

## **THE REGISTER OF THE QUR'ĀNIC NARRATIVES: SFL-BASED PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON Q19 (41–50)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A text is an instance of a particular ‘register’, Halliday states. Because text carries indications of its context, it is possible, then, to reconstruct out of it (text) certain features of the situation in which it is produced. Accordingly, the register- being a configuration of semantic features typically associated with the contextual variables of field, tenor and mode- can be established. The aim of this study is to construct the context of situation of a short text (an instance of language) of the Qur’ānic story of Abraham in Q19 (41–50). This passage represents only a sample of Abraham’s story told in different sūras of the Qur’ān; and as instance of language (text) in a context of situation, this story belongs to a register known as stories of prophets in the Qur’ān. Preliminary observations on some features of the Qur’ānic narratives register are reported here.

**Keywords:** Register; Context; SFL; Qur’ānic narratives; Story of Abraham.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

From its beginning, Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth, SFL) prioritized the ‘societal’ aspect of language in that language work is done ‘*always*’ and ‘*only*’ in society (Hasan, 2005a:56; italics from original). Accordingly, SFL described language as a social semiotic<sup>1</sup>, in which humans- social beings- interact between them through an ongoing exchange of meanings (Halliday, 1978:1–2). This, evident in everyday uses of language “as a means of organizing other people, and directing their behaviour” (Halliday, 2002/1970, Vol. 1:173), demonstrates that language has evolved to meet the demands

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<sup>1</sup> SFL excludes the atomistic aspect of semiotics term as “an isolate thing existing in and of itself before it comes to be related to other signs”. The term is more related to the study of sign systems in terms of studying meanings. Semiotics then is a meaning making (generating) system (Halliday, 1989:3–4).

human make on it. This means that language, to be functional and meaningful, should always occur in a social context where meanings are created by the social system and are exchanged by the members in the form of text (Halliday, 1978:13–23; 141); such construal shows why language is a social phenomenon. Stemmed from this relation between language and society, the saliency of ‘context’ position and role in SFL can be appreciated for it brings linguistics, sociology and social psychology together; and it becomes, in this way, a unifying element within the overall architecture of SFL (Bartlett, 2017:375), as Fig. 1 shows.

Summarizing, the context represents “some sort of environment, in which language (text) breaths relevance; and without it, language, Halliday asserts, is “likely to be artificial and unrewarding” (Halliday, 1978: 28–29; 1999/1991:3). Hence, the centrality of context, within SFL conceptual framework, is attributable to this position it occupies. On this point, what characterized SFL and distinguished it from other linguistic theories is tying context to semantics and lexicogrammar. This tying is systemically done through the realization, a relation that means that “the context plays a part in determining what we say; and what we say plays a part in determining the context” (Halliday, 1978:3). Based on that, registers, which are a fact of everyday experience, occupy a central place in language-context relation because of the interpretive power they provide for relating different configuration of semantic resources to different situations typically associated with (Halliday, 2007/1975, Vol. 10:182.).

The text we are going to analyze represents a ‘text type’ that belongs to the narrative register in the Qur’ān. The Qur’ān is known to have different registers that reflect variation in language use according to different situations.<sup>2</sup> The narrative register is a rich one that received voluminous studies; but these studies are not functionally based and oriented. The present research, however, offers an SFL based analysis of the context of situation. The study examines the story of Abraham in Q19 (41–50), and analyzes it as an instance of language (text) that is similar to other groupings of texts of the same nature (text types: register). In other words, it is an interpretation of a register to which it belongs. Various passages of Abraham’s story are spread over different sūras of the Qur’ān, with each passage touching on a different subject matter. For example, the present discusses a ‘call to monotheism’.

The study is divided into four parts. The first part, the introduction, briefly addresses the social aspects of language. The second part, dedicated to the notion of register, discusses points of text and context; system and instance and the relationships between them. The third is the analysis and discussion; the fourth part concludes the study with some general remarks.

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<sup>2</sup> Besides the narrative, the Qur’ān has, generally speaking, other registers: transactional register (of social, economic & legal issues); register of worship services (of praying, fasting, etc...); register of beliefs, and eschatology, to cite but a few.

## 2 REGISTER

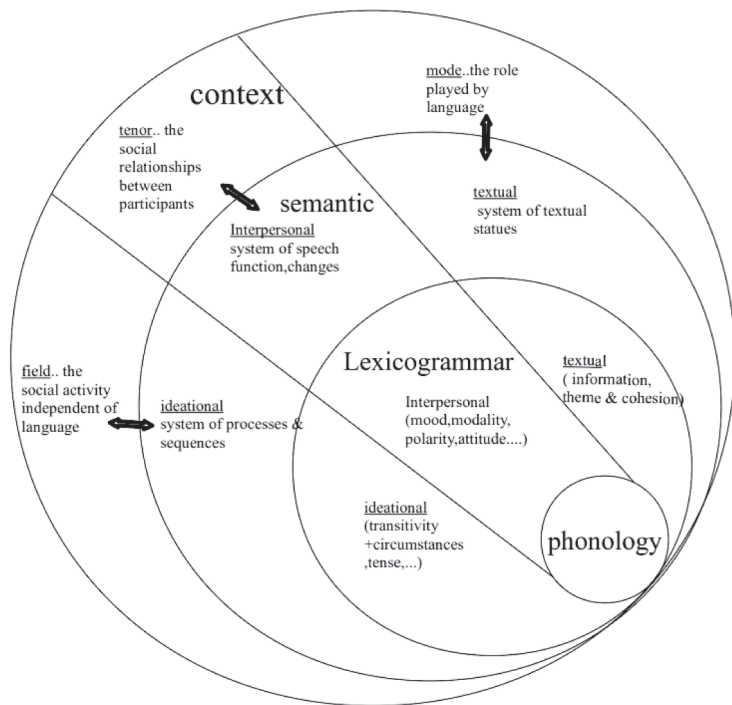
Halliday (1978:31–32) asserts that the job of the theory of register is “to attempt to uncover the general principles” which govern the linguistic variation according to the situational (contextual) variation. It follows, then, that the context – text relation is the point of departure to examine the relation between language as a system (potential) and as an instance (text). Therefore, an account about some important aspects of context concept and its relation with text, is necessary.

### 2.1 TEXT AND CONTEXT OF SITUATION RELATIONSHIP

The concept of context, originally postulated by Malinowski, was further developed by Firth, who highlighted its interpretation as an abstract representation of the environment of relevance to text (Halliday, 2003/1975, Vol. 4:287; 2007/1975 Vol. 10:180; 1989:5–8). It is Halliday, however, who presented the situation in still more abstract terms on “relating the variation of text in context to inherent linguistic phenomenon” (Hasan, 2014:54). In this regard, it is worth noting that Halliday’s focus on context or situation, which emphasized the stratal organization of language, is different from other linguists (Bowcher, 2010:68) in that the ‘context’ concept represents a “stratum in its own right in the theoretical linguistic framework”, because of “the explanatory and descriptive power it generates for the theory” (Hasan, 2009:168).

It follows then that context of situation is a “theoretical construct for explaining how a text relates to the social processes within which it is located” (Halliday, 1999/1991:10). And as such, it can be represented as consisting of three components. These components are generally known as field, tenor and mode of discourse, respectively. Briefly described, the field refers to ‘what is happening, what it is that the participants are engaged in’; the tenor to ‘who is taking part, the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles’; and finally, the mode to ‘what part language is playing, and the symbolic organisation of the text’ (Halliday, 1978: 117, 143; Halliday & Hasan 1989/1985: 12; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:35). What characterizes these components is that they represent a configuration; that is, they do not work as a combination of factors simply added together, rather they are interdependent in that the selection (of meanings) in one factor affects the meanings in the other factors in a way similar to a chemical solution where substances are dissolved (Hasan, 1995:231). And this, of course, demonstrates the nature of their relevance (relation) to text.

Such relation, Fig. 1, is interpreted as follows: these contextual parameters (variables, components) are reflected in the metafunctional diversity of meanings (semantics) and expressions (lexicogrammar). In other words, this figure tells us that functions of language (semantics) interface between



**Figure 1. Functionally diversified correlations between context and language (modified from Matthiessen *et al* 1992.)**

the lexicogrammatical system and the system of context through the relation of realization.

In a more specific terms, avoiding the seemingly deterministic nature, this correlation<sup>3</sup> states that the three metafunctions, realized by their respective systems in the lexicogrammar, are activated by specific variables of the context (of situation) by establishing a link between both the contextual variables and language metafunctions (Halliday, 1978: 117–123; Hasan, 2009: 172; Halliday, 2002/1979, Vol. 1:201). With this understanding in mind, the adequate specification of contextual variables helps us make sensible predictions about the semantic properties of texts associated with (Halliday, Vol. 10:181). This means that the real essence of this correlation, functionally looked at, resides in being a ‘predictive power’, in that each of its contextual semiotic elements activates a corresponding component in the semantic system; and in this way the register, which is the range within which meanings are selected and the form which are used for their expression, is determined (Halliday, 2007/1974, Vol. 10:112; 2002/1977, Vol. 2:58; 1978:117,122, 31).

To put it in a more general scope of definition, register refers to the fact that language varies according to the type of situation in which it is used

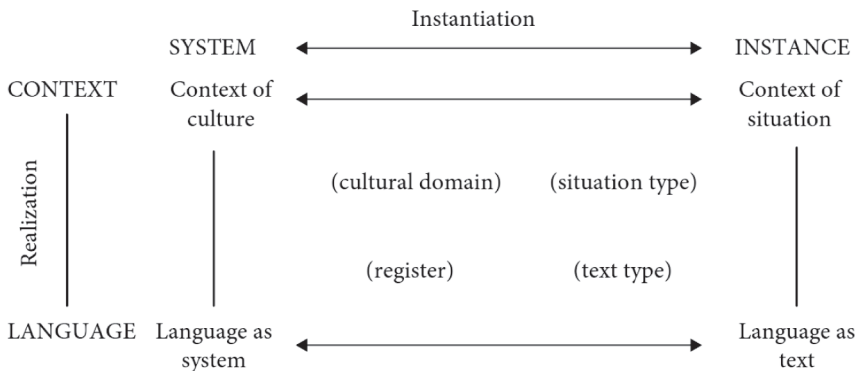
<sup>3</sup> It is known in SFL mainstream as Context-Metafunction Hook-up Hypothesis.

(Halliday, 1976:22–23; 1978:31–32; 110–111). For a certain use, there should be a corresponding appropriate type of language. In this sense, registers can be seen “as adaptations to different uses of language” in different contexts (Matthiessen, 2009:207). This is actually what is meant by saying that register is a groupings of texts (text types) sharing similar features that can be explained in turn by the shared context of situation. On a cline of instantiation (Fig. 3), this is a bottom-up perspective; whereas the top-down perspective sees registers as subsystems of the language system (Neumann, 2014: 2, 10).

Summarizing, register is defined as a “configuration of meanings that are typically associated with a particular situational configuration of field, mode and tenor” (Halliday and Hasan, 1985/1989: 38–39). One implication of such interpretation is that text is a semantic choice, and the situation is a semiotic environment of text. It can be said that a particular pattern of field, tenor and mode of a ‘situation type’ is resonating in the semantic system and so “activating particular networks of semantic options, typically options from within the corresponding semantic components” (Halliday, 2003/1975, Vol. 4. 295; 1978:123). And this explains why the register is located within the semantics stratum; an understanding differed from the originally view conceived of in only lexicogrammatical terms (Halliday, 1978:111).

## 2.2 SYSTEM AND INSTANCE

In the relation between language and context, language is viewed both as a system and as an instance extending along a cline of instantiation. This cline demonstrates that a variation in language goes with a variation of context, where a particular text is seen as an instance of that particular functional variety (register) (Halliday, 1989). In such relation, context is inseparably linked to register as shown in Fig. 2, where register is “the necessary mediating concept that enables us to establish the continuity between a text and its sociosemiotic



**Figure 2. Language and context: system and instance (reproduced from Halliday 1999/1991)**

environment” (ibid, 2002/1977, Vol. 2:58). In this way, the position of register, the relation between realization and instantiation, becomes explicit.

Fig. 2 tells us that there are two relationships between the four elements of the diagram. Vertically, there is a realization relation between both context of culture<sup>4</sup> and language (as system) as well as between context of situation and text; secondly, there is an instantiation relation between context of culture (as potential) and context of situation (as its instance), on the one hand, and on the other hand, between language (as potential) and text (as instance). In these two relations, realization (the working principle of stratification) is an interstratal permitting movements between the strata; whereas instantiation (working on a cline) is an intrastratal relation.

Simply stated, the realization means that each stratum is realized in the one below it. As the figure shows, the situation is “realized” in the text; and in a similar way the culture is “realized” in the linguistic system. This relation is a semiotic one that works bidirectionally, of activation and construal, where systems of meaning are interlocked once it (i.e., the realization) is established (Halliday 1999/1991); and this is already shown by Fig. 1. Summarizing, at these three higher strata – context, meaning and wording – realization functions as dialectic: looking from above, contextual choices **ACTIVATE** semantic choices which activate the lexicogrammatical ones; looking from below, lexicogrammatical choices **CONSTRUE** semantic choices which construe contextual ones (Hasan, 2009:170; uppercase in original). This again demonstrates that the relationship between the strata is neither causal, nor determining; but a systemic correlation between the two systems of context and content (Bowcher, 2010:75).

The instantiation, on the other hand, is understood as a cline of two poles or ends; one of system (potential), and the other of instance. For example, going back to our Fig. 2, we notice that language is the potential and text is an instance of that system or potential. Similarly, culture is the potential which its instance is the situation. In this relation, culture and language are not taken as two independent objects; simply each of them (culture and language) represents the potential that lies behind all the various types of instances (situation and text). That is, just as a piece of text is an instance of language, so a situation is an instance of culture (Halliday, 1999/1991). The context for an instance of language (text) is an instance of culture (situation) (ibid); that is, situation instantiates (i.e., activate, actualize) culture, and similarly text

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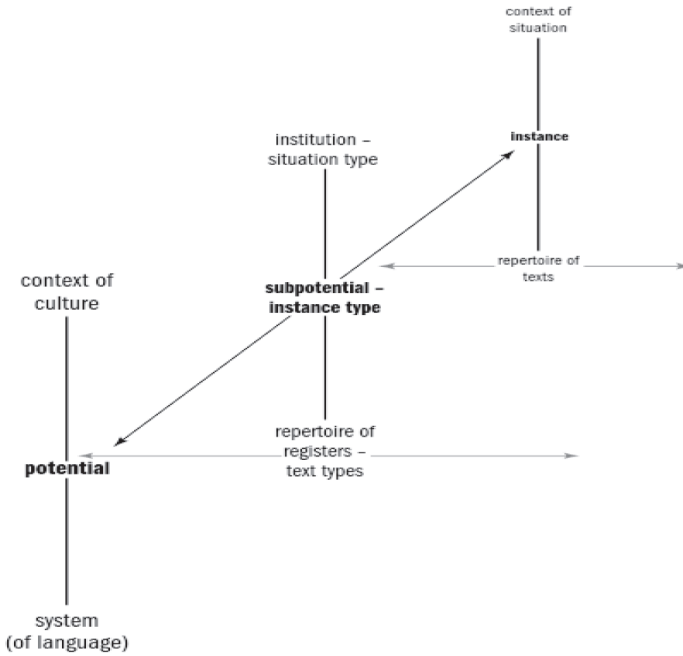
<sup>4</sup> The term ‘culture’, as used here and elsewhere in SFL treatment of the context-language relation, should not be confused with the ‘lay’ meaning of the term related to ‘the traditional life styles, beliefs and value system of a language community’ (Halliday, 1999/1991:17). Rather, culture refers to the features of culture that are relevant to the register in question; as a context for such register in terms of a system meanings that is realized in language and hence can be construed in language (Ibid.18). Culture is a system of higher-level meanings (construction of meanings-semiotic system).

instantiates language. Essential in this relation is that instance (text in context of situation), “unfolds over short intervals of time; whereas the potential, (system of language in the context of culture) evolves over long intervals of time” (Matthiessen, 2009:207).

The analogy of climate to weather put forward by Halliday (1999/1991; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:28) unambiguously demonstrates how this cline implies the existence of continuum, from one pole of the cline to another, in which system and instance define the two poles of the cline – that of the overall potential and that of a particular instance. That is, it can be viewed either from the system pole as subsystems (register & institution) or from the instance pole as instance types (text type & situation type). And because it is a continuum, there are intermediate patterns of meaning (Matthiessen, 2009:207; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:27). As subsystems, these patterns of meaning operate in this way: *registers* operating in institutional settings, or they can be explored as instance types that emerge over time; *text types* operating in situation types (Matthiessen, 2009:207; emphasis in the original). System is a meaning potential, which is actualized (instantiated) in the form of text; a text is an instance of social meaning in a particular context of situation. In other words, a text type is an instance of a register, and register is the linguistic realisation of a ‘situation type’ (Bowcher, 2014). This means that “interpreting a particular text in relation to its context requires from us assigning it to some register” (Halliday, 1989/1985). And in this way ‘that particular text’ is seen as an instance of ‘that particular functional variety’ (register). By identifying a text type, which starts as a single text at the instance pole, we are moving along the cline of instantiation away from the text pole towards the system pole (register) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:32), as Figure 2 shows, and more conspicuously Figure 3 below. The concept of types (of situations or of instantiated texts) implies a certain frequency of recurrence of features or patterns (Neumann, 2014:15–16). Just as situations tend to recur and thus form types, registers represent recurring ways of using language in a given situation (ibid). And this helps our interpreting register as a functional variety of language; that is, “the patterns of instantiation of the overall system associated with a given type of context (a situation type)” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:34). Therefore, the kinds of linguistic patterns that characterize a specific register (a text type) construe, and at the same time realise, a specific configuration of choices in the contextual parameters of Field, Tenor, and Mode (Bowcher, 2014). In our study, the analyzed text is considered as a text type that belongs to a grouping of similar text types (register) for it is an instantiation of that register.

In the present study the discussion of the model parameters in terms of the descriptive nature of its contextual features and networks is beyond the study scope. These points and other related aspects were reviewed and argued by various SFL scholars. In this regard, Hasan’s extensive work is a landmark (1989; 1995; 1996; 1999; 2005a; 2009; 2014). Therefore, it suffices to briefly





**Figure 3. The cline of instantiation (reproduced from Matthiessen & Halliday, 2014:28)**

mention some of these works. For example, Bartlett (2015, with focus on the features of the Mode; 2017.) Bowcher (2007; 2010; 2014: focusing on Field in principle; 2017); Butt and Wegener (2007); Leckie-Tarry (1995); Lukin et al (2011), and Lukin (2015); Matthiessen (1993; 2014; 2015; his 1993's seminal paper provides a holistic entry to the register theory in all its aspects, theoretical and applicable); Moore (2015); and Wegener (2011; 2015). Despite that, some like Neumann (2014:16) holds that the global definition of the three parameters remains essentially unchanged, though some work have been carried out to provide a more detailed elaboration. He further argues that

these parameters are highly abstract and cannot be observed directly in texts as instances of a given register. Therefore, from an early stage in the development of register theory (Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens 1964) sub-dimensions specifying the three register variables, like the experiential domain under field of discourse, social hierarchy under tenor of discourse and medium under mode of discourse, were discussed and gradually developed. Although these sub-dimensions provide necessary concretions of the highly abstract and broad register parameters, they are still too abstract to be directly observable in instances. In social research, variables like these are termed latent variables.



Recently, Moore (2017) in her review of register concept, raised the point, shared by other scholars, that “there has surprisingly little explication and testing of Halliday’s specific view of register, in particular, in terms of ‘semantic configuration’ and a ‘setting of probabilities’”. Several implications, she added, of this model are still generating critical evaluations (*ibid*). And about the role of semantic networks in register analysis, she questioned whether “it is necessary or even possible to draw up formalized accounts of meaning potential at the semantic stratum [...]”(*ibid*: 426). Concluding her comments, she highlighted that “SFL is the model most concerned with factoring register into its architecture; thus register is something on which SFL must draw, but also something that it must explain” (*Ibid*:432).

### 3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In analyzing the contextual factors of this text, it is taken as an instantiation of narrative register in the Qur’ān; because “an instance of language, with its particular cluster of semantic features, brings into being an instance of situation” (Moore, 2017:421). It is, therefore, an interpretation of this register, starting from above down to lexicogrammar systems because each situation type is associated with a register or text type at the stratum of semantics and lexicogrammar. The analysis is for the Arabic text, which is found in the appendix.

The analysis of these factors is as follows. Field is described by examining the transitivity system. Tenor is elaborated with focus on semantic options (speech functions); and interaction and status. The variables of Mode, with the exception of the channel, are given some detail (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:38). This is because our old text is known for its oral nature in spite of its written form.<sup>5</sup> Also some elements of cohesion (reference & ellipsis) were given brief description. Finally, a short description of options selected with their realizations in MOOD system as well as logico-semantic relations, during text unfolding, will be discussed at the end of this section.

#### 3.1 FIELD OF DISCOURSE

Generally speaking, Field is about what is going on in the situation and is informed by the nature of the social and semiotic activity, and the domain of experience to which this activity relates (subject matter or topic). Looking at

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<sup>5</sup> The Qur’ān is still considered an oral text, as its very name refers to this fact; the everyday recitation or cantillation of it around the world by Muslims is one among other features indicating its orality nature. Neuwirth (2006:145–147) asserts that though one encounters the Quran as a written text, it was originally proclaimed orally. This is self-evident in engaging its audience and addresses them directly through a dynamic and interactive communication built on each other; a quality characterizing it as a unique among scriptures, which the current Quran does not reflect its communicative sequence (*ibid*). For more, see Mir (2006:93–96)

the story semantically (experiential content), it expresses the narrator's view and experience (knowledge) of the world that revolves around proclamation of oneness of God; that is, monotheism against polytheism. The message is about propagating a new belief system. It is realized by a short dialogue between Abraham - protagonist of the new belief system-on the one hand, and his father representing a whole community (the old system), on the other hand. The call, in its first move, started at the family stage, which is patriarchally based and constructed. And this is well-presented at the interpersonal level interpreted in terms of speech functions.

At the level of lexicogrammar system, the field is expressed in the transitivity systems of the types of processes, participants and circumstances; and the vocabulary. The text consists of 25 clauses organized in ten clause complexes; the number of clauses in each clause complex, however, varies.

### 3.1.1 PROCESSES

**Table 1. Types of processes in transitivity system.**

Type of process		frequency
Verbal	Said (he):41, 42, 46, 47; elided in 43–45. Call(I): 47; 48(2 times)	7 3
Material	42,44(worship); 43(follow); 46(stone, leave); 48–49(desist; worship);	7
Mental	42; 45	2
Relational	41b; 44b; 45; 47	4

The processes, which carry the experiential meaning, are of four types: verbal, material, mental and relational. Where there is a projection relation, these processes are mentioned in the projected clause.

The verbal processes: the most frequent one is the speech denoting verb ('say' in the past tense). The 'say' verb, in the theme position, established a locution projection relation, where the projected clause (s) has (have) important role in speech function as we show later in the tenor of discourse. It (the verb 'said') occurred in four āyahs<sup>6</sup> (41, 42, 46, and 47); and it was dropped (elided) in three more āyahs (43, 44, and 45).<sup>7</sup> The second in order of the verbal processes is 'call', in āyah 47 (I implore God for forgiveness), and twice in āyah 48 (what you call; and I call).

Material processes are also prevalent and all are in the projected clause which is the abode of modality. Most are related to 'doing' type like worshipping

<sup>6</sup> The Arabic terms of āyah and Sūra were used to avoid confusion with 'verse' and 'chapter' relevant of biblical studies.

<sup>7</sup> Dropping of 'say' verb as a projecting clause is abundant in the Qur'ān. To cite but a few Q2:36, 92,125,127,285; Q3:79,191; Q6:93,104,128; Q13:23–24.

(of idols exophorically referred to in āyah 42, and Satan in āyah 44; and āyah 49: other than God), and stoning; leaving, and desisting (I stone you, leave me for good, āyah 46; I will desist you, āyah 48; and when he desisted them, āyah 49). Others are of the ‘happening’ type (active participle<sup>8</sup> in āyah 45; ‘follow’ in second clause of āyah 43). However, in the first clause of āyah 43, though the process appears as Material one, it is better seen as a Relational (to me came a knowledge that had not come to you yet<sup>9</sup>). Finally, the material process (i.e., grant), in the clause complex of āyahs 49, and 50, is not strictly related to the body of the conversation between Abraham and his father since it represents an external voice concluding the story. Hence, it was not included in the count of Material processes.

Mental processes are present in three places (hear, see: second clause of āyah 42); (I fear: āyah 45). The first two occurred in the projected clause; whereas ‘fear’ established an idea projection. Finally, the Relational processes, of attributive kind, are referring to Abraham (third person), Satan, Abraham (second person), and Lord, and Abraham (first person) (āyahs 41b; 44b; 45; 47b, and 48b), respectively. In summary, all these kind of processes, semantically speaking, reflects the reality and the ideas behind the belief system on which Abraham’s propagation of his call to a different belief system, is based.

On the level of vocabulary, the field is evident in the use of the following expressions and utterances: worshipping; idols (exophorically referred to) and Satan; prophets’ names (Abraham, Isaac & Jacob) and gods (my Lord, my gods, Allah, and the Compassionate), belief system (ask my lord for forgiveness; disobedient to God; punishment from God; worshipping other than God; companion of Satan; follow the right path, guidance, and the Book-the Qur’ān). One salient point worthy to be mentioned is that the words like ‘mention’, ‘said’, with the interpersonal modal ‘idh’, and nouns like Abraham, Moses and others gives the listener a quick hint to easily recognizes this register of the Qur’ān.

In terms of tense, the past tense alternates with present and the future tenses.

### 3.1.2 PARTICIPANTS

There are particular grammatical structures associated with the processes that determined the participants in the story (don’t worship; he said; you follow me; I

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<sup>8</sup> The active participle is a subtype of noun lacking agent marker, but replicates many properties of a verb, and since it has no inherent tense, it must be contextualized to represent a tense (Owens and Yavrumyan, 2006, vol. 3:542).

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly enough this process seems to be a Material process; exegetes consider it as a Relational in the sense “I have with me some kind of knowledge”. See for example, Ibn ‘Ašur, 1984, vol. 16:115.

guide you; I stone you; you desert me; I ask for forgiveness). These participants are just two, Abraham and his father ( his people included). There was an external voice intervening almost at the end of the story using first person pronoun plural (āyahs 49, 50). Third person and first person pronouns were used for Abraham (āyahs 41, 43, 45, 48); and his father (āyah 46 first person pronoun); secondly, the second person pronoun is explicit for both of them (Abraham addressing his father in āyahs 42–45, 47 and 48; his father addressing Abraham in āyah 46). The implications of these personal meanings will be elaborated in the discussion of Tenor.

With regard to circumstantial adjuncts, there is a noticeable absence of the spatial and the temporal adjuncts to show where and when this story happened. The story floats in absolute space and time as if the discourse is not addressed to a particular community in specific.

### 3.2 TENOR OF THE DISCOURSE

Semantically looked at, the Tenor is reflected, as semantic configurations, in the interpersonal metafunction. The tenor, thus, represents the abode that reveals the interaction in terms of participants' role, contact and status. Discussed within the frame of speech functions, the tenor brings to the fore these semantic configurations that carry the weight of this relation. And this is more profitable than the grammatical analysis of MOOD system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:34). Therefore, the analysis is carried out in term of exchange of information (propositions), and exchange of goods-&-services (proposals). It also touches on interpersonal interaction and status.

#### 3.2.1 EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

This is expressed by statements and questions. As to questions, they are raised by both the son (Abraham) and his father; however, those used by the son are more of a denial and reproach of what his father is doing (āyah 42).<sup>10</sup> In āyah 45, Abraham expressed fear or expectation towards his father future. His father, in āyah 46, launched a strong question, not waiting for a confirmation or a reply from Abraham, rather surprised of, as well as denied Abraham's attitude towards his old gods; and it can be formulated as follows: "how you dare to forsake worshipping my gods, and my ancestors' gods" repeating the word Abraham five times in form of a pronoun (four times) and in a proper noun. In āyahs 47 and 48, Abraham provides information (statements) in form of probability (أدعو ربي، عسى، سأستغفر)، respectively. In modality terms,

<sup>10</sup> A polar question, in the Qur'ānic narratives, does not necessarily seek a yes/no reply. The functions it serves are semantically various; they cover wide range of: invalidatory and reproachful denial; confirmation (acknowledgment); disdain & mockery; command; exclamation. For more, see Ibn Hišām's Muḡnī I-Labīb (90–97).

this represents the modalization (statements and questions to realize meaning of certainty, affirmation, probability and usuality).

### 3.2.2 EXCHANGE OF GOODS & SERVICES

Exchanging good & services are realized by offer and command to explain roles of giving and demanding. For example, command was used twice: one by Abraham though it has the nuance of an advice (āyah 44), and by his father (āyah 46) of a threatening one. Offer is expressed in āyah 43, and the one in āyah 47 has the nuance of willingness. Finally, in āyah 48, there is a kind of inclination. This in terms of modality expresses the modulation that explains roles of giving and demanding (in terms of obligation, command, inclination and determination).

### 3.2.3 INTERACTION AND STATUS

The salient aspect one sees in this dialogue occurring between only two parties is that Abraham took up more space, as shown in āyahs (42–45). This is also apparent in the use of first person pronoun of Abraham, attached to the particle 'inna (إِنَّ) in āyahs 47, 48), to nouns as (رَبِّي) ( āyahs 43, 45), and or attached as an object (accusative case) or implicitly in the verbs (āyah 43 three times; āyahs 45; 47; 48 three times). The use of the second person pronoun is explicit in addressing his father respectfully (āyahs 42, 43, 44, 45), or as a pronoun attached to other names, or implicit in the verbs (āyahs: 42 twice; 43 three times; 44; 45 twice; 47 twice). Also his father addressed him in āyah 46 four times in a form of a separate pronoun (you) and three times in a form of a suffix pronouns attached to verbs.

As to the status, it represents son-father relation in a patriarchal society. On the one hand, the son reverentially and politely addresses his father, by using the vocative “O! Father mine!” four times (āyahs 42–45) to keep the distance. In line with the above tendency, Abraham (āyah 45) even expressed his fear -or expectation- that a punishment might fall on his father because of worshipping idols; and finally when he lost hope of getting his father to his side, he wished him peace and promised to intercede with God for his forgiveness.

An interesting point related to the above discussion throws light on the expression of semantic meanings (speech functions) by lexico-grammatical realization. For example, his use of interrogative reflects a subtle type of advice. The imperative, when used, also shows nuance of suggestion and offering instead of a direct command. Table 2 shows some of the semantic features together with their lexico-grammatical realizations.

His father use of imperative is very harsh and clear-cut. Representing the authority, being the lord of the house, his only reply (āyah 46) expresses both a reproaching denial (realized by active participle ), and threatening, of

**Table 2. Semantic features and the lexicogrammatical realizations**

Ayah no.	Semantical features	Lexico-grammatical realizations
42	Denial & advice	Indicative(interrogative: content question)
43	Offer	Imperative
44	Advice	Imperative
45	Fear ( or expectation)	Indicative (declarative. Mental projection)
46	Denial and blame; threatening	Indicative (interrogative: polar); imperative
47	Offer & probability: I call perhaps	Indicative (declarative)
48	Affirmation & willingness: I will ask my Lord for your forgiveness	Indicative (declarative)

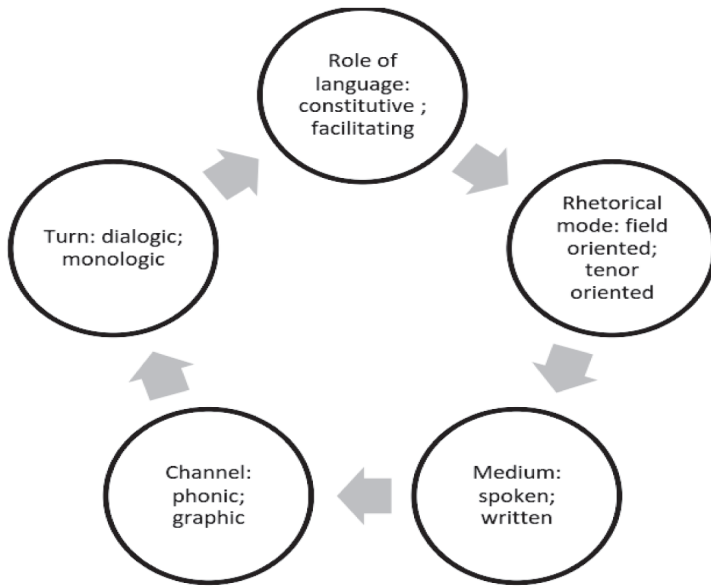
inflicting a punishment of stoning (physical or verbal) on Abraham if he did not cease advising him.

In terms of semantic options available to both parties, the dialogue shows that Abraham has more options than his father. And this can be explained in light of his status of knowledge (experience) of faith in that he possesses a knowledge that his father has not yet received. Translated in, and viewed from semantic meanings, Abraham has accordingly, by virtue of the knowledge he possesses, more semantic options to express his experience reflected in arguing, exhorting, advising, imploring, foreseeing and warning, and wishing good for his father in the end. His father options, because of lack of experience (knowledge) in issues of faith, were limited (āyah 46 clearly reveals). And that led him to reject his son proposition. So, the status here exposes two dimensions: one is interpreted socially as related to the patriarchal position; the second is interpreted epistemologically of possessing wide knowledge (experience) in respect to the question under discussion. When compared to Field and Mode, Tenor is more recognized and easily worked out through the modality system which anchors the clause to the reality.

### 3.3 *MODE OF DISCOURSE*

The mode, as a contextual factor, is resonated in the textual metafunction in that it activates and determines the textual meanings of Theme, information system (given and new) and cohesion. Within it, there are five variables (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:38–41), as figure 4 shows, without any priority of importance assigned.

The more relevant variables in this study are: the role of language in the text; the rhetorical mode that has to do with the orientation of the text towards field of the situation, towards the tenor of the situation, or towards both of them (ibid.39); and the medium (spoken or written), which reveals a lot of the text features related to how it is produced (linguistic structures) and what functions (semantic meanings) serves as there are differences between the spoken and written texts.



**Figure 4. The variables of the mode of the situation.**

### 3.3.1 ROLE OF LANGUAGE

This is associated with the division of labour between linguistic activity (language represents the whole activity) and social activity (another activity beside the linguistic). In other words, it is about the constitutive and ancillary roles of the language. In this story, there is no other than the semiotic activity of narrating an event which at the same time represents the topic. Language is what the text revolves around. Because it is a story, it is normal that language has the constitutive role representing the whole activity in text.

### 3.3.2 RHETORICAL MODE

It essentially concerns the orientation of the text towards the other two situation variables, field and tenor. That is, it explains how the text meanings are expressed towards the field of the situation, towards the tenor of the situation, or combining both of them. In other words, which way the text takes once it is unfolded?

The following discussion is restricted to define and demonstrate the orientation of the text. And this can be argued as follows. To start with, the argumentative, persuasive and polemic aspects of the speech functions, elaborated in the tenor, are evident in the use of experiential Themes of āyahs 43, 45, 46, 47 and 48. These āyahs stating Abraham's point of view that, through the persuasive and exhortatory discourse, questioned and disdained the validity of their old system of belief. Secondly, the thematization of first and second



person pronouns invites interaction (Gerot and Wignell 1995: 83; Graber, 2001: 133; Eggins, 2004: 321) in such a way that interpersonal meanings in Theme position get prominence and orient the unfolding of the message. Because one of the ways “the interpersonal meanings are realized” is “by expression of modality that may recur throughout the clause” (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 387). These pronouns are “embodied in the person system, both as pronouns and as possessive determiners” (ibid). And where there is a high degree of interpersonal interaction, message takes interpersonal meanings as point of departure (Graber, 2001: 133).

Related to that, Abraham was mentioned ten times in the form of first person pronoun; his father was only twice. As a second person pronoun, Abraham was referred to four times; whereas his father was referred to eight times. This betrays that Abraham’s share of the dialogue covers bigger space than his father, noticeable in the logical relations, expansion type, between the clauses in (āyahs 43, 44, 45, and 47). In other words, Abraham part of dialogue is more developed in that elements of dialogue are well-presented in terms of the negotiation (interaction) which contributed to the prominence of interpersonal meanings of Theme. This, already explained in Tenor section, shows the wide range of semantic options that is at the service of Abraham.

Thirdly, the use of interpersonal Themes, preceding the experiential Theme, has contributed also to the prominence of interpersonal meanings. These interpersonal Themes are realized by the particle (إِنَّ), by modal particle (قَدْ), by the modal lexical verb (عسى), and finally by the vocative (يَا أَبَتَ). The first two particles express meaning of confirmation, whereas the third one expresses meanings of hope and expectation. It (the vocative) lends a significant interpersonal charge since it refers directly to the addressee; and as such its contribution to the interpersonal meaning of Theme is evident. It (the vocative), mentioned four times (āyahs 42–45), expresses a very subtle, elegant and respectful way of addressing; and this carries, therefore, an emotional charge that helps backing the addresser position in such a situation of arguing, beseeching, and imploring. In addition, it reflects, on the other hand, the relation of power and status between father and son in a patriarchal society. Accordingly, its function backed and provided an accumulation of interpersonally charged elements that guided the messages. It stands to reason that interpersonal meanings, organized by textual metafunction, shaped the message development through the interpersonal interaction of a live dialogue between father and son (Alamiri, 2018). The level of interaction and status, and power between the two participants reflect the essence of interpersonal meanings.

### 3.3.3 TURN

As to the turn, it is a dialogue carried out mainly by Abraham, whereas his father's portion is limited to single reply (āyah 46 consisting of four clauses), as explained above in Tenor section.

In a dialogue between two parties, one expects a continuous turn between first and second person pronouns; however, in this story this pattern is broken because of a noticeable switching between pronouns (first, second and third person). This phenomenon, which is known as 'iltifat'<sup>11</sup>, is a characteristic of the I Qur'ānic rhetorical discourse, better interpreted in the light of Arabic rhetoric of the time.

It follows that Abraham's horizon is more dynamic in that the expression of his two worlds (external and internal) is so varied that enriched the dialogue evident in the processes used in constructing the narrative and carrying out the dialogue that covered meanings of advice, warning, exhortation, and sometimes a subtle command couched in a rhetorical style of argumentation and persuasion to serve his mission. His father experience, on the contrary, is limited in that he is rigid- no place for negotiation (āyah 46)- in defending his belief system (through denial, threatening and repudiating).

### 3.3.4 SPOKEN AND WRITTEN MODE

Generally speaking spoken-ness and written-ness of a text provides important insights about its grammatical structures and logico-semantic relations; as there are certain features in the text contribute to, and determine the spoken-ness or written-ness of the discourse. Starting from the mode orientation, we argue that the text exhibits spoken-ness. And this is based on the following brief analysis.

The use and the shift of first person and the second person indicate a high interaction (see Tenor section). The addressee's reply, although brief, shows a kind of contact (visual and aural) between the interactants, a signal of a spoken mode. This contact, however, was partially realized as Abraham's father, in his role as addressee, did not fully interact to his son's questions, offers, and statements. Rather, he made only one reply (āyah 46) answering his son points raised in āyahs 42–45.

The other features are: the frequent use of textual Themes, in particular, the 'wa' particle<sup>12</sup> (six times); the prevalent of unmarked Themes; the use of the vocatives, with their high degree of interaction; and finally, the locution projection, which is established by the verb 'say'. Taken together, all these features contribute, with varying degrees, to the the spoken-ness of the mode.

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<sup>11</sup> Generally speaking, this term refers to shifts of person, number, and tense in a discourse. Its usage is frequent; and it indicates another feature of its orality. For more, see Abdul Haleem (2000).

<sup>12</sup> The 'wa' is not, as always thought of in Arabic Linguistic Tradition, a mere coordinating particle; it actually functions as a Conjunctive Adjunct (discourse marker), seen from SFL perspective, serving various semantic meanings in the clauses complexes (Alamiri, 2020a: 155-157).

Despite having said that, some features of written-ness of the mode are not completely absent. For example, the endophoric third person reference (which will be touched on in the cohesion) refers to constitutive role of language, a feature of a written mode (Gerot & Wignell, 1995; Garber, 2001; Eggins, 2004). The little use of dependent relation in the thematic structure, with the exception of the conditional clauses, and the absence of circumstantial adjuncts, all are indications of written mode.

One possible interpretation of this ‘blending’ of mode, so to speak, that one might think of is that it is a spoken mode that was delivered after a deliberation, and not spontaneously.

Closely associated with this specific point is the channel. Our study shows that the channel variable overlaps with with the medium; and for that reason it is recommendable that its analysis should not be taken separately. The channel of the Qur’ān is evidently phonic<sup>13</sup>; a point extensively elaborated in the Qur’ānic scholarship.

Summarizing, one can claim that the mode shows a kind of ‘blending’ of both the spoken and written modes; this phenomenon requires an in-depth investigation. It should be remembered that we are applying a model to an old and classic text that does not necessarily conform to the features of this model (i.e. SFL model). Secondly, such features should be taken within 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabic rhetoric domain, which were lost just after two centuries, as Cuypers (2011) argues. What is essential, in my opinion, is that we could, though relatively, show that the Qur’ān lends itself to SFL analysis, and that it has inherently functional features by virtue of being a text whose function was to serve the needs of its community of the time.

### 3.4 COHESION TIES: REFERENCE AND ELLIPSIS

In terms of cohesion, the text employed some of the grammatical and lexical cohesive elements or devices that contribute to building up semantic relationships between the text parts (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Regarding the grammatical devices, the reference is the frequent one. Its role in creating links between text parts is essential to keep them together. This is noticeable from the first āyah as it relates one element (Abraham as a participant) along the whole text. The reference employed here is endophorically realized by the

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<sup>13</sup> Oral literature precedes writing that has been with us for a relatively short period of human history (Paul Hernadi, 2001:55). Acharti (2008, n16:168) holds that the formulaic density is well above 20 percent, the threshold to establish original oral nature. And such a high density suggests that: “[...] Muhammad (or Allāh or the Archangel Gabriel) was seemingly well versed in the techniques of folkloristic oral transmission” (Dundes, Alan, 2003:65 cited in Acharti, 2008). Paret (1983:200) asserts that directing the audience or the prophet himself by an introductory “what do you think about this” to adopt a critical attitude to a particular subject, indicates that “everything is couched in a living, spoken language”.

third person pronoun singular falling anaphorically on Abraham (āyahs 41, 42, 47, and 49: two times), and also on his father (āyah 46 falling back on 'his father' in āyah 42). And this creates a referential relation on a relatively long distance in comparison to the short distance evident in āyah 47, where the third person pronoun singular falls back on 'my lord' in the preceding clause of the same āyah. Similarly, this short distance of referential relation was noticed also in the āyah 50, where the third person plural anaphorically falls back on Isaac and Jacob (āyah 49). Actually, reference plays an essential role in the cohesion of the Qur'ānic narratives and can be realized by different categories like demonstrative reference (Alamiri & Mickan, 2016), but in this passage it is mainly realized by person category. The exophoric reference, which is not cohesive, is also present (āyahs 42, 48, and āyah 49). Both are contextually understood referring in the former to the idols; and in the latter to Abraham's people (a third person pronoun plural (اعتزلهم)).

The second cohesive element employed in this passage is ellipsis; ellipsis is "usually confined to closely contiguous passages, and is particularly characteristic of question + answer or similar 'adjacency pairs' in dialogue" (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 606). It is confined in this passage to the process (verb), in particular, that of the saying verb 'said (he)', in the projecting clause in a way that made the āyahs (43–45) appear as consecutive series of projected clauses initiated by the projecting clause in āyah 42. Ellipsis also occurred in āyah 48 which appeared as sequence of the previous one (āyah 47). As explained earlier, dropping of this verb is common in the Qur'ān is common.

With regard to the lexical cohesive devices, we mention only the role of repetition. For example, it was noticed in the following instances: 'Satan' in āyah 44; 'My Lord' in āyah 48; and 'Father Mine' four times in āyahs 42–45. And this is not without a significant functional meaning. Because, in āyah 44 (in the second clause), a third person pronoun could have been used to refer to 'Satan', but the use of an explicit noun served two semantic functions: emphasizing the predicative relation in this clause; and secondly depriving Satan of any human feature. The same applies to āyah 48, where the 'Lord' is repeated twice instead of using the reference relation realized by third person pronoun (he). Finally, the conjunction role, when looked at as a system realized by elaboration, extension and enhancement, is apparent but it is beyond our scope to give a detailed account of (see, for example, footnote no.12.).

### 3.5 *TEXT UNFOLDING: SELECTIONS IN MOOD SYSTEM AND LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS*

Knowing that texts at the instance pole unfold as going selections from the system, we offer here general observations about the selections made, in particular in MOOD system and logico-semantic relations. The text as

mentioned in the beginning consists of ten clause complexes that contain 25 clauses.

MOOD system (the primary interpersonal system of the clause), realizes semantic features (Table 2). In this regard, it is shown that the indicative clauses are prevalent, with the majority being declarative; and only two instances are in interrogative in āyah 42 (content question: WH-interrogative), and āyah 46 (polar question: yes-no interrogative). These clauses served different speech functions, as explained in Table 2. The imperative is mentioned in four āyahs, with different semantic meanings. The projecting clause of the 'saying' verb is counted within the indicative system (as declarative). The conclusion that can be drawn from this short account is that there is no consistent or clear pattern in this kind of selection (of indicative system).

With regard to the logical relation, the locution projection is manifest; and it needs a separate paper to discuss. It started from āyah 42 to āyah 48, with dropping of it (43–45, and 48). A variation in the types of projected clauses was noted. For example, it is an imperative in āyah 44; and an interrogative in āyah 42 (by Abraham), and āyah 46 (by his father). In other instances, it is indicative (declarative) in āyahs 43, 45<sup>14</sup>, 47 and 48. The abundance of statements is expected in a dialogue of argumentation. We should keep in mind that the actual dialogue in this story is short (āyahs 42–48), and hence the selections of meanings based on both MOOD system and logico-semantic relations system is therefore limited. In other words, the story is compacted, and this affected its unfolding.<sup>15</sup>

Regarding the expansion, the text showed a preference towards paratactic extension and to hypotactic enhancement in second order. The extension indicates that indicative clauses, in particular the statements, were used to build up the dialogue that explains, and argues ideas and points of views. It (i.e., extension) is mentioned in the second third of the dialogue initiated by Abraham; that is, āyahs (46, 47, and 48), whereas the first third starting in āyah 42 put forward the 'call to monotheism'. As to enhancement, it shows relations of cause-result (āyahs 43, 45), conditional (āyah 46). The elaboration occurred only in āyahs 41 and 49. These two āyahs together with āyah 50 are

<sup>14</sup> The projected clause has a mental projection, which itself has its own projected clause.

<sup>15</sup> Two features characterize the Qur'ānic narratives. Firstly, it lacks a chronological orientation of the events told; and secondly, it does not go in detail whether of the event or the character for a simple reason that it gives a certain portion of a certain story to serve the thematic unity of the sūra in which it is mentioned. Other portions will be used in other contexts. Only sūra 12 (of Joseph amounting to 111 āyahs) is a sustained sūra. Differently stated, 'the Qur'ān never tells a story for its own sake but rather uses it to drive home the point it happens to be making in a sūra or in a section of it. As a rule, considerations of thematic unity determine which portion of a story will be narrated in which Sūra.' (Mir, 1988:59).

not considered here for the speaker is an external voice and not part of the actual dialogue; though they are constituents of the story.

#### 4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The text analyzed represents a text type instantiated in the register (of the Qur'ānic narrative). It belongs to a grouping of texts that fall under a 'call to monotheism' in the story of Abraham that is mentioned in different parts of the Qur'ān, and discussed other topics related to the religious domain of prophetic mission. The study tried to construct the context of situation out of the text itself, within the framework of register concept. Therefore the study offered an SFL based analysis of the contextual factors of field, tenor and mode of discourse; they all contribute in an integrative approach to this register. It is worth noting that the Qur'ānic scholarship had touched only on one aspect of tenor; that is, examining (semantic) meanings, understood as speech functions in SFL, and their correspondent lexico-grammatical realizations (i.e., MOOD system in SFL terms). This has been studied, and still is, in a fragmentary way under different guises of rhetoric and style.

Summarizing the contextual variables, the field revolved around a 'call to monotheism' that presented the subject matter which is the only activity. In the tenor many insightful points are apparent, in particular Abraham's status of knowledge that explains why he has occupied much of the dialogue and had more semantic options. As for the mode, the rhetorical mode showed a preference towards the tenor. The medium of the mode revealed an inclination towards the spoken-ness. It can be a 'blending' of spoken-ness and written-ness. Therefore, there is an overlapping between tenor and mode of discourse. And for that reason there is a need to work on a description of system networks to better reflect the delicacy of each of these two factors. Finally, it is important to discuss temporally other texts (instances) of Abraham story to see if there is a change over time between a situation type and a text type.

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## APPENDIX: Q 19 (42–50)

41

||| وَ اذْكُرْ << فِي الْكِتَابِ >> اِبْرَاهِيمَ ||| اِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا |||

||| and mention <<in the Book>> Abraham||| indeed he is a trustworthy, a prophet |||

42

||| اِذْ قَالَ << لِاَبِيهِ >> ||| يَا اَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ [مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا] |||

||| as (he) said to his father||| O! Father why you worship [[that which neither hears, nor sees, nor avails you anything]] |||

43

||| اِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ [مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ] ||| فَاتَّبِعْنِي ||| اِهْدِكْ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا |||

|||O! My Father, I assure really came to me of knowledge [[that which reached not to you]]||| follow me||| so that (I) lead you on the right path|||

44

||| يَا اَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ ||| اِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا |||

|||O! My Father, do not worship the Satan ||| Satan is disobedient to the Merciful|||

45

||| اِنِّي اَبَتِ اِنِّي اَخَافُ ||| اَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ << مِنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ >> ||| فَتَكُوْنَ لِلشَّيْطٰنِ وَلِيًّا |||

|||O! My Father, I assure (I) fear that a punishment<<from God>> inflicts you||| so (you) become a friend of Satan|||

46

||| قَالَ ||| اُرَاغِبُ اَنْتَ عَنِ الْهَيْتِي << اِبْرَاهِيمَ >> ||| لَنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهَ ||| لِارْجَمَنَّكَ ||| وَ اَهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا |||

||| (he) said ||| rejecting you my gods <<O! Abraham>>? ||| if do (you) not desist||| (I) stone you||| and leave me for ages|||

47

||| قَالَ << سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ >> ||| سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي ||| اِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَوِيًّا |||

||| (he) said <<|| peace on you||>>||| (I) will ask my Lord to forgive you||| he is indeed kind with me|||

48

|| وَ أَعْتَزَلِكُمْ || [وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ] || وَ أَدْعُو رَبِّي || عَسَىٰ أَلَّا أَكُونَ << بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي >> شَقِيًّا ||

|| and (I) withdraw you[[and that unto which pray (you) instead of God]]|| and (I) pray unto my Lord|| perhaps (I) do not become with my Lord pray unblessed ||

49

|| فَلَمَّا اعْتَزَلَهُمْ || [وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ] || وَ هَبْنَا لَهُ << إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ >> || وَ كَلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا ||

|| when (he) abandoned them[[and what worship(they) instead of God]]|| (we) gave him Isaac Jacob || and both (we) made prophet||

50

|| وَ هَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِّن رَّحْمَتِنَا || وَ جَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا ||

|| and (we)gave them of our mercy|| and (we) assigned to them a high and true mention of eminence||