

# The Verbal and the Transcribed Qur'an

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By a linguistic text we mean it is a written speech, and by a discourse we mean it is a verbal speech. Thus, the speech is preceding the text, whether in terms of anthropology or in terms of psychological and subjective formation. Every written form ought to be a product of talking or speech, which is what we express as the 'inner speech' in the Ash'arites school, which has an instinctive and innate feature, unlike the text, which has the features of artificiality and affectation. In terms of self-formation, thought precedes speech, and they both are innate and they precede the text. In other words, thought is the cause of discourse, and discourse is the cause of the written product.

Because discourse is a verbal speech, it is directed to a present listener within a set of circumstantial and actual contexts, and the relationship it contains is a relationship between a speaker and a listener, the link that unites both of them is the direct communication, whereby the speaker intends to make the listener understands the content of his speech using all semantic (semiotic) means available. 'Reality' in this communication plays an additional role in determining the meaning of the speaker's sentence.

As for the text, it is devoid of the actual circumstantial contexts required by the discourse, wherein 'reality' is absent, which is regarded as a lacking status compared to discourse. The text relationship is determined by two different parties, namely: the author and the reader.

From a semiotic point of view, the connotations of the text and discourse are not identical, for the text, being a written code, remains incomplete compared to discourse, as the latter is combining two

things, mainly verbal speech and interactive actual reality. As for the text, it is characterized by abstraction, being transformed from verbal to written form, therefore, it does not retain the actual reality required by the discourse.

Thus, the discourse is characterized by two contexts: one is semantic and the other is a circumstantial and actual context, and in this respect, it differs from the accomplished text which is dealing with only one context, mainly the semantic, as it is detached from the circumstantial context, even if it refers to it sometimes. From this point of view, the discourse is including the text, and the text forms part of the discourse. In this respect, the discourse may be transformed into a text irreversibly. As soon as the discourse is over, it loses its circumstantial context, for its existence is concomitant with this context, a matter which gives it greater vitality and significance than that of the text, as it is the original carrier of the truth. But what compensates for the text's vitality and significance weakness is its opening to interpretation or (hermeneutics) in a way that does not compare to discourse, a matter which opens the door to what is called "excess of meaning."

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What is mentioned above applies to the Holy Qur'an, as there is a verbal Qur'an and a transcribed Qur'an. The verses of the Qur'an were sent down verbally and then they were transcribed. The original is the verbal Qur'an.

From a semantic point of view, the verbal Qur'an establishes its dialectic with the actual reality, hence it creates vivid images with specific intent and meaning according to this connection, the least of it is that it refers directly to reality, therefore, the Qur'an was expressed as a declaration to people, and that it is a clarification of everything. It is a declaration and clarification as a verbal Qur'an, meaning that it is easy for people who have heard and interacted with the Qur'an to

understand its purposes and meanings, especially since it was revealed in the language they used in their discourse. The written Qur'an, on the other hand, does not have this distinguishing feature. It either never refers to reality, or it refers to it as a 'dead' reality. And even in this reference, the 'dead' reality, it does not include specifying the exact nature of what precisely is that reality with all its social and natural circumstances. Furthermore, the meanings of the language it uses change over centuries and generations, therefore its readings are limitless.

According to what is mentioned above, the percentage of what the transcribed Qur'an can provide in terms of revealing indications that express the true intended meaning is half or less than what the verbal Qur'an provides. If the latter gives us an indicative semantic percentage of this meaning, about eighty percent for example; what the transcribed Qur'an provides is forty percent or less. This numerical ratio is meant for clarification, otherwise, any percentage presented in this regard is wrong. It is not possible to put a mathematical comparison between the semantic disclosure performed by the two parties, as long as the verbal Qur'an, which is the discourse, includes two asymmetric matters, namely the verbal speech and reality, unlike the transcribed Qur'an, which is the text that expresses abstract speech.

Moreover, the fact that the sequence mentioned in the transcribed Qur'an was not the same as the natural sequence according to which the verbal Qur'an was revealed, so the first does not reflect the reality of the second, therefore, this weakens the semantic disclosure of the first compared to the last.

In general, the text is just a speech devoid of reality, while discourse requires interaction with direct reality, therefore, it exceeds the text with this reality. Since discourse belongs to a world other than abstract speech or text, it is not possible to compare them mathematically in terms of their effect on semantic detection.

However, we can mathematically formulate the semantic difference between them as follows:

verbal context  $\ominus$  text

Verbal context + Situational reality context  $\ominus$  Discourse

In terms of compensation, the result will be as follows:

Text + Realistic Context  $\ominus$  Discourse

This case applies to the semantic difference of the recipient on the verbal and transcribed Qur'an as follows:

The verbal Qur'an = the transcribed Qur'an + the actual context

The transcribed Qur'an = the verbal Qur'an - the actual context

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It does become clear to us that the verbal Qur'an is the original, which represents the revelation with all its inclusions of an authentic sent down that does not allow ijtiḥād. As for the transcribed Qur'an, it was copied from the first and it lost a lot of its connotations and allusions. In spite of its ijtiḥād content that made it unable to retain the revelation that was rooted in the first, at least the arrangement of the chapters (suras) in the transcribed Qur'an was a result of ijtiḥād, and it does not match the revelation in the verbal Qur'an.

The revelation of the Qur'an has targeted the actual community in which it was sent down, with all the peculiarities and historical contexts, a matter which made its relationship with reality a relation of direct influence. After the absence of this reality revelation no longer had that relationship of direct influence. Rather, it can be said that transformation and change have affected both sides, as the revelation is no longer the same as it was before, after it was transformed into a

transcribed Qur'an, and reality is no longer the same as that which was intended by sent down and influence. The relationship between revelation as a sent down discourse and the reality in which it was sent down was an integrated relationship. Thus, it was easy for the recipient to understand the meanings and purposes of revelation, a situation that changed from both sides, for the absence of reality and the transformation of the verbal revelation into a transcribed Qur'an led to understanding difficulties, and the situation has worsened as time passes.

Translated by **Ali al-Inizi**

The reference

<https://www.fahmaldin.net/index.php?id=2747>