

# LINGUISTIC VARIATIONS IN THE RECITATIONS OF SELECTED QURANIC CHAPTERS: THE CASE OF ADDITION AND DEDUCTION

## VARIAÇÕES LINGÜÍSTICAS NAS RECITAÇÕES DE CAPÍTULOS QURANICOS SELECIONADOS: O CASO DE ADIÇÃO E DEDUÇÃO\*

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**Abstract:** The Noble Quran was revealed in seven Ahruf (dialects) of recitations, which contains the seven standard modes of readings in the present day. However, there is a paucity of research into the connotations of different modes of Quranic recitations. As such, some grammarians tend to criticize certain recitations, perhaps due to their inadequate knowledge of Quranic exegesis. For this reason, there is an urgent need to conduct a systematic investigation to address the issue of misinterpretation of Quranic verses based on modes of recitations, especially Hafs and other forms of recitations. Therefore, this study aims to address the question of variations between two modes of Quranic recitations, Hafs and Nafi', concerning addition and deduction in two selected chapters, Al-Fatihah (The Opening) and Al-Baqarah (The Cow) and their connotations. The study adopts an inductive-analytical approach in which Quranic verses from the selected chapters are analyzed to reach valid outcomes. The findings reveal that differences in Hafs and Nafi' modes of recitations do not suggest contradiction but increase our understanding of the meanings of Quranic verses with multiple expressions. The expressions fulfill the basic requirement for the validity of regular modes of recitations. This knowledge helps in exegeses within Quranic verses and reveals the inimitability of the Noble Quran. It is envisaged that this study could advance our understanding of how the variety of recitations can help in forming accurate interpretations of Quranic verses.

**Keywords:** Exegesis of the Quran. Linguistic variations. Quran modes of recitations.

**Resumo:** O Nobre Alcorão foi revelado em sete Ahruf (dialetos) de recitações, que contém os sete modos padrão de leitura dos dias atuais. No entanto, há uma escassez de pesquisas sobre as conotações dos diferentes modos de recitações do Alcorão. Como tal, alguns gramáticos tendem a criticar certas recitações, talvez devido a seu conhecimento inadequado da exegese do Alcorão. Por esta razão, há uma necessidade urgente de conduzir uma investigação sistemática para abordar a questão da má

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interpretação dos versos do Alcorão com base nos modos de recitações, especialmente Hafs e outras formas de recitações. Portanto, este estudo visa abordar a questão das variações entre duas modalidades de recitações do Alcorão, Hafs e Nafi', no que diz respeito à adição e dedução em dois capítulos selecionados, Al-Fatihah (A Abertura) e Al-Baqarah (A Vaca) e suas conotações. O estudo adota uma abordagem indutiva-analítica na qual os versos do Alcorão dos capítulos selecionados são analisados para se chegar a resultados válidos. Os resultados revelam que as diferenças nos modos de recitações de Hafs e Nafi não sugerem contradição, mas aumentam nossa compreensão dos significados dos versos do Alcorão com múltiplas expressões. As expressões cumprem o requisito básico para a validade dos modos regulares de recitações. Este conhecimento ajuda em exegeses dentro dos versos do Alcorão e revela a inimitabilidade do Nobre Alcorão. Prevê-se que este estudo possa avançar nossa compreensão de como a variedade de recitações pode ajudar a formar interpretações precisas dos versos do Alcorão.

**Palavras-chave:** Exegese do Alcorão. Variações linguísticas. Modos de recitações do Alcorão.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Noble Quran was revealed unto Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) in seven *Abruf* (dialects) of recitations. It was reported by Ubaidullah bin Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) that Abdullahi bin Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) told him that the Prophet (prophet be upon him) said: “Gabriel recited the Qur'an to me in one way. Then I requested him (to read it in another way), and continued asking him to recite it in other ways, and he recited it in several ways till he ultimately recited it in seven different ways” (Al-Bukhari, 1987, Hadith No. 4705). It was narrated from the *Hadith* of Umar bin Al-Khattab (May Allah be pleased with him) that he said: I heard Hisham bin Hakim reciting Surat-al-Furqan during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him), I listened to his recitation and noticed that he was reciting in different ways that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) had not taught me. I was about to jump over him while he was still in prayer, but I waited patiently and when he finished his prayer, I put my sheet round his neck (and pulled him) and said, “Who has taught you this Surah which I have heard you reciting?” Hisham said, “Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) taught it to me”. I said, “You are telling a lie, for he taught it to me in a way different from the way you have recited it!” Then I started leading (dragging) him to Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) and said (to the Prophet), “I have heard this man reciting Surah al- Furqan in a way that you have not taught me”. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “(O `Umar) release him! Recite, O Hisham”. Hisham recited in the way I heard him reciting. Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said, “It was revealed like

this”. Then Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said, “Recite, O `Umar!” I recited in the way he had taught me, whereupon he said, “It was revealed like this”, and added, “The Qur’an has been revealed to be recited in seven different ways, so recite of it whichever is easy for you” (Al-Bukhari, 1987, Hadith No 4706).

Additionally, Imam Al-Suyudi (may Allah have mercy on him) mentioned that similar Hadiths were reported by different companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) (Al-Suyudi, 1974). There might be various reasons for the wisdom behind revealing the Noble Quran on seven dialects, the most important of which could be to ease recitations because Arabs are of different tribes, and each tribe has its dialect with different linguistic variations, which makes it difficult for them to use each other’s dialect. As such, Allah (SWT) has blessed the Arabs by revealing the Quran in seven dialects that are sufficient and satisfactory (Ismail, 1999). Nevertheless, scholars have more than 40 differing views regarding the meaning of seven dialects. Some of these views were collected and scrutinized by Imam al-Hafiz bin Al-Jazari (1380) who mentioned that “I have been considering these views and looking at them closely for more than thirty years, until Allah (SWT) showed me what could be right. This is because I examined the recitations, be it regular, irregular, or weak recitation” (Vol. 1, p. 27). According to ibn Al-Jazari, the different views of scholars are still attributable to the seven dialects specifically.

At times, the differences exist only in the letters with no contradiction in meanings and form, for example *البخل* or *يحسب* which can be recited in four or two different ways respectively. They often come with slightly different but non-contradictory connotations, such as *فتلقى آدم من ربه كلمات* or *(أمه و (وادكر بعد أمة، و* or different letters and meaning except form, for example, *ننحيك بيدنك لتكون لمن خلفك-ننجيك بيدنك* and *تبلاوا-وتتلوا*, and *بصطة-بسطة* and *يأتل-يتأل* and *أشد منكم-منهم* and *الصراط-السرائ* and so on. Also, letters are often changed, for instance, *فامضوا إلى ذكر الله* or *فيقتلون* and *وأوصى-* and *ويقتلون* and *وجاءت سكرة الحق بالموت* and *الذكر والأنثى* and *ووصى*. These examples represent the seven ways within which every disagreement occurs (Ibn Al-Jazari, 1380, Vol. 1, p. 27). As mentioned by ibn Al-Jazari, variations related to “addition and deduction” represent the most crucial issue among scholars, which indicates the need to conduct a more investigation of how the differences occur and

clarify misconceptions in this regard. Therefore, this investigation aims to explore categories of linguistic variations between *Hafs* and *Nafi'* in terms of addition and deduction of letters in *Al-Fatihah* and *Al-Baqarah* and their connotations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A few studies have recently looked into the modes of recitations, particularly the seven dialects. and their significance in understanding the meaning of Quranic verses. For example, Muhammad and Hamzah (2019) used an inductive-analytical approach to explore the terminology and sources of Quranic recitations. The study revealed that the science of Quranic recitations seeks to clarify the question of variations in terms of meaning and syntax. Similarly, Al-Thulaia (2000) employed a descriptive analytical method to explain the significance of understanding the science of variations in Quranic recitations. According to the study, there is a unanimous agreement among scholars that understanding the different modes of recitations could help in explaining, expounding, and clarifying misconceptions of the meaning of Quranic verses.

More recently conducted by Nabeel (2021) used an inductive method to explore reasons for the criticism of some Quranic recitations. The study enumerated several reasons for such criticism, including a lack of thorough investigation into the original usage of the Arabic language, such as evidence from poetry, prose, speeches, stories, and proverbs, as well as the inadequate knowledge of both regular and irregular modes of recitations. While the above-mentioned studies focused on the benefits of understanding the modes of recitations and reasons for their criticism generally, the current investigation pays particular attention to exploring the question of Quranic recitation difference in terms of addition and deduction of letters.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed an inductive-analytical method that corroborates evidence from Quranic verses to explore the points of variations in *Hafs* and *Nafi'* modes of recitation with

particular focus on two Quranic chapters: *Al-Fatihah* and *Al-Baqarah*. The inductive-analytical approach aims at generating specific concepts through analysis of raw textual data (Gasson, 2004). According to Thomas (2006), the inductive approach “provides an easily used and systematic set of procedures for analyzing qualitative data that can produce reliable and valid findings” (p. 237). The benefits of using an inductive approach are numerous. This approach, for example, helps to contract raw textual data into a brief and summary form as well as outline a clear link between the research objectives and the findings generated from the raw textual data. It is, therefore, an approach for generating valid findings based on facts. The general inductive approach “provides a simple, straightforward approach for deriving findings in the context of focused evaluation questions” (Thomas, 2006, p. 237).

This study adopted the general analysis procedure described by Thomas (2006). First, verses in the selected chapters of the Noble Quran with evidence of addition and deduction of letters were gathered. Then these verses were studied closely with the aim of identifying variations in terms of addition and deduction of letters. Subsequently, categories were developed from multiple readings of the textual data. The emerging categories were used to form a database that integrates the most important themes concerning addition and deduction of letters in the selected chapters. Finally, the data were interpreted based on the specific research objectives.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### **Variations between *Hafs* and *Nafi*’ Modes of Recitations in *Al-Fatihah* and *Al-Baqarah***

This section the findings regarding the categories of linguistic variations between *Hafs* and *Nafi*’ in terms of addition and deduction of letters in *Al-Fatihah* and *Al-Baqarah* and their connotations. According to scholars of recitation science, the addition or deduction of letters in the Noble Quran has nothing to do with interpolation or alteration. The modes of recitations were revealed unto the Prophet (peace be upon him) and they are sufficient and satisfactory. Although some words might differ in form, their connotations remain non-contradictory. The connotations of regular modes of recitations are considered valid in

explaining the meaning of Quranic verses. Table 1 shows the categories of differences between the two modes of recitations in the selected chapters.

**Table 1.** Variations between *Hafs* and *Nafi'* concerning addition and deduction

SN	Variation Categories	Verse	Verse No.	Hafs	Nafi'
<i>Surah Al-Fatihah</i> (The Opening)					
1	Addition or deduction of <i>Alif</i> (أ)	مالك يوم الدين	3	مالك	ملك
<i>Surah Al-Baqarah</i> (The Cow)					
	Addition or deduction of <i>Alif</i> (أ)	وما يصدقون إلا أنفسهم وما يشعرون	9	يُخَدَعُونَ	يُخَادِعُونَ
		بلى من كسب سيئة وأحاطت به خطيئته فأولئك أصحاب النار	81	خَطِيئَتُهُ	خَطِيئَاتُهُ
		ووصى بها إبراهيم بنبيه ويعقوب يابني إن الله اصطفى لكم الدين	132	وَوَصَّى	وَأَوْصَى
		ولولا دفع الله الناس بعضهم ببعض لفسدت الأرض	251	دفع	دفاع
		قال أنا احبي واميت	258	أنا	أنا
2	Doubling of letters	ولهم عذاب أليم بما كانوا يكذبون	10	يَكْذِبُونَ	يُكْذِبُونَ
		وتخرجون فريقا منكم من ديارهم تظاهرون عليهم بالإثم والعدوان	85	تَظَاهَرُونَ	تَظَاهَرُونَ
		وأن تصدقوا خير لكم إن كنتم تعلمون	280	تَصَدَّقُوا	تَصَدَّقُوا
3	Addition or deduction of <i>Hamzah</i> (ء)	ويقتلون النبيين بغير حق	61	النَّبِيِّينَ	النَّبِيِّينَ
		إن الذين آمنوا والذين هادوا والصابئين والنصارى والصابئين	62	الصَّابِئِينَ	الصَّابِئِينَ
		من كان عدواً لله وملائكته ورسوله وجبريل وميكال	98	ميكال	ميكائل
4	Addition or deduction of <i>Yaa</i> (ي)	وإذا سألك عبادي عني فإني قريب أجيب دعوة الداع إذا دعان	186	الدَّاعِ	الدَّاعِ =

As shown in Table 1, there are four categories of variations between *Hafs* and *Nafi'* in terms of addition and deduction. The first category relates to the addition or deduction of *Alif* (أ). For instance, the first word in the third verse of *Surah Al-Fatihah* is read as مالك according to *Hafs* and ملك based on *Nafi'* mode of recitation with a deduction of *Alif*. In the ninth verse of *Surah Al-Baqarah*, the word is read as يُخَدَعُونَ by *Hafs* without *Alif* and by *Nafi'* as يُخَادِعُونَ with *Alif*. Although the words' connotations may differ, they are non-contradictory. For example, the word يُخَادِعُونَ (they deceive) with *Alif* as read by *Nafi'* is concerned with

“reactance”. It is also read by Ibn Kathir and Abu Amr with *Alif*. According to Abu Amr, a person does not decoy but deceive himself. Also, Hafs and the people of Shaam and Kufah read the word as *يُخَادِعُونَ* without *Alif*. This is because, according to them, the verse mentions that the hypocrites “think to deceive” Allah (SWT) and those who believe as they said “We believe in Allah and the Last Day”, but it is proven that they only deceive themselves (Ibn Zanjalah, n.d., p. 88). Nevertheless, Ibn Khaluyah opines that Nafi’ mode of recitation relates to confirmation in this regard, because all of the reciters read the first word in the verse *يُخَادِعُونَ* with *Alif*. This is because *فاعل* is not used in a statement unless there is *فاعلين* (two doers) who share a common action, such as “I fought with [someone else]”. Thus, the connotations of the two words are very similar, for instance, *فَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ* which means “May Allah destroy them”. Thus, *يُخَادِعُونَ* may connote *يُخَادِعُونَ* (they deceive) in this regard (Ibn Khalawaih, 1401, p. 68).

Additionally, Hafs reads the word *خَطِيئَتُهُ* (his sin) without *Alif*, which represents a singular noun. Whereas, *Nafi’* recites the word as *خَطِيئَاتُهُ* (his sins) with *Alif*, denoting a plural noun. In this respect, *خَطِيئَتُهُ* means “polytheism”, and it is preceded by *سِيئة* (evil or bad deed) because both word can be used interchangeably. Perhaps, the plural noun *خَطِيئَاتُهُ* is used because even if the two words have singular forms, they might be considered as plural as *أحاط* (encompass) does not connote singular (Ibn Khalawaih, 1401, p. 83). According to Al-Nairabani (2006), the word’s plural form is interpreted in Tafsir (exegeses) as *كباير* (great sins), and thus the expression *وأحاطت به خطيئاته* means “his great sins encompassed him. Also, Al-Ahwazi (2002) mentioned that the expression *وأحاطت به خطيئته* may connote “his sins encompass his good deeds”, meaning that one of them (sin) is greater than the other (good deed), as stated in *Surah Al-Ankabut* verse 54 *بِالْكَافِرِينَ* and *Surah Al-Kahf* Verse 29 *أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا* (a fire whose walls will surround them). The statement can also connote “his sins destroyed him” as mentioned in *Surah Yusuf* (AS) Verse 66 *لَنَأْتِيَنَّيَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ* (that you will bring him [back] to me, unless you should be surrounded by enemies).

The word *وَأَوْصَى* is recited by Nafi’ with *Alif* and by Hafs as *وَوَصَى* without *Alif*. According to Al-Maqdisi (2009), this word is of two different dialogues, such as in the form of *أَنْزَلَ* and *أَنْزَلْ* accordingly. The former is found in the scriptures of Madinah and Shaam (Syria).

In addition, the word دفع is read by *Hafs* with no *Alif* and by *Nafi'* as دفاع with *Alif*. In this regard, *Nafi'* recitation considers the word origin to be دافع يدافع دفاعا which connotes “defend”, while *Hafs* considers it to be دفع يدفع دفعا (force). Thus, Abu Shamah (n.d.) mentioned that both words are of the same origin دفع as in the form of كتبت كتابا or دافع as in the form of قاتلهم الله, meaning “May Allah destroyed them”. Likewise, in the verse قال انا احيي واميت وأنا, the word أنا is recited by *Hafs* without *Alif* and by *Nafi'* as أنا with *Alif*. Reciters unanimously agree with the ruling of the word أنا in the case of *Waqf* (stop) *Wasl* (continuity) due to differences in dialogues. Nevertheless, the most eloquent dialogue is to deduct *Alif* in the case of *Wasl*.

The second category refers to the doubling of a letter. For instance, *Nafi'* doubles the letter ذ when reciting the word يَكْذِبُونَ by placing *Tashdeed* (double consonants). By doubling the consonant as in *Nafi'* mode of recitation, the word connotes “for denying the messengers” or “for denying Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This interpretation could be made because unlike الكذب (lie), التكذيب (denying) the messengers can incur severe punishment. Nevertheless, without *Tashdeed*, the expression could mean they deserve severe punishment as they declare themselves to be believers while hiding their disbelief (Al-Samira'I, 2005). In both modes of recitations, the word refers to hypocrites as they tell lies and deny the Prophet (SAW) for what has been revealed to him. Likewise, in Verse 85, *Hafs* reads the word تَطَاهَرُونَ with single consonant ط while *Nafi'* recites it with *Tashdeed*, which means “conspiring”. Similarly, in Verse 280, *Hafs* recites the word تَصَدَّقُوا without *Tashdeed* while *Nafi'* recites it as تَصَدَّقُوا with *Tashdeed*, meaning “remit it as a charity” (Ibn Zanjalah, n.d.).

The third category concerns the addition or deduction of Hamzah (ء). For instance, in Verse 61, the word النَّبِيِّنَ is recited by *Hafs* without *Hamzah* and by as *Nafi'* as النَّبِيِّنَ with *Hamzah*. According to Ibn Zanjalah (n.d.), *Nafi'* mode of recitation considers the word to be from أخبر (inform) as mentioned in Surah Al-Tahreem Verse 3 أنبأك هذا (who informed you of this?). Thus, the Prophet (peace be upon him) informs (bring messages from Allah). Whereas, *Hafs* considers the word's connotation to be نبا (high) because, according to Ibn Zanjalah, a Prophet is called نبي due to his high position. Nevertheless, similar words found in the Noble Quran are based on the rule followed by *Nafi'* except a few words such as the singular and plural of ولي and أولياء. In a different case, *Hafs* recites the word الصَّابِئِينَ that comes in Verse 62



with *Hamzab* while Nafi' recites it as *الصَّائِبِينَ* without *Hamzab*. According to Ibn Khalawaih (1401), Hafs considers the word to be derived from *صَبَأَ* (defect from) in the case of a person converting from one religion to another. However, Nafi' considers the word to be derived from *صَبَا* (incline to) for which a child is called *صَبِي* because his mind can be inclined to fun (Al-Abyari, 1405).

Additionally, the name *مِيكَال* in Verse 98 is recited by Hafs with no *Hamzab* and by Nafi' as *مِيكَائِل* with *Hamzab*. This difference is viewed by the majority of scholars as a dialectic variation. According to Ibn Al-Jauzi (1422), five Arabic dialects pronounce the word differently. First, *مِيكَال* without *Hamzab* is the dialect of the people of Hajaz, and it is recited as such by Abu Amr and Hafs from A'sim. Second, *مِيكَائِيل* with *Yaa* (ي) preceded by *Hamzab* is the dialect of Tameem and Qais as well as many from the people of Najd. Also, Ibn A'mir, Ibn Kathir, Hamzah, Al-Kisa'I, and Abu Bakr from A'sim recite the word in this form. Third, *مِيكَائِل* with *Hamzab* preceded by *Alif* without *Yaa* as recited by Nafi', Ibn Shambouth, Ibn Al-Sabahi all from Qumbul. Fourth, *مِيكَل* as recited by Muhaisin. Fifth, *مِيكَائِين* with *Hamzab* alongside *Yaa* and *Nun* (ن) preceded by *Alif* as mentioned by Al-Ambari (Ibn Al-Jauzi, 1422). These variations could be because *مِيكَال* is a non-Arabic name, Allah knows best. Finally, the fourth category is concerned with the addition or deduction of *Yaa*. For instance, in Verse 186, Hafs recites the word *الدَّاعِ* without *Yaa* while Nafi' recites it with *Yaa*. Also, Warsh and Abu Amr recited the word with *Yaa* in the case of continuation, whereas other reciters removed it. The reciters follow the word's origin in the case of continuation, and in the case of stopping, they follow the rule of the scripture. However, some reciters read the word without *Yaa* even in the case of continuation as they try to avoid breaking the rule of the scripture (Ibn Zanjalah, n. d.).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated linguistic variations in Hafs and Nafi' modes of recitations in terms of addition and deduction of letters as well as their connotations. The findings revealed four categories of variations between the two modes of recitations, consisting of addition or

deduction of *Alif, Hamzah, Yaa* and doubling of letters. According to the findings, differences between the two modes of recitations do not suggest contradiction but help us to understand the meanings of Quranic verses with multiple expressions. Also, the expressions fulfill the basic requirement for the validity of regular modes of recitations. This knowledge helps in exegeses within Quranic verses and reveals the inimitability of the Noble Quran. It is envisaged that this study could advance our understanding of how the variety of recitations can help in forming accurate interpretations of Quranic verses. Nevertheless, the study is limited to variations in the case of addition and deduction of letters in two selected chapters, i.e Al-Fatihah and Al-Baqarah. Further research may investigate these variations in chapters other than those investigated in the present study.

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