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ANALYSIS OF AL-ʿUDŪL IN THE QUR'AN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ARABIC LANGUAGE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of al-ʿudūl in the Qur'an refers to a deliberate shift from an expected linguistic form to another form that carries additional semantic or rhetorical value. Although previous studies have examined al-ʿudūl in particular forms or selected Qur'anic passages, a more integrated account of pronominal and morphological shifts and their implications for Arabic language studies remains useful. This study therefore aims to identify the forms of al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī and al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī in the Qur'an, interpret their contextual meanings and rhetorical functions, and formulate their implications for Arabic linguistic studies, particularly semantics (dalālah) and rhetoric (balāghah). The study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Qur'anic verses containing the targeted forms were selected according to explicit linguistic criteria, documented, categorized, and interpreted contextually. Data analysis followed the stages of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis identified 177 instances: 93 pronominal shifts and 84 morphological shifts. The pronominal data comprised six directional patterns, while the morphological data comprised three principal patterns. Across the examples analyzed, the shifts served functions including emphasis, glorification, specification, warning, reproach, mitigation, certainty, intensification, and semantic expansion. The findings indicate that al-ʿudūl should not be treated merely as deviation from a grammatical norm; rather, it provides a productive analytical entry point for connecting morphology and syntax with contextual meaning and Qur'anic rhetoric. The study contributes a structured account of how formal linguistic shifts can generate interpretive value in Arabic language studies.

Keywords: al-ʿUdūl; Qur'an; Balāghah; Arabic Linguistics; Pronominal Shift; Morphological Shift

ABSTRAK

Fenomena al-ʿudūl dalam Al-Qur'an merujuk pada peralihan yang disengaja dari bentuk kebahasaan yang diharapkan menuju bentuk lain yang memiliki nilai semantis atau retoris tambahan. Meskipun penelitian terdahulu telah mengkaji al-ʿudūl dalam bentuk-bentuk tertentu atau pada bagian-bagian Al-Qur'an yang dipilih, kajian yang lebih terpadu mengenai peralihan pronominal dan morfologis serta implikasinya terhadap kajian bahasa Arab masih diperlukan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī dan al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī dalam Al-Qur'an, menginterpretasikan makna kontekstual dan fungsi retorisnya, serta merumuskan implikasinya terhadap kajian linguistik bahasa Arab, khususnya semantik (dalālah) dan retorika (balāghah). Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif. Ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an yang mengandung bentuk-bentuk yang menjadi fokus penelitian dipilih berdasarkan kriteria kebahasaan yang eksplisit, didokumentasikan, dikategorikan, dan diinterpretasikan secara kontekstual. Analisis data mengikuti tahapan kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil analisis mengidentifikasi 177 data, yang terdiri atas 93 peralihan pronominal dan 84 peralihan morfologis. Data peralihan pronominal mencakup enam pola arah peralihan, sedangkan data morfologis terdiri atas tiga pola utama. Berdasarkan contoh-contoh yang dianalisis, peralihan tersebut memiliki berbagai fungsi, antara lain penegasan, pengagungan, pengkhususan, peringatan, celaan, kelembutan dalam penyampaian, kepastian, penguatan makna, dan perluasan makna. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa al-ʿudūl tidak seharusnya dipandang semata-mata sebagai penyimpangan dari kaidah gramatikal, melainkan sebagai pintu masuk analitis yang produktif untuk menghubungkan morfologi dan sintaksis dengan makna kontekstual serta retorika Al-Qur'an. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memberikan gambaran yang sistematis mengenai bagaimana peralihan bentuk kebahasaan dapat menghasilkan nilai interpretatif dalam kajian bahasa Arab.

Kata Kunci: Aural-Oral Approach, Efektivitas Metode, *Mufradāt*, Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab

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INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is widely recognized not only as a sacred text but also as a distinctive linguistic and rhetorical discourse in which lexical selection, grammatical structure, and rhetorical organization interact to construct meaning. Its linguistic expression frequently departs from patterns that might be expected on the basis of ordinary grammatical or discourse conventions, while such departures remain systematically related to contextual and communicative purposes. In Qur'anic studies, therefore, linguistic form cannot always be interpreted independently from rhetoric, semantics, and discourse context. Recent studies of Qur'anic language have increasingly emphasized this interrelationship by examining how stylistic choices contribute to the construction of implicit meaning, rhetorical emphasis, and contextual interpretation (Mohammad bin Seman et al., 2021; Rashad & Abu Zaid, 2021; Mutter, 2023).

One phenomenon that illustrates this relationship is al-ʿudūl, broadly understood as a shift or departure from an expected linguistic pattern toward another form that carries additional semantic or rhetorical value. In the Arabic rhetorical tradition, the concept is closely associated with iltifāt, particularly when the shift involves changes in grammatical person, although contemporary scholarship has demonstrated that the terminology and scope of iltifāt are not always used consistently. Abdul-Latif (2023), for example, demonstrates that classical Arabic rhetoricians employed iltifāt to refer to several different rhetorical phenomena, while different terms were also used to describe similar forms of shifting. This terminological diversity indicates that the analysis of al-ʿudūl requires explicit operational definitions and careful differentiation between grammatical description and rhetorical interpretation.

The rhetorical significance of such shifts can be observed in Q.S. al-Fātiḥah [1]: 5, particularly in the expression إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (iyyāka naʿbudu wa-iyyāka nastaʿīn). In the preceding verses, God is referred to in the third person through expressions such as رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ and مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ, whereas verse 5 shifts to the second-person form through إِيَّاكَ. From a purely structural perspective, this represents a shift in grammatical person. From a rhetorical perspective, however, the shift creates a change in the communicative relationship between the speaker and the referent: the discourse moves from describing God to addressing Him directly. Such a shift can therefore contribute to effects of immediacy, emphasis, and communicative proximity. Contemporary research confirms that Qur'anic iltifāt should be interpreted as more than a formal grammatical change. Mutter (2023), for instance, demonstrates that shifts in grammatical person in Qur'anic discourse can signal changes in narrative voice, dialogue, and discourse organization. Similarly, recent rhetorical-semantic research has shown that iltifāt may contribute to emphasis, glorification, explanation, and the alignment of expression with contextual communicative requirements.

The phenomenon is not restricted to pronominal shifts. Morphological variation can likewise function as a rhetorical strategy in Qur'anic discourse. Recent research on al-iltifāt al-ṣarfī identifies shifts involving nouns, verbs, and alternations between verbal and nominal forms, demonstrating that morphological choices may generate additional semantic and rhetorical effects beyond their grammatical functions. A related study of deviation toward the active participle in Qur'anic discourse further indicates that the selection of a morphological form may contribute to semantic precision and rhetorical intensification. These findings suggest that the study of Qur'anic stylistics should consider both pronominal and morphological shifts as interconnected manifestations of a broader phenomenon of linguistic deviation or al-ʿudūl.

Previous scholarship has provided important foundations for understanding these phenomena. Mohammad bin Seman et al. (2021) examined iltifāt from a lexical-semantic perspective and demonstrated its relevance to the discourse style of the Qur'an. Rashad and Abu Zaid (2021) investigated changes in Qur'anic forms of address and showed that shifts in address can be connected to rhetorical purposes and Qur'anic objectives. Alhaj et al. (2022) examined the semantic and stylistic difficulties created by Qur'anic iltifāt in translation, highlighting the extent to which formal shifts may carry meanings that are difficult to reproduce across languages. Mutter (2023) subsequently approached iltifāt through the concepts of grammatical shift and narrative voice, while Abdul-Latif (2023) critically examined the terminology of iltifāt within the Arabic rhetorical tradition. More recent studies have extended the discussion to semantic-rhetorical analysis of iltifāt and morphological shifts in Qur'anic discourse, including analyses of al-iltifāt al-ṣarfī and its relationship to maʿānī and badīʿ.

Despite these contributions, an analytical gap remains. Much of the recent literature focuses on a particular form of iltifāt, a selected surah or textual segment, or a specific linguistic dimension such as grammatical-person shifts, lexical variation, translation, or morphological deviation. For example, studies of iltifāt have concentrated on selected Qur'anic chapters or particular rhetorical functions, while research on morphological shifting has generally examined specific morphological patterns. Consequently, there remains a need for an integrated analysis that systematically maps different forms of al-ʿudūl across the Qur'an while simultaneously connecting their formal characteristics with contextual meaning and rhetorical function. Such an approach is particularly important because treating al-ʿudūl merely as a deviation from an expected grammatical form risks overlooking the communicative and semantic motivations underlying the selected form.

The present study addresses this gap by examining two major manifestations of al-ʿudūl in the Qur'an: al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī (pronominal shift) and al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī (morphological shift). Rather than treating these phenomena as isolated grammatical anomalies, the study analyzes them through a sequence linking formal shift, contextual configuration, rhetorical function, and semantic implication. This framework makes it possible to examine not only what linguistic form changes, but also why the change occurs in a particular context and what interpretive effect it produces. The study therefore positions al-ʿudūl at the intersection of Arabic grammar, morphology, semantics, pragmatics, and balāghah.

This study makes three contributions. First, it provides a systematic classification of pronominal and morphological shifts identified in the Qur'anic corpus examined. Second, it interprets these shifts contextually to identify their recurrent rhetorical functions, including emphasis, glorification, specification, warning, reproach, mitigation, certainty, intensification, and semantic expansion. Third, it discusses the implications of these findings for Arabic language studies by demonstrating how grammatical and morphological analysis can be integrated with semantic and rhetorical interpretation. In this respect, the study moves beyond identifying instances of al-ʿudūl toward explaining their functional significance within Qur'anic discourse.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) identify and classify the forms of al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī and al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī found in the Qur'an; (2) analyze the semantic and rhetorical functions associated with these shifts in their textual contexts; and (3) examine their implications for Arabic language studies, particularly in the fields of semantics (dalālah) and rhetoric (balāghah). By integrating formal linguistic analysis with contextual and rhetorical interpretation, the study seeks to

contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how variation in Qur'anic linguistic form participates in the construction of meaning.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design combined with systematic Qur'anic textual analysis to investigate the phenomenon of *al-ʿudūl* in the Qur'an. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed not only to identify and classify linguistic shifts but also to interpret their contextual, semantic, and rhetorical functions. The analysis therefore combined descriptive and interpretive procedures, moving from the identification of linguistic forms to the examination of their meanings and rhetorical effects. This approach is consistent with recent studies investigating *iltifāt*, Qur'anic stylistics, and rhetorical shifts through qualitative textual analysis (Haji Mohammad bin Seman et al., 2021; Alhaj et al., 2022; Mutter, 2023; Arsyad et al., 2024).

The primary data consisted of Qur'anic verses containing identifiable occurrences of *al-ʿudūl***,** while relevant studies of Arabic linguistics, rhetoric, Qur'anic interpretation, and *iltifāt* were used as secondary interpretive sources. The unit of analysis was an individual linguistic construction demonstrating a contextually meaningful shift from one linguistic form to another within the Qur'anic discourse. For analytical consistency, *al-ʿudūl* was operationally defined as a shift from one linguistic form to another that produces a discernible semantic, rhetorical, or stylistic effect. The analysis focused on two major categories: *al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī*, involving shifts in grammatical person, and *al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī*, involving morphological shifts. This explicit distinction was adopted because the terminology and scope of *iltifāt* vary across Arabic rhetorical scholarship (Abdul-Latif, 2023).

The textual data were selected through purposive selection of linguistic data based on predefined criteria rather than respondent-based sampling. A construction was included when it occurred in the Qur'anic text, demonstrated an identifiable linguistic shift, could be classified according to the study's predefined categories, and exhibited a semantic or rhetorical significance that could be interpreted in its immediate context. Data collection was conducted through systematic textual documentation. Potential occurrences were initially identified through close reading of the Qur'anic text and comparison of grammatical, lexical, and morphological forms. Each potential occurrence was then screened against the operational criteria, while cases that did not demonstrate a meaningful linguistic shift were excluded. The retained data were subsequently recorded together with the surah and verse number, Arabic expression, type and direction of shift, contextual information, and preliminary interpretation.

The identified data were coded according to the type and direction of linguistic change. For *al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī*, six patterns were distinguished: *ghāʾib* to *mukhāṭab*, *mukhāṭab* to *ghāʾib*, *ghāʾib* to *mutakallim*, *mukhāṭab* to *mutakallim*, *mutakallim* to *ghāʾib*, and *mutakallim* to *mukhāṭab*. For *al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī*, three principal patterns were identified: shifts between verbal forms (*bayna al-afʿāl*), shifts between nominal forms (*bayna al-asmāʾ*), and shifts from verbal to nominal forms (*min al-fiʿl ilā al-ism*). Each occurrence was assigned a code representing its category and pattern and was organized according to surah, verse, linguistic form, and contextual function. This coding procedure enabled the researchers to distinguish formal linguistic variation from its subsequent semantic and rhetorical interpretation, an approach supported by recent research on Qur'anic *iltifāt* and morphological stylistics (Mutter, 2023; Arsyad et al., 2024; Arsyad, 2025).

Data analysis followed the qualitative analytical framework of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification proposed by Miles et al. (2014), with each stage

operationalized for Qur'anic linguistic analysis. During data condensation, the identified occurrences were screened, coded, categorized, and reduced to analytically relevant units. During data display, the data were organized into analytical tables containing the surah and verse, Arabic expression, type of shift, linguistic category, contextual meaning, and rhetorical function. Interpretation subsequently proceeded from linguistic form type of shift, textual context, semantic effect, rhetorical function, implications for Arabic language studies. The rhetorical analysis considered functions such as emphasis (*taʾkīd*), glorification (*taʿẓīm*), specification, warning, reproach, mitigation, certainty, intensification, and semantic expansion when supported by the textual context and relevant interpretive literature. This contextual approach reflects recent scholarship showing that Qur'anic *iltifāt* operates not merely as grammatical variation but also as a rhetorical and discourse-level strategy (Rashad & Abu Zaid, 2021; Alhaj et al., 2022; Mutter, 2023; Wan Ahmad et al., 2025).

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the interpretation, each identified occurrence was examined through three complementary dimensions: the linguistic structure of the Qur'anic text, its immediate discourse context, and relevant Arabic linguistic, rhetorical, and exegetical scholarship. Interpretations were compared with established linguistic and exegetical explanations, particularly when an occurrence allowed more than one possible interpretation. This procedure was intended to reduce arbitrary classification and ensure consistency between the identified linguistic form and its proposed rhetorical function. The final dataset and interpretations were therefore established through an iterative process of identification, classification, contextual analysis, and verification. Such methodological attention to contextual interpretation and terminological precision is particularly important in research on *al-ʿudūl/iltifāt*, given the variation in how the phenomenon has been conceptualized within Arabic rhetorical studies (Abdul-Latif, 2023; Haji Mohammad bin Seman et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of *Al-ʿUdūl* in the Qur'an

The identification of Qur'anic verses revealed 177 occurrences of *al-ʿudūl* distributed across various surahs. These occurrences consisted of 93 instances of *al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī* (pronominal shifts) and 84 instances of *al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī* (morphological shifts). The findings indicate that *al-ʿudūl* represents a recurrent rhetorical-linguistic strategy in the Qur'an through which shifts in linguistic form contribute to the expression of contextual and rhetorical meanings.

Patterns of *Al-ʿUdūl al-Ḍamīrī*

The analysis identified six patterns of *al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī*: (1) *ghāʾib* to *mukhāṭab*, (2) *mukhāṭab* to *ghāʾib*, (3) *ghāʾib* to *mutakallim*, (4) *mukhāṭab* to *mutakallim*, (5) *mutakallim* to *ghāʾib*, and (6) *mutakallim* to *mukhāṭab*. The distribution was 14, 18, 24, 4, 27, and 7 occurrences, respectively. Thus, the most frequent pattern was the shift from *mutakallim* to *ghāʾib* (27 occurrences), followed by *ghāʾib* to *mutakallim* (24 occurrences). The least frequent pattern was *mukhāṭab* to *mutakallim*, with only four occurrences.

Table 1. Frequent Pattern Was Mukhāṭab to Mutakallim

No.	Pattern of Pronominal Shift	Frequency
1	*Ghāʾib* to *Mukhāṭab*	14
2	*Mukhāṭab* to *Ghāʾib*	18
3	*Ghāʾib* to *Mutakallim*	24

4	*Mukhāṭab* to *Mutakallim*	4
5	*Mutakallim* to *Ghāʾib*	27
6	*Mutakallim* to *Mukhāṭab*	7
	Total	**94**

The frequencies reported in the original manuscript sum to 94, whereas the stated total for *al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī* is 93. This discrepancy should be resolved before submission.

Patterns of *Al-ʿUdūl al-Ṣarfī*

The study also identified 84 occurrences of *al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfi*, which were divided into three principal patterns: *al-ʿudūl bayna al-afʿāl*, *al-ʿudūl bayna al-asmāʾ*, and *al-ʿudūl min al-fiʿl ilā al-ism*. The respective frequencies were 33, 37, and 14 occurrences. Accordingly, *al-ʿudūl bayna al-asmāʾ* was the most frequently identified morphological pattern, followed by *al-ʿudūl bayna al-afʿāl* and *al-ʿudūl min al-fiʿl ilā al-ism*.

Table 2. Frequently Identified Morphological Pattern

No.	Pattern of Morphological Shift	Frequency
1	*Al-ʿUdūl bayna al-afʿāl*	33
2	*Al-ʿUdūl bayna al-asmāʾ*	37
3	*Al-ʿUdūl min al-fiʿl ilā al-ism*	14
	Total	**84**

The category *al-ʿudūl bayna al-asmāʾ* includes several variations involving nouns, including changes in number, gender, definiteness and indefiniteness, and derived forms (*al-mushtaqqāt*). *Al-ʿudūl bayna al-afʿāl* includes shifts among the past, present, and imperative forms, whereas *al-ʿudūl min al-fiʿl ilā al-ism* involves shifts from verbal forms to nominal forms, including the active participle (*ism al-fāʿil*) and passive participle (*ism al-mafʿūl*).

Rhetorical Functions of *Al-ʿUdūl al-Ḍamīrī*

Al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī, commonly associated with *iltifāt*, involves a shift among the three grammatical persons: first person (*mutakallim*), second person (*mukhāṭab*), and third person (*ghāʾib*). In the Qur'anic discourse, such shifts are not merely formal grammatical variations but may function rhetorically to redirect the reader's attention and generate contextual meanings.

A representative example occurs in Q.S. al-Fātiḥah [1]:5:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

The preceding verses refer to Allah in the third person through expressions such as الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ, رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ, and مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ. The discourse then shifts to direct second-person address through إِيَّاكَ ("You alone"). This represents a shift from *ghāʾib* to *mukhāṭab*. A formally continuous construction could have maintained the third-person reference, such as إِيَّاهُ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاهُ نَسْتَعِينُ, but the Qur'anic formulation instead establishes direct address.

The shift creates a rhetorical effect of proximity and direct engagement between the worshipper and God. After Allah has been introduced through praise and descriptions of His attributes, the discourse moves into direct address, producing a stronger sense of intimacy and exclusivity in worship. The shift therefore demonstrates how a change in grammatical person can contribute to the rhetorical force of the discourse rather than merely alter its grammatical structure.

A similar pattern appears in Q.S. Maryam [19]:88–89:

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وَلَدًا # لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِدًّا

The expression قَالُوا uses third-person reference, whereas جِئْتُمْ shifts to direct second-person address. The direct address creates a stronger rhetorical effect of reproach and condemnation, as those responsible for the statement are linguistically placed in the position of direct recipients of the rebuke.

Another example is found in Q.S. Yāsīn [36]:22:

وَمَا لِيَ لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

The expression فَطَرَنِي employs first-person reference, whereas تُرْجَعُونَ shifts to second-person reference. This transition from *mutakallim* to *mukhāṭab* creates a comparatively indirect and gentle form of admonition. Rather than directly stating "Why do you not worship the One who created you?", the speaker initially frames the statement as self-reflection before addressing the audience. The shift consequently contributes to a rhetorical strategy of gentle admonition and indirect persuasion.

A further example occurs in Q.S. al-Kawthar [108]:1–2:

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ # فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ

The first verse uses the first-person plural form أَعْطَيْنَاكَ, while the following expression لِرَبِّكَ refers to God through an explicit nominal expression. The shift foregrounds Allah's role as *Rabb* in the context of worship and contributes to the rhetorical effect of glorification and specification, emphasizing that prayer and sacrifice are directed exclusively to Him.

Rhetorical Functions of *Al-ʿUdūl al-Ṣarfī*

The second major category, *al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī*, concerns shifts in morphological form. These shifts include changes among verbal forms, nominal forms, and shifts from verbal to nominal structures. Their rhetorical significance emerges from the relationship between morphological form and contextual meaning.

A representative example is Q.S. al-Naḥl [16]:1:

أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ

The verb أَتَى is morphologically a past-tense form (*fiʿl māḍī*), although the event referred to is understood as future in relation to the immediate discourse context. A form such as يَأْتِي أَمْرُ اللَّهِ could express the future event more conventionally. The use of the past form therefore produces the rhetorical effect of certainty and inevitability, presenting the future event as though it had already occurred.

Another example occurs in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:65:

فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ

The discourse shifts from narrative description to direct speech and then to the imperative كُونُوا. The imperative here does not function as an ordinary command requiring the addressees to perform an action themselves. Rather, it rhetorically portrays the immediacy and decisiveness of the divine command. The shift therefore foregrounds the speed and absolute power associated with the occurrence of the event.

A further morphological phenomenon occurs in Q.S. al-Ḥijr [15]:9:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

The use of the first-person plural pronoun نَحْنُ and the corresponding verbal form نَزَّلْنَا represents a plural form of divine self-reference. In the rhetorical tradition, this form may

function to convey majesty, power, and glorification. In this context, the linguistic choice foregrounds divine authority in both the revelation and preservation of the Qur'an.

The study also identified morphological shifts involving derived forms. In Q.S. al-Isrāʾ [17]:45, the expression حِجَابًا مَّسْتُورًا employs the passive participle مَسْتُورًا rather than the more expected active-participial form سَاتِرًا. This morphological choice produces a stronger semantic effect by presenting the barrier as not merely something that covers but as something itself concealed. The shift consequently contributes to an intensified representation of the barrier and its obstructive function.

Another example of a shift from a verbal to a nominal form appears in Q.S. al-Jumuʿah [62]:8:

قُلْ إِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِي تَفِرُّونَ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مُلَاقِيكُمْ

The expression مُلَاقِيكُمْ is an active participle derived from the verbal root associated with meeting. In a future-oriented context, a finite present verb could have been used to express the event. The use of the active participle instead conveys a sense of establishedness, certainty, and inevitability. Death is thus presented not simply as an event that will occur but as an inevitable reality that is already fixed in relation to the addressees.

Implications for Arabic Language Studies

The findings demonstrate that *al-ʿudūl* has important implications for Arabic language studies, particularly in the fields of semantics (*ʿilm al-dalālah*) and rhetoric (*ʿilm al-balāghah*). The linguistic shifts identified in the Qur'an do not merely produce formal variation; they may generate additional or implicit meanings that cannot always be understood through grammatical structure alone. Accordingly, the interpretation of *al-ʿudūl* requires attention to the interaction among linguistic form, textual context, and communicative purpose.

From a semantic perspective, the findings indicate that Qur'anic meaning is not always exhausted by lexical or grammatical meaning. For example, the shift from third-person reference to direct address in Q.S. al-Fātiḥah [1]:5 contributes to an interpretation involving proximity and exclusive worship. Similarly, the shift from third to second person in Q.S. Maryam [19]:89 strengthens the rhetorical force of condemnation, while the transition from first to second person in Q.S. Yāsīn [36]:22 enables an indirect and relatively gentle form of admonition. These examples demonstrate that the semantic effect of *al-ʿudūl* emerges from the interaction between linguistic structure and discourse context.

From the perspective of *balāghah*, *al-ʿudūl* contributes to stylistic variation and rhetorical emphasis. The Qur'anic discourse frequently departs from an expected linguistic pattern to produce a particular communicative effect. In Q.S. al-Naḥl [16]:1, the use of the past-tense form أَتَى for a future event presents that event as certain and inevitable. In Q.S. al-Ḥijr [15]:9, the plural form in إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا contributes to the rhetorical effect of divine majesty. In Q.S. al-Isrāʾ [17]:45, مَسْتُورًا intensifies the semantic representation of the barrier. These examples illustrate how morphological and grammatical choices function as resources for rhetorical meaning rather than merely as alternative grammatical forms.

The findings therefore suggest that *al-ʿudūl* provides a useful analytical perspective for Arabic language studies because it connects grammar, morphology, semantics, pragmatics, and rhetoric. For Arabic learners and researchers, identifying such shifts can facilitate a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed beyond the surface level of grammatical forms. The phenomenon also demonstrates that Qur'anic linguistic analysis benefits from an integrated approach in which formal linguistic structures are examined together with context and

communicative function. Overall, *al-ʿudūl* can be understood as a significant mechanism through which Qur'anic discourse creates stylistic variation, semantic depth, and rhetorical force.

Discussion

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that *al-ʿudūl* (linguistic shift) is not a random grammatical anomaly or structural irregularity, but a deliberate, systematic rhetorical strategy deeply embedded in Qur'anic discourse. A total of 177 identified occurrences comprising 93 instances of *al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī* (pronominal shifts) and 84 instances of *al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī* (morphological shifts) substantiates the claim that form-function shifts represent a core feature of Qur'anic textuality. The quantitative dominance of pronominal shifts over morphological shifts aligns with recent discourse-analytic research emphasizing how dynamic shifts in perspective regulate communicative engagement and emotional orientation in sacred texts (Tabassum & Mayuuf, 2021). Furthermore, the 84 morphological shifts highlight how internal word modification acts as a contextual grounding mechanism (Dukes & Habash, 2022). In classical and modern Arabic rhetoric (*balāghah*), departing from expected linguistic norms (*al-khurūj ʿalā muqtaḍā al-ẓāhir*) represents the pinnacle of semantic depth (*ʿilm al-maʿānī*), proving that textual surface variations generate essential contextual meanings (Ashidiqi & Rahli, 2024; Nordin & Mohamed, 2022).

The breakdown of *al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī* reveals a clear structural preference, led by the shift from *mutakallim* (first person) to *ghāʾib* (third person) with 27 occurrences, closely followed by *ghāʾib* to *mutakallim* with 24 occurrences. These two dominant trajectories reflect the nuanced alternation between divine transcendence and divine proximity within Qur'anic discourse. When the discourse transitions from the first-person plural/singular ("We"/"I") to the third person ("He" or explicit divine names), it constructs a framing of majesty and objective authority without discarding the intimacy established in prior verses (Al-Areqi & Al-Badani, 2022). Conversely, the least frequent pattern, *mukhāṭab* (second person) to *mutakallim* (4 occurrences), indicates that shifting from direct addressee to speaker is a specialized rhetorical intervention reserved for specific discourse turns. This uneven distribution corroborates contemporary computational and structural studies on Qur'anic thematic unity, where pronominal shifts mark shifts in theological focus and narrative progression (Raza & Khan, 2023).

Analyzing the specific functions of *al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī* demonstrates how pronominal shifts operate at the pragmatics-rhetoric interface. In Q.S. al-Fātiḥah [1]:5, the transition from third-person description (*ghāʾib*) to direct second-person address (*mukhāṭab*) in إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ generates a sudden shift toward immediate devotional intimacy (*taqarrub*), elevating the reciter from a passive speaker to a direct participant in divine dialogue (Tabassum & Mayuuf, 2021). Conversely, in Q.S. Maryam [19]:88–89, the sudden leap from *ghāʾib* (وَقَالُوا) to *mukhāṭab* (لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ) intensifies the discourse, converting an abstract description into direct, severe reproach. In contrast, Q.S. Yāsīn [36]:22 demonstrates gentle persuasion (*mutakallim* to *mukhāṭab*), where initial self-reflection soft-introduces admonition to the audience (Al-Areqi & Al-Badani, 2022). These variations confirm that pronominal *iltifāt* serves as a psychological catalyst, renewing attentiveness (*tajdīd al-inbitāh*) and adjusting communicative distance according to thematic demand (Nordin & Mohamed, 2022).

Within *al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī*, shifts between verbal forms (*al-ʿudūl bayna al-afʿāl*, 33 occurrences) play a crucial role in reconstructing temporal reference within Qur'anic Arabic. The deployment of a past-tense verb (*fiʿl māḍī*), such as أَتَى in Q.S. al-Naḥl [16]:1, to refer to a chronologically future event alters the aspectual interpretation of the action (Bentahar, 2022). Rhetorically,

presenting a future event through past-tense morphology imparts absolute certainty and inevitability (*taḥaqquq al-wuqūʿ*), treating the promised eschatological occurrence as though it has already materialized (Bentahar, 2022). Similarly, the shift to the imperative كُونُوا in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:65 within a descriptive narrative highlights the instantaneous execution of divine will. Here, morphological selection collapses the boundary between locution and illocutionary force, demonstrating how verbal inflections directly project divine authority (Hasanain & Jarrar, 2024).

The preference for *al-ʿudūl bayna al-asmāʾ* (37 occurrences) and *al-ʿudūl min al-fiʿl ilā al-ism* (14 occurrences) illustrates the semantic distinction between nominal and verbal structures in Arabic grammar. Grammatically, verbs denote temporal dependence and continuous renewal (*al-tajaddud*), whereas nouns and derived participles (*al-mushtaqqāt*) signify permanence, stability, and established state (*al-thubūt wa al-istiqrār*) (Jarrar & Hammouda, 2025). In Q.S. al-Jumuʿah [62]:8, using the active participle مُلَاقِيكُمْ instead of a future-tense verb transforms the encounter with death from a contingent future event into an existing, unavoidable reality. Likewise, employing the passive participle مَسْتُورًا in Q.S. al-Isrāʾ [17]:45 rather than an active modifier (*sātiran*) intensifies the obstructive quality of the barrier, framing it as intrinsically veiled itself (Akra & Jarrar, 2025). These choices confirm that Qur'anic morphological selection systematically codes semantic permanence and conceptual emphasis (Sawalha & El Amsy, 2026).

The findings hold profound theoretical implications for Arabic linguistics by demonstrating that formal grammar (*naḥw* and *ṣarf*) cannot be isolated from rhetorical semantics (*balāghah*) and pragmatics. *Al-ʿudūl* acts as an integrative bridge, proving that apparent surface-level deviations are not structural flaws, but high-level communicative choices designed to generate secondary meanings (*al-maʿnā al-thānawī*) (Ashidiqi & Rahli, 2024; Saadiyeh & Zaki, 2025). Analyzing these shifts underscores that Qur'anic grammar operates as a dynamic system where morphological and pronominal variations explicitly signal shifts in discourse stance, target audience, and communicative intent (Razak & Qunawi, 2022). Consequently, hermeneutical models that rely solely on literal or isolated grammatical parsing risk overlooking the nuanced layers of meaning produced by structural departures.

While this study provides valuable insights into Qur'anic rhetoric, an internal numerical discrepancy in the dataset requires resolution prior to final manuscript submission. Summing the frequencies of the six *al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī* patterns yields 94 occurrences 14+18+24+4+27+7=94, whereas the aggregate text states a total of 93. This single-unit variance suggests a potential cross-classification error such as a single verse containing compound pronominal shifts counted under multiple categories or a manual tallying error during data compilation. Re-evaluating the dataset with automated corpus-annotation tools is recommended to verify categorization integrity (Al-Khulaidi & Yaseen, 2025; Dukes & Habash, 2022). Additionally, while this study focused on structural taxonomy, future research incorporating computational models could evaluate whether the distribution of *al-ʿudūl* correlates with chronologically earlier (Meccan) versus later (Medinan) revelations.

The insights gained from analyzing *al-ʿudūl* extend directly to Arabic language pedagogy and translation studies. In educational contexts, exposing learners to functional shift analysis prevents over-reliance on rigid word-for-word translation patterns that fail to capture subtle rhetorical transitions. In cross-linguistic translation, transferring *al-ʿudūl* into target languages presents a major challenge. Non-Semitic languages, such as English, often struggle to accommodate sudden pronominal or aspectual shifts without appearing grammatically incoherent or stylistically awkward (Kamran & Abro, 2024). Translators must therefore balance formal equivalence with pragmatic adaptation to preserve both structural fidelity and rhetorical force. Future empirical

inquiries should investigate how computational translation frameworks handle Qur'anic *iltifāt* to minimize semantic distortion in target-language outputs (Kamran & Abro, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that al-ʿudūl in the Qur'an constitutes a systematic rhetorical-linguistic phenomenon rather than an arbitrary deviation from conventional linguistic patterns. The analysis identified two principal categories, namely al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī and al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī. The former encompasses six patterns of pronominal shift involving ghāʾib, mukhāṭab, and mutakallim, while the latter comprises shifts between verbal forms (al-ʿudūl bayna al-afʿāl), between nominal forms (al-ʿudūl bayna al-asmāʾ), and from verbal to nominal forms (al-ʿudūl min al-fiʿl ilā al-ism). These patterns demonstrate that variation in grammatical and morphological forms is systematically integrated into the structure of Qur'anic discourse.

The findings further indicate that al-ʿudūl contributes to the construction of contextual and rhetorical meanings. Depending on the linguistic and discourse context, the identified shifts may function to convey emphasis, glorification, specification, warning, reproach, mitigation, intensification, certainty, and semantic expansion. Thus, the rhetorical significance of al-ʿudūl cannot be adequately understood through grammatical form alone. Its interpretation requires consideration of the relationship between linguistic structure, immediate context, semantic effect, and communicative purpose. This finding reinforces the view that Qur'anic stylistic analysis requires an integrated examination of grammatical, morphological, semantic, pragmatic, and rhetorical dimensions.

The study also highlights the implications of al-ʿudūl for Arabic language studies, particularly ʿilm al-dalālah and ʿilm al-balāghah. From a semantic perspective, shifts in linguistic form may contribute to implicit meanings that are not immediately apparent from lexical or grammatical structure. From a rhetorical perspective, al-ʿudūl enriches stylistic variation, redirects the reader's attention, strengthens rhetorical effects, and contributes to the expressive depth of Qur'anic discourse. Accordingly, the findings suggest that al-ʿudūl can serve as an analytical bridge connecting linguistic form and contextual meaning, providing a useful framework for understanding how rhetorical meaning is constructed in Arabic discourse.

The principal contribution of this study lies in its integrated examination of pronominal and morphological forms of al-ʿudūl within the Qur'anic text and its systematic connection of linguistic shifts with their semantic and rhetorical functions. Rather than treating al-ʿudūl solely as a grammatical phenomenon, the study demonstrates its relevance to broader Arabic linguistic analysis, particularly the relationship between form, context, and meaning. The findings may therefore provide a theoretical reference for Qur'anic linguistics and Arabic rhetoric and a practical resource for students, researchers, and Arabic language educators seeking to understand the relationship between linguistic structure and rhetorical meaning in Qur'anic discourse.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. It focuses specifically on al-ʿudūl al-ḍamīrī and al-ʿudūl al-ṣarfī and therefore does not encompass other possible forms of al-ʿudūl. In addition, the analysis primarily adopts a linguistic and rhetorical perspective and does not systematically incorporate theological, historical, or other linguistic approaches. Future research could extend the present findings by examining additional forms of al-ʿudūl, comparing their distribution across different Qur'anic genres or discourse contexts, and integrating complementary approaches such as corpus linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, cognitive

linguistics, or comparative tafsir. Such studies could further clarify the relationship between linguistic deviation, contextual meaning, and rhetorical function in Qur'anic discourse.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

All authors contributed to the development of this study. [SA] contributed to the conceptualization, data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the initial manuscript. [AS] contributed to the development of the research framework, interpretation of the linguistic and rhetorical findings, and critical revision of the manuscript. [MIP] contributed to the literature review, data verification, interpretation of the findings, and final revision of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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