A Cognitive Linguistic Study of the Features of Gradability by Focus in Arabic

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ABSTRACT: *The present study tackles the linguistic phenomenon of 'gradability by focus' in Arabic from a cognitive linguistic perspective. By and large, the early Arab grammarians have not theorized about gradability despite its importance in the semantic relationships. They address some grammatical and morphological forms that convey either ends of the scale of gradability. Gradable forms include ''at-Tawwkīd'' (i.e., emphasis), ''al-Mafξūl 'al-Muṭlaq'' (i.e., the cognate object), ṣiyagh 'at-Taşghīr'' (i.e., diminutive forms), "ṣiyagh 'al-Mubālaghah'' (i.e., maximizers) and many other forms. However, they do not use any of the aforesaid forms under the heading of ''at-Tadarruj bit-Tarkīz'' (i.e., gradability by focus). Therefore, the study grounds for 'focus' highlighting its salient lexical, grammatical, and morphological features in Arabic. The present paper provides definitions for gradability, focus, prototypicality and precision. Afterwards, it provides a detailed analysis of the sub-categories of prototypicality and precision unearthing their rhetorical functions. In conclusion, gradability by focus plays a key role in identifying the subtle shades of meaning. Tackling such cognitive linguistic features is of an overwhelming importance at the pure linguistic level as well as the sociolinguistic one.*

KEYWORDS: cognitive, focus, gradability, linguistic, prototypicality, semantics

INTRODUCTION

Rational of the Study

Gradability represents a semantic relationship just like synonyms and antonyms. However, it has not received full attention in Arabic since the early Arab grammarians do not theorize about it. At the sociolinguistic level, gradability is of great importance in daily life. It plays a key role for overcoming the state of dichotomy that divides peoples or things into two opposing or contradictory parts. Instead, it opens the door for pluralism and different points of view. Instead of the white-black dichotomy which is the result of the misuse of the concept of antonym, there is the cline of white, brown, black, etc. Thereupon, it opens the door for tolerance and coexistence. Instead of having one or two opposing views regarding a specific thing, the speaker can adopt a gradable view in a way that helps in resolving conflicts between all parties. The speaker can adopt multiple points of view like being for, against a specific point of view or taking a neutral position. Therefore, it enables the speaker to have gradable points of views in a way that fits the situation. At the pure linguistic level, it helps in revealing the subtle shades of meaning as illustrated below.

15

Given the controversy over the interpretation of specific cases in the Holy Books, it is important to establish theoretical frameworks for providing an accurate interpretation for such cases. Thus, the current study attempts to ground for the linguistic device of gradability by focus. it goes a step further shedding light on the traditional argument regarding the question: which came first: theory or analysis? It is taken for granted that theory and practice are inseparable. In other words, analysis may be the basis from which a theoretical framework can be devised. On the contrary, a theoretical framework is the basis for conducting a study on a methodical basis. Therefore, it is crucial to find theoretical frameworks for analyzing specific phenomena; otherwise, the process of analysis will be neither comprehensive nor accurate. Theorizing about a specific phenomenon enables the analyst to deal with the complex nuances of the text.

Objectives of the Study
By addressing the device of gradability by focus, the study aims at achieving the following goals:
a.   Getting the readers familiar with the phenomenon of gradability by focus in Arabic.
b.   Giving a thorough grounding in the concepts of 'focus' in Arabic identifying its salient features, categories, sub-categories, and rhetorical functions.
c.   Providing an accurate exegetical commentary for some problematic cases under analysis.
d.   Unearthing the subtle shades of meaning which gradable forms do have.

METHODOLOGY

The present paper attempts to develop a model of gradability by focus categorizing it into: prototypicality and preciseness. Under prototypicality, the study provides eight subcategories as follows: perfection/excellence, exemplarity, typicality, genuineness, originality, purity, virginity, faithfulness. As for preciseness, it covers two main types: comprehensiveness, and perfectness.

Data of the Study
The primary data of the study is obtained from the All-Glorious Qur'an. The data is highly representative in a way that helps in achieving the goals of the study. The selection of the cases under analysis helps in identifying the cognitive features of the linguistic device of 'focus'. Moreover, the study moves a step forward focusing on the most problematic cases which the exegetes differ over their interpretations.

Gradability: A Historical Overview
Once reading the term 'gradability, a question pops into the reader's mind "do Arab grammarians theorize about gradability?". To be objective, no one can say that Arab grammarians do not address gradable forms at all. Indeed, it has been addressed sporadically in grammar, morphology, and lexicology under different terms. Under lexicology, it happens that al-ξaskary (1997) authorizes a book under the heading of *'al-Fawāriq al-Lughawyyah'* in which he tackles the differences between words. Anyway, he does not establish a complete theoretical framework for the device of gradability by focus. Under grammar, Arab grammarians have tackled the cognate object, the particles of negation, comparative and superlative forms. But they do not deal with these forms under the heading of gradability. Moreover, they do not mention the functional scales of

gradability. Under morphology, they have tackled ''şiyagh 'al-Mubālaghah'' (i.e., maximizers), şiyagh 'at-Taşghīr (i.e., diminutive forms). Really, they do not formulate a theory for gradability. Therefore, the study works on the theory of gradability by 'focus' in Arabic.

Gradability: Definition

Lexically, gradability is a matter of arranging in degrees and ranks according to Aarts et al. (1994, p. 183). The previous definition revolves around scaling with reference to force which is out of the scope of the present study. There is no mention of scaling with reference to focus which the study addresses later. Technically, gradability is defined as a defining property of attitudinal positioning according to Martin and White (2005). It has the function of raising the volume up or down. The modifier 'gradual' itself represents a specific degree which is not neither rapid nor steep.

In Arabic, the equivalent form of gradability is ''*Tadarruj*'' ''تَدَرُّج''. According to ؏umar (2008, p. 734), "*at-Tadarruj*" is the infinitive form of the verbal process "*tadarraja*''. Also, the noun دَرَجٌ ''*darajun*'' (i.e., stairs, a set of steps) is the plural of the singular ''*darajah*'' (i.e., a single step in a set of stairs) which conveys a series of steps for going from one level into another. The verbal process ''*daraja*'' conveys the state of being graduated in ranks and degrees. According to the definitions above, gradability is a means of categorization or arrangement of a group of people or things in ranks and grades. There are two main types of gradability: focus and force. The present study puts a laser beam on 'focus' dividing it into two main types: (a) prototypicality, and (b) precision.
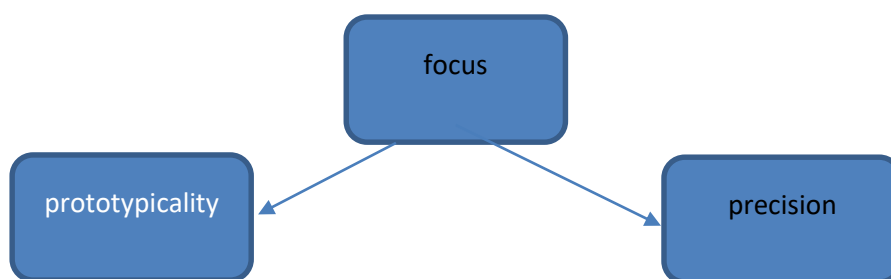

Figure (1): Focus Two Main Types.

Focus: Definition

Focus has been addressed in functional grammar in terms of information content or prominence in the sentence (Aarts, 1994). Cognitively, it means scalability according to prototypicality and preciseness. On one hand, prototypicality is a cover term for eight sub-categories such as typicality, perfection, exemplarity, genuineness, originality, faithfulness, virginity, and purity. On the other hand, precision covers the scale of comprehensiveness and perfectness. In the lines below, there is a discussion of prototypicality, precision, and the gradation of attitudinal positions with reference to the two scales above. They enable the speaker to assess something as having a full, peripheral membership, or even a zero membership of the graduated entity.

Prototypicality: Definition

According to Radden and Dirven (2007, p. 7), lexical and grammatical categories display different degrees of membership of prototypicality or periphery. In Arabic, prototypicality is equivalent to ''*'awwalyyah*'' (i.e., the first of everything) which can reflect both focus and force. When the intended meaning is order in time or place, the scale would be by force. Otherwise, gradability is by focus. In the sections below, there is a detailed analysis of the main types of prototypicality.

Scalability

Originally, prototypicality can be used for graduating non-scalable entities. However, it can be used for graduating scalable categories when viewed from an experiential perspective. Cognitively, prototypicality covers a scale of three clines: full, peripheral, or zero membership. Sometimes, the scale of prototypicality has only one end of the scale. The other times, the other ends of the cline can be realized via the scale of force. Graduating the singular form ''*niξmah*'' (grace) and its plural form ''*niξam*'' (favors) is a case in point. In Arabic, the former is a generic noun which is basically graduated with reference to focus. The latter '*niξam*' is a plural noun which is graduated in line with focus, too. An example for ''*niξmah*'' is the verse that reads:

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... وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ ... (12:6).

</div>

… and He <u>perfected</u> His grace upon you.(12:6).

The verse revolves around God's favors upon the Prophet Joseph (Peace be upon him). The act of bestowing God's favors upon His Prophet is graduated with reference to focus. It is achieved by the scale of perfection. The form '*niξmah*' is put into a scale of prototype in which it has a full membership of perfection. In the same vein, the same scale of perfection is used for graduating the plural form '*niξam*' in the verse that reads:

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أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهُ ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً ۗ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُّنِيرٍ. (31:20).

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Have you not seen that Allah has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and He has <u>conferred</u> upon you His <u>favors</u>, outward and inward? And of mankind is he who disputed concerning Allah without knowledge, nor guidance, nor an enlightening Book. (31:20).

The verbal process '''*asbagha*'' is used for graduating '*niξam*' (favors) with reference to the scale of perfection. It is an infused form which is analogous to ''thoroughly perfected''. Metaphorically, the nominal form '''*as-sābigha*'' is a protective device made of iron which a warrior wears to thoroughly cover his body. The act of covering the body conveys perfection, completion, or both. If it conveys completion, it is graduated with reference to quantification i.e., fulfilling parts; otherwise, the scale of perfection is intended.

Modes of Prototypicality

In the lines blow, there is a detailed analysis of the eight sub-categories of prototypicality. They are typicality, perfection, exemplarity, genuineness, originality, purity, faithfulness, and virginity.

These forms can be realized by lexical, grammatical, or morphological forms that display full membership of prototype.
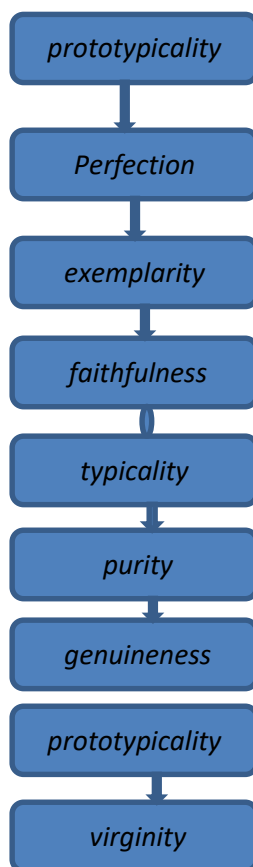

Figure (2): The Eight Scales of Prototypicality.

Typicality:

Typicality means having or exhibiting all qualities that identify someone or something. The ordinal number "'*awwal*" (literally, 'first') can be a means of scaling in reference to typicality. For instance, the Holy Mosque is graduated with reference to focus using the ordinal number ''*awwal*' in the verse below:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاس لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ. (96).

Surely the <u>first</u> Home laid down for mankind was indeed at Bakkah, a blessed (place) and a guidance to the worlds. (3: 96).

The scale of typicality is realized by the ordinal number ' '*awwal*' (literally, first). By the scale of typicality, the word ' '*awwal*' indicates that the graduated entity has a full membership of

19

exhibiting the typical qualities of worship. Accordingly, the Holy Mosque is given a full membership of typicality that makes it a magnate for worshippers around the world. Ash-Shaؘrawy (1991, p. 1628) buttresses the former view which interprets ''*awwal*' in terms of typicality. He reports that Ali Ibn Aby Ṯalib (May Allah be Pleased with him) states that a man asked the Prophet (Peace be upon him) 'Is the Holy Mosque the first mosque that laid down for mankind? The Prophet (PBUH) says 'No, there were Homes before it? If so, how to reconciliate between the verse above and the Prophetic saying? Therein lies the answer. The scale of typicality is a means of reconciling between the verse and the Prophetic *ħadith*. The scale of typicality plays an important role in revealing the subtle shades of meanings of different forms. It helps in reconciling the apparent contradiction for the cases over which the exegetes dispute. Accordingly, the graduated entity is the first in terms of exhibiting all the typical qualities of worship.

In the same way, the use of ''*awwal*' in the cases below is used in line with the scale of typicality. The All-Glorious Qur'an reports a fact that all the Prophets starting from Adam to Mohammad submit themselves to God. Thereupon, the verse below states that Noah (Peace be upon him) is a Muslim. The verse reads:

فإن توليتم فما سألتكم من أجر إن أجري إلا على الله وأمرت أن أكون من المسلمين. (10:72).

Yet in case you turn away, then in no way have I asked you for any reward; decidedly my reward is from anyone except Allah, and I have been commanded to be one of the <u>Muslims</u>. (10:72).

Also, another verse reports that Ibrahim (Peace be upon him) is a Muslim. It reads:

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَٰكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا. (3:67).

In no way was Ibrahim a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was an unswervingly (up-right) <u>Muslim</u>; and in no way was he one of the associators (those who associate others with Allah). (3:67).
The two verses above confirm that Noah and Ibrahim are Muslims as well as all the Prophets and Messengers of God. So, how come does the Qur'an say in many occasions that Muħammad (Peace be upon him) is the first Muslim while there are Muslims before him? One of the verses reads:

قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ. (6:14).

Say, ''Surely, I have been commanded to be the <u>first</u> of the ones who have surrendered", and definitely do not be of the associator. (6:14).

The verse states clearly that Muħammad (PBUH) is the first Muslim. If so, how to reconcile between these verses and the two verses above? It is taken for granted that Ibrahim and Noah (Peace be upon them) preceded Muħammad (Peace be upon him) in the order of the Prophets by centuries. To solve the apparent contradiction, the scale of typicality proves effective in such cases. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is the final Prophet. Using the scale of typicality, Muħammad (Peace be upon him) is the first with reference to exhibiting all the characteristics of the religion of Islam. Therefore, he brings a fully-fledged form of Islam. Ash-Shaؘrāwy manages in reflecting

20

this meaning. In spite of not having the conceptual theoretical framework of gradability by focus, Ash-Sha؏rāwy manages in giving an illustrative example of a student who is in the first rank of his college in all years. It goes without saying that there were many other students who were ranked first before him. However, he is first for having full marks in all subjects. Under focus, the Prophet (PBUH) is given a full membership regarding all the typical qualities of Islam. Moreover, Islam in its present form is different from Islam at the time of Noah and Ibrahim. In a nutshell, the use of the ordinal number "*'awwal*" indicates that the Prophet (PBUH) exhibits all the good attributes of Islam. Indeed, all Prophets represent a continuous series of Islam starting from Adam to Muħammad. Notwithstanding, the Prophet (PBUH) sets the typical example of Islam as a distinct entity that carries all the characteristic features of the true divinity. All divine religions share the feature of the Oneness of God. However, Islam carries all the features of perfection as God says: "Today, I have perfected your religion". It is Ibrahīm (PBUH) who gives Muslims the name of Islam since all divine messages have the same belief in the Oneness of God. However, they differ regarding the branches of the divine law. So, Muħammad (PBUH) presents a typical and distinct full-scale of Islam.

Perfection
It means having the typical qualities of perfection and excellence. It helps a lot in understanding many cases which the exegetes differ over their interpretations. For example, the exegetes of the Qur'an differ over the interpretation of the verbal process ''*istawā*'' in the verse that reads:

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْش اِسْتَوَى. (45:5).

The All-Merciful has upon the throne <u>levelled</u> Himself. (45:5).

The scale of perfection is used in the verse above to reflect God's perfect control over everything. Ash-Sha؏rāwy (1991, p. 9217) interprets the verbal process ''*istawā*'' in terms of perfection. According to him, it is a demonstration of power and domination. The assertion of God's true authority over all things does not exclude that God is perfectly upon the throne in a way which fits His glory. Many exegetes of the Qur'an assert the frame of the throne such as Al-Qurŧuby (2006, p. 15).

Perfection: God's Omnipotence of Creation
In the same vein, the scale of perfection is intended when God speaks about His omnipotence of creation. Likewise, perfection is realized via the verbal process ''*sawwa*'' which means that God finished His work with a "personal touch" in the perfect image. Allah (All Glory be to Him) says:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى. (87:2).

Who <u>created</u>; so He molded; …. (87:2).

In compliance with the scale of perfection, the act of shaping man is given a full membership of perfection. It is realized via the verbal process "*sawwa*" which means giving order and proportion. Then, it is scaled with reference to quantification. The use of the form above puts the act of shaping man in the high scale of gradability. The intended meaning is the highest degree of the divine

perfection regarding shaping man. The meaning of perfection could be reflected using a modifier such as perfectly to modify the verbal process 'shape', 'mold', or 'fashion'. The same scale of perfection is expressed in the Bible in a verse that reads: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (New International Version Holy Bible, 2011, Genesis 1:27). Likewise, the meaning of perfection is conveyed by the modifier "sawyyan". It modifies a non-scalable noun as in the verse that reads:

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلاثَ لَيَالٍ سَوِيًّا. (19:10).

He said, ''Lord! Make for me (some) sign: Said He, ''your sign is that you shall not speak to any of mankind, though being in perfect shape, three nights. (19:10).

Does the linguistic form 'sawyyan' modify Zacharia or nights? Most exegetes adopt the view that it is a modifier of Zacharia. Thereupon, the scale is with reference to perfection of health. It means that Zacharia cannot speak despite being in perfect shape. Accordingly, the use of the modifier '*sawyyan'* is a means of scaling with reference to focus. However, 'sawyyan' can modify the plural noun 'layālin' (i.e., nights). If so, the scale is with reference to frequency or quantification. When it is scaled with reference to frequency, the meaning could be 'three consecutive nights.' As for quantification, the scale of perfection is conveyed in terms of quantification in English i.e., 'wholeness'. The question raised is 'which is more miraculous: the inability to speak though being in perfect shape or the inability to speak for three consecutive nights? Both interpretations could be possible. The meaning could be: "you cannot speak though being in perfect shape for three consecutive nights."

Perfection Versus Completion
Perfection is a means of gradability by focus while completion/fulfillment is a means of gradability by quantification. Such a distinction applies to Arabic verbal processes such as '*'atamma'* (i.e., perfected) and '*'akmala'* (i.e., fulfilled/completed). The first is a scale of focus while the latter is a scale of quantification. For example, the semantics of fulfillment of religion and perfection of grace falls under the category of perfection as in: "*'akmala*" (i.e., fulfilled) and "*'atamma*" (i.e., perfected). Allah (Glory be to Him) says:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا. (4:3).

Today I have completed your religion for you, and I have perfected My favor on you, and I am satisfied with Islām for you as a religion. (4:3).

Under the scale of gradability, the verbal process '*'akmala'* grades religion in terms of parts. The scale of quantification is used in the Bible in a verse that reads: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" according to The New International Commentary on The New Testament, 2007, Matthew 5:17. That verse goes in line with the Qur'anic verse above which uses the same scale. For Muslims, all monotheistic religions fulfill each other. On the other hand, *"'atamma"* is used for grading ''*anniξmah''* (grace). When

viewed from the discourse perspective of the semantic meanings being made, it is graduated by focus. However, when it is used in the context of numbers and quantification, it is graduated in line with force. It is important to differentiate between the forms of perfection and superlative forms. The former is a scale of focus while the latter is a scale of force. Superlativeness conveys a degree of importance or superiority to all others. It can be realized via modifiers such as 'the best, the worst, etc.

The scale of perfection is always realized by the definite article '*al'* (i.e., the). It has been used with all the fairest names of God. For example, the use of the definite article in the fairest name of God 'Allah' comes under the scale of typicality, perfection, and force. Therefore, the meaning is ''the True and Perfect''. Under force, it is scaled with reference to intensification. Accordingly, the meaning is the Unique, an infused form, which is analogous to 'the only one'. Putting these pieces together, the meaning will be ''The True, Perfect, and Unique God''.

Exemplarity
Exemplarity means exhibiting a full membership of the qualities of a model. For example, Ibrahim (PBUH) is introduced in the Qur'an as a model for worshippers. According to this representation, he has all qualities that make him a model for worshippers. The verse reads:

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِّلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ. (16:120).
Surely, Ibrahim was a <u>nation</u>, devout to Allah, unswervingly up-right, and he was not of the associators, …". (16:120).

Gradability is realized metaphorically via the term "*ummah*". It is a polysemous word that has more than one meaning. Literally, it means a nation; however, it could be used to convey the meaning of "exemplarity". Accordingly, the meaning is that Ibrahim alone stands as a model for all worshipers over time.

Originality
Originality means having the typical qualities of novelty, freshness, and originality. The act of creation is a case in point. There are different forms of the act of creation with a view to conveying God's omnipotence. These forms include the verbal processes 'create', 'initiate', and 'originate'. When attributed to God, they indicate that God creates all things from nothing. Such an act of initiation, creation, and originality have a full membership of originality. In Arabic, it is realized by forms such as ''*khalaqa*'' ''*bad'a'* (when followed by a modifier such as '*'awwala marrah'*), and "*faṭara*" respectively. Using such lexemes aims at scaling the act of creation in terms of originality. They place emphasis on the omnipotence of God Who creates from nothing. For example, the use of the verbal process ''*faṭara*'' in the verse below indicates originality. The verse reads:

فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَن يُعِيدُنَا ۖ قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ... (17:51).
"… Then they will soon say, "who will bring us back?" Say, "The one who <u>originated</u> you the first time."(17:51).

In this regard, the verbal process of doing '*fatara*' (i.e., originate and initiate) has an emphatic function of underlining God's omnipotence. The act of creation is put in a scale of gradability in which origination occupies the highest end of the scale of focus. In addition, lexemes such as '''*a'wjada*'' joins the scale of originality. Also, the verbal process '*ja؏ala*' joins the scale of originality when it has the frame of creation and initiation'. But when it means bringing into existence by shaping, modifying, or putting together material, it has a peripheral membership. An example of originality as in the verse that reads:

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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ وَالنُّورَ ۖ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ. (6:1).

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Praise be to Allah Who <u>created</u> the heavens and the earth, and made darkness(es) and light, thereafter the ones who have disbelieved unjustly set up equals to their Lord. (6:1).

The act of creation of the light and darkness is given a full membership of originality because they were not shaped or molded. But they are created from nothing. However, there are many cases in which the act of creation is given a peripheral membership of originality such as the verse that reads:

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وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُم بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ ۚ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ. (16:72).

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And Allah has made for you of yourselves spouses and made for you from your spouses sons and grandchildren, and He has provided you of the good (things). Is it then that they believe in untruth, and in the favor of Allah they (do) disbelieve? (16:72).

Here, the act of creation is given a peripheral membership because God creates Eve from Adam. Therefore, the act of creation takes the form of shaping or molding. The varieties of the forms of creation indicates the omnipotence of God that He creates whatever He wants in whatever shape that He decides. The two versions of ''*ja؏ala*'' are given by Majma؏ al-Lughati al-؏arabiah (2004, p. 102). Similarly, the verbal process of doing '''*ansha'a*'' is a means of gradability with reference to originality as in the verse that reads:

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وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ. (6:141).

</div>

And He is The (One) Who has brought into beings gardens trellised and untrellised, … (6:141).

The verbal process of doing '''*ansha'a*'' means 'to initiate and create out of nothing'. It reflects originality. However, this form may require a modifier like ''awwala marrah'' as in the verse that reads:

<div dir="rtl">

قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ. (36:79).

</div>

Say, ''He will give them life, (He) Who <u>brought them into being</u> the <u>first</u> <u>time</u>, and He is Ever-Knowing of every (kind) of creation. (39:79).

The use of '*awwala marrah*' modifies the verbal process '*ansha'a*' giving it a full membership of originality. On the contrary, when it means 'producing something out of something else', it has a peripheral membership of originality as in the verse that reads:

<div dir="rtl">

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ. (23:14).

</div>

… thereafter, We <u>brought him into being</u> as another creation. (23:14).

The creation of man has various developmental stages starting by a sperm-drop which becomes a clot which, in turn, becomes a chewed-up morsel. Then, the chewed-up morsel becomes bones which are covered by flesh. Finally, God molds or shapes man in the present form. Therefore, the process of bringing into being has a peripheral membership of originality. Some exegetes like <u>Ash-Shaɛrāwy manages in differentiating between the forms of creation mentioned above. He stresses the frame of originality when it comes to verbs such as</u> ''faṭara'' (i.e., created). Using these forms aims at having a rhetorical function of indicating the omnipotence of God. The scale of originality can be realized by different forms such as the verbal process, present participle, and nominal forms. From the experiential perspective, creation is a distinct category, within the taxonomy of creation types. Creation is re-construed according to an interpersonal semantic by which some types of creation are assessed as prototypical of the creation category and others as being only a marginal exemplar.

Metaphor: Originality
Metaphorically, originality can be realized via forms such as '*um*' in the verse that reads:

وَإِنَّهُ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِيٌّ حَكِيمٌ (43:4).

And surely it is the <u>Mother</u> of the Book, close to Us, indeed ever-exalted, ever-wise. (43: 4).
The use of "*um*" conveys the meaning of the original and primary source of all divine Books. The Qur'an is graduated with reference to focus being given a full membership of divinity. The meaning is realized metaphorically in terms of motherhood that the Qur'an exhibits all divine attributes. As for the peripheral or zero membership, it can be realized via different forms. For instance, in their attempt to vilify the Qur'an, the unbelievers used the scale of fabrication giving the Qur'an a zero membership of divinity. They used forms such as '*'ikhtilāq'* (i.e., fabrication) and '*'asāṭīr'* (myths/tales). The Qur'an records and refutes their false argument in the verse that reads:

مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَٰذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا اخْتِلَاقٌ. (38:7).

In no way did we hear of this in the last creed; decidedly this nothing except a made-up device. (38:7).
They also resort to the same scale in another verse that reports their false claim. It reads:

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا قَالُوا قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هَٰذَا إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ. (8:31).

And when our ayāt are recited to them, they said, ''we have already heard; if we decided, we would indeed say the like of this; decidedly this is nothing except the <u>myths</u> of the earliest (people). (8:31).

In the first verse, the unbelievers attempt to undermine the Qur'an giving it a peripheral membership of divine originality. They use the infinitive form '*'ikhtilāq'* (i.e., fabrication) to achieve their goal. In the second verse, they use ''*'asāṭīr''* which reflects the same degree of fabrication. The unbelievers use these expressions in a vain attempt to undermine the Qur'an.

25

Virginity

Virginity is one of the forms of focus which indicates the state of prototypicality. It is used frequently in daily life. In the Qur'an, it is a main characteristic of ''*al-ħūr 'al-ɣ̌īn*'' (the beautiful young maidens) in the hereafter. They ['*al-ħūr 'al-ɣ̌īn*] are given a full membership of virginity as in the verse that reads:

فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا. (56:36).

So, We have made them virgins. (56:36).

The word ''*'abkaran*'' is the plural of "*bikr*" which etymologically means "the face of the day". The term ''*'abkāran*'' (i.e., virgin, untouched) indicates having a full membership of virginity. The zero or peripheral membership of virginity can be expressed by terms such as '*thayeb*' (i.e., no longer married woman) as in the verse that reads:

عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُ إِن طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَن يُبْدِلَهُ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِّنكُنَّ مُسْلِمَاتٍ مُّؤْمِنَاتٍ قَانِتَاتٍ تَائِبَاتٍ عَابِدَاتٍ سَائِحَاتٍ ثَيِّبَاتٍ وَأَبْكَارًا. (66:5).

It may be that, in case he divorces you, his Lord will give him, in exchange, spouses more charitable than you, Muslim women, believing, devout, repentant, worshiping (Allah), (and) wandering (in His way), who were married before and virgins too. (66:5).

The modifier '*thayeb*' is used for graduating woman giving her a zero membership of virginity in this case.

Authenticity and Faithfulness

The semantics of authenticity and faithfulness are a means of gradability by focus. It can be realized via lexemes such as the verbal process ''*akhlaṣa*" in the verse below:

إِلا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ لِلَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا. (4:146).

Except the ones who repent, and act righteously, and adhere firmly to Allah, and make their religion faithful to Allah; so, those are with the believers, and Allah will eventually bring the believers a significant reward. (4: 146).

The verbal process ''*akhlaṣa*'' (i.e., to purify one's faith as in Allah's sight). In Arabic, ''*akhlaṣa*'' comes first in the order of the scale of focus. It indicates having a full membership of faithfulness. The scale of faithfulness is different from the scale of purity which is addressed in the following section. Faithfulness is realized via the active form '*akhlaṣa*' while purity is realized via the truncated passive form ''*mukhlaṣ*'' as illustrated below. The marginal or peripheral membership can be realized via the scale of force such as '*muzabzabīna*' (i.e., oscillators) in the verse below:

مُّذَبْذَبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ لَا إِلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ ۚ وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا. (4:143).

Wavering between this (and that), not to these, nor to those, and he whom Allah leads into error, then you will never find for him a way. (4:143).

The verse gives a vivid image of the state of the hypocrites. Using the truncated passive 'muzabzabīna' (wavering) indicates uncontrollable movement. It conveys that the hypocrites have not a firm faith. Accordingly, they have a peripheral membership of faith wavering between faith and unbelief.
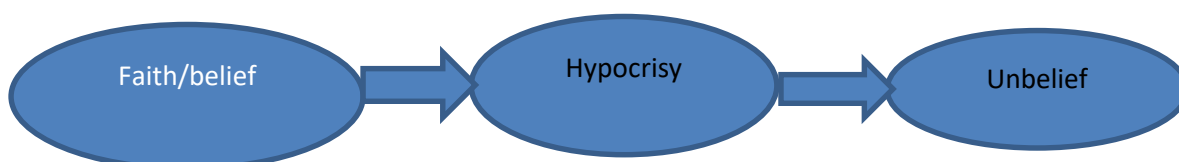

Figure 3): Graduating Faith According to the Scale of Force.

Purity

It is mentioned above that the active form '*akhlaṣa'* (to be faithful to) and *mukhliṣ'* (faithful) are a means of scaling with reference to faithfulness. On the contrary, the passive form '*mukhlaṣ'* (purified) is a means of graduating with reference to purity. The truncated passive "*'al-mukhlaṣīn*" (i.e., highly scrutinized/purified people) denotes scrutinization. In the chain of the chosen people of God, "*'al-mukhlaṣīn*" joins the cline of a full membership of purity. There are other forms that join the scale of purity such as '*'al-'ijtibā''*, '*'al-'iṣtifā''*, and '*'al-'ikhtyar''*. The forms have a full membership of purity. Under focus, the verbal process '*'al-'ijtibā'* comes on the top of the scale of purity as well as *'al-'iṣtifā*, and '*'al-'ikhlāṣ'*. For instance, the act of choosing the Prophets (Peace be upon them) are graduated with reference to purity as in the verse that reads:

<div dir="rtl">

وَإِنَّهُمْ عِندَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ. (38:47).

</div>

And surely in Our Providence they are indeed of the elected, the most charitable. (38:47).

The scale of focus is realized via the truncated passive form '*'al-muṣtafynā'* and the nominal phrase '*'al-'akhyār''*. They mean that the graduated entity is pure without being mixed with other things. Accordingly, the Prophets have a full membership of purity. The discourse of '*'al-'iṣtifā'*, '*'akhyār''*, and '*'al-'ikhlāṣ''* revolve around the chosen people of God. It indicates that they are first ranked. Similarly, the lexical form '*'al-'ijtibā'* is used for graduating the Prophets and Muslims with reference to focus. Accordingly, they have a full membership of purity. Thus, the selection of the Muslim nation is on the same scale as the messengers of God. The processes of '*al-'ijtibā'*, '*al-'iṣtifā'* and '*'al-'ikhlāṣ'* have the same feature of being "the people of God". They all have the meaning that God elects them for Himself being ranked exemplary. So, the verbal process ''ijtibā'' is used in the two verses below for graduating Muslims and Messengers of God giving them a full membership of purity. Here are the two verses:

<div dir="rtl">

شَاكِرًا لِأَنْعُمِهِ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ. (16:121).

</div>

Thankful for His amenities. He selected him and He guided him to a straight path. (16:121).

<div dir="rtl">

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ۚ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ۚ مِّلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ. (22:78).

</div>

27

And strive for ’Allah as is the true striving for Him. He is (The One) Who has <u>selected</u> you, and in no way a (He) made for you (any) restriction in the religion, (being) the creed of your father Ibrahim. (22: 78).

In Arabic, the verbal process ‘‘*’ijtabā’’* means ‘electing somebody/something for oneself’. It is a process of scrutinization for the sake of purity. Therefore, the forms ‘‘*’al-’ijtibā’’*, ‘‘*’al-’iştifā’’*, and ‘‘*’al-’ikhtyār’’* have an intrinsic feature of purity.

Genuineness

Genuineness is one of the resources of gradability by focus. It can be realized grammatically, and lexically. At the grammatical level, it can be realized via the cognate object or the particles. Lexically, it can be realized by many forms such as the modifier ‘‘rabbāny” as in the verse below. It reads:

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَن يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِّي مِن دُونِ اللهِ وَلَٰكِن كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ. (9:79).

In no way should a mortal (to whom) Allah brings the Book and the Judgement and the Prophethood thereafter say to mankind, “Be bondmen to me, apart from Allah.” But, “<u>Be Lordly</u> in that you used to teach the Book and in that you used to study (it). (9:79).

The form “rabbānyyuna” is a means of identification. It means that the believers’ faith must be identical to the original faith. It indicates that believers should practice genuine faith in God by keeping the word of Allah. [1] Therefore, faith is graduated as having a full membership of genuineness. The scale of genuineness helps in revealing the subtle points. A typical example is the problematic interpretation of the two verses below:

(1) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ <u>حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ</u>... (3:102).

O you who have believed, be pious to Allah with His true piety… (3:102).

(2) فَاتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ مَا ٱسْتَطَعْتُمْ ... (64:16).

So be pious to Allah as best as you can… (as much as you are able to be). (64:16).

The exegetes differ over the interpretation of the verses above. According to A<u>t-T</u>abary (2001, p. 641), some interpreters state that the second verse abrogates the first one with a view to promoting convenience for worshippers. According to the present scale of focus, the believers’ act of devoutness is graduated with reference to genuineness that it should be identical to the case of genuine faith in the first verse. It is realized via the cognate object ‘*ħaqqan’* (i.e., really). Thereupon, it revolves about the degree of spiritual power. Regarding the second verse, devoutness is graduated with reference to quantification. It commands the believers to be pious according to their physical ability. Herein lies the importance of the framework of focus in arriving at the subtle

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[1] Interestingly, the scale of genuineness is used frequently in colloquial Egyptian Arabic. For instance, Egyptians use the scale of genuineness for graduating beauty giving it a full membership. They say ‘‘jamālun rabbāny’’ which could be translated into ‘genuine beauty’.

shades of meaning. It helps in providing a methodical analysis on a consistent basis. Moreover, it makes the cases under analysis less controversial. Thusly, it is crucial to establish a theoretical framework for the sake of consistency and accuracy. One of the most controversial issues is the interpretation of the term ''*tabaξaʹ*' in the verse that reads:

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ. (16:108).

Those are they upon whose hearts Allah as <u>stamped</u> and, on their hearing, and their beholdings; and those are the ones who are heedless. (16: 108).

The exegetes interpret the verbal process ''*tabaξa*'' in terms of setting a seal on their hearts in a way that prevents them from learning the lesson of faith. Indeed, the verbal process conveys a specific degree of natural disposition. Also, genuineness can be realized via lexemes such as ''*tabīξah*'' (i.e., nature), ''*tabξ*'' and ''*sājyyah*'' (i.e., disposition). A gradual interpretation helps in grasping the meaning of the verse whether the meaning is real or figurative. The exegetic interpretation of the verbal process above falls into two camps: (1) *al-Muξtazilah* headed by Az-Zamakhshary, and (b) the people of As-Sunnah. On one hand, the former school assumes that *tabaξa* is figuratively used meaning that there is no stamp or anything from God. According to Az-Zamakhshary (2009, pp.43-44), arrogance and hardheadedness should be attributed to the unbelievers. For him, God has nothing to do with man's acts. God does not guide nor misguide anyone. Thereupon, the unbelievers' acts of arrogance and disobedience are figuratively attributed to God. On the other hand, the people of As-Sunnah believe that all the acts which are attributed to God are real. They say that God guides whomever He wants and misguides whomever He wants with His wisdom and grace. According to the present interpretation of focus, the verbal process ''*tabaξa*'' is not figuratively used. The unbelievers' acts of adamancy are put in the scale of faith giving them a zero membership of it. They have adamant-fashioned hearts by nature. Therefore, God fashioned their hearts into adamancy according to His eternal Knowledge. The scale of genuineness helps in reconciling between the two interpretations above. It is God Who misguides whomever He wants according to His eternal Knowledge of the adamant-fashioned hearts. Grammatically, genuineness can be realized via modifiers such as '*ħaqqan*' in the verse that reads:

أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا ۚ لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ. (8:4).

Those are <u>truly</u> the ones who are believers; they have degrees in the Providence of their Lord, and forgiveness, and an honorable provision. (8:4).

According to focus, belief in God is graduated with reference to genuineness in which the believers' faith has a full membership of genuineness. Therefore, their faith is identical to genuine faith. It is realized by the modifier ''*ħaqqan*'' (i.e., utterly/truly). Such forms have the function of identification. Similarly, the scale of genuineness can be realized by the particle of identification ''*qad*''. It is used for graduating an entity giving it a full membership of identification. Thereupon, both the graduated entity and the scale of graduation are two sides of the same coin. For instance, the believers' prosperity in the hereafter is given a full membership of genuineness in the verse that reads:

29

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ. (23:1).

The believers have <u>already</u> prospered. (23:1).

Contrary to the case of full membership stated above, a zero membership of genuineness can be realized grammatically via the particles of negation such as 'mā' in the verse that reads:

وَيَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالرَّسُولِ وَأَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّىٰ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَا أُولَٰئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ. (24:47).

And they say, "We believe in Allah and in the messenger, and we obey." Thereafter a group of them turn a way even after that, and in <u>no way</u> are those ever the believers. (24:47).

Using the particle of negation aims at graduating the degree of faith giving the hypocrites a zero membership of genuineness. Therefore, the hypocrites develop a fake faith.

Precision
The second sub-category of gradability by focus is the scale of 'precision'. It means having a full membership of conformity to fact and accuracy. It can be realized either lexically or grammatically. It covers two forms: comprehensiveness, and perfectness.

Comprehensiveness
Comprehensiveness is one of the two scales of precision. It can be realized by lexemes such as ''*aḥāta*'' (i.e., to have comprehensive knowledge). The use of the mental processes ''*aḥāta*'' and ''*aḥṣā*'' *conveys the infinite knowledge of God* in the verse that reads:

لِّيَعْلَمَ أَن قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا. (72:28).

That He may know they have already proclaimed the Messages of their Lord. And He has encompassed (all) that is closely (kept) with them, and He has enumerated everything in numbers." (72:28).

The use of the two lexemes ''*aḥāta*'' and ''*aḥṣā*'' reflects God's infinite knowledge. Therefore, God's All-Knowledge is graduated with reference to the scale of comprehensiveness. It indicates the God's Knowledge is infinite. Also, comprehensiveness is realized lexically via cleft forms in the verse that reads:

لِّيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا. (48:2).

That Allah may forgive you your guilty (deeds) <u>whatever of them has gone forward and whatever of them is postponed</u> – and perfect His favor upon you, and guide you on a straight Path. (48:2).

The use of the two verbal processes 'taqaddama' (whatever has gone forward) and *ta'akhkhara'* (whatever has postponed) in the cleft structure has the function of scaling guilts with reference to comprehensiveness. Based on the common meaning of the verse, one may ask: Did the Prophet (PBUH) commit any guilt? The answer is ''absolutely, not''. It is the Qur'an itself that praises and applauds the Prophet (PBUH) for his great manners and high morals when it says:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ. (76:4).

30

And surely you are indeed <u>of a magnificent character</u>. (76:4).

The verse points out that the Prophet (PBUH) is extremely a well-mannered person. Moreover, the early life of the Prophet (PBUH) before the revelation proves many facts of which are: (1) the Prophet's usual habit of spiritual meditation, and (2) the Prophet's high moral standards. He falls asleep fast and deeply whenever he hears any sounds of diversion. He was far away from committing any guilt by God's act. Thusly, the frame of claiming guilt is far off from the truth. The mention of the scale of comprehensiveness paves the way for the scale of perfection. It emphasizes God's overflowing mercy with His Prophet. It is a step that precedes the scale of perfection in the context of God's favors upon him.[i] Likewise, the verse below may raise the same question because of the use of the nominal phrase 'wizraka' (burdens). It reads:

<div dir="rtl">وَوَضَعْنَا عَنْكَ وِزْرَكَ. (94:2).</div>

And laid aside from you your <u>encumbrance</u>. (94:2).

Some exegetes interpret '*wizraka'* in terms of 'guilt' which is far away from the authentic meaning. The intended meaning of 'wizraka' is the 'burden' of preaching the message of God. The Prophet (PBUH) knows for sure that he will face troubles and resistance form his own people when delivering the divine message. So, God (Glory Be to Him) assures His Prophet (PBUH) that He will enable him of delivering the divine message of the Oneness of God.

Perfectness

Perfectness means having all qualities of competence and accomplishment. It can be realized via the verbal process '*'atqanā'* and the metaphorical form *'ṣunἔa Allah'*. For example, the act of creation is given a full membership of perfectness as in the verse that reads:

<div dir="rtl">وَتَرَى ٱلْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ ٱلسَّحَابِّ صُنْعَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلَّذِي أَتْقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرُ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ. (27:88).</div>

And you see the mountains, that you reckon inert, and really they pass by like clouds- the handiwork of Allah, Who has consummated everything; surely He is Ever-Cognizant of whatever you perform. (27:88).

The scale of perfectness is realized by the verbal process '*atqanā'* and '*ṣunἔa Allah*'. Under the scale of perfectness, the act of creating the mountains and the movement of clouds is graduated with reference to the scale of perfectness. It is given a full membership of perfectness with a view to signifying the masterpieces of God' creation. Similarly, the wording of the All-Glorious Qur'an is scaled with reference to the same scale of perfectness. It is realized by the verbal process "*'uħkimat*" and the maximizer form "*ħakīm*". The verbal process "*'uħkimat*" means being precisely worded and the form of maximization "*ħakīm*" conveys the meaning 'the All-Wise'. Therefore, both the wording of the Qur'an and the All-Knowledge of God are graduated with reference to perfectness. Therefore, the acts of creation and wording are given a full membership of perfectness. The verse reads:

<div dir="rtl">الر ۚ كِتَابٌ أُحْكِمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِن لَّدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ. (11:1).</div>

Alif, Lam, Ra. A book whose 'ayāt are set clear; thereafter expounded from very close to One Ever-Wise, Ever-Cognizant, …". (11:1).

Moreover, the scale of perfectness can be realized grammatically via forms such as the Cognate object. For instance, the act of creation is given a full membership of perfectness in the verse that reads:

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَّرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا. (25:2).

To whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and He as not taken to Him a child, and He has no associate in the kingdom; and He created everything, <u>so He has determined it an (exact) determination</u>. (25:2).

The cognate object '*taqdīran'* in the clause *"faqaddarahu taqdīran*" reflects the scale of perfectness. It means that God creates everything in a perfect and precise way. Thereupon, the act of creation is given a full membership of perfectness. In his exegesis of the verse, <u>Ṭanṭāwy</u> (1997, p. 157) manages in reflecting the scale of perfectness stating that God creates everything in a perfect and precise way according to His Will and Wisdom. (*Translation is mine*).

In addition, the same scale can be realized by prepositional phrases such as ''*biqadarin''* (i.e., precisely, and accurately). Again, the act of creation is scaled with reference to perfectness. The verse reads:

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ <u>بِقَدَرٍ</u>.(54:49).

Verily, We created everything <u>in due measure and proportion</u>. The prepositional phrase "in due measure and proportion" carry the meaning of proficiency and precision. (54:49).

The act of creation is given a full membership of perfectness and perfection in a way that indicates God's omnipotence.

CONCLUSION

Gradability is one of the most important semantic relationships. Given the fact that it has not received adequate attention in Arabic grammar, the present paper grounds for gradability by focus. It gets the reader familiar with the phenomena of gradability, by and large. Then, it defines the device of gradability by focus providing a detailed analysis of its categories and their rhetorical functions. The process of analysis reveals the importance of gradability at both the linguistic and social levels. The study classifies focus into two main categories: prototypicality and preciseness. Under prototypicality, it develops eight distinct sub-categories as follows: typicality, exemplarity, perfection, originality, purity, virginity, genuineness, and faithfulness. Under precision, there are two scales: comprehensiveness and perfectness. The use of such scales has proved effective as illustrated in the process of analysis above.

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