



Beyond Orthographic Variation: A Corpus-Based Semantic Study of رحمة and رحمت in Al-Qur'an

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Article Information

Article History:

Received : 14-April-2025
Revised : 19-June-2026
Accepted : 29-June-2026
Published : 30-June-2026

Keywords:

Al-Qur'an;
Corpus;
Semantic;
Synonymy;

رحمة and رحمت

Articles Available Online:



ABSTRACT

The Qur'an contains numerous near-synonymous lexical items whose meanings vary according to their linguistic and contextual environments. However, corpus-based investigations of these subtle semantic distinctions remain limited. This study examines the lexical forms رحمة and رحمت, which derive from the same root (ر-ح-م) but differ in orthographic realization and syntactic construction, to identify their contextual distribution and semantic functions in the Qur'an. A qualitative descriptive corpus linguistics approach was employed using AntConc to analyse 108 Qur'anic occurrences, comprising رحمة (n = 71) and رحمت (n = 37). The analysis focused on frequency, collocation, and concordance patterns to examine differences in contextual usage. The findings indicate that رحمة occurs across a wider range of semantic contexts referring to divine mercy in a general sense, whereas رحمت predominantly appears in idāfah constructions that express possession and constrain meaning according to the surrounding context. These findings demonstrate that the distinction between the two forms is primarily distributional and functional rather than merely lexical or orthographic. This study contributes to Qur'anic lexical semantics by providing corpus-based evidence of contextual variation in near-synonymous expressions and demonstrates the usefulness of corpus linguistics for context-sensitive semantic analysis. The findings also offer pedagogical implications for teaching Qur'anic Arabic by enabling learners to understand lexical meaning through authentic patterns of Qur'anic usage.



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How to Cite:

Pamungkas, M. I., Kurniawan, E., & Supriadi, R. (2026). Beyond Orthographic Variation: A Corpus-Based Semantic Study of رحمة and رحمت in Al-Qur'an. *Ta'lim al-'Arabiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab & Kebahasaaraban*, 10(1), 129–149. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpba.v10i1.44977>

INTRODUCTION

Al-Qur'an not only conveys profound religious messages but also embodies remarkable linguistic richness. This sacred text employs a language that is deeply nuanced and semantically layered, where diction plays a strategic role in conveying meaning both implicitly and explicitly. This forms an essential foundation for examining the linguistic phenomena present in the Qur'an, particularly in the use of synonymous words. Thus, studying the subtle differences in meaning between synonymous terms is relevant for deepening our understanding of the Qur'an's semantic richness. As stated by Zeroual & Lakhouaja (2018), the morphological richness of Arabic is evident in its prominent features of derivation and inflection. Revealed in Arabic, Al-Qur'an has long drawn the attention of scholars to be studied from various angles, including linguistic analysis. One of the modern approaches applicable in the linguistic study of Al-Qur'an is corpus linguistics, which allows researchers to examine language patterns based on large, systematically organized textual data. Al-Qur'an with its fully preserved diacritical marks, offers an ideal linguistic resource for conducting detailed morphosyntactic and semantic analysis, enabling researchers to explore subtle lexical distinctions, such as between near-synonymous terms like *رحمة* and *رحمت*, with a high level of phonological and contextual precision (Zeroual & Lakhouaja, 2016).

In this context, synonymous words such as *رحمة* and *رحمت* present an intriguing example of how a single root word can evolve into two distinct linguistic entities with subtle yet meaningful differences. This aligns with the perspective of several linguists who reject the concept of complete synonymy (Annisa, 2022; Qomariah & Nazwa, 2022; Wardania et al., 2023) the notion that two different words can carry entirely identical meanings. After all, language users would not create a new word if its meaning were already fully represented by an existing term. Thus, the existence of synonyms instead signifies unique shades of meaning, even if the distinctions may be exceedingly nuanced.

To date, the number of scholarly articles or books specifically addressing the nuanced differences between highly similar Arabic vocabulary remains limited. Although previous research has explored near-synonymous expressions in the Qur'an (Bağmanç & Önel, 2024; Farraj & Kahtani, 2023; Shehab, 2026), it has mainly focused on translation issues, leaving the relationship between their orthographic variation and semantic usage underexplored. Therefore, this research is considered necessary to serve as a foundational study for subsequent research that will further develop the analysis of seemingly identical words that carry fundamental semantic distinctions. The scarcity of academic sources often leads to partial interpretations or opinions, where only a single verse or source is referenced to comprehensively understand words like *رحمة* and *رحمت*. While traditional interpretations often rely on intuitive subjective interpretation, such as linking *رحمت* with “boundless mercy” and *رحمة* with “bound mercy” based on orthography. These claims lack empirical grounding and require corpus-based analysis to validate their semantic and theological distinctions. In the Qur'anic context, variations in written forms may provide insights into linguistic and semantic aspects that cannot be explained solely through orthographic analysis (Ezaldeen & Yasin, 2025).

This perspective is particularly relevant to the analysis of *رحمة* and *رحمت*, two forms derived from the same root (ر-ح-م) and commonly associated with the concept of mercy in the Qur'an. Rather than assuming that the difference between these forms automatically indicates a difference in meaning, this study investigates whether their distributional patterns and contextual environments reveal distinct semantic tendencies. From a semantic perspective, words that are considered synonymous do not necessarily share identical meanings in all contexts. Therefore, examining the distinction between related lexical forms requires attention not only to their definitions but also to their actual distribution and usage within a given corpus.

To examine this phenomenon, corpus linguistics emerges as an appropriate methodological approach. Utilizing software such as AntConc enables researchers to conduct systematic frequency analysis, collocation studies, and concordance line examinations. This method not only provides quantitative data to support analytical conclusions but also facilitates qualitative interpretation through contextual analysis of word usage in Quranic verses.

This approach aligns with Arum's (2020) research highlighting corpus linguistics as an effective tool for extracting vocabulary and lexical features within specific domains. Consequently, this methodology serves as a bridge between empirical analysis and theoretical inquiry in both linguistic and exegetical studies. The integration of computational tools with traditional textual analysis offers a robust framework for investigating subtle semantic distinctions while maintaining rigorous academic standards.

Previous studies on Qur'anic corpus linguistics have demonstrated the potential of corpus-based approaches in exploring various aspects of Qur'anic language. Existing research has applied corpus methods for purposes such as translation analysis (Humaini & Ningrum, 2019; Lestari et al., 2017; Sa'ad & Halim, 2021), lexical frequency identification (Zaini et al., 2021), and discourse analysis of specific Qur'anic concepts (Omar et al., 2021). These developments have been supported by the establishment of digital Qur'anic corpus resources, such as the work of Hizbullah et al. (2017), which provides an important foundation for computational analysis of Qur'anic texts.

Despite these contributions, previous corpus-based studies have largely focused on computational processing, translation comparison, and retrieval-oriented analysis. While they demonstrate the effectiveness of corpus methods in examining Qur'anic texts, limited attention has been given to how corpus evidence can reveal semantic distinctions among lexical items that appear synonymous in Qur'anic Arabic. Therefore, the application of corpus-based analysis to investigate subtle lexical variations remains an area that requires further exploration. Thus, a gap remains in Qur'anic corpus research regarding the use of corpus evidence to investigate subtle semantic distinctions among near-synonymous lexical items.

Addressing this gap allows a more evidence-based examination of Qur'anic near-synonyms, where semantic distinctions are explored through patterns of actual language use rather than isolated textual interpretations. By integrating empirical corpus data with contextual analysis, this research contributes to a more systematic understanding of lexical

variation in the Qur'an and highlights the relevance of corpus-based approaches for linguistic and exegetical studies.

Drawing from the issues identified above, this study aims to investigate the semantic nuances of *رحمة* and *رحمت* in the Qur'an through a corpus-based approach. Specifically, it addresses three questions: (1) how these two forms are distributed within the Qur'anic corpus, (2) what contextual and collocational patterns characterize their usage, and (3) how these patterns contribute to understanding their semantic relationship as near-synonymous expressions.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative corpus-based research design to investigate the semantic nuances of *رحمة* and *رحمت* in the Qur'an. The analysis combines corpus linguistic techniques with contextual semantic interpretation. The corpus data are examined through three analytical dimensions, (1) frequency analysis to identify distributional patterns, (2) collocation analysis to explore lexical associations, and (3) concordance analysis to examine contextual usage. These linguistic patterns are then interpreted to identify possible semantic tendencies of the two forms within Qur'anic contexts.

The research data consists of the original Quranic text, which has been cleaned and formatted for compatibility with AntConc software (version 4.3.1). Unlike studies analyzing Quranic translations, which may involve multiple versions, this research utilizes a single corpus, given the singular nature of the original Quranic text. The research was conducted through the following steps:

1. Data Retrieval

The Quranic text in .txt format can be downloaded from <https://tanzil.net/download/>.

2. Data Cleaning

At this stage, the Quranic text needs to be cleaned to ensure compatibility with AntConc software. The website provides a feature to remove *harakat*, pause marks (*waqaf*), and other symbols that may cause readability issues in AntConc. The following illustration demonstrates this process.

Quran text type: [?]

- Simple
- Simple (Plain)
- Simple (Minimal)
- Simple (Clean)
- Uthmani
- Uthmani (Minimal)

Output file format:

- Text
- Text (with aya numbers)
- XML
- SQL (MySql dump)

Include pause marks

Include sajdah signs (س)

Include rub-el-hizb signs (حزب)

Download I agree with Terms of Use

Figure 1 Cleaning Al-Qur'an Corpus Data

Based on the figure, the text cleaning procedure consists of the following steps:

- Text Type Selection:** Choose "Simple (Clean)" under "Quran text type" to remove diacritical marks (*harakat*).
- Format Specification:** Set "Output file format" to "Text".

- c. **Symbol Removal:** Uncheck all three boxes on the right side to eliminate pause marks (*waqaf*) and other symbols.
 - d. **Download:** Check the “I agree with Terms of Use” box and click the “Download” button.
3. **Data Loading**
- a. Launch AntConc and select **File → Open File(s) as ‘Quick Corpus’** (or the equivalent option).
 - b. Load the cleaned Quranic corpus text file for software processing.

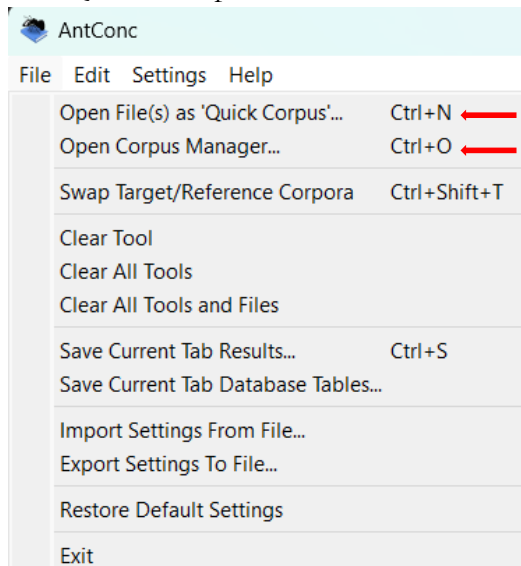


Figure 2 Loading Corpus Data

4. Corpus Query Process

After loading the corpus text, the researcher conducts word searches by:

- a. Inputting Target Lexemes: Entering search terms in the bottom text field.
- b. Executing Search: Clicking the “Start” button to initiate corpus analysis.
- c. Output Optimization: Selecting “Sort to Left” under “Sort Options” for enhanced readability of results.

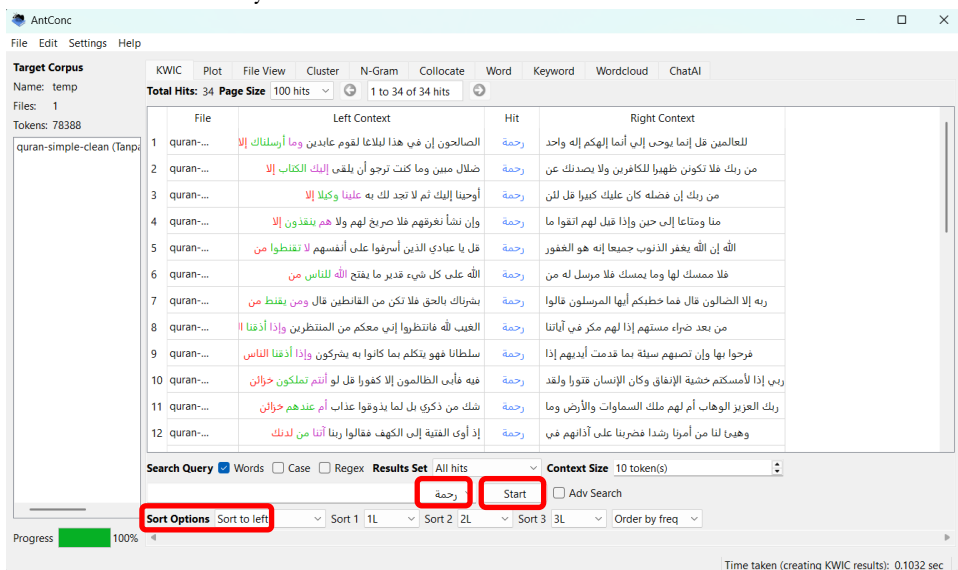


Figure 3 Conducting a Word Search

5. Data Sorting and Analysis

The data obtained from the software can be examined and analyzed through frequency patterns, collocational relationships, and concordance lines. This approach helps researchers identify semantic nuances in the target words. The analysis follows a sequential process, beginning with quantitative examination before moving to qualitative interpretation.

6. Data Analysis

To ensure interpretive reliability, the findings were validated through methodological triangulation by comparing corpus-based patterns with contextual analysis and classical Qur'anic tafsir, allowing semantic interpretation to be grounded in both linguistic evidence and established exegetical tradition.

The study analyzed 108 occurrences of the lexical root ر-ح-م in the Qur'an, comprising رحمة forms (n = 71) and رحمت constructions (n = 37). Data were retrieved using AntConc and examined through frequency, collocation, and concordance analysis to identify contextual usage patterns.

Given the frequency of both رحمة and رحمت forms, purposive sampling was applied to select contextually relevant occurrences from both categories for qualitative analysis. The selected instances represent varied syntactic, collocational, and thematic environments in which the two forms appear, allowing for a focused examination of contextual usage patterns. This approach prioritizes interpretive relevance over exhaustive coverage, enabling the study to identify meaningful distributional differences within the Qur'anic corpus.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The corpus analysis was conducted to identify the distributional patterns and contextual usage of رحمة and رحمت in the Qur'anic corpus. The analysis focuses on three linguistic features: frequency, collocation, and concordance. These features provide empirical evidence for examining whether the two forms, although derived from the same root, demonstrate different patterns of usage within Qur'anic contexts.

The Word رحمة in Al-Qur'an

The word appears in several orthographic variations. Precise search terms are required when using AntConc, as not all instances can be retrieved through a single keyword. The following table details the frequency distribution of the word and its variants within the Quranic corpus:

Table 1. The word رحمة and its varieties frequency

Keyword	Frequency
رحمة	34
الرحمة	6

Keyword	Frequency
ورحمة	24
برحمة	7

The distributional patterns indicate that *رحمة* and *رحمت* do not occur randomly across the Qur'anic corpus. These differences provide an initial basis for further examination through collocation and concordance analysis to identify their contextual tendencies. This aligns with Haug & Pedrazzini's (2023) assertion that no two words are perfectly synonymous. The researcher thus posits that while the difference between *رحمة* and *رحمت* may be subtle, it is nevertheless semantically significant. The following analysis examines select verses containing *رحمة*:

1. QS Hud: 28

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَأَتَانِي رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنُلْزِمُكُمْوهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ

In this verse, *رحمة* is interpreted by classical and contemporary exegetes (*mufassirin*) as referring to:

a. Prophethood and Divine Mission

Allah's selection of Prophet Nuh (Noah) as a messenger, granting him revelation and a prophetic mission (الدمشقي, ١٩٩٩; الطبري, ٢٠٠١; القرطبي, ٢٠٠١). This *rahmah* is not merely general benevolence but a specialized divine gift tied to prophethood and guidance. (جماعة من علماء التفسير, ٢٠١٥).

b. Divine Guidance and Spiritual Knowledge

The term encompasses true knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and guidance (*hudan*) toward the straight path (البغوي, ١٩٨٩; السعدي, ٢٠٠٢). In this context, *rahmah* indicates divine guidance and knowledge granted to Nuh as part of his prophetic mission.

c. Faith and Salvation

Some scholars interpret *rahmah* here as entry into true faith (*iman*) and religious salvation (القرطبي, ٢٠٠٦). It reflects Allah's elective mercy granted only to those whom He wills.

Therefore, *رحمة* in this verse refers not merely to general mercy, but to a contextualized form of divine favor manifested through revelation, prophethood, guidance, and spiritual benefit granted to Prophet Nuh. The surrounding context emphasizes that this divine favor requires acceptance and recognition rather than coercion.

2. QS Ali Imran: 107

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Classical exegetes generally interpret *rahmah* in this verse as referring to Allah's reward in the Hereafter, particularly Paradise (*Jannah*). Several key points emerge from the meaning of *rahmah* in this context:

a. Rahmah as Paradise and Eternal Bliss

Exegetes affirm that *rahmah* in this verse is contextualized as Paradise and the eternal blessings associated with it, the highest reward from Allah, characterized as a place of endless blessings, honor, and divine favor. This is supported by the phrase *فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ* (they will abide therein forever), which emphasizes that this form of *rahmah* is not temporary, but rather an everlasting gift, the eternal abode for the righteous. (البغوي, ١٩٨٩; الدمشقي, ٢٠٠٦; جماعة من علماء القرطبي, ٢٠٠١; الطبري, ٢٠٠٢; السعدي, ١٩٩٩; التفسير, ٢٠١٥).

b. Rahmah as a Manifestation of Divine Nearness

This interpretation expands the contextual meaning of *rahmah* beyond material reward, highlighting it as divine favor that includes spiritual fulfillment and ultimate well-being (السعدي, ٢٠٠٢). In other words, being within His *rahmah* means not only enjoying the physical pleasures of Paradise, but also experiencing intimate nearness to the Most Merciful a life of peace, love, and tranquility in His presence.

Therefore, in this verse, *rahmah* represents Allah's eschatological favor, manifested through Paradise and the eternal blessings granted to the believers. It illustrates that *rahmah* is not limited to worldly provisions but also encompasses the eternal recompense bestowed upon those who believe and remain obedient.

3. QS Al-Isra: 100

قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ تَمْلِكُونَ خَزَائِنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّي إِذًا لَأَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْإِنْفَاقِ وَكَانَ
الْإِنْسَانُ قَتُورًا

In this verse, the word *رحمة* contextually refers to sustenance, blessings, and wealth under the dominion of Allah. Here, *رحمة* is contextualized through material provisions and worldly blessings, particularly wealth and sustenance granted by Allah. Several key insights can be drawn from the meaning of *رحمة* in this context:

a. **Rahmah as Sustenance and Wealth**

All exegetes interpret رَحْمَةً رَبِّي in this verse as referring to the treasures of sustenance, blessings, or wealth (a contextual realization of divine رحمة in the form of worldly provision).

b. **The Contrast Between Human Stinginess and Divine Generosity**

This verse contains a critique of human nature, which is inherently inclined toward miserliness (*qatūra*). If humans were given control over such رحمة, they would withhold it out of fear of depletion (الأشقر, ٢٠٠٧). In contrast, Allah's generosity is presented as unrestricted, unlike human possession which is limited by fear of loss, without fear of scarcity, underscoring the perfection and vastness of His generosity in comparison to human limitations.

c. **Rahmah as a Reflection of Divine Majesty in Giving**

Thus, in this verse, رحمة is manifested through worldly blessings, particularly provisions and wealth, illustrating Allah's unrestricted generosity in contrast with human limitation. Even if humans were entrusted with such treasures, they would never match Allah's boundless generosity due to their inherent fear of poverty and selfish tendencies.

Therefore, in QS Al-Isra 17:100, رحمة represents a contextual form of divine favor manifested through worldly provisions and wealth. The surrounding expressions, particularly خزائن and الإنفاق, indicate that the term refers to Allah's abundant resources and generosity, while the contrast with human stinginess highlights the difference between divine and human capacity in giving.

4. **QS Al-Ahzab: 17**

قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا

In this verse, رحمة is contextually associated with divine favor and beneficial outcomes granted by Allah, including protection, assistance, and well-being. The following points elaborate on the meanings conveyed:

a. **Rahmah as Divine Assistance and Protection**

In the broader context of the surah, which discusses conflict and divine protection, رحمة refers to Allah's favorable decree and assistance, while emphasizing that such protection comes solely from Him.

b. **Rahmah as an Expression of Divine Goodness**

In this context, the interpretation presents *رحمة* as a beneficial divine outcome, whether in the form of worldly protection or general goodness. This underscores that *رحمة* in this context is tangible and worldly, representing real and beneficial outcomes granted by Allah to protect His servants from harm.

c. **The Contrast Between *Rahmah* and *Sū'* (Harm)**

The verse emphasizes that only Allah has the power to bestow *رحمة* (good) or bring about *سوء* (harm). This highlights that *رحمة* is a manifestation of Allah's benevolent will. The opposition between *رحمة* and *سوء* establishes *رحمة* as a positive divine intervention under Allah's exclusive authority.

d. **Rahmah as a Sign of Total Dependence on Allah**

The verse implies that all forms of safety, success, and deliverance are aspects of Allah's *رحمة*, inaccessible and unassailable by anyone except through His will (جماعة من علماء التفسير, ٢٠١٥). It points to the verse reinforces the concept that divine favor and protection are ultimately controlled by Allah alone.

Thus, in QS Al-Ahzab 33:17, *رحمة* refers to Allah's favorable intervention and divine favor, manifested through protection, assistance, and beneficial outcomes. The contrast with *سوء* highlights that both harm and benefit remain under Allah's authority (السعدي, ٢٠٠٢), emphasizing that human beings cannot control or secure such outcomes independently.

5. **QS Al-Hadid: 27**

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَىٰ ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

Classical exegetes generally interpret *رحمة* in this verse as referring to compassion and mercy placed in the hearts of the followers of Prophet Isa, referring to deep compassion and heartfelt kindness toward others. This quality is considered one of their most distinctive traits, even surpassing the gentleness and compassion of other communities, so long as they remained true to the

teachings of Prophet Isa (البغوي, ١٩٨٩; الدمشقي, ١٩٩٩; السعدي, ٢٠٠٢; الطبري, ٢٠٠١; القرطبي, ٢٠٠٦; جماعة من علماء التفسير, ٢٠١٥).

Al-Ṭabarī (2001) holds that the term *رحمة* is paired with *رأفة* (compassion) to emphasize the true moral character of the followers of Isa. Al-Qurṭubī (2006) explains the distinction by stating that *رأفة* refers to a form of affection that alleviates burdens, while *رحمة* denotes a deeper form of mercy that willingly bears the burden on behalf of others.

Therefore, in QS Al-Hadid 57:27, *رحمة* refers to an internal moral quality characterized by compassion and care toward others. Unlike the previous contexts where *رحمة* denotes divine gifts or blessings granted by Allah, this verse presents *رحمة* as a human disposition instilled by Allah, functioning as an ethical characteristic of believers

6. QS Al-Baqarah: 179

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلَى الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ
وَالْأُنثَى بِالْأُنثَى فَمَنْ عَفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبِعْهُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ
ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

The term *رحمة* in this context is interpreted as divine mercy manifested through the legal flexibility and alternatives provided within the ruling of *qisas*. This verse presents *رحمة* as the manifestation of the flexibility and mercy embedded in Islamic law, which offers a range of legal options: *qisas*, *diyyah*, or even full pardon without compensation (البغوي, ١٩٨٩; الطبري, ٢٠٠١).

This contextual use presents *رحمة* as a divine form of mercy expressed through legislation that reduces hardship and provides alternatives, reflecting Allah's gentleness in legislation and easing the burden on the followers of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ compared to earlier communities. The permissibility of *diyyah* offers Muslims the opportunity to pursue justice while considering circumstances and social benefit, offering Muslims the opportunity to pursue justice in a manner aligned with wisdom and societal benefit. In conclusion, *رحمة* in this verse represents divine mercy manifested through the alleviation of legal burden and the provision of compassionate alternatives within Islamic rulings.

Thus, *رحمة* in this verse refers to divine mercy manifested through the legal alleviation and flexibility embedded in the ruling of *qisas*. The connection between *takhsif* and *رحمة* indicates that this mercy is realized through reducing hardship and providing balanced alternatives, including retaliation, compensation, or pardon.

7. QS Al-An'am: 54

إِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ
الرَّحْمَةَ ۖ أَنَّهُ مَن عَمِلَ مِنكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ

The term *الرَّحْمَةَ* is emphasized through the expression *كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ*, which presents mercy as a divinely established attribute in relation to His servants. The *mufassir* provide several dimensions of meaning for this term:

a. Syntactic and Semantic Reinforcement

Al-Qurtubi and At-Tabari offer a linguistic analysis in which the term “*الرَّحْمَةَ*” is directly explained or interpreted by the following clause via a specific syntactic structure. This emphasizes that Allah’s mercy is not abstract but is manifested concretely by opening the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness for those who have sinned. Al-Qurtubi (2006) explains that regarding the phrase “*فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ*” there is a variation in reading the particle “*أن*”: some recitations read it with a *kasrah* (إِنَّ), starting a new clause (*isti’naf*) to clarify the meaning of *الرَّحْمَةَ*, while other recitations use a fathah (أَنَّ) as a replacement (*badal*) for *الرَّحْمَةَ*, meaning that Allah has established His mercy in such a way that whoever sins out of ignorance and subsequently repents will be forgiven.

This grammatical interpretation firmly links the meaning of *الرَّحْمَةَ* with forgiveness and the acceptance of repentance. According to At-Tabari (2001), most reciters from Madinah use the *fathah* (أَنَّ) reading to explain *الرَّحْمَةَ*, whereas those reading with a *kasrah* treat the clause as a new sentence that further elucidates Allah’s compassionate forgiveness toward those who repent and correct their deeds.

b. Ar-Rahmah as Divine Decree

According to Al-Sa’di (2002), Allah’s mercy encompasses His forgiveness and benevolence toward His servants who repent and reform. Allah has

established mercy as a self-imposed divine promise arising from His generosity, not from external obligation. Ibnu Katsir (1999) emphasizes that the inscription of mercy on Allah's own essence is a manifestation of His voluntary goodness (*tathannu'*), which, though not obligatory, is established by His generosity and compassion.

c. Ar-Rahmah as the Basis for Forgiveness

Al-Baghawi (1989) explains that the establishment of Allah's mercy in this verse is closely related to His forgiveness toward those who commit wrongdoing out of ignorance and subsequently repent and reform themselves. In this context, rahmah functions as the basis for divine forgiveness, where mercy is manifested through the acceptance of repentance and the removal of punishment. Both At-Tabari (2001) and Al-Qurtubi (2006) further highlight that the connection between الرَّحْمَةَ and غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ reinforces the interpretation of rahmah as a divine favor that enables sinners to return to Allah through sincere repentance and righteous correction.

The Word رحمت in Al-Qur'an

The word رحمت appears seven times in the Qur'an. It occurs six times in its independent form "رحمت" and once in its connected form "ورحمت" (with the conjunction *waw*). This distribution can be observed from the corpus search results using the AntConc version 4.3.1. The following is a detailed list of the Surahs and verses in which the term رحمت is used. Based on the corpus findings, several observations can be drawn:

1. The word رحمت is predominantly used in an *idafah* (possessive construction) with references to Allah. In the Qur'anic occurrences, the term appears in constructions such as رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ and رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ. This grammatical pattern emphasizes that the mercy referred to is not a general abstract concept but a mercy attributed specifically to Allah as its source. Therefore, the term carries a theological dimension, indicating divine mercy that originates from Allah and is granted according to His will.
2. The occurrences of رحمت indicate a contextualized and specific manifestation of divine mercy. Unlike the broader concept of رحمة that may refer to Allah's general attribute, the use of رحمت in these verses often refers to a particular form of mercy experienced by specific individuals or communities. The following example illustrates this contextual meaning:

a. QS Al-Baqarah: 218

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

This verse was revealed in relation to the companions involved in the expedition led by ‘Abdullah ibn Jahsh. They asked the Prophet whether their participation in the expedition could be considered equivalent to a battle (*ghazwah*) so that they might receive the same reward as those who fought in major battles. Allah then clarified that their hope for His reward was justified because of their faith, migration, and struggle in His path (الأشقر, ٢٠٠٧).

In this context, the expression *يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ* does not merely refer to a general expectation of kindness, but specifically to the divine reward and favor promised to those who demonstrate commitment through faith, migration, and striving for Allah’s cause. The construction *رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ* highlights that this mercy belongs exclusively to Allah and is connected with His act of granting reward and forgiveness.

Although the word is written with *ta maftuḥah* (ت) in the Qur’anic orthography *رحمت*, this form should primarily be understood as part of the Qur’anic *rasm* tradition rather than as an independent grammatical indicator of meaning. However, within the semantic context of the verse, the use of this term reflects a specific manifestation of Allah’s mercy, which is a divine favor that is realized through reward, acceptance, and compassion toward believers who make sacrifices for their faith.

b. QS Al-A’raf: 56

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ
مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

This verse contains a prohibition against causing corruption on the earth after its restoration, followed by an instruction to call upon Allah with a balance between fear (*khanf*) and hope (*tama*). The verse then emphasizes that Allah’s mercy is close to those who perform *ibsan*. According to Al-Asyqar (2007), *الْمُحْسِنِينَ* refers to those who combine faith in Allah and the unseen, fulfill the obligations commanded by Allah, avoid His prohibitions, and continuously worship Him with the awareness that Allah observes their actions, thereby perfecting their deeds.

The expression *إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ* presents Allah’s mercy as something closely connected with the quality of human actions. In this context, *رحمت* does

not merely represent a general attribute of Allah, but refers to a particular manifestation of divine mercy that is associated with those who achieve the level of *ihsan*. Therefore, the verse functions not only as a statement about Allah's mercy but also as a motivational encouragement for believers to maintain righteous conduct.

c. QS Hud: 73

قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحِمَتُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ
مَجِيدٌ

This verse describes the response of the angels to Sarah, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim, when she expressed astonishment upon receiving the news that she would have a child despite her old age. The angels reassured her that such an event was not impossible because it occurred by Allah's command and power. The verse emphasizes that Allah's decree is beyond human limitation, and that His mercy and blessings extend to the household of Ibrahim. This verse reflects Allah's honor and special favor toward the family of Prophet Ibrahim through the gift of offspring and the continuation of divine blessings (جماعة من علماء ١٩٨٩ (التفسير, ٢٠١٥; مجمع اللغة العربية, ١٩٨٩).

The expression رَحِمَتُ اللَّهِ in this verse refers to a specific manifestation of Allah's mercy that is realized through a particular event, which is the fulfillment of the promise of a child to Ibrahim and Sarah. Unlike a general concept of mercy, the mercy mentioned here is connected with a specific recipient, namely *Ahl al-Bayt*, and a specific divine favor, namely the blessing of offspring and the continuation of prophetic lineage.

d. QS Maryam: 2

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا

This verse serves as an introduction to the story of Prophet Zakariyya in Surah Maryam. It functions as a preface that explains how Allah's mercy was granted to Zakariyya in the form of the acceptance of his supplication for offspring, through the acceptance of his supplication and the granting of offspring despite the limitations of human circumstances (السعدي, ٢٠٠٢).

The opening expression ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ introduces the narrative as a remembrance of a specific manifestation of Allah's mercy toward Zakariyya. The word رَحْمَتِ in this verse is used in an *idhafah* (possessive) construction linking the mercy specifically to Allah as its source and indicating a particular manifestation of divine favor toward Zakariyya. Therefore, رحمت in this context refers not merely to general compassion, but to a specific divine blessing realized

through the fulfilment of prayer and the granting of a gift beyond ordinary expectations.

e. **QS Ar-Rum: 50**

فَأَنْظُرْ إِلَىٰ آثَارِ رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ لَمُحِي الْمَوْتِ وَهُوَ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Verse 50 directs attention to the observable signs of Allah’s power, particularly the revival of the earth through rain as a manifestation of His mercy.

The Qur’anic orthographic form رَحْمَتِ occurs in a context where mercy is presented through observable manifestations of divine action. According to classical exegetes such as Al-Tabari (2001), Al-Qurtubi (2006), and Al-Baghawi (1989), the phrase آثَارِ رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ indicates that Allah’s mercy is manifested through observable signs in creation, particularly the rain that revives the earth “كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا”.

Thus, the use of the Qur’anic form رَحْمَتِ within the phrase آثَارِ رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ highlights a contextual realization of mercy as a divine act whose effects are manifested in creation, particularly through the revival of the earth by rain.

3. The word رحمت never appears in the Qur’an with the definite article “الـ” (al-).
4. The word رحمت also appears in *idafah* constructions with attached pronouns, indicating different possessive relations depending on the referent. The following section presents the frequency of these forms in the Qur’anic text.

Table 2. The word رحمت and its varieties frequency

Keyword	Frequency
رحمته	16
رحمتك	1
رحمتي	1
رحمتنا	4
ورحمته	7
ورحمتي	1

The corpus analysis reveals several patterns in the use of رحمت when it occurs in *idafah* constructions with attached pronouns, highlighting how possessive relations contribute to the contextual specification of its meaning:

1. The corpus evidence suggests that unbound occurrences of *رحمة* appear in broader semantic environments, whereas *رحمت* in *idafah* forms with attached pronouns show stronger association with possessive and context-specific constructions.
2. The attached pronouns in these forms predominantly refer to Allah or are used within contexts where mercy is attributed to divine authority.
3. The form *رحمته* frequently occurs in the construction *بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ* in Al-A'raf (7:57), Al-Furqan (25:48), and An-Naml (27:63), showing a recurring association between divine mercy and the signs preceding its manifestation. It also frequently appears with the prepositions *في* and *من*, indicating recurring syntactic patterns.
4. The phrase “*رحمتي*” appears only once, in Surah Al-'Ankabut (29:23). The occurrence of *رحمتي* in the verse appears in a direct first-person divine expression, emphasizing Allah's direct attribution of mercy and strengthening the rhetorical force of the statement. Remarkably, this verse employs the rhetorical style of *iltifat* (grammatical shift in person) to emphasize “My mercy”. This shift functions to deliver a stronger emphasis, explicitly asserting divine authority and making the declaration about the disbelievers' loss of hope in Allah's mercy more personal and absolute from the side of Allah Himself.
5. In Al-Anbiya (21:74, 86), it appears with *وأدخلناهم في رحمتنا*, emphasizing inclusion within divine mercy, whereas in Maryam (19:50, 53), it occurs with *ووهبنا لهم من رحمتنا*, highlighting mercy as a divine gift bestowed upon the prophets.
6. The phrase *ورحمته* frequently appears alongside expressions of divine favor, particularly *فضل الله عليكم*, except in Surah An-Nisa (4:113), which uses the singular form *فضل الله عليك* still maintaining the same structural pattern. This highlights a consistent syntactic association that underscores the linkage between divine bounty and mercy.

Discussion

The analysis reveals that synonymy in the Qur'an is not simply a matter of identical meanings between two words, but involves subtle distinctions in their contextual usage, consistent with Nugraha's (2024) findings on collocationally driven semantic variation. Similarly, Meqdad et al. (2024) demonstrate a graded semantic distinction among *al-fi'l*, *al-'amal*, and *al-ṣun'*, ranging from general to increasingly specific and context-dependent usage.

In this context, the difference between *رحمة* and *رحمت* is not merely orthographic but reflects a semantic distinction with implications for Qur'anic interpretation and the contextual nuances of word choice. Corpus analysis using AntConc supports this by

showing that each seemingly synonymous word in the Qur'an follows a unique distributional pattern, reinforcing the idea that complete synonymy does not exist in natural language.

These findings can be understood through the concept of near-synonymy in lexical semantics, which suggests that words with overlapping meanings may still differ in terms of contextual distribution, collocational preference, and pragmatic usage. Therefore, the distinction between *رحمة* and *رحمت* should not be viewed as a complete separation of meaning, but rather as a difference in usage tendencies within the same semantic domain. The findings should be interpreted as contextual tendencies rather than absolute semantic distinctions, as the present study focuses on frequency, collocation, and concordance patterns without applying advanced statistical association measures.

Pedagogical Implications for Arabic Language Teaching

The findings of this study have implications for Arabic language teaching, particularly in developing learners' awareness of lexical nuance and contextual meaning. The analysis demonstrates that words often considered synonymous, such as *رحمة* and its Qur'anic orthographic forms *رحمت*, do not function identically across contexts. Therefore, presenting Arabic vocabulary through direct translation alone may obscure important semantic distinctions, as learners may perceive synonymous expressions as interchangeable without recognizing their contextual restrictions. This aligns with Hilmi et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of linguistic intelligence in helping students accurately express meaning in Arabic through authentic, contextual data from corpus-based approaches.

Corpus linguistics offers a potential approach for addressing this issue by providing learners with authentic examples of lexical usage. Through concordance-based activities, students can observe how a word appears with different collocations, grammatical patterns, and discourse contexts. Such exposure encourages learners to move beyond memorizing dictionary meanings toward understanding how meaning is constructed through actual language use (Alimuddin et al., 2022).

In Arabic learning contexts, especially those involving Qur'anic Arabic, corpus-based analysis can support deeper vocabulary acquisition by allowing learners to investigate semantic relationships among near-synonyms. For example, instead of teaching *رحمة* simply as "mercy", instructors can guide students to examine how its meaning is specified through different contexts, such as guidance, forgiveness, provision, compassion, or divine reward. This approach develops learners' ability to interpret lexical choices more accurately and strengthens their linguistic awareness.

Therefore, corpus linguistics can function not only as a research methodology but also as a pedagogical tool for Arabic instruction. By integrating corpus-based activities into vocabulary learning, teachers can provide evidence-based explanations of lexical variation and help learners develop a more precise understanding of Arabic meaning. In this regard, corpus analysis supports teachers as "language managers" who facilitate contextual and informed language learning (Nurmala et al., 2025).

Potential Future Corpus Studies in Al-Qur'an and Arabic

This study demonstrates that corpus linguistics provides a valuable framework for examining semantic relationships in the Qur'an by revealing how lexical choices are shaped by distributional patterns and contextual environments. As highlighted by Omar et al. (2021), corpus-based approaches enable more systematic and evidence-based semantic analysis by reducing reliance on isolated interpretation. The findings of this study may contribute to Qur'anic interpretation and translation by providing empirical evidence for distinguishing near-synonymous expressions and identifying contextually appropriate meanings. Through the analysis of word frequency, collocation, and concordance patterns, corpus studies can support more accurate lexical interpretation and facilitate the development of context-sensitive resources for Qur'anic Arabic learning and research.

Furthermore, this study opens opportunities for broader corpus-based investigations of semantic relations in Arabic and Qur'anic vocabulary. Future research may examine other pairs of near-synonyms, including words with semantic overlap but different contextual distributions, such as خوف-خشية (fear), علم-عرف (knowledge/knowing), or orthographic variations such as امرأت-امراة. Expanding this approach may contribute to a more systematic understanding of Qur'anic lexical choice and demonstrate how corpus linguistics can complement classical semantic and exegetical approaches.

Overall, corpus-based analysis of Qur'anic lexical items contributes to more context-sensitive approaches in Arabic language teaching and interpretation by clarifying semantic variation among near-synonyms through authentic textual evidence. However, corpus analysis should not be viewed as a replacement for traditional *tafsir*, but rather as a complementary source of empirical linguistic evidence that can support and enrich interpretive understanding.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the semantic variation between رحمة and its orthographic form رحمت in the Qur'an using a corpus-based approach based on frequency, collocation, and concordance analysis. Both forms derive from the same lexical root (ر-ح-م), with رحمت functioning as an orthographic realization of رحمة in *idafah* constructions. The findings show that although they share the same general semantic field of divine mercy, they exhibit different contextual distribution patterns across Qur'anic usage.

The analysis indicates that رحمة tends to appear in broader semantic contexts referring to general manifestations of divine mercy, while رحمت is more frequently embedded in possessive constructions that specify and restrict meaning according to context. This suggests that their distinction lies not in lexical meaning, but in contextual usage and distributional behavior.

The study contributes to Qur'anic lexical semantics by demonstrating that near-synonymous expressions should be understood through contextual evidence rather than absolute equivalence. It also highlights the value of corpus-based methods in supporting

more precise lexical interpretation and Arabic language teaching. However, the study is limited to two lexical forms and basic corpus techniques, and future research may expand the analysis to other Qur'anic lexical items using more advanced corpus methodologies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author declares that this research received no specific funding and acknowledges no external support or contribution.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

[MIP] was responsible for designing the research framework, collecting, and analyzing the data. [EK] and [RS] served as supervisors, providing guidance and direction, particularly in ensuring the accurate and methodological application of the corpus-based approach.

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