A Stylistic Study of Negation in Al-Kafirun Surah

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Abstract

As a widespread linguistic phenomenon, negation is inevitable in everyday speech and interaction. It has been tackled from different linguistic points of view. However, the current study highlights it from a stylistic perspective in an attempt to show how it is used in Al-Kafirun surah in the Glorious Quran. Thus, the paper aims to find out the eminent stylistic features and functions that negation has exploited. After applying an eclectic model in a descriptive qualitative method of analysis, the paper proves that negation is represented syntactically in a very simple way but with deep rhetorical stylistic features that make this surah actively effective.

Keywords: negation, stylistic features, linguistic levels.

ملخص البحث:

كظاهرة لغوية واسعة الانتشار ، فإن النفي أمر لا مفر منه في الكلام والتفاعل اليومي. وقد تم دارسة هذه الظاهرة من وجهات نظر لغوية مختلفة. ومع ذلك، فإن الدراسة الحالية تسلط الضوء عليها من منظور أسلوبي في محاولة لإظهار كيفية استخدامها في سورة الكافرون في القرآن الكريم. وعليه، تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى معرفة السمات والوظائف الأسلوبية البارزة التي استغلتها ظاهرة النفي. بعد تطبيق نظرية انتقائية بواسطة استعمال طريقة التحليل الانتقائي النوعي في الوصف والتحليل، تكتشف الدراسة الحالية أن النفي يتم تمثيله نحويًا لغاية معينة وبطريقة بسيطة ولكن مع ميزات أسلوبية بلاغية عميقة تجعل هذه السورة فعالة بشكل مؤثر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النفي، خصائص اسلوبيه، مستويات لغوية.

Introduction

Negation is "a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence's meaning." (Crystal 1989: 348). Negation, in the grammar of English, is expressed by the presence of the negative particle *not;* in semantics, there are several means to express it, e.g. prefixes such as *un-, non-*, or words such as *deny or refuse*. Some languages use more than one particle in a single clause to express such phenomenon. The use of more than one negative form in the same clause (as in **double negatives**) is a characteristic of some English dialects, e.g. *I'm not unhappy* (which is a stylistically marked as a mode of affirmation). However, the position of a negative particle, is variant, for example:

- *I think John isn't coming*
- *I don't think John is coming*

Such variations affect the usual structure as well as the semantic analysis of the sentence. (Ibid: 349).

The current paper aims to investigate how negation is represented syntactically in Al-Kafirun Surah, and what rhetorical devices are used to attract the attention of the audience. Thus, it is hypothesized that there are syntactic structures to reflect negation and there are rhetorical devices which support such structures. An eclectic model is used to achieve a descriptive qualitative analysis for each verse in the surah as an adopted procedure in this paper.

As such, the paper is divided into three sections in addition to the introduction: theoretical part, analysis and conclusions.

1.Theoretical Part

1.1Types of Negation

Negation is well-understood in grammars which detail the valid ways to form negation (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and svativk 2000; Harris 2008). Negation has many types since it can be expressed by **verbs** (e.g., <u>avoid</u> running), **nouns** (e.g., the <u>absence</u> of evidence), **adjectives** (e.g., it is <u>pointless</u>), **adverbs** (e.g., I <u>never</u> tried Persian food before), **prepositions** (e.g., you can exchange it <u>without</u> a problem), **determiners** (e.g., the new law has <u>no</u> direct implications), **pronouns** (e.g., <u>nobody</u> will keep election promises), and others. This paper, however, focuses on describing negation particularly on some aspects of the last type (determiners and the particle *not*) as they are more frequent used in this surah.

In philosophy and linguistics, many attempts are made to highlight the literature of the current paper whether the phenomenon of negation itself or the Arabic data; that is, Al-Kafirun surah. For example, one of these studies is phonological rhetorical approach for this surah.

2.2 Stylistic Account of Negation

Syntactical categories have long been the object of stylistic research. There are different syntactical means and different classifications that are studied within stylistics. There are a few general principles and techniques that create stylistic functions on the syntactical level common for most stylistic figures or devices.

The major principles at work on the sentence level are:

A.The deletion or absence of one or more parts of the sentence. B. Reiteration (repetition) of some parts. C.The inverted word order. D. The interaction of adjacent sentences. (Znamenskaya 2008: 110).

However, Leech & Short's model (1982:121) focuses only on three basic levels to achieve stylistic analysis, these levels are: semantic, syntactic and phonological level. Abdul-Raof (2018: 18), on the other hand, shows two interlocked areas to do the stylistic analysis: linguistic levels (grammatical, semantic, phonetic, and pragmatic), and rhetorical levels (stylistic features or figures of speech). Consequently, this paper adopts an eclectic model based on Leech and Short's (1982) linguistic levels and on Raof's (2018) model specifically rhetorical level, as in figure (1) below:
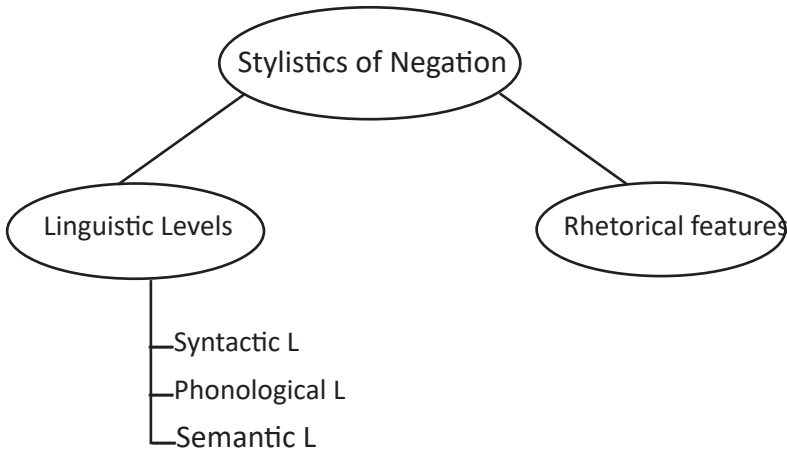
```
                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │ Stylistics of Negation │
                    └──────────────────────┘
                       /                \
        ┌──────────────────┐      ┌────────────────────┐
        │ Linguistic Levels │      │ Rhetorical features │
        └──────────────────┘      └────────────────────┘
              │
              ├─ Syntactic L
              ├─ Phonological L
              └─ Semantic L
```

Figure (1) Model of Analysis

According to Leech and Short (1982: 75-80) there are three main linguistic levels for analysis:

 a.Syntactic level represents combination of words and sentences that syntax is concerned with. Parallel structures lead readers to deduce parallel meanings between such structures. (Leech &Short 1982: 76).

b.Phonological level: It involves the study of speech sounds of the given language (Leech and Short 1981: 119). In analyzing the phonological patterns, the focus will be on elements like: assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, and rhythm.

c.Semantic level: represents the effect and meaning of words and sentences. This meaning can be derived from the coherence of the expressions or from the inferences dependent on the context. (Short 1996:58).

2.2 Rhetorical (Stylistic) Features

There are many stylistic or rhetoric features but in this paper only those that are mentioned within the surah will be explained. These features are:

1.*Parallelis.* Successive clauses or sentences are similarly structured . This similarity makes it easier for the reader / listener to concentrate on the message. "it is one of the mechanisms which writers have at their disposal for controlling the associative connections which readers make" (Short 1996: 65)

2.*Repetition* It is a rhetorical figure which is used for the purpose of emphasis by repeating words or phrases. (ibid: 14).

3.*Merism* Describing people/objects by enumerating their traits. Example: Lock, stock, and barrel (gun); heart and soul (entirety).

4.*Binarity* (also **binary system**) is a pair of related terms or concepts that are opposite in meaning. Binary opposition is the system of language and/or thought by which two theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set off against one another, (Black 2006: 41). "Binary semantic features are those which come naturally in pairs, such as [male], [female]; [adult], [young]; [animate], [inanimate], and so on" (Cruze 2006: 20).

5.***Antimetabole*** is a literary and rhetorical device in which a phrase or sentence is repeated, but in reverse order. Writers or speakers use **antimetabole** for effect-calling attention to the words, or demonstrating that reality is not always what it seems by using the reversal of word, (Chapman, 1973: 98).

6.***Deviation*** is the breaking of rules which others obey. It has been claimed to be a basic principle of aesthetic communication and is essential for the study of poetic language. (Short 1996: 36-37).

2.**Analysis**

سُورَةُ الكافِرون

بِسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

﴿ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿ ١ ﴾ لا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿ ٢ ﴾ وَلا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ﴿ ٣ ﴾ وَلا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدتُّمْ ﴿ ٤ ﴾ وَلا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ﴿ ٥ ﴾ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ﴿ ٦ ﴾ ﴾

1. **Say: "O,** you **unbelievers** [infidels; the ones who reject God6; you who reject the faith7;]

2. I do not **worship** [serve] what you (plural) **worship**

3. *And you are not **worshiping** [and nor are you worshipers] <u>who</u> I worship*

4. And I am not **worshiping** [and I am not a worshipper] <u>what</u> you have **worshipped**

5. *And you are not **worshiping** [and nor are you worshipers] <u>who</u> I worship*

6. For [to] you your **religion** [faith; true religion; true faith; judgment ; (final) reckoning], and for [to] me my **religion. (**Abdel Haleem 2010: 811).

The Analysis

First of all through the whole sura, the phonological level sheds light on rhymes and assonances. They are, in each verse, represented in (l-kāfirū**na** – taʿbudū**na**; ʿabadt**um** – lak**um** – dīnuk**um**) indicates a polemic context, and a merism since it directs a special group of people in a kind of "negotiation" with *kāfirūna,* rather than a miscellaneous one.

Then, the syntactic and semantic levels produce negation in rhetorical ways that attract the attention in a simplified clear oration to those referred people affirming that this is the religion of negotiation and freedom.

The first verse contains the feature "binarity or antithesis" in pronouns "You" and

"Your" pronoun appear 7 times against "I" and "Me" which occur 5 times. It has been claimed that the usage of such "thick" direct pronouns is one of the effective devices both in poetic speech and in the Qur'an. The structure "**Say**: O, *you* unbelievers" can serve as an implicit binarity and implicit negation for putting such group of people and their demand in a label "unbelievers". Such a word contradicts them (as they asked the prophet for exchanging the worship) to the believers and to the personality of the prophet. That is, there is a borderline between Muhammad (*You - Muhammad* have to say to *them - disbelievers*) is drawn.

Here the word "qul or say" is of a special concern. It is an imperative opening which indicates a tool to attain an emphasis stronger than a direct statement. "Qul" is usually directly addressed to the prophet or to the whole community of believers.

Following *yā-ʾayyuhā l-kāfirūna* could function as blame. In addi-

tion, *yā-ʾayyuhā* is a "phrasal tie" to catch the attention of audience. So, this first verse predetermines the whole tone of the Surah by blaming unbelievers and setting binarity image for the rest of Surah.

The second verse represents a direct strong negation represented by the use of the negative particle "la, not" with present verb tense. The particle with the verb indicate future direction. That is, it is never ever that the prophet worships their Gods neither now nor in future. The word "maa" is also used to humiliate their gods. To emphasize the truth of the verb, an implicit pronoun is used to indicate the subject . Also, a feature of antonyms or (binarity or antithesis) is used twice: first in the implicit pronoun which refers to the prophet (pbuh) and the opposite of his character and personality which is 'those disbelievers'. This is a kind of repetition in such contradictory reference. Second binarity is represented by the referent God (the meant worship). This binarity is best expressed by parallelism of meaning.

The third verse begins with repeating the negative particle "w la, or not" with nominal structure represented by a separate pronoun "antum, you" as a syntactic level. This plural pronoun generalizes all disbelievers in any time. Then, in the phonological level, the word "Abiduun or worshiping" comes in the same rhyme as "kafiruun or disbelievers". Such repetition for the structure of "esm al-fa'al or name of subject" affirms the permanence and constant of their hypocritical and fake worship. This verse with the previous one creates binarity or antimetabole in both structure and meaning. The expression "ma A'abud or what I worship" implies a kind of negation in which he negates their knowledge for Allah; they do not know whom did a prophet worship.

The forth verse as a semantic level, there is a repetition for the prophet's attitude towards what they worship but in a structure that parallels the previous third verse. That is, the syntactic level represents the use of negative particle with a nominal structure "w la ana or I am not". This structure refers to futurity clearly. The personal pronoun "ana or I am" is used to add more emphasis and clarity for the implied pronoun of the second verse "la a'abud or I am not worshiping". Consequently, the prophet negates his worship for their gods in two structures: the verbal and the nominal one with two different tenses: present and past to indicate that his attitude is stable, renewal, and continuous. Semantically, he affirms his attitude by repeating the particle "ma or who" and the expressions of worship.

The fifth verse is a complete direct repetition of the third verse in which the negation is reflected only by a verbal structure to indicate the attitudes of the disbelievers. Such equal parallelism of negation highlights how poor and weak is their reaction compared to the prophet's worship to Allah and how they cannot be like him whether towards Allah or even towards their god. Such a repetition of the previous indirect ones by the forms of the word " ya'bud or worship" , "la or not" and "ma or what" reflects the coherence of the text.

The sixth verse summarizes all the previous verses in an economic speech with deep profound meaning. Binarity or antithesis is again reflected in the pronoun "lkum or for you" and "li or for me". Deviation is presented in that the pronoun of disbelievers precedes the pronoun of the prophet for a reason. It is to assure the limitedness of their religion and at the same time this is respect for their belief though they oppose . The second deviation is in "we li" that precedes "deen or religion" to reflect the true belongingness of the

prophet to Islam and his appreciations to this kind of religion. The end the verse is an open ending for "deen or religion". This expression is used without any addition whether the addition of pronoun like "**my** religion" or a definite article. Using such an expression reflects its continuity and at the same time keeps the same correspondence of rhyme.

3.**Conclusion**

This paper finds out that negation is used throughout the text of this surah in a simple but a rhetorical way. Negation has been introduced to reflect a polemic context which presents some kind of the struggles of the prophet with the surrounding religions. It has exploited many stylistic devices in phonological, syntactic, and semantic levels. All the surah is extremely of a dichotomy nature exploiting the property of binary or antimetabole in structures and expressions of not only worship but also in the people under polemics (i.e., the prophet and the disbelievers).

The negation used by the prophet is stronger and more effective than the one used on the part of the disbelievers. The former one is represented by both nominal and verbal phrase in order to refuse the worship of their idols forever. The second one indicates their temporal refusal of their worship.

Also, negation is used with the verb *ʾ-b-d* which appears eight times in all verses, to be a repetitive word. Such a repetition together with the use of parallelism affirms the same topic through addressing to assure the message and prevent them from any falsification. Some verses express negation implicitly through the pronouns as happened in the last verse. These pronouns are deviated to add extra aesthetic aspects to the text. Also, coherence appears

as a style in this surah since all the repetitive particles and expressions have led to a clear smooth understanding.

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