

## Appraisal of the Use of Metaphors in the Holy Qur'an

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### Abstract

This study appraised the use of metaphors in the Holy Qur'an, guided by Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Theory of Metaphor (1980). Data were collected from thirteen chapters of the Holy Qur'an that were purposively selected out of one hundred and fourteen chapters through the purposive criterion sampling technique. Results revealed that structural metaphors occurred most, followed by orientational metaphors and lastly ontological metaphors. Impliedly, the Qur'anic metaphors observed from selected chapters of the Holy Qur'an are more structural than orientational or ontological. Thus, the study confirmed the existence of conceptual types of metaphors by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in the Holy Book of the Holy Qur'an.

### Keywords:

Holy Qur'an, Orientational Metaphors, Ontological Metaphors  
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### Introduction

This study appraises the metaphor use in the Holy Qur'an, on the one hand, and the believers' comprehension of these metaphors, on the other hand. Rapp and Wild (2011) define non-literal language as a linguistic entity of speech forms, which go beyond the literal meaning of the word. Thus, non-literal meaning is pragmatic rather than semantic. Figurative language types, according to Bose et al. (2018), include metaphors, idioms, proverbs, indirect requests, and conversational implicatures. In this regard, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2015) defines a metaphor as a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison. Al-Zoubi and Al-Husanawi (2006) argue that the term metaphor originally came from the Greek word *metaphora* which means to 'carry over or to 'transfer'; thus, metaphor concepts are derivable from the original meaning of free and transferred.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) maintain that a metaphor is not merely a figure of speech, but a specific mental, and neural mapping that influences a good deal of how people think, reason, and imagine in everyday life.

Zhang and Hu (2009) argue that studies on metaphor have taken on a new look known as 'modern metaphor' ever since the 1980s, evidenced by the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*, where metaphors are said to be not just in language but in thought and action. From that ground, metaphors are said to be found everywhere in different aspects of human life like political, social, cultural as well as religious aspects. Thus, until the 1980s, metaphors that we use in almost every area of our daily lives were considered to be a technique of using language effectively and were defined as an art of using words without reference to their real meanings<sup>1</sup>.

In line with the work of Lakoff and Johnson's 1980 '*Metaphors we live by*', the interest in publications on metaphor has emerged in cognitive linguistics as well as in other disciplines such as cognitive anthropology, computer science, and philosophy of language, and to a smaller extent also in psychology (Moser 2000). For instance, Zaltman and Coulter (1995) in their study on metaphor in advertisement treated a metaphor as a technique designed to cover the mental models that drive consumer thinking and behaviour and characterise these models in actionable ways using consumers' metaphors.

Metaphors have featured in political discourse to emphasise the information communicated. Mio (1997), for example, presented various ways in which metaphors have been used in the political arena, particularly for persuasive purposes; Karimova (2015) investigated metaphors used in modern political discourse; and Fiawornu et al. (2021) examined how

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<sup>1</sup> Firat, M., & Kabakci, I. 2011, Metaphors in meta-communication, meta-communication for reflective online conversation, *Models for Distance Education*, p. 171, DOI:10.4018/978-1-61350-0721.ch010.

ordinary citizens use metaphors and similes in their contributions to political discussions in Ghana.

Studies on the metaphor have also covered poetic discourse. Kenett et al. (2018) investigated how lower and higher creative individuals perform in metaphor comprehension tasks, and Tonon (2020) explored how symbolic perceptions of depressed individuals are organised to understand what they reveal about the nature of their mental states. Metaphors have also helped to describe economic issues. Mouton (2013), for example, compared the use of metaphor describing the global economic crisis of 2008 in the mainstream economic press in Britain and Russia using a corpus-based approach and found a considerable similarity in frequency and linguistic expression. Similarly, Sazdovska (2017), who focused on metonymy in economic discourse, noted that some ontological, orientational, and structural metaphors exist in discourse.

As for social discourse, Mohammad, Shutova and Turney (2016) explored statements that have a stronger emotional impact between metaphorical statements and literal statements and identified the most common metaphor of death as 'death is a journey'. Moreover, studies on metaphor are also vital in religious discourse. Soskice (1985) observed that what is needed in the study of religious language is not a more literal theology, but a better understanding of the use of the metaphor. She further opines that the analysis of the metaphor in religious language scholarship illuminates how clergies speak of God metaphorically. In this regard, metaphors inevitably exist in religious discourse because of the function they serve. Other studies such as Kotze (2004) have compared the metaphor system of anger and lust in English with those found in the Hebrew Bible; meanwhile, Naicker (2016) analysed conceptual metaphors in Hindu religious discourse.

Metaphors in the Holy Qur'an made Alama (2018) contend that one of the major figures of speech that abound in the Qur'an is the metaphor. Ruma (2014) observes that the Qur'an passages artistically use metaphorical

expressions to nurture human sympathy. In addition, Eldin (2014) argues that metaphors in the Holy Qur'an serve as a strategy for making readers memorise and refresh their minds on human goals of existence.

A few studies on metaphors have been conducted on the Qur'an discourse, notably on the translatability of metaphors and metaphors as tools for communication efficacy in the Holy Qur'an (see, for example, Nurbayan 2019; Ali & Sardaraz 2019; Alama 2018; Zaban 2016). However, these studies have not examined the magnitude of different types of metaphors. This study, therefore, sought to appraise the use and comprehension of metaphors in the religious context, particularly the Holy Qur'an.

### *Theoretical Framework*

This study adopted the conceptual metaphor theory established by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 3), which assumed that the human conceptual system is metaphorical regarding the way a person thinks and acts in everyday life is metaphorical. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphor pervades our way of conceiving the world and is reflected in our "language, thought and actions:

Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish- a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p.3).

Furthermore, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.5) argue that "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another." Based on that statement, it is evident that a person can understand something through other things which one has experienced. Thus,

metaphors organise relations between objects and create an understanding of a certain object through an understanding of other objects (Hardiyanti 2019). For instance, 'desire is fire', by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) described that; 'desire' is the target topic and 'fire' is a vehicle. Thus, it can be reflected from such an example that, 'desire' has characteristics and properties such as 'fire'. So, if someone has desire it means in him there is a tempestuous feeling.

In CMT, there are two conceptual domains, namely, the source and target domains. On the one hand, the target domain, which is also known as the image recipient is the experience described by the source domain (Nordquist 2020). On the other hand, the source domain is the one used for the concept area from which the metaphor is drawn, as in 'argument is war', the source domain from which the metaphor is drawn is the 'war' and the target domain in which the metaphor is applied is 'argument' (Nordquist 2020).

In conceptual theory, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) identified three types of metaphors under conceptual metaphor: structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor. These types are explained further below:

- *Structural metaphors* are cases "where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another." The concept that needs explanation is understood via the corresponding source domain. This metaphor can be found in a lot of ordinary utterances like, "Your claims are indefensible, and he attacked every weak point in my argument." In all these expressions, the concept of war structures the activity of argument. They contend that in the metaphor, the *argument is war*, the argument is only understood in terms of war, but it is not war.
- *Oriental metaphor* gives a concept of a spatial orientation. The source domain infuses the target domain with a certain direction. In the utterance *happy is up*, the target domain of happiness is

structured via the source domain of verticality. In other words, people draw the picture of happiness in their minds as a vertical axis.

- *Ontological "abstract" metaphor* is a matter of viewing an abstract concept in terms of a physical entity. The abstract entities are ideas, feelings, and events, e.g. in the metaphor, *inflation is up*, inflation is regarded as an entity that makes one confront it and feel the opposite against it.

Generally, even though there are several theories such as Aristotle's theory of metaphor, the hybrid theory of metaphor, etc. (see: Tendahl, 2009; Zhang, 2021), the conceptual theory of metaphor fits better in this study due to its one feature which distinguishes it from other theories; that is, the types of metaphors identified in it. The types structural, orientational, and ontological, are the ones in which the current study focused on due to, *inter alia*, it was deemed manageable since all types cannot be covered in this study. Besides, the main assumption of the theory 'human conceptual system is metaphorical in nature' structures the whole study. Since the current study works on the appraisal of metaphor use in the Holy Qur'an, the ideal of metaphor comprehension relies on the statement.

### **Methodology**

This subsection focuses on the research methodology used for this study. The specifically covers the research design and approach adopted, the text under analysis, the study area, sampling procedures, instruments of data collection, data handling procedures, and ethical considerations.

### **Research Approach**

The study covers the researchers' assumptions on ontology (nature of truth) and epistemology (nature and forms of human knowledge).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, a researcher based on their purpose, may adopt different approaches to

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<sup>2</sup> Cohen, L et al. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.

uncover the truth and/or knowledge (Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri 2021). Thus, in the current study, the researchers employed a qualitative research approach.

### ***Research Design***

The study used a case study design. This design concerns the detailed study of a specific subject, such as a person, group, place, event, organization, or phenomenon. Case studies are commonly used in social, educational, clinical, and business research (McCombes 2019). Therefore, in this study the text in focus is The Holy Qur'an.

### ***Text under Analysis***

Research data were collected from the English version of the Holy Qur'an by Saheeh International- Riyadh (1997). The text comprises 114 with a total of 6236 verses. Since the current study dealt with metaphors, the researchers went through the text to pick out chapters that comprised metaphors. The selection was done via a purposive criterion sampling technique. Consequently, a total of thirteen chapters were selected. These chapters are *Al-An'âm*, *An-Nûr*, *Al-Baqarah*, *Âl-`Imrân*, *Az-Zalzalah*, *Al-Layl*, *Fâtir*, *Al-Fâtihah*, *Al-Isrâ'*, *Al-Fath*, *At-Tûr*, *At-Tîn* and *Al-Hajj*. The chapters were selected out of one hundred and fourteen chapters, which is equivalent to 11.4 percent.

Besides the current study, The Holy Qur'an has been previously used as a study area by different scholars in various fields such as in language technology, anthropology, science, psychology, health, economy, business, politics, religion etc. Ismail et al. (2021) researched on the impact of Quran memorisation on psychological and health well-being. Apart from that, Ali and Sardaraz (2021) wrote on the dichotomy of languages and thought in the interpretation of metaphor in the Qur'an; moreover, the text was used

in the study on characteristics of man in the holy Quran<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, Sharifi and Kordasiabi (2020) analysed the role of ideology in enhancing political ethics at the level of international relations from the perspective of the Holy Quran and hadith. Additionally, Al-Khatib (2012) studied politeness in the Holy Quran. So, it can be seen that the text under analysis has already been studied by various scholars as well in various contexts as aforementioned. In the current study, the text works on metaphors.

### ***Sampling Procedures***

According to Kabir (2016), sampling design refers to plans and methods to be followed in selecting a sample from the target population and the estimation technique formula for computing the sample statistics. In this study, the target population is one hundred and fourteen chapters of the Holy Qur'an. As the population is extremely high, a sample had to be taken for the manageability of the study. In this regard, the researchers used purposive sampling to obtain sample from one hundred and fourteen chapters of the Holy Qur'an. They selected only the chapters with conceptual metaphorical verses in which a total of thirteen chapters were selected. The sampling technique was preferred due to the nature of the data that were needed to handle the research question. The question was limited to conceptual types of metaphors in the Holy Qur'an. So, the criterion of inclusion was only chapters with conceptual metaphors.

### ***Instrument of Data Collection***

The study used a document survey as the sole tool for data collection. The term "document" has several definitions. However, in the context of this study, it is defined as any form of written material that has been produced for other purposes outside of research (Guba & Lincoln 1981, p. 228). The researchers had to go through the document for extraction of metaphors therein. This method enabled them to collect credible and authentic data

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<sup>3</sup> Rehman, A. (2021). Characteristics of Man in the Holy Quran.

since the document (Holy Qur'an) was written free and independent of the researcher.

### ***Data Handling Procedures***

First, the researchers read the selected chapters of the Holy Qur'an keenly. Then they read the entire verse more than once to identify the metaphor comprehensively by using the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) proposed by Pragglejaz Group (2007). Thirdly, the identified texts were isolated from non-Qur'anic metaphorical texts. Fourthly, the researchers classified the metaphors identified in their categories. Fifthly, the number of classified metaphors was identified, frequencies were run, and percentages were computed; finally, the metaphors were described and explained.

### **Findings and Discussion**

This section considers the presentation of data, the analysis, and the discussion of findings about different magnitudes of types of metaphors used in the Holy Qur'an.

### ***Magnitude of using different types of metaphors***

In the quest to identify the magnitudes of use for conceptual types of metaphors in the Holy Qur'an, it was necessary to identify conceptual types of metaphors (structural, orientation, and ontological) in thirteen selected chapters of the Holy Qur'an (*Al-An'âm, An-Nûr, Al-Baqarah, Âl-`Imrân, Az-Zalzalah, Al-Layl, Fâtir, Al-Fâtihah, Al-Isrâ', Al-Fath, At-Tûr, At-Tîn* and *Al-Hajj*). These chapters were selected out of one hundred and fourteen chapters, which is equivalent to 11.4 percent, via purposive criterion sampling technique, in which the researchers read the chapters and picked the ones with metaphors. This was done until when the researchers saw the data could exhaustively respond to the research objective. Thus, the researchers read the selected chapters and identified metaphorical verses into structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. The frequencies of

metaphors in each category were computed to establish the magnitude of occurrences for each metaphor category. The results are as summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Different magnitudes of types of metaphors

SN	Types of metaphors	Frequencies	Percentage	Example of metaphors
1	Structural metaphors	17	77.27%	-Worldly life is not but amusement and diversion -Who denies and turns away  -And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion?
2	Oriental metaphors	3	13.63%	-Lower them the wing of humility  -Then We return him to the lowest of the low  -The hand of the Lord is over their hands
3	Ontological metaphors	2	9.09%	- We drive them to a dead land

As Table 4.1 illustrates, all three types of metaphors were evident in the Holy Qur'an. The table shows that structural metaphors occurred seventeen times which is equivalent to 77 percent. Oriental metaphors occurred three times, which makes 3.6 percent in magnitude and ontological metaphors occurred only twice which results in nine percent of the magnitude. Therefore, structural metaphors occurred most prevalently compared to other types, followed by ontological metaphors whereas

orientational metaphors were rarely used. Implicitly, structural metaphors in the Holy Qur'an feature much more highly than other types of metaphors. This intertwines with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) argument to the effect that structural metaphors are the group with the highest number. And since their existence is high compared to other types in the Qur'an, it may also imply that metaphors in the Holy Qur'an are mostly used in explaining abstract concepts. As for structural metaphors, abstract entities are projected into concrete entities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Having presented the data, a description of data in each category is provided below. However, only a few examples were considered for easy data management in the analysis.

### *Structural metaphors*

A structural metaphor is a concept formed metaphorically by using another concept. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue that structural metaphors are based on systematic correlations in everyday experience. Moreover, these metaphors occur when we metaphorically structure one concept in terms of another. The following are examples of structural types of metaphors obtained from the Holy Qur'an:

#### *Example 1*

"And **worldly life is not but amusement and diversion**; but the home of the Hereafter is best for those who fear *Allah* (Lord), so will you, not reason?" (6: 32)

**Identified metaphor:** The worldly life is amusement and diversion

#### *Description:*

This data is a metaphor following the argument by Lakoff & Johnson (2003) on what makes a metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p. 5) defined metaphor as understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of

another. When we look at the data, 'worldly life' is understood in terms of 'amusement and diversion', which makes the structure to be a metaphor since in it, one thing is understood in terms of the other. Literally, the metaphorical statement means that the life of this world is amusement and diversion. However, metaphorically it is elaborated as comparing with the true and abiding life of the hereafter, earthly life seems, as if it were a sport, a transient pastime with which to amuse oneself.

The type of metaphor in this verse is a structural metaphor with the source domain of **amusement** and **diversion** and the target domain of **earthly life**. As such, the play and amusement help to understand life on this earth. The metaphor is structural due to the structure of the statement in which an abstract concept (worldly life) is presented in terms of a concrete concept (amusement and diversion). In this regard, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) contend that structural metaphors are cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another. As there should be conceptual mapping for the source-target domain; in the metaphor exemplified, earthly life is understandable in terms of amusement and diversion, in that amusement and diversion are characterised by finite time-bound and lack of seriousness, and earthly life, likewise, is time-bound and fun.

### *Example 2*

"O you who have believed, do not follow the **footsteps of Satan**. And whoever follows footsteps of Satan - indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing..." (24:21)

**Identified metaphor:** Footsteps of Satan

### *Description:*

Following Knowles and Moon's (2005:2) view of metaphor as the use of language to refer to something other than what it was originally applied to, the data above is a metaphor. When we look at the data, 'acts' are understood in terms of 'footsteps'; a thing that considers the structure to be a metaphor since in it, one thing is understood in terms of the other. Literally, the metaphorical statement means that one should not follow

Satan's footsteps. Though metaphorically, it is expounded as, avoiding all acts that involve disobedience to the Lord of worlds. The type of metaphor used in this verse is structural with the source domain 'footsteps' and the target domain 'acts'. So, it can be said that the expression 'footsteps' is used to understand one's act. From the verse, Satan's footsteps represent bad acts as Satan is regarded as the source of all sins in the Holy books (Qur'an and Bible). Therefore, Satan's footsteps represent all bad acts (sins) committed by human beings.

### *Example 3*

"So, whoever does an **atom's weight** of good will see it; And whoever does an **atom's weight** of evil will see it." (99:7-8)

**Identified metaphor:** Atom's weight

### *Description:*

For a structure to be a metaphor there should be a comparison between two unlike entities.<sup>4</sup> From that argument, the data constitutes a metaphor because when we look at the data, 'small deed' is understood in terms of 'atom's weight'; a point that makes the structure to be a metaphor. That is the case because there is a comparison of dissimilar entities. The type of metaphor used in this verse is structural with the source domain being 'atom's weight' and the target domain being 'small deed.' Thus, it can be said that atom's weight is used to understand small deed. Literally, the metaphorical statement refers to 'weights of atom'. However, metaphorically, it means 'small deed'. Moreover, the data provided relies in the conceptual mapping for source-target domain in which a small deed

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<sup>4</sup> Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2017, December 8). *Metaphor*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/art/metaphor>

is understood in terms of atom's weight, since both are characterized by littleness.

#### **Example 4**

"And is one who was **dead**, and We **gave him life** and made him **light** by which to walk among the people like one who is in **darkness**, never to emerge there from? ....." (6:122)

#### **Metaphors identified**

- : *Dead*
- : *Give life*
- : Light: *Darkness*

#### **Description:**

This data contains metaphors, such as 'state of ignorance and lack of consciousness, state of knowledge and true cognition, right guidance and wrong guidance' are understood in terms of dead, alive, light, and darkness, which makes the structure a metaphor since in it, one thing is understood in terms of another. The literal meanings of the identified metaphors are death, alive, light, and darkness. However, metaphorically they are explained as a 'state of ignorance and lack of consciousness, state of knowledge and true cognition, knowledge and truth, right guidance and wrong guidance. The type of metaphors used in this verse is structural with the source domains **dead, alive, light, darkness**, and the target domains **state of ignorance and lack of consciousness, state of knowledge and true cognition, right guidance and wrong guidance**, respectively. Thus, it can be said that *dead* is used to understand the state of ignorance and lack of consciousness; *give life* is used to understand the state of knowledge and true cognition; *light* is used to understand right guidance, and *darkness* is used to understand wrong guidance. In this regard, metaphors are structural due to the structure of the statements in which abstract concepts 'state of ignorance and lack of consciousness, state of knowledge and true cognition, right guidance and wrong guidance' are presented in terms of concrete concepts; dead, 'alive', 'light' and 'darkness' in line with the argument by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) which states that structural

metaphors are cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another.

Since there should be conceptual mapping for a source-target domain, a state of ignorance and lack of consciousness are understood in terms of death in that both cannot do anything useful and productive. Similarly, the state of knowledge and true cognition is understood in terms of being alive, since both are characterized by usefulness and productiveness; right guidance is understood in terms of light since light makes one see the right way to go.

### *Example 5*

“And they said, “**Our hearts are wrapped**” .....” (2:88)

**Identified metaphor:** our hearts are wrapped

### *Description:*

This data contains a metaphor following the argument by Lakoff & Johnson (2003) as it contains what makes a metaphor. When we look at the data ‘protected’ is understood in terms of ‘wrapped’, which makes the structure to be a metaphor. The literal meaning of the identified metaphor is ‘Our hearts are wrapped’ but, metaphorically, it is explained as they were so staunch in their beliefs that their convictions would remain unaffected. The type of metaphor used in this verse is structural with the source domain **wrapped** and the target domain **protected**. The metaphor is said to be structural as the abstract concept ‘protection’ is presented in terms of the concrete concept ‘wrapped.’ Since conceptual mapping for a source-target domain is a must, in the data exemplified protection is understood in terms of wrapping in that both possessed the character of resisting.

### **Example 6**

“And indeed, to Us belongs the Hereafter and the first (life). So, I have warned you of a Fire which is blazing. None will enter therein except the most wretched one, who denied and **turned away**” (92:13-16).

**Identified metaphor:** Turn away

#### **Description:**

Here, there is a metaphor. The concept of ‘denying’ is understood in terms of ‘turn away’. For that reason, one thing is understood in terms of the other. The literal meaning of the metaphorical statement is ‘start to move away or to face in a different direction’. However, metaphorically it is expounded as, ‘being against something’. The type of metaphor used in this verse is structural with the source domain **turning away** and the target domain **denying**. Consequently, it can be said, that ‘turn away’ is used to understand deny. The metaphor is said to be structural due to the structure of the statement in which an abstract concept, ‘denying’ is presented in terms of the concrete concept ‘turning away’ as it is stated by Nordquist (2018) that structural metaphors are cases where one complex concept is presented in terms of some other more concrete concepts.

### **Example 7**

“And of the people are some who say, “We believe in *Allah* ‘Lord’ and the Last Day, “but they are not believers. They think to deceive *Allah* ‘Lord’ and those who believe, but they deceive not except themselves and perceive (it) not. **In their hearts is disease....**” (2: 8-10)

**Identified metaphor:** In their hearts is disease.

#### **Description:**

This text contains a metaphor because the *habit of hypocrisy and doubt* is understood in terms of (disease), which leads one to consider the structure to be a metaphor. In this context, one thing is understood in terms of the other. The literal meaning of the metaphorical statement is ‘in their heart,

there is a medical problem'. Nevertheless, metaphorically, it is elucidated as 'their hearts are filled with hypocrisy and doubt'. The type of metaphor used in this verse is structural with the source domain as disease and the target domain as **habit of hypocrisy and doubt**. So, it can be said, *that* 'disease' is used to understand the habit of 'hypocrisy and doubt'. The metaphor is said to be structural due to the structure of the statement in which the abstract concepts 'hypocrisy and doubt' are presented in terms of the concrete concept 'disease' as it is stated by Nordquist (2018) who says that structural metaphors are cases where one complex concept is presented in terms of some other more concrete concept. Conceptual mapping for the source-target domain in the metaphor exemplified is that hypocrisy and doubt habits are understood in terms of disease since the habit of hypocrisy and doubt makes one spiritually unhealthy in the same way as a disease makes one's body unhealthy.

### ***Orientational metaphors***

An orientational metaphor relates to the orientation of space, such as up-down, inside-outside, etc. This orientation space arises from the fact that we have a body and body functioning in the physical environment. This metaphor is based more on human physical experience in regulating direction orientation in everyday life, such as UP-DOWN which is measured by human physical experience. Orientational metaphors are prevalent in reflecting special concepts that vary according to the physical or cultural experience of the people (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, p. 14). Below are examples of such metaphors.

### ***Example 8***

'And your Lord has decreed that you do not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age (while) with you, say not to them (so as much as), (uff) and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word. And **lower to them the wing of humility** out of

mercy and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up (when I was) small" (17: 23-24)

**Identified metaphor:** Lower to them the wing of humility.

**Description:**

This data is a metaphor since the word 'humble' is understood in terms of being down (lowering), a thing that is structurally considered to be a metaphor since in it, one thing is understood in terms of the other. The literal meaning of the metaphorical statement is, 'showing a modest or low estimate of one's importance' However, metaphorically it is expounded as, 'take good care of them'. The source domain is **lower**, and the target domain is **humble**. Thus, it can be said that 'lowering the wing of humility' is used to understand the concept 'of humility'. The metaphor is said to be orientational since in orientational metaphor, a system of ideas is organized concerning interaction in space like up-down, inside-out, front-behind, shallow-deep, centre-periphery, etc.<sup>5</sup> So, likewise, the metaphorical statement is in terms of lowering the wing which entails down space. Conceptual mapping for the source-target domain is that being humble is understood in terms of being lower as both experiences move to the level or position below or less than an earlier one.

**Example 9**

"We have certainly created man in the best of stature. Then **we return him to the lowest of the low**" (95:4-5)

**Identified metaphor:** We return him to the lowest of the low.

**Description:**

This data is a metaphor because the datum 'miserable' is understood in terms of 'lowest', which leads one to consider the structure to be a metaphor

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<sup>5</sup> Vu, N. N. 2015, Structural, orientational, ontological conceptual metaphors and implications for language teaching, *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 67-71.

since in it, one thing is understood in terms of the other. The literal meaning of the metaphorical statement is, 'to return to the lowest level'. However, metaphorically, it is expounded as 'brings back to be miserable'. The type of metaphor used in this verse is an instance of orientational metaphor with the source domain **lowest** and the target domain **miserable**. Thus, it can be said, that 'lowest' is used to understand 'misery'. The metaphor is said to be orientational since a system of ideas is organised in relation and interaction with space like up-down, inside-out, front-behind, shallow-deep, centre-periphery, etc.<sup>6</sup> So, in terms of space, a metaphorical statement is exemplified which shows something to be the lowest means to be down in space. Since conceptual mapping for the source-target domain is a must, in the metaphor exemplified, misery is understood in terms of lowest since both experience moving to a level or position that is below or less than an earlier one.

### *Ontological metaphor*

Ontological metaphors are those that see events, emotional activities, and ideas as entities and substances. Ontological metaphors enable us to see more sharply delineated structures where there is very little or none. In these metaphors, as Kövecses (2002) states, the source domain assigns an ontological status to general categories of abstract target concepts. These involve the projection of physical objects, substances and container statuses on an entity that does not have that status inherently. This ontological mapping to the target domains therefore helps us in referring to, quantifying and identifying certain aspects of these target domains, and thereby reasoning about them (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, p. 27). Moreover, the projection of ontological (more concrete-based) status on the target domain prepares the terrain for the structural metaphors to construct these domains

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<sup>6</sup> Vu, N. N. 2015, Structural, orientational, ontological conceptual metaphors and implications for language teaching, *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 67-71.

systematically, so that they can be easily comprehensible. Observe the example below.

### ***Example 10***

“And it is Allah ‘Lord’ Who sends forth winds, and they stir the clouds, and We drive them to a **dead land** and give life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness. Thus is the resurrection” (35:9).

**Identified metaphor:** Dead land

### ***Description:***

This data is a metaphor following the argument by Lakoff & Johnson (2003) on what makes a metaphor. When we look at the data, ‘infertile’ is understood in terms of ‘dead’, a thing that considers the structure to be a metaphor since in it, one thing is understood in terms of the other. The literal meaning of the metaphorical statement is, ‘a land which does not support life’. However, metaphorically, it is expounded as ‘land which is not good enough for plants or crops to grow well’. The type of metaphor used in this verse is an ontological metaphor with the source domain **dead** and the target domain **infertile**. Thus, it can be said, that ‘dead’ is used to understand the ‘barren state’. As there should be conceptual mapping for the source-target domain; in the metaphor exemplified, barren is understood in terms of death since both death and barrenness are not expected to produce.

Therefore, ontological metaphors, as one of the types of metaphors that exists in the Holy Qur’an are the least occurrence from other types described earlier and they are mostly used in presenting abstraction, emotion, or idea in something concrete such as an object, substance, container, or person. Their common example is that of personification where inanimate is given animating characteristics as seen in example 10 above. The findings reveal that in the cited verses of the Holy Qur’an, there are 17 structural metaphors, which is equivalent to 77 percent; orientational metaphors are three, equivalent to 13.6 percent and ontological metaphors occurred twice, equivalent to nine percent. Therefore, structural metaphors appear to have the highest magnitude compared to orientational and

ontological metaphors. Thus, this predicts that the Holy Qur'an largely communicates via structural metaphors in most cases compared to other types of metaphors. This gains support from Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who considered structural metaphors as the group with the highest number.

Related to this finding is the study by Nabilla (2018) who analysed metaphors in the English translation of chapter Ash-Shuraa and found that two ontological metaphors and one structural metaphor were used in some verses of the chapter Ash-Shuraa. Moreover, Alama (2018) also worked on metaphors in the Holy Qur'an. However, his study aimed to find out the best strategy for metaphor translation and, unlike the current study, his study checked on implicit, representative, and explicit metaphors. Similarly, Hassanein (2019) conducted a study on conceptual metaphors in the Holy Qur'an using a cognitive approach in which he uses different types of metaphors.

## **Conclusion**

The study has revealed that structural metaphors occurred most prevalently compared to other types followed by ontological metaphors and the least used were orientational metaphors. The study has confirmed differing magnitudes of the existence of conceptual types of metaphors in the Holy Qur'an. It has been found that structural metaphors are more prevalent compared to orientational and ontological metaphors. This further predicts that the Holy Qur'an makes use of structural metaphors to deliver the message in most cases.

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