they conclude that this is the word of the Almighty in QS. Al Baqarah verse 55 and QS. Al A’raf verse 205.

Based on this verse, they say that the congregational prayer with the voice after prayer is a heretical innovation that goes against the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his righteous predecessors, because the Messenger of Allah and his Companions did not do that. Is it correct to conclude this verse in the prohibition of prayer and collective prayer? In fact, the meaning of the verse (Al-A’raf: 55) is prayer to Allah in all circumstances. And it says hidden, meaning that the belief of worship is in the soul, because prayer means worship, and it does not respond to the meaning of prayer collectively and generally. And the true meaning of the verse (Al-A’raf: 205) is Allah’s command to Muhammad to recite the prayer, meaning to fear his punishment if he himself is an imam, and these are the words of a warrior. Al-Kalbi said, “And remember your Lord within yourselves, meaning secretly, meaning openly, so that those behind you hear. “Al-Dahhak said that it means reciting aloud in the morning, sunset and evening prayers, and the meaning of ”لا تكن من الغافلين“ is not to neglect reciting during the day and evening, the recitation is hidden.[11]

So their statement about the misguidance of those who pray in congregation after the obligatory prayer as it is known and practised in Indonesia is an incorrect statement and is considered a big mistake, because the intention of these two verses is not to prevent praying together, but prayer and hiding, and it refers to the meaning of a Muslim calling God in all circumstances with humility, prayer and humility. And fear that God will accept his prayer, and the meaning of prayer is the language of fear, not hidden from something.
3.8. Islamic Caliphate

Some people argue that the presence of a caliph, president or imam is obligatory for every nation after nation/ummah after ummah/generation after generation referring to the words of Allah SWT in Qur’an Surah Al An’am verse 165.

And they see that caliph here in the sense of the leader or imam of the Muslims and not the successor of the caliph as Ibn Kasir understands, meaning (nation by nation) (ummah by ummah) (generation by generation). And from where the obedient people and the disobedient people can be enabled to oppose it by responding to the angels when God Almighty wanted to make a Caliph on earth, which shows that the Caliph is one of the obedient people to avoid destruction and corruption in it. And they confirm the obligation of the Caliphate for Muslims with the words of Allah QS. Asyura verse 13, QS. Ali Imran verse 103, QS. Al Maidah verse 48.

Hence their understanding that the presence of a caliph, president or imam is obligatory is wrong and misleading because the true meaning of the preceding verses, as I have shown, does not include anything related to it. From these verses, they understand that Allah commands Muslims to be united and judged by Allah's boundaries, and for that Muslims need a caliph to govern them.

Is it correct to conclude from these verses in requiring the existence of a caliph for Muslims? In fact, the verse (Al-An’am: 165) relates to humans in general, and not specifically to caliphs, presidents, or imams. And it was revealed about the inhabitants of the earth after the destruction of the empty nations, and the Prophet is the last of the prophets, and his nation has succeeded all nations. And it says: successor means you replace each other, i.e. the superiority of some of you over others in terms of money and sustenance, and the meaning of "ليبلوكم في ماءاتكم" means that the rich are afflicted with wealth and ask for gratitude, and the poor are afflicted with poverty and ask for patience.[12]

As for the verse (Al-Shura: 13) and the verse (Al-Imran: 103), these two verses indicate obedience to the religion of Allah and the Qur’an without uniting to form an Islamic caliphate. Hold to the religion of Allah and the Qur’an, and it says: Hold to the path of the Sunnah and guidance. Do not differ in religion as the Jews and Christians differed. It means seeking support from God, not from tribes and clans. This means that whatever is in doubt for you, refer to the Book of Allah as you dispute with Him Most High. Refer to Allah and the Messenger).[13]

The interpretation of the verse (Al-Ma’idah: 48) is that if the Almighty had willed to make mankind one nation with one law and one methodology that you live by and
practice, then that one law would apply to man, he would do that because he is in the power of the Almighty which cannot be broken, but He did not will that, rather He willed. To make man a species endowed with reason, mind, and readiness for understanding and knowledge, and for man to ascend gradually in all phases of life and be subject to the Sunnah of ascension, so that one law is not suitable for people in all their phases and in all groups, so that wisdom arises in distinguishing their type from other species that creep upon the face of the earth, and between animals and property. Hence their belief that the existence of a caliph, ruler or imam is obligatory on the basis of these verses is a wrong and misleading understanding because the true meaning of the preceding verses, as I have shown, does not include anything related to them.

3.9. The Fulfilment Prayer of The Zalim

Some people see that whether the Zalim is a human or a jinn, Allah SWT still fulfils his prayer, and the proof of this is Satan’s prayer for Allah to prolong his life, and they cite it as evidence of the word of the Almighty in QS. Al A’raf verse 14-15, and Allah Says in QS. Ghafir verse 60.

Sufyan bin Uyaynah said, “Do not prevent one of you from supplicating what he knows about himself: Allah Almighty grants the supplication of the worst of creatures the accursed devil”. So they concluded that Allah accepts the supplication of the devil, for you will not die until the Day of Judgement, and accepts the supplication of the Zalim. So they conclude that Allah accepts the supplication of the devil, because you do not die until the Day of Judgement, and this understanding is not correct, because Allah does not accept the supplication of oppressors, be they jinn or humans, just as Allah did not accept the supplication of Pharaoh and his testimony when he drowned in the sea. Allah said in QS. Yunus verse 90.

And their conclusion about the verse is wrong, because Allah in this verse uses جملة إسمية which indicates continuity without being limited by time, unlike جملة فعلية which is bound by time. Therefore, the lengthening of Iblis’ life is a decree of Allah swt before the prayers and wishes of the cursed Iblis, to whisper and tempt people in the life of this world until the Day of Judgement, so the belief that Allah grants the prayers of the wrongdoer is not correct.[14]

And there is a saying that God may grant the supplication of sinners, but the granting of their supplication is a form of suffering and quarreling, unlike the granting of the supplication of the obedient as a form of mercy.[15] And Ibn Abbas said in this verse that Iblis did not want to taste death, but God Almighty refused to give it to him and
destined him to live until the first whistle, as he said, then he tasted death and bitterness overtook him.[16] From this, the researcher concludes that what is most correct is that the extension of Satan’s life is a provision that Allah has determined before Satan asked and hoped to Allah, even though the question started from him, but this is not a form of answered prayer. So it can be concluded that the supplication of the oppressor is not acceptable.

4. Conclusion

The interpretation had to refer to the context of Quran verses, not translation and lack of proficiency in Arabic literally, like the misunderstanding understood by non-expert, which have made trouble in Indonesia such as: Conflict among Indonesian Moslem and confusing in implementing Islamic teaching. The Literation in order to understand the verses of the Quran should be based on the ability of scholars, who are trusted in synthesising the science of Arabic language and the sciences of the Qur’an, such as Kitab Mulakhos Qawaid al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah, Mu’jam al-Wasith, Tafsir ash-Sya’râwî and Al-Marâghî. The Researchers recommend that the interpretation of the verses of the Qur’an must be done by the experts.

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