



## ***Khithâb* Qur'ani as a Model of Ethical Religious Communication: A Study of Linguistic-Pragmatic Development**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines Qur'anic *khithâb* as a model of ethical religious communication through an integrative linguistic-pragmatic approach. Using a qualitative textual-pragmatic design, it draws on a corpus of 1,412 verses in the narratives of the five *Ulul Aẓmi* prophets, comprising 645 dialogic, 144 monologic, and 623 narrative verses. The analysis focuses on the dialogic corpus and proceeds through four stages: identifying dominant language functions, classifying speech acts, mapping discourse patterns, and synthesizing an explanatory model. The findings show that dialogic *khithâb* is shaped primarily by the referential function (336 verses; 52.09%) and the conative function (250 verses; 38.76%), followed by the metalingual function (31 verses; 4.81%), the emotive function (20 verses; 3.10%), the phatic function (5 verses; 0.78%), and the poetic function (3 verses; 0.47%). These patterns indicate that ethical communication in Qur'anic *khithâb* emerges from the interaction of explanatory truth-orientation, directive guidance, relational accountability, and affective support.

**Keywords:** *Qur'anic khithâb, pragmatics, language functions, ethical communication, discourse analysis*

### **Introduction**

The study of Qur'anic discourse has increasingly moved beyond formal description toward approaches that treat the Qur'an as an active communicative text. Meaning is shaped not only by propositional content, but also by speaker-addressee relations, illocutionary force, contextual framing, and social uptake. Recent work in language-and-religion studies therefore emphasizes discourse as a site where theology, communicative purpose, and social meaning intersect (Bhatt et al., 2025). Studies of contemporary religious communication also show that linguistic framing may encourage guidance, exclusion, conflict, or meaningful engagement, depending on how relations

with the addressee are constructed (Chigbu et al., 2024; Haq & Kwok, 2024). Research on digital religion further shows that communicative distortion can intensify misinterpretation and polarization, which makes the study of ethically structured religious discourse especially important (al-Zaman, 2024).

Within this broader shift, *khithâb Qur'ânî* may be understood not merely as a rhetorical feature but as a structured mode of communication. Through vocatives, commands, prohibitions, warnings, promises, questions, and dialogic exchanges, the Qur'an organizes relations of authority, guidance, and response. *Khithâb* thus functions as a communicative architecture in which linguistic form, pragmatic force, and discourse sequence operate together. This perspective is valuable because sacred discourse is increasingly studied not only as theology or law, but also as communicative practice shaped by persuasion and ethical positioning (Bhatt et al., 2025; Haq & Kwok, 2024). More broadly, sociolinguistic research shows that religion can influence linguistic behaviour and communicative practice itself (Malcah, 2015).

Several studies provide important foundations for this inquiry. Khafaga (2024) shows that requests in Qur'anic dialogue may motivate broader macro-speech-act structures. Khalîl (2022) demonstrates that Qur'anic discourse can be examined as organized pragmatic argumentation rather than as a merely doctrinal text. Jacoby (2023) shows how Qur'anic citations may be recontextualized in ideological discourse, while Haq and Kwok (2024) demonstrate how digital religious environments shape encounters with religious others. Other work in pragmatics and discourse studies underscores the importance of metapragmatic framing, relational evaluation, and context-sensitive interpretation in communication (Dynel, 2023; House & Kádár, 2023; Riggs, 2024; Spencer-Oatey & Wang, 2025). Research in educational and social settings likewise shows that public understanding of religious messages depends heavily on linguistic framing and communicative delivery (Hamidah & Dungcik, 2024; Hanafi et al., 2024).

Despite these advances, three gaps remain. First, many studies privilege only one analytical layer, such as speech acts, argumentation, ideology, or digital circulation, so the relation between micro-level linguistic choices and macro-level discourse organization remains underexplained. Second, many studies remain descriptive and do not move toward a conceptual model explaining how communicative elements work together. Third, ethics is often treated as an external evaluative category rather than as an effect emerging from discourse structure itself through addressivity, directive force, explanation, and relational positioning (Haq & Kwok, 2024; Khafaga, 2024; Khalîl, 2022).

This article addresses those gaps by investigating Qur'anic *khithâb* through an integrative linguistic-pragmatic framework that combines language function, illocutionary force, and discourse organization. It does not treat *khithâb* as a loose collection of commands or rhetorical devices, but as a structured communicative practice in which exhortation, clarification, emotional positioning, and relational framing are coordinated. The study therefore asks how Qur'anic *khithâb* is linguistically

organized as a communicative practice and how that organization generates an ethical orientation in religious communication.

The article contributes in three ways. First, it treats Qur'anic *khithâb* as communicative architecture rather than merely stylistic ornament. Second, it links Jakobsonian language functions, speech-act analysis, and discourse analysis in a single explanatory frame. Third, it proposes a model in which ethics is understood not as an external moral layer imposed on the text, but as an emergent effect of referential mediation, directive orientation, affective sensitivity, and relational-dialogic organization.

By focusing on the dialogic corpus of the five *Ulul Azmi* prophets, the study aims to show that Qur'anic *khithâb* may be read not only as a textual or theological phenomenon, but also as a patterned model of ethically mediated communication.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative design with a textual-pragmatic orientation because the analysis of Qur'anic *khithâb* requires an interpretive reading of linguistic structure, communicative intention, and discourse organization within their relational context. Rather than quantifying linguistic forms statistically, the study explains how meaning is produced through addressivity, illocutionary force, and discourse progression. This orientation is appropriate when utterances function simultaneously as textual forms and communicative acts and when the objective is conceptual explanation derived from discourse data rather than surface frequency alone (Levitt et al., 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The study therefore examines how Qur'anic *khithâb* organizes communication through the interaction of language functions, speech acts, and discourse structure, while maintaining explicit links between research questions, analytical procedures, and interpretive claims (Gaglio et al., 2020; O'Brien et al., 2014).

The data source consists of Qur'anic verses narrating the stories of the five *Ulul Azmi* prophets that contain communicative structures relevant to the analysis of *khithâb*. The corpus was established by mapping verses associated with Nuḥ, Ibrâhîm, Muṣa, 'Īsa, and Muḥammad and classifying them into dialogic, monologic, and narrative categories. This distinction separates verses that explicitly realize addressive communication from those functioning mainly as descriptive narration. Identification of *khithâb*-related units was based on indicators such as direct addressivity, second-person reference, imperative constructions, prohibitions, interrogatives, and other forms signaling an explicit communicative relation between speaker and addressee. Clear definition of the unit of analysis is essential in qualitative textual inquiry to maintain analytic consistency and interpretive trustworthiness (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The corpus consists of 1,412 verses distributed across the narratives of Nuḥ, Ibrâhîm, Muṣa, 'Īsa, and Muḥammad. For analytical purposes, these verses were classified into dialogic, monologic, and narrative categories according to their communicative structure. The distribution of the corpus is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Dialogic, Monologic, and Narrative Verses in the Stories of the *Ulul Aẓmi* Prophets

Prophet	Total Verses	Dialogic Verses	Monologic Verses	Narrative Verses
Nūh	159	52	26	81
Ibrâhîm	184	79	36	68
Mūsa	304	170	16	119
Āsa	205	50	2	152
Muḥammad	561	294	64	203
Total	1,412	645	144	623

Table 1 presents the overall distribution of story verses in the narratives of the five *Ulul Aẓmi* prophets, classified into dialogic, monologic, and narrative categories. Out of 1,412 verses identified in the classified corpus, 645 are dialogic, 144 are monologic, and 623 are narrative. The distribution varies substantially across the prophets, with Muḥammad constituting the largest portion of the corpus (561 verses), followed by Mūsa (304), Āsa (205), Ibrâhîm (184), and Nūh (159). This distribution shows that the corpus is quantitatively broad and internally differentiated, thereby providing a sufficient basis for comparative linguistic–pragmatic analysis.

This study applies purposive sampling because the objective is not statistical representativeness but the selection of analytically rich units capable of illuminating the phenomenon in conceptual depth. Since the study aims to formulate a model of ethical religious communication grounded in Qur’anic *khithâb*, sampling prioritizes verses with strong communicative relevance in terms of addressivity, illocutionary force, and discourse progression (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Robinson, 2014).. As shown in Table 1, the dialogic category forms the principal dataset for the present study because it most clearly realizes speaker–addressee relations, communicative intention, and discourse progression. On this basis, the subsequent analysis concentrates on the 645 dialogic verses while treating monologic and narrative verses as contextual support.

Data analysis was conducted through four integrated stages connecting structural identification at the micro level with conceptual modelling at the macro level. First, each dialogic unit was examined to identify its dominant language function in relation to referential, conative, emotive, phatic, metalingual, or poetic orientations, following Jakobson’s functional model. Second, the study classified the speech acts realized in each utterance by determining its illocutionary force, such as directive, representative, expressive, commissive, or declarative. Third, discourse patterns were mapped by examining how utterances function within sequences of dialogue in order to identify coherence, challenge, clarification, reassurance, and consequence. Fourth, findings from the previous stages were synthesized to formulate recurrent relational patterns explaining how language function, communicative force, and discourse organization interact to produce an ethical orientation in Qur’anic *khithâb* (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; O’Brien et al., 2014).

To make the analytical procedure operational and reproducible, the coding followed a structured protocol. Each dialogic verse was first segmented into a speaker–

addressee unit and assigned a dialogic identifier. In the first layer, the dominant language function was coded according to the primary communicative orientation of the utterance: referential, conative, emotive, phatic, metalingual, or poetic. In the second layer, speech acts were coded based on the main illocutionary force realized in context, such as directive, representative, expressive, commissive, or declarative. In the third layer, discourse patterns were coded sequentially by tracing the role of each utterance within the surrounding exchange, including opening address, challenge, clarification, rebuttal, warning, reassurance, commitment, and consequence. To maintain coding stability, each verse was interpreted within its immediate co-text and broader narrative setting so that function, speech act, and discourse pattern were assigned contextually rather than in isolation.

To ensure methodological rigour, the study applies theoretical triangulation by integrating language function theory, speech act theory, and discourse analysis. Trustworthiness is maintained through consistency in unit identification, stability in coding criteria, and contextual checking of each interpretation against the broader discourse sequence (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

## Results and Discussion

### *Results*

This section presents findings derived from the corpus of 1,412 verses in the narratives of the five *Ulul Azmi* prophets, comprising 645 dialogic, 144 monologic, and 623 narrative verses. Since the study examines Qur'anic *khithâb* as an explicitly addressive and interactional mode of discourse, the analysis focuses on the 645 dialogic verses, because this category most clearly realizes speaker-addressee relations, communicative intention, and discourse progression. The dialogic corpus is distributed across the five prophets as follows: Nuḥ (52 verses), Ibrâhîm (79), Muṣa (170), Īsa (50), and Muḥammad (294). In pragmatic studies of Qur'anic dialogue, such focus on dialogic sequencing is methodologically important because interactional form often carries communicative force beyond propositional meaning alone, especially where requests, challenges, rebuttals, reassurance, and commitment are organized across turns rather than within isolated utterances (Khafaga, 2024; Khalîl, 2022).

### *Linguistic Characteristics of Qur'anic Khithâb in Dialogic Verses*

The mapping of the dialogic corpus shows that two language functions dominate the communicative structure of Qur'anic *khithâb*, namely the referential and conative functions. Out of the 645 dialogic verses, the referential function appears as dominant in 336 verses (52.09%), while the conative function appears in 250 verses (38.76%). The metalingual function is dominant in 31 verses (4.81%), the emotive function in 20 verses (3.10%), the phatic function in 5 verses (0.78%), and the poetic function in 3 verses (0.47%). These findings indicate that the dialogic structure of Qur'anic *khithâb* is shaped primarily by two intersecting orientations: explaining truth, belief, law, and circumstance, and influencing the addressee toward response, transformation, and moral action.

Table 2. Distribution of Dominant Language Functions in Dialogic Verses of the *Ulul Aẓmi* Prophets

Prophet	Number of dialogic verses	Referential	Conative	Emotive	Phatic	Metalingual	Poetic
Nuh	52	19 (36.54%)	23 (44.23%)	1 (1.92%)	0 (0.00%)	8 (15.38%)	1 (1.92%)
Ibrâhîm	79	36 (45.57%)	29 (36.71%)	3 (3.80%)	4 (5.06%)	7 (8.86%)	0 (0.00%)
Mūsā	170	45 (26.47%)	125 (73.53%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Īsa	50	27 (54.00%)	9 (18.00%)	11 (22.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (6.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Muḥammad	294	209 (71.09%)	64 (21.77%)	5 (1.70%)	1 (0.34%)	13 (4.42%)	2 (0.68%)
Total	645	336 (52.09%)	250 (38.76%)	20 (3.10%)	5 (0.78%)	31 (4.81%)	3 (0.47%)

*Source: reconstructed from the coding of dominant functions in the dialogic corpus.*

Table 2 shows that the functional distribution across dialogic verses is concentrated in the referential and conative domains. Referential dominance appears most strongly in the dialogues related to Muḥammad, Īsa, and Ibrâhîm, whereas conative dominance is especially visible in the dialogues of Mūsā and Nuh. In Īsa’s dialogic corpus, the referential function remains central, but emotive expression also plays a significant role, especially in passages involving reassurance, supplication, and existential response. The Muḥammad corpus is marked by very strong referential dominance, supported by conative direction, metalingual clarification, and limited emotive, phatic, and poetic functions. Such a distribution aligns with recent pragmatic work showing that Qur’anic dialogue tends to combine explanation, response-orientation, and broader macro-communicative structures rather than as isolated commands (Khafaga, 2024; Khalîl, 2022).

These findings permit a more precise characterization of Qur’anic *khithâb*. Dialogic discourse is not governed by a single communicative logic, but by a close interaction between explanatory mediation and directive orientation. In discourse-pragmatic terms, exhortation embedded in explanation differs from bare command because it addresses the addressee not only as an object of compliance, but also as an interpreter of meaning. Studies of religious discourse more broadly have noted that meaning-making, evaluative positioning, and response formation are deeply intertwined in interaction, especially where discourse carries moral or communal authority (Bhatt et al., 2025; Spencer-Oatey & Wang, 2025). This is also consistent with broader work on religious language showing that linguistic behaviour and communicative orientation are shaped by religious commitment, social context, and discourse expectations rather than by lexical form alone (Baker-Smemoe, 2015). The metalingual, emotive, phatic, and

poetic functions, while quantitatively secondary, remain significant because they show that prophetic dialogue also accommodates clarification of meaning, fear, hope, grief, reassurance, relational opening, and aesthetic emphasis.

### *Speech Pattern*

The dialogic dataset shows that Qur'anic *kbithâb* is structurally shaped by a close interaction between referential explanation, directive pressure, metalingual clarification, and emotive expression. Across the 645 dialogic verses, the referential function appears in 336 verses, conative in 250, metalingual in 31, emotive in 20, phatic in 5, and poetic in 3. This distribution suggests that dialogic communication in the Qur'an is organized around two major illocutionary tendencies: clarifying truth, belief, law, and circumstance through explanation, and moving the addressee toward response or action. That pattern resonates with research showing that religious discourse often relies on the interplay between directive force and interpretive framing rather than on naked assertion alone (Bhatt et al., 2025; Khafaga, 2024).

The speech pattern of Qur'anic dialogue therefore cannot be reduced to command alone. Even where the utterance is strongly conative, it is often accompanied by explanatory, justificatory, or corrective material. This is visible in many of Mūsa's dialogic verses, where commands, invitations, warnings, and challenges are framed by references to divine authority, historical experience, or theological truth. Likewise, in the dialogues of Ibrâhîm, ʿĪsa, and Muḥammad, referential force often takes precedence because speech is structured through clarification of prophetic legitimacy, legal-normative teaching, and critique of false belief. In Nuḥ's dialogues, the prominence of conative and metalingual elements shows that persuasion is accompanied by correction of misunderstanding concerning prophethood and revelation. In pragmatic terms, directive force is thus mediated rather than merely issued. Comparable insights appear in studies of Qur'anic requests and argument structures, where the force of the utterance depends on how it is sequentially prepared and inferentially grounded (Khafaga, 2024; Khalil, 2022).

At the same time, Qur'anic *kbithâb* operates not only by commanding or explaining, but also by expressing concern, fear, hope, consolation, and relational sensitivity. In Ibrâhîm's dialogues, emotive dominance appears in filial concern and fear of punishment; in Mūsa's dialogues, it emerges in supplication, anxiety, rebuke, and grief; and in ʿĪsa's dialogues, in reassurance, supplication, and inner longing. More broadly, pragmatic research has shown that evaluative and relational responses are central to how utterances are interpreted, especially in morally loaded discourse (House & Kádár, 2023; Spencer-Oatey & Wang, 2025).

### *Discourse Patterns*

The corpus of 645 dialogic verses indicates that Qur'anic *kbithâb* tends to develop through a relatively stable but flexible discourse pattern. Rather than presenting utterances as isolated speech events, the dialogic structure frequently unfolds through a sequence in which addressivity, explanation, response-orientation, and consequence are

interrelated. In many cases, discourse opens by establishing the speaker-addressee relationship through direct address, interrogative opening, challenge, reassurance, or summons; it then proceeds to clarification, argument, warning, or appeal before moving toward response, rejection, commitment, or consequence. The discourse pattern is therefore progressive: meaning develops through sequence, not through isolated propositions. This observation is compatible with discourse-analytic perspectives that treat local utterances as meaningful only within broader organizational structures and interactional progression (Dijk, 2008; Khalil, 2022).

This pattern is especially clear in prophetic dialogues that combine theological correction with attempts to influence conduct. In Nuh's dialogues, discourse moves from summons or challenge to clarification of prophetic authority and moral appeal. In Ibrâhîm's dialogues, it develops through question, rational clarification, rebuttal, and persuasive confrontation. In Muša's much larger corpus, the same underlying structure remains visible: command is framed by reference, challenge is answered by clarification, and fear is met with reassurance. In ʿĪsa's dialogues, the pattern appears in more compressed form but retains the same interplay of appeal, explanation, and inner or communal response. What emerges is that discourse organization in Qur'anic *khithâb* is both systematic and context-sensitive. Dialogues of warning and rejection tend to show stronger confrontational sequencing, whereas dialogues of supplication, reassurance, or internal guidance tend to be shorter and more affective. In communication studies more generally, such variation is expected because discourse structure adapts to relational context and communicative purpose (Dyrel, 2023; Riggs, 2024). A similar point appears in recent work on religious communication in educational settings, which shows that message uptake is strongly influenced by how discourse is sequenced, contextualized, and interactionally managed (Hanafi et al., 2024).

### *Emerging Ethical Dimensions*

The dialogic corpus shows that the ethical dimension of Qur'anic *khithâb* cannot be reduced to the mere presence of directive force. The referential function is the most dominant orientation in the dataset, occurring in 336 of the 645 dialogic verses (52.09%), followed by the conative function, which appears in 250 verses (38.76%). This distribution indicates that dialogic communication in the Qur'an does not operate primarily through isolated command, but through a combination of explanation and exhortation. The effort to influence the addressee is frequently accompanied by clarification, theological grounding, correction of misunderstanding, legal-normative instruction, or rational argument. Such a pattern suggests that Qur'anic communication is structured not as coercive imposition, but as guided persuasion grounded in meaning. This interpretation is in line with recent scholarship showing that religious discourse becomes ethically and socially consequential through the way authority is linguistically framed, not simply through the existence of authority itself (Bhatt et al., 2025; Jacoby, 2023). This is further reinforced by research indicating that public understanding of religious messages is shaped by language choice and communicative accessibility, both

of which affect how religious guidance is interpreted and received (Hamidah & Duncik, 2024).

A second ethical dimension emerges from the role of emotive and relational discourse. Although emotive function is not dominant in quantitative terms, it still appears in 20 of the 645 dialogic verses (3.10%), with a particularly visible proportion in the *‘Isa* corpus (11 of 50 verses; 22.00%). This shows that Qur’anic *kbithâb* does not treat communication as purely juridical or propositional. Rather, it incorporates fear, hope, tenderness, grief, reassurance, supplication, and moral concern into the communicative process. In ethical terms, Qur’anic dialogue does not merely direct the addressee correctly but also addresses the affective and relational dimension of human response. Studies of religious and interpersonal discourse likewise emphasize that guidance and evaluation are often inseparable from the management of emotional stance and relational alignment (Haq & Kwok, 2024; Spencer-Oatey & Wang, 2025).

A third ethical dimension is visible in the explicitly relational character of the discourse. The dialogic verses consistently mark who speaks, to whom, and within what relational stance. The speaker is not presented as an abstract transmitter of truth, but as one who addresses a people, a father, a ruler, disciples, opponents, believers, or God Himself. This relational explicitness is ethically important because it ties linguistic action to responsibility, proximity, and communicative accountability. Prophetic discourse in the Qur’an is therefore not anonymous or impersonal in effect. It is organized through speaker-addressee relations that frame warning, correction, invitation, consolation, and commitment. Taken together, these findings show that the ethical dimension of Qur’anic *kbithâb* emerges from the interaction of three structural features—referential mediation, directive orientation, and relational-dialogic organization—with emotive, metalingual, phatic, and poetic functions operating as supporting layers. On that basis, Qur’anic *kbithâb* may be understood as a model of ethical communication because it combines truth-claim, response-orientation, clarification, and relational accountability within a coherent dialogic structure. That conclusion is also consistent with broader discourse research showing that communication ethics is not reducible to message content alone, but emerges through the organization of relation, interpretation, and response in discourse.

## Discussion

The findings presented above indicate that Qur’anic *kbithâb*, particularly in its dialogic form, is organized through the recurring interaction of referential, conative, metalingual, and, to a lesser extent, emotive functions within an explicitly relational discourse framework. Building on those descriptive results, this discussion interprets their broader significance for pragmatics, discourse studies, and language-and-religion research. The emphasis here is therefore not on restating the frequencies, but on explaining what the observed pattern means theoretically and analytically (Khafaga, 2024; Khalil, 2022).

### *Theoretical Implications*

One major implication concerns the application of language function theory in religious discourse. In many earlier uses of Jakobson's model, dominant functions are treated primarily as classificatory categories. The present findings suggest that, in Qur'anic dialogic discourse, such classification should be understood only as a first step. The dominance of the referential function (52.09%), supported by the conative function (38.76%), indicates that prophetic dialogue is shaped by explanatory truth-orientation and directive guidance working together. Exhortation in Qur'anic *khithâb* is frequently mediated by clarification, theological grounding, legal-normative instruction, or argumentative framing. Language functions therefore do more than identify orientation; they reveal the relational organization through which discourse becomes persuasive, corrective, and ethically accountable (Bhatt et al., 2025; Jakobson, 1960). This interpretation is also consistent with recent pragmatic work showing that evaluative meaning and moral order are negotiated through interactional positioning rather than through propositional content alone (Baxter-Webb, 2024).

A second implication concerns speech act theory. Although classical speech act approaches are effective in identifying illocutionary force, the findings indicate that force in Qur'anic dialogue is rarely isolated. Directive force is often embedded in explanation, warning, appeal, reassurance, or emotional alignment. This is especially visible in the corpus of Muṣā, where command, challenge, and warning are regularly accompanied by statements of divine authority, truth-claim, or historical justification. In Muḥammad's and Ibrâhîm's dialogues, referential clarification often precedes or accompanies exhortation, while in Nuḥ's corpus persuasive force is supported by metalingual correction of misunderstanding. These patterns support the view that illocutionary force in religious discourse should be examined not only in terms of type, but also in terms of mediation that is, how force is managed through contextualization, justification, and relation. In this sense, the study advances the idea of illocutionary mediation, where authority is not merely asserted but linguistically framed in ways that reduce arbitrariness and support interpretive uptake (Dynel, 2023; Khafaga, 2024). A similar point appears in recent pragmatic analysis showing that speech acts derive much of their force from their embedding in societal and interactional context rather than from formal structure alone (Khater et al., 2024).

A third implication concerns discourse analysis. The results show that the ethical force of Qur'anic *khithâb* cannot be fully explained at the level of isolated utterances. Dominant functions become fully meaningful only when read in relation to discourse sequence: who speaks, to whom, in what context, and toward what response. The dialogic material repeatedly shows movement from addressivity to explanation, and from explanation to warning, appeal, reassurance, or consequence. This supports the view that religious discourse should be studied through the integration of micro-level linguistic categories and macro-level discourse organization. Meaning, guidance, and ethical orientation arise not only from propositions, but from the structuring of interaction itself (Dijk, 2008; Khalil, 2022). Thus, the study contributes to discourse theory by demonstrating that ethical effects in religious communication are emergent

properties of discourse architecture rather than external values applied after interpretation.

#### *Comparison with Previous Studies*

The present study extends earlier research in several ways. Previous scholarship on Qur'anic discourse has contributed important insights into rhetorical form, stylistic structure, theological argument, and specific speech acts. Khafaga (2024), for example, shows that requests in Qur'anic dialogue may generate macro-speech-act structures, while Khalil (2022) demonstrates that Qur'anic discourse can be organized through pragmatic argumentation. These studies are important because they move beyond purely formal readings and highlight the dynamic communicative force of Qur'anic language. However, their focus remains limited to particular domains.

The present study differs by integrating three analytical layers within a single explanatory framework: language function, communicative force, and discourse organization. It does not merely identify the presence of directives or arguments, but shows how explanation, exhortation, clarification, affective support, and relational positioning work together across a dialogic corpus. This is important because the findings reveal a clear referential dominance, while also showing that conative force remains the second major communicative orientation. Qur'anic dialogue therefore cannot be adequately described as merely exhortative or merely explanatory. It is dialogically organized so that response-orientation and meaning-making operate together (Bhatt et al., 2025; Spencer-Oatey & Wang, 2025).

The study also differs from approaches that read religious discourse mainly through ideology and power. Research such as Jacoby (2023) is important for showing how Qur'anic citations may be recontextualized for ideological purposes in modern media. Yet such work focuses primarily on afterlives and appropriation. The present study instead examines the internal communicative architecture of Qur'anic *kbithâb* itself. It shows that authority in prophetic discourse is not communicated through raw domination, but through a patterned interplay of addressivity, explanation, warning, appeal, and reassurance. In this respect, the study complements ideological readings by showing that authority is linguistically organized and ethically mediated before it is politically appropriated (Haq & Kwok, 2024; Jacoby, 2023).

#### *Interdisciplinary Significance*

The contribution of this study extends beyond Qur'anic studies and theoretical linguistics. In applied linguistics, the model developed here offers a useful framework for evaluating how religious discourse organizes persuasion without collapsing into coercion. Because the findings show that exhortation is regularly accompanied by explanation and relational positioning, the model may help distinguish between discourse that merely pressures and discourse that guides through meaning, accountability, and interpretive engagement. This is relevant not only to textual study, but also to educational discourse, preaching, da'wah, and contemporary religious communication in public settings (Bhatt et al., 2025; Haq & Kwok, 2024). Recent work on sermon discourse likewise indicates that religious persuasion depends not only on

doctrinal substance but also on the strategic integration of rhetoric, linguistic form, and communicative authority (Palangyos & Ulla, 2025). This broader relevance is further supported by communication research showing that religious language can shape public trust, evaluative response, and institutional credibility when it is perceived as contextually appropriate and relationally meaningful (Morehouse et al., 2025).

In religion-and-language studies, the findings support a view of scripture as communicative practice rather than as a static repository of doctrines alone. The Qur'anic text, especially in its prophetic dialogues, emerges as a discourse system in which ethics is enacted through linguistic organization. This broadens the study of religion beyond theology and law toward interaction, discourse form, and communicative effect (Jacoby, 2023; Khalil, 2022). In communication ethics, the study likewise offers a more precise basis for analysis than one focused only on message content. The findings suggest that ethical communication is not reducible to good intention or morally correct doctrine, but emerges from the linguistic architecture of discourse: from the way speakers orient to addressees, frame directives with explanation, articulate consequence, and incorporate affective sensitivity into the communicative act (Dyner, 2023; Spencer-Oatey & Wang, 2025).

#### *Conceptual Model of Ethical Religious Communication*

Based on these findings, a conceptual model of ethical religious communication can be formulated. This model does not treat ethics as an external normative layer added after interpretation. Instead, it understands ethics as an emergent property of discourse structure itself. In the present corpus, this emergence is visible in the interaction of referential mediation, conative orientation, metalingual clarification, relational-dialogic organization, and emotive support. Taken together, these components show that Qur'anic *khithâb* is not merely a collection of functions or isolated illocutionary acts, but a patterned linguistic architecture through which ethical communication is produced.

The referential dimension shows that Qur'anic dialogue is oriented toward explanation, truth-claim, correction, legal-normative instruction, and theological clarification. The conative dimension shows that such explanation is not passive, but is directed toward response, transformation, and guidance. The relational-dialogic dimension demonstrates that these communicative moves are enacted through explicit speaker-addressee positions that structure responsibility, proximity, challenge, consolation, and accountability. The metalingual layer clarifies meaning, code, and conceptual misunderstanding, while the emotive layer shows that ethical communication in the Qur'an addresses the addressee not only as a rational respondent, but also as an affective and relational being capable of fear, hope, grief, reassurance, and longing.

The significance of the model lies in this integration. Ethical orientation does not arise from explanation alone, nor from directive force alone, but from explanation that guides action and from directive force mediated by meaning within an explicit relational frame. Referential material becomes ethically effective because it is embedded in dialogue and oriented toward response, while conative force becomes ethically

accountable because it is framed by clarification, truth-claim, and relational responsibility. In this way, Qur'anic *khithâb* presents a form of communication in which truth, action, relationship, clarification, and affect are mutually constitutive. The model is therefore analytical rather than merely normative: it explains how ethical religious communication is linguistically produced and why Qur'anic dialogue repeatedly appears as non-coercive, explanatory, and relationally accountable (Bhatt et al., 2025; Khafaga, 2024).

Based on the integration of language functions, illocutionary mediation, and dialogic structuring identified in this study, Figure 1 presents the conceptual model of ethical religious communication in Qur'anic *khithâb*.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Ethical Religious Communication in Qur'anic *Khithâb*

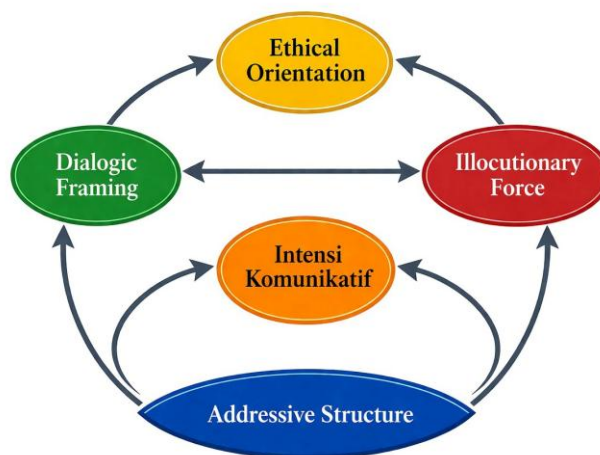


Figure 1 illustrates the dynamic interaction among addressive structure, communicative intention, dialogic framing, illocutionary force, and ethical orientation. Addressive structure forms the communicative base by establishing speaker-addressee relations, while communicative intention directs the movement of meaning and response. Dialogic framing and illocutionary force then regulate how exhortation, clarification, warning, and persuasion are linguistically managed within discourse. Ethical orientation emerges at the upper level as the cumulative effect of these interacting components rather than from isolated directives or propositional meaning alone. The figure therefore visualizes Qur'anic *khithâb* as a linguistic architecture that generates non-coercive, explanatory, and dialogically mediated religious communication. In this sense, the model is not only conceptually descriptive but also operationally useful for the analysis of ethical communication in other religious discourse settings.

## Conclusion

This study examines Qur'anic *khithâb* as a model of ethical religious communication through a linguistic-pragmatic analysis of the prophetic narratives of

the five *Ulul Azmi* prophets. Focusing on 645 dialogic verses within a classified corpus of 1,412 verses, it shows that dialogic *keithâb* is shaped primarily by the referential function, followed by the conative function, while metalingual, emotive, phatic, and poetic functions operate as supporting layers. Qur'anic dialogue therefore appears not as exhortation alone, but as a patterned combination of explanation, response-orientation, clarification, relational accountability, and affective support.

The study contributes by showing, first, that referential and conative orientations in Qur'anic dialogue operate in close integration; second, that directive force is commonly mediated through explanation, argument, reassurance, metalingual clarification, and relational framing; and third, that ethical communication emerges from the structured interaction of function, force, and discourse sequencing rather than from an external normative layer. In this sense, Qur'anic *keithâb* can be read as a model of explanatory, directive, non-coercive, and relationally accountable communication (Bhatt et al., 2025; Khafaga, 2024).

Its main limitation is the focus on the dialogic corpus, while monologic and narrative verses function mainly as contextual support. Future research may test the model on other Qur'anic corpora, compare it with communicative structures in other religious traditions, or apply it to contemporary public religious discourse.

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