

# The Tautological Language Style of the Qur'an on God Existence (A Stylistic Study)

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## ABSTRACT

To repeat a word with synonymous meaning does not necessarily mean redundant. It also works in Arabic language with its typical characteristics even though the words are synonymous. This study aims to examine the tautological language features of Arabic language in the Quran regarding the existence of God and their underlying meanings. It employs stylistics approach where linguistic interpretation is carried out to meticulously examine one word from another. The results demonstrate that the existence of God is constructed in 1) kalam khabar-informative, 2) qashr-limited, and 3) similar construction of the predicate illustrating the subject. The underlying meanings of such construction is to emphasize Allah's almighty, the present God's presence, and illuminate the hereafter.

**Keywords:** *Tautological Language, God's Existence, Stylistics, The World Life, The Hereafter*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The miracle of the Quran in terms of language had been a major challenge for societies in Arab as the scientific sign, which is a part of the Quran miracle, was not revealed. It was beyond common sense. This challenge was deliberately confronted to them because the traditions of language skill challenge had been known since pre-Islamic era (*Jahiliyah*). Some figures, such as Umru` al-Qais, Zuhair bin Abi Sulma, Tharafah bin al-Abd, Antarah, Amr bin Kultsum, Labid, and Thawilah al-Harits, were famous poets whose works were called *muallaqat* as they were hung on the wall of the Kaaba [1].

Finding the fact that there were a lot of popular poets in Arab, the Quran challenged them to make one paragraph with a great quality diction and deep meaning. Quran beautifully chose the type of words, phrases, structures of sentences, and language styles in different situations. For example, the subject with various types of words, the structure of verbal and non-verbal clauses, inverted order, the affirmation of words with synonymous meaning, and other types of structures. The structure will have the same meaning once it is translated into Indonesian. It is different from the structure in the rhetoric study or Arabic grammar because every similar word or different sentence structure will also result a

different meaning and understanding. Therefore, repeating a word or another word with similar meaning does not mean a waste of expression. Even tautological language can be a means of *da'wah* (missionary endeavor) of Islamic teachings [2] to strengthen the character and moral [3].

The opinion, that tautological language style creates an ineffective sentence, only works on the study of non-Arabic language. The words in Arabic are different as they have different character and meaning even though they are synonymous. For example, the word *qa'ada* and *jalasa*, which means sitting down, means different way of sitting even though they are similar in meaning. In general, such figure of speech in Arabic literary tradition and grammar was delivered to affirm a message by considering the situation and context of the conversation. The language selection and placement in the Qur'an cannot be separated from the historical factor once the Quran was revealed. Therefore, many of its language styles are in accordance with certain effects to reveal because they aim to show the beauty of the language use, the expression accuracy, and the richness of meaning that can result in diverse understanding.

This paper is intended to respond the opinion that a tautological language figure creates ineffective

sentence. Therefore, two questions are formulated: (a) how does the Quran formulate a tautological language style about the existence of God? (b) what is the secret meaning of the tautological language style about the existence of God in the Quran? The analysis on both questions is the main point of this paper.

This paper is based on the argument that: (a) many tautological language styles of the Quran about the existence of God are expressed in the structure of *qashr* (restrictions); (b) the text and context have a dialectic relationship, that a text is resulted from context. The socio-historical context of the Arab society was an adherent to *paganism*, so Allah shows Himself as the Almighty God, after denying the other Gods.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. The Understanding of Tautological Language Style

Tautology is etymologically derived from Latin language, “*tautologia*”, which means “meaning repetition”. The Indonesian dictionary [4] defines it as the repetition of a redundant statement, idea, or word, and it is basically unnecessary because it has similar meaning. Thus, a tautological figure may refer to a language style that employs a repetition of words with synonymous meaning to give more affirmation.

In certain context, word repetition leads to more assertive meaning. The redundant words cause the tautological figure quite similar to the pleonasm figure. In the pleonasm figure, word repetition is not necessary because the previous word contains an implicit meaning. It means adding information on the clear statement or attaching unnecessary notes. Tautological figure tends to use synonyms as a repetition to affirm the formulated sentences [5].

In the grammar of Arabic, the term tautological language style is compatible with *taukid* (affirmation), either *lafdzi* (word) or *ma'nawi* (meaning). The example of *taukid lafdzi* is *Ja'a Ali Ali* (Ali has come), *Ji'ta Anta* (you have come), while that of *ma'nawi* is *Ja'a Ali Nafsuhi* (Ali has come). The language style of *taukid* functions to strengthen the information on the listener or eliminate the indecision on certain news [6] Such language style is often found in the Quran with lots of variations.

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ

*So, the angels prostrated - all of them entirely* (al-Hijr, 15: 30) [7].

The word “*kulluhum*” and “*ajma'un*” serves as *taukid ma'nawi* from the word *Malaikat*, which confirms that all of the angels honored the Prophet Adam because he was

knowledgeable. It means that none of the angels refuse the commandments of God to appreciate the noble position of the Prophet Adam.

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

*And We said, "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers* (al-Baqarah, 2: 35) [7].

God said to Adam, dwell you, there is *taukid lafdzi*, “*anta*”, which functions to abolish doubts about the commandment that it refers to Prophet Adam. The rich facilities in heaven were intentionally created by God for Prophet Adam and his wife, Eve.

In Arabic grammar, every word has different characters and meanings even though they are synonyms. In general, the language style of *taukid*, both *lafdzi* and *ma'nawi*, is delivered to affirm the message, information, command, and others by considering the situation and context of the conversation. This process will result and produce an option of *language style to express*, so the language becomes meaningful.

### 2.2. The Existence of God in the Qur'an

The God's existence and religion always become a discussion or even a debate in whole human's history. The recent fact indicates that theologically some believe in God and have a religion only in theoretical level, not practical level (practical atheism/secularism), some others take over in their incompetence or impossibility of knowing God (agnosticism), even some others deny God and religion either theoretically or practically (atheism) [8]. Initiating an argument of God's existence is actually a very crucial effort as well as quaint in religion life and human's belief. Arguments proposed by Aristotle is of the most popular and had been adopted and developed by the next thinkers and philosopher, no exception for arguments by Ibn Rusyd [9]. This study figured out that the God's existence in various west philosophy thinkers had triggered a serious debate that involve sense and heart [10].

According to Miswanto (t.t.), to prove the existence of Allah, we need to use at least three postulates (arguments) that can support and strengthen that God is there, which are the arguments of *fitrah*, *naqli*, and *aqli* [11]. Humans, since they were in the world of spirit, had been instilled the seeds of faith, trust, and witness (*shahadah*) to the existence of Allah SWT (al-A'raf, 7:

172) [7]. Who and how is God continually sought by human as the natural characteristic of servant who will always need the highest existence where they can rest on and shelter. The philosophy of deity teaches human to recognize God through minds which then the truth can be reached out in accordance with revelation (Holy Book) [12]. The seed of belief in the existence of God is a natural disposition or something which is not supernatural because believing in God is human nature. The nature becomes the first driving force to acknowledge God. God created man with various instincts, including the divine and religious ones. Cited in Miswanto (t.t.), Ali Issa Othman explained that the meaning of nature is the essence of human nature, who naturally also wanted to know and recognize God.

The argument of *naqli* is an evidence which based on Quran and Sunnah Prophet Muhammad SAW. While the argument of *aqli* (rational) is the evidence to prove the God existence with mind. The contemplation of human beings with critical mind along with the smooth and sharp observation of intuition will inevitably result in the conclusion that the universe and all its contents are God's creatures, created by The Almighty Creator with full planning and goals (al-Mu'minun, 23: 115 and Ali Imron, 3: 191) [7]. The rational arguments refer to: first, the ontological argument, which is the science that discusses about the realization of the true nature, or the science that studies about the nature of something tangible based on logic. The object of the ontological study is something exists. Ontology discusses something exists universally, by trying to find the essence within every fact. Therefore, the formal object of ontology is the nature of all reality. It is no wonder that the philosophy of religion proposes an ontological argument to talk about the existence of a God [13].

The second, cosmological argument, where the law of cause-and-effect (causality) in the universe should end on the First Cause, called God. Something that happens in this universe must be with a reason because that is the cause of the existence or occurrence of something. Because, nature is more mandatory and there than the nature itself. Something might occur in the world due to willingness of The almighty, the Greatest, or also referred to *Aperion* [14].

The third, teleological argument, which states that everything is seen as an organization composed of parts which have close relations and cooperate with one another. All of the purposes are for the goodness of the whole world. This nature does not circulate and evolve by chance, but it does for specific purpose, which is universal goodness. There must be substance that moves towards the goal and make this nature circulated and evolved into that direction. The substance is called God [15].

The fourth, moral argument, which is considered the most important and most powerful. The popular figure that employed the argument was Immanuel Kant (1724-1804 M) [16]. Kant believes that human beings have moral feelings attached to their soul and conscience, which let people feel responsible to avoid all forms of bad deeds and do all of the good ones. The command to avoid all of forms of bad deeds and do all the good ones is absolute and universal (categorical imperative). Good deeds are done and the bad ones are avoided because they are the command [16].

The fifth, an intuitive argument, which is also called religious experience. The argument is intuitive based on conscience or inner conviction that the existence of God is often based on the feeling that the faithful figures had already experienced the feeling and evidence on God existence in the real life. The human heart with its strong predisposition to love the eternity and absolute perfection shows that The Eternal is only The Almighty God, and the absolute perfection only belongs to Him. According to Said Nursi, there is an impassioned and strong desire within every heart of human beings to love eternity. It leads most humans to wishful thinking that all they love is eternal [17].

The sixth, a historical argument, which explains the arguments about the power and majesty of God is derived from the events that have prevailed on the earth.

### 3. METHODS

The current study employed qualitative research, which generates descriptive data of the observable objects [18]. In this context, the researcher uses a library study. The data source are the verses of the Quran, which explain about the existence of God and some books of *mu'tabar tafseer*, such as *Tafsir al-Kasysyaf`an Haqa'iq Ghawamidh al-Tanzil* by Imam al-Zamakhshari (1407), *Tafsir Thabari* by Imam al-Thabari (1992), and *Tafsir al-Qurthubi* by Imam al-Qurthubi (1964).

The data were analyzed by using stylistic technique. According to Wellek (1995), stylistic analysis has two considerable approaches. The first is analyzing systematically the linguistics issues, and interpreting them to unravel the whole meaning. The second is analyzing the distinctive traits differs one work with the others, by finding the distortion and deviation of the language use to reveal the philosophy [19]. According to Endraswara (2003), the steps of the analysis to do in the stylistic study are: 1) diction analysis to find out the language beauty and scope of meaning; 2) sentence analysis emphasized on its variation; 3) analysis of the meaning of the language style to find various meanings [20].

#### 4. RESULTS

The tautological language style that explains about the existence of God in the Quran can be categorized into 3 groups: 1) *kalam khabar* (informative language), 2) *qashr* (restrictions), and 3) similar construction of the predicate illustrating the subject. *Kalam khabar* is the language of information or news about a matter that might be true if it is in accordance with the circumstances, or it is untrue if it does not agree with the circumstances. The news is true or untrue depending on the contents of the news, not on the people who deliver [21]. Meanwhile, *qashr* sentence refers to the sentence which is limited by another sentence. Therefore, it becomes specific, not going beyond the others. The structure of this sentence functions as a limitation on something specific, so the law or the nature will not apply to general [21]. The meaning of "the predicate describes the nature of the subject or the doer" is a sentence whose predicate is *isim ma'rifat* (specific word), so the subject and the predicate are essentially the same. In a sense that the subject is the predicate, and the predicate is also the subject.

There is one strong foundation which forms a tautological language style in the Quran, which explains about the existence of God, which is ideological foundation. *Nomad* tribes in the desert do not have a formal religion or a particular doctrine. They embraced the so-called *the tribe humanism*, which prioritises human excellence and the tribe honour [22]. Their condition was different from that of the residents' in Mecca. Because they were preoccupied with trading, they required a formal religion. Moreover, the lower classes, suffering of economic difficulties due to inequality in the wealth distribution, require spiritual peace. Al-Syahrastani, a muslim historian said that there were 360 idols around Kaaba, and the most famous one was Hubal. The other three statues of the God in Mecca were Manat, Lata, and `Uzza. Tor Andrae said that the offerings for all of the three Gods had been conducted for a long time.

The world of Arab society was the world of the senses, which was the life that only witnessed and appreciated the vastness of the desert, an exclusive place. They grew and developed in their own world, which was *nomadic*. They believed that this mortal world was the only world they would live in, so the most realistic solution was hedonism. The wealth accumulation in the pursuit of worldly pleasures was perceived to give eternal life. Therefore, the pursuit of the pseudo worldly pleasure was made in various ways, and it became a common phenomenon in Arabia [23]. The conception of the existence which was typical to characterize the pagan world view of the Arabs had been illustrated in the Quran, surah 45 (al-Jatsiyah) verse 24, that life was just in this world, and nothing destroyed them except the time. On the existential psychological level, their mentality is characterized by the *preteritism* thought, which is the

correlation with what is already known, rejecting and even being frightened of the unknown [24]. The possibility that human beings will be given a life back in a future is a taboo conception beyond their minds.

#### 5. DISCUSSION

In the theoretical philosophy of Kant, God's status is not transcendent but transcendental. According to Kant, the concept of God is a regulative idea. Regulative idea does not have reference outer human's mind [25]. In the Quran, the surah Shad verse 5, the Prophet Muhammad got a warning from the pagans because he wanted to make the Gods (idols) into one God. The Prophet invited them to worship Allah, not to worship the idols hanging around the Kaaba.

أَجْعَلِ الْأَلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ

*Why does he make the gods into One God? This is indeed very surprising (Shad, 38: 5).*

A warning was given by the idolaters to the Prophet, where they feel wonder if Muhammad made the Gods into One God, Allah [26]. For them, it was weird because the activity of worship had been done since the life of their ancestors. It was no wonder if the Prophet Muhammad was accused as a witch. On the structure of the above sentence, the word "*Alihah*" (plural), and the word "*Ilah*" (singular) both function as the object, while the word "*Wahid*" is the adjective of the word "*Ilah*". The word "*Wahid*" is the name of the good names of Allah. The structure of this sentence provides understanding on the strong affirmation of monotheism, in which the Gods they worship in cannot give them benefits and dangers. It is also explained in the following verse:

إِنَّ إِلَهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ

*Indeed, your God is one God Almighty (al-Shaffat, 37: 4).*

The sentence above is the answer of *qasam* (swear) from the previous sentence, so the sentence begins with "inna" and the predicate is attached with "lam", both of which mean truly or really. The interesting part is that the word "*Ilah*" refers to the word "*kum*", which means your God. This structure confirms that your God is really One, unlike what the paganism *idolaters*, who worship in idols or statues, perceive [26]. The similar structure is found on Quran al-A'raf verse 172, al-Baqarah verse 133, al-Hajj verse 34, al-Ankabut verse 46, etc.

Therefore, Quran states that the God in Islam is Allah Almighty;

وَالْهُكْمَ إِلَهًا وَجِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

*And your god is one God. There is no deity [worthy of worship] except Him, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful (al-Baqarah, 2: 163).*

The word “Ilah” in the above verse is mentioned three times, meaning that God really confirms about His oneness. That God entitled to obey and worship is only the God Almighty, not the others [27]. All forms of God are denied, and only one God is worth worshipping, Allah. The structure of limitation sentence is also found at Quran, al-Nisa` verse 171, al-Ma`idah verse 73, al-An`am verse 19, Ibrahim verse 52, etc. At the end of the surah al-Baqarah verse 163, Quran reinforces with the phrase “Huwa al-Rahman al-Rahim”, an epilogue that explains that Allah is the Most Gracious and Merciful. *Al-Rahman al-Rahim* including the names of Allah which are often pronounced by the people of faith. In fact, the Prophet Muhammad commanded his people to mention the name if they begin doing something commanded or allowed. The command is intended that human beings can apply His character of love and affection in life.

Even though God has names that show His strength and beauty, only two names, *al-Rahman al-Rahim* that Allah commanded to understand in life. The two names could be imitated by His creatures with a status of *khalifatullah fi al-ardh*. In another context, when a human can interpret His affection to all the creatures, the creatures in the sky will also appreciate him with compassion. As the highest reality and the origin of all reality, the word Rabb in al-Qur`an have three elements of meaning: who is creating, who is having and who is organizing. It means that Rabb is the only one who is creating, who is having and who is organizing this universe. The human’s confession toward the God’s existence had create awareness that there is no God to be worshipped but Allah. It also brings about the human’s characteristic of rabbani that is those who have a deep knowledge of religion law, wisdom and wise in organizing and guiding as well as strive to make human’s benefit come true [28].

In the verse of Ibrahim verse 48, Allah with all His power resurrects all creatures from the grave;

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَوَاتُ وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

*[It will be] on the Day the earth will be replaced by another earth, and the heavens [as well], and all*

*creatures will come out before Allah, the One, the Prevailing (Ibrahim, 14: 48).*

God is the One Almighty who can do what He wanted. He wanted to bring the creatures back in life and similarly to turn them off. No one can beat the will of the Almighty God, when all creatures are resurrected from the grave in life [27]. The majority of the society of Arab in Mecca do not believe in the day of resurrection. Death is only a change of period. Existentially and Psychologically, their mentality is contaminated by the thought of *preteritism*, which is tied to something concrete and resistant against something unknown or unseen. Thus, the other eschatological problem, like the grave, the judgement, justice, heaven, hell, and others is beyond their reason. Therefore, Quran chooses the diction of “al-Wahid” and “al-Qahhar” which are two natures or names of Allah that shows His absolute power, which can break their beliefs. Therefore, the two dictions in a clause becomes a predicate to reverse the prejudice of the people musyrik or kafir unfounded. The structure of predicate which illustrates subject is also found at Quran Yusuf verse 39, al-Ra`du verse 16, Ibrahim verse 48, Shad verse 65, al-Zumar verse 4, etc.

Tautological language style in Arabic literary tradition and grammar is generally delivered to affirm a message. After considering and analysing some verses or tautological language style in the Quran that explains about the oneness of God, the revealable secret is: First, God Affirms Himself as the Almighty God. Some of the tautological language style that explains about the existence of God is that Quran employs a lot of forms of phrase, whose second word refers to the idolatrous or infidel. For example, in al-Hajj verse 34;

فَالْهُكْمَ إِلَهًا وَجِدًا فَلَهُ أَسْلَمُوا وَبَشَرَ الْمُخْبِتِينَ

The word “you” in the phrase “your God” refers to idolatrous who deify and worship the idols. Then, the idol that is perceived the God is likely merged in the phrase “Ilahun Wahid”, because the idols who are lauded is essentially a creature of Allah [27]. A muslim who surrenders to God always declares that God is the One Almighty. One in a sense of the Essence, character, and action that determine all of the affairs of the creatures on earth. It is also found in the Quran, al-Anbiya` verse 108:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَهٌ وَجِدٌ

The structure of the sentence above reveals that all kinds of the Gods worshipped by Arabian *paganism* were

denied, and agreed upon only one God Almighty who deserves to worship, namely Allah [29].

The second, God includes Himself with the character of al-Wahid and al-Qahhar. As it is told in the Quran, al-Shad verse 65, when the unbelievers accused that God made Jesus a child, could not revive the people who died, and other accusations, Quran answered them with the word “al-Wahid” and “al-Qahhar”.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمَا مِن إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ

There is no God who can deliver the benefits and dangers in this world, except He Who is the One and Almighty. God is One in everything, and the Almighty who can do anything he wants [27]. Under the two characters, Quran explains that God is powerful by Himself, without any help of others, and beats all the accusations to Him. The word “al-Wahid” and “al-Qahhar” are the two characters of Allah that show His great power, addressed to the arrogant and haughty disbelievers.

The third, behind the life in the world, there is a hereafter. The world and the hereafter illustrate two different circumstances. The world is mortal while the hereafter is everlasting. God reminds us about the mirage world as stated in al-Hadid verse 20;

*Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.*

The real life is the life after death. The tautological language can be a symbol to describe death, which does not to fear, but to face and prepare [30]. Every muslim should balance between the world life and the afterlife. The world is a means and field to attain happiness in the hereafter. The happiness in the hereafter is according to the deeds in the world. Believing that God is One and Almighty will lead to conviction that there will be the true life behind the world, which is the hereafter. Thus, the granted time and opportunity are always made the most for the life in the hereafter.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The language selection and placement in the qur'an cannot be separated from the historical factor once the

Quran was revealed. Therefore, many of its language styles are in accordance with certain effects to reveal because they aim to show the beauty of the language use, the expression accuracy, and the richness of meaning that can result in diverse understanding. This is the miracle of the Quran which is incomparable forever.

The results demonstrate that the existence of God is constructed in 1) kalam khabar-informative, 2) qashr-limited, and 3) similar construction of the predicate illustrating the subject. The underlying meanings of such construction is to emphasize Allah's almighty, the present God's presence, and illuminate the world hereafter. Meanwhile, it aims to affirm that Allah is the Almighty God. He always follows His names with the characters of *al-Wahid* and *al-Qahhar*, great characters that can subdue the pride and arrogance of the Arabian *paganism*. Besides, behind the life of the world, there is a hereafter, a life beyond the common sense of the societies in Arab then.

To complement the findings, it is necessary to conduct a study of other disciplines, such as sociolinguistics, social semiotics, semantics, and so on. So, the findings could enrich the Islamic scientific knowledge which affirms that God existence is basically logic in the universe.

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