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A Relevance Theory Approach to the Pragmatic Interpretation of Surah Al-Mulk

[PENDEKATAN TEORI RELEVAN TERHADAP INTERPRETASI PRAGMATIK SURAH AL-MULK]

[Quranica](#) • Article • 2025

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Abstract

The Qur'an employs a wide range of rhetorical strategies in conveying its message to humanity, referred to in Arabic as *uslub* (plural: *asâlib*). Among these strategies is the use of interrogative constructions. A considerable number of interrogative verses in the Qur'an are not intended to function as literal questions; rather, they convey layered and implicit meanings. Inaccurate interpretation of such interrogatives may therefore lead to a distorted understanding of the Qur'anic message. This study aims to identify interrogative verses in Surah al-Mulk and to elucidate both their explicit and implicit meanings within their respective textual contexts. Data analysis is conducted through a pragmatic framework grounded in Relevance Theory as proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986), adapted to Qur'anic textual analysis through reference to authoritative classical exegetical works (*tafsir mu'tabâr*). A total of twelve interrogative verses were identified in Surah al-Mulk and selected as the corpus of analysis. The findings reveal that interrogative constructions in Surah al-Mulk serve a range of rhetorical functions, including admonition, warning, threat, reproach, and the evocation of fear in the audience. Such usage underscores the aesthetic refinement, semantic depth, and expressive richness of Qur'anic discourse in guiding human reflection and moral awareness. Accordingly, the ability to discern both the explicit and implicit meanings of Qur'anic interrogatives is essential for Muslims, in order to avoid misinterpretation of the divine message. © 2025 Centre of Quranic Research (CQR), University of Malaya, Malaysia.

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Citations

Detailed information

Bibliographic information

Document type	Article
EID	2-s2.0-105026886708
Original language	Indonesian
Publication date	December 2025
PubMed ID	
Source type	Journal
ISSN	22895396
Publisher	University of Malaya
Publication year	2025
Source title	Quranica
Volume	17
Issue	2
Pages	216 - 236

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