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Meaning Between Separation and Connection

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ABSTRACT

Like other languages, the Arabic language provides a set of mechanisms and technical frameworks that constitute some of the highest forms of beauty appreciated by refined literary taste in the expressive pathways of the desired poetic eloquence to which languages aspire on the scale of rhetorical radiance and stylistic creativity. Among these is the concept of separation and connection (al-fasl wa-l-wasl), which the Arabs regarded as the very essence and pillar of eloquence. It represents a distinctive core element in their linguistic structure, closely linked to the process of coordinating a sentence—or refraining from coordinating it—with the following one, based primarily on the particle "wa" (and) rather than other conjunctions. In this lies a rich field of study filled with subtle linguistic nuances, abundant in meanings and connotations of remarkable beauty.

Keywords: Separation, Connection, And , Desinential Inflection .

Introduction

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. All praise is due to Allah, who is sufficient, and may peace and blessings be upon the chosen Prophet and the selected Messenger, as well as upon his noble family and righteous companions.

The influx of Western schools in the field of linguistic and literary research—despite their diversity and abundance—is of considerable significance. It is the product of deep investigation, broad knowledge, and the outcome of numerous philosophies and ideologies. There is no doubt that these schools constitute rich tributaries to linguistic research, from which benefits can be drawn and experiences gained. They deserve appreciation and respect, despite the differences imposed by linguistic structures and expressive mechanisms. This is in addition to the reservations we may have, based on our Arab-Islamic cultural background, regarding some of these theories.

Among the issues extensively explored in Western linguistic research is the cohesion of texts and the mechanisms that have been established to form the foundation of this study. However, what deserves closer examination here is the extent of the contribution made by Arab linguists—or rather, classical Arabic scholarship—to this field. What frameworks, tools, and linguistic methods were identified for this purpose? What artistic and aesthetic values characterized their discourse? Or is textual cohesion purely a product of Western linguistic research, born from minds passionate about exploration, eager to delve into the unknown, and dedicated to uncovering hidden truths?

The reality is that textual coherence and cohesion were subjects of great interest and focus for classical Arab rhetoricians. Their research into this matter was extensive and took various directions. One such aspect that merits attention is the study of **"fasl wa wasl"** (separation and connection), which Arab scholars examined with great enthusiasm and thorough analysis.

The linguistic definition of these terms appears in Arabic lexicons, where "wasl" (connection) is described as the opposite of "fasl" (separation): *"Wasl" means joining one thing with another. (Ibn Manzur, n.d., p. 224).* On the other hand, "fasl" refers to the separation between two things: *"Fasl is the gap between two things; to separate means to create a division between them.* (Ibn Manzur, n.d., p. 180).

In rhetorical terminology, **"wasl"** refers to connecting one sentence to another with the conjunction **"wa"** (and), while **"fasl"** is the omission of this conjunction (Al-Jarim & Amin, n.d., p. 228).

Perhaps one of the earliest scholars to discuss this topic was **Al-Jahiz**, a prominent figure in Arabic rhetoric. He quoted a Persian scholar as saying:

"What is eloquence? It is knowing the difference between separation and connection." (Al-Jahiz, n.d., p. 111).

Similarly, **Abu Al-Abbas Al-Saffah** advised his scribe:

"Pause at the points where speech naturally ends, and be careful not to mix what is well-ordered with what is disorganized. One of the ornaments of eloquence is knowing when to separate and when to connect." (Abu Hilal, 2002, p. 497).

Furthermore, in *Kitab al-Sina'atayn*, it is narrated that **Caliph Al-Ma'mun** said: *"If eloquence is devoid of the knowledge of when to separate and when to connect, it is like pearls without a string."* (Abu Hilal, 2002).

And the most significant aspect of these numerous texts is the clarification of how crucial it is to separate or connect the segments of speech—particularly sentences—in conveying meanings and comprehending both the overall and specific intents of discourse. This is achieved with eloquence of style, linguistic precision, refined craftsmanship, and skillful composition, all of which are hallmarks of Arab rhetorical tradition. The Arabs have always been keen on producing a rhythm that delights the ear and pleases the soul, reflecting their artistic passion for speech. This concern for the harmony of expression extends from **Al-Jahiz to Al-Jurjani** and those who followed in their path.

Thus, the study of **"fasl wa wasl"** (separation and connection) emerges as a meticulous exploration of the structure of Arabic rhetorical texts. To emphasize this idea, one scholar states:

"Know that there is no branch of rhetoric that you might consider obscure, intricate, and difficult except that the study of this topic is even more obscure, more intricate, and more difficult." (Al-Jurjani, 1992, p. 187).

This issue fundamentally revolves around whether to connect one word to another or one sentence to another through **conjunctions**, following grammatical and semantic considerations, or whether to omit such connections.

However, the **central focus** of this discussion is specifically on the conjunction **"wa"** (**و**) rather than the many other conjunctions available in Arabic, despite their diverse meanings and functions. While all conjunctions serve to establish cohesion and balance within the text, each carries a distinct role:

- **Fa' (ف)** indicates **immediacy and sequence** (e.g., *He gave me, so I thanked him* → The thanks followed immediately after the giving).

- **Thumma (ثم)** indicates **sequence with delay** (e.g., *Zaid arrived, then Amr* → Amr's arrival occurred after Zaid's, with a time gap in between).

- **Aw (أو)** expresses **choice** (e.g., *Eat dates or grapes* → The listener is given the choice between the two).

- **Bal (بل)** denotes **correction or contrast** (e.g., *Zaid arrived, rather Amr* → Meaning Amr arrived, not Zaid).

Unlike these conjunctions, the **wa (و)** possesses unique **semantic and structural properties** that distinguish it significantly. Its presence or absence between words or sentences can introduce subtle shifts in meaning, making it the primary focus of the **study of "fasl wa wasl"**.

This research will delve into the essence of this topic with analysis and explanation, investigating its nuances and variations. It will examine the ways in which **wa** contributes to textual cohesion, balancing two essential dimensions: **grammatical structure and semantic coherence**.

1.The Grammatical Basis

A. Connecting One Word to Another

When **wa (و)** is placed between two nouns, its function is to **convey grammatical agreement** between them. The second noun adopts the grammatical case of the first, whether nominative, accusative, or genitive. For example:

- **"Jā'a Zaydun wa 'Amrٌ"** (جاء زيد وعمرو) → Both **Zayd** and **Amr** are in the nominative case as subjects.

- **"Akramtu Zaydan wa 'Aliyyan"** (أكرمت زيدا وعليا) → Both **Zayd** and **Ali** are in the accusative case as direct objects.

- **"Laqītu bi-'Amrin wa Zaydٍ"** (التقيت بعمرو وزيد) → **Zayd** follows **'Amr** in taking the genitive case due to the preposition **bi**.

On the other hand, **appositions and descriptive phrases** (such as adjectives, emphatic pronouns, and explanatory words) do not require a conjunction because they inherently belong to the same entity they describe. Examples:

- **"Qaddamat al-quwwāt al-khāṣṣa 'arḍan amāma al-ḥāḍirīn"** (قدمت القوات الخاصة عرضًا أمام الحاضرين).

- *Al-khāṣṣa (الخاصة) is an adjective of al-quwwāt (القوات) and does not require a conjunction.*

- **"Istalama al-Fārūq nafsahu mafātīḥa Bayt al-Maqdis"** (*استلم الفاروق نفسه مفاتيح بيت المقدس*).

- *Nafsahu (نفسه) is an emphatic pronoun referring to al-Fārūq (الفاروق), so no conjunction is needed.*

B. Connecting or Separating Sentences

Similarly, in Arabic rhetoric, sentences that serve as **clarifications or confirmations** do not require **wa (و)** because they naturally reinforce the preceding statement.

A prime example is the Quranic verse:

"الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُم بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ" (الرعد 28)

"Those who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah."

This statement **clarifies and confirms** the previous verse:

"وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ أَنَابَ" (الرعد 27)

"And He guides to Him those who turn in repentance."

Since **"those who believe and whose hearts find peace"** are the same as **"those who turn in repentance"**, no conjunction was needed. The omission of **wa (و)** strengthens the connection between the two statements, making the bond between them more emphatic.

Another example is:

"قُلْ أَنفِقُوا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا لَّن يُتَقَبَّلَ مِنكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ" (التوبة 53)

"Say: Spend willingly or unwillingly, it will never be accepted from you, for you have been a rebellious people."

Here, the phrase **"إِنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ"** (*for you have been a rebellious people*) is directly explaining **why** Allah rejects their spending. Since it serves as an explanation and confirmation, it is **not connected with wa (و)**. Instead, the separation enhances the **forcefulness** of the argument, making the rejection more emphatic and undeniable.

B. Connecting a Sentence to Another Sentence

There are **two cases** when a sentence is conjoined to another sentence using **wa (و)**:

1. When the First Sentence Has a Grammatical Position (i‘rāb)

In this case, the second sentence **inherits the grammatical role** of the first, just as a noun follows another in coordination. An example:

- **"Yatwashaḥu al-mujāhidūn bi-awsimatin ashkāluhā basīṭah wa dalālātuhā ‘aẓīmah."**
(*يتوشح المجاهدون بأوسمة أشكالها بسيطة ودلالاتها عظيمة*)

o The phrase **"ashkāluhā basīṭah"** is an **adjective clause** (na‘t) describing **"awsimah"** (medals).

o The second phrase **"dalālātuhā ‘aẓīmah"** is also an **adjective clause**, following the first in both meaning and grammatical role, connected via **wa (و)**.

Similarly:

- **"Alqā al-imām darsan mawḍū‘uhu qayyim wa mu‘ālijatuhu kānat qāṣirah."**
(*ألقى الإمام درسا موضوعه قيم ومعالجته كانت قاصرة*)

o **"Mawḍū‘uhu qayyim"** is an adjective clause (na‘t) modifying **"darsan"** (lesson).

o **"Mu‘ālijatuhu kānat qāṣirah"** inherits the same role, as it is conjoined using **wa (و)**.

For **a sentence to be conjoined properly**, it must meet these **conditions**:

1. **The first sentence must have a grammatical function** (*i.e., be part of a larger grammatical structure, like an adjective clause*).

2. **The second sentence must share the same function** and follow the first in meaning and structure.

2. When the First Sentence Has No Grammatical Position

In some cases, a sentence is **independent** and **does not serve a grammatical function** within a larger structure. In such cases, the conjunction **wa (و)** only links the two thoughts without affecting their syntax.

Example:

- **"Zaydun kātib wa ‘Amru shā‘ir."**

(زيد كاتب وعمرو شاعر)

Although both sentences are linked in **meaning** (both describe occupations), **wa (و)** does not affect the **i‘rāb** of the second sentence. The **independence** of each sentence means there is **no syntactic transfer** between them.

Thus, the key difference is:

- **In the first case**, wa (و) **carries over the grammatical role** from the first clause to the second.
- **In the second case**, wa (و) **only connects ideas**, without affecting the grammatical structure.

This distinction is a fundamental concept in **fasl wa wasl** (separation and connection) in Arabic rhetoric.

2. The Semantic Basis:

Thus, there must be semantic and meaningful justifications to resolve this ambiguity and provide reasons for such coordination. In reality, mentioning something alongside its opposite, equivalent, or counterpart is recognized by sound logic before being affirmed by linguistic or cultural contexts. It is deeply ingrained in the intellect and firmly established in human nature, so that when the state of the first is known, the state of the second must also be understood.

This becomes evident when something unrelated is conjoined with the first, where no connection exists between them, and the presence of one does not necessitate the presence of the other. In such cases, the construction and meaning become incoherent. For instance, saying: *"Zayd is tall, and Amr is a poet."* There is no connection or similarity between Zayd’s height and Amr’s poetry.

Therefore, a justification must be provided to explain why Amr's state is mentioned alongside Zayd’s as a coordinated phrase. Hence, there must be a semantic basis between the two components of the coordination that justifies this linkage.

A similar example is the criticism directed at Abu Tammam for his verse:

"No, by Him who knows that separation is bitter, And that Abu al-Husayn is generous."

There is no correlation between Abu al-Husayn's generosity and the bitterness of separation. There is no logical connection between the two, nor any reason to link them. On the other hand, it would be necessary and correct to say: *"Zayd is a writer, and Amr is a poet,"* or *"Zayd is tall, and Amr is short,"* as this establishes a legitimate basis for using the coordinating conjunction *wa* (and) between the two statements. This linkage is valid when their simultaneous presence leads to a description, comparison, or clarification of each in relation to the other, as required by speech.

Another example is saying: *"I embarked on a journey, and my neighbor eats a lot..."* which invites ridicule because there is no necessary connection, comparison, or logical association between the two elements. This deviates from meaningful speech, which is a fundamental condition of a proper sentence according to grammarians (Qubsh, 1985, p. 5).

In reality, we frequently use such expressions, such as *"Knowledge is light, and ignorance is darkness,"* or *"Generosity is a virtue, and miserliness is a vice."* The idea that *"knowledge is light"* is inherently tied to the idea that *"ignorance is darkness,"* just as the notion that *"generosity is a virtue"* is naturally linked to the idea that *"miserliness is a vice."*

Similarly, the connection becomes inevitable when two actions share the same ruling, as in:

"Do not forbid a trait while practicing it yourself— That is a great disgrace upon you if you do so." Or *"What I said and what you heard is sufficient for you."*

In these examples, the verbs *"forbid-commit"* and *"said-heard"* are interdependent and inherently linked because they are attributed to the same subject and are opposites. Their connection through *wa* (and) is essential, and omitting the conjunction would disrupt the sentence structure and meaning.

When the subject of both clauses is the same, such as: *"He harms and benefits," "He offends and does good,"* or *"He permits and prohibits,"* the sense of conjunction in *wa* becomes even stronger and more apparent. The coordinating conjunction is essential; otherwise, the second clause would contradict the first. For example, saying: *"He profits, he loses"* without *wa* leads to ambiguity and confusion, disrupting the intended meaning and rendering the sentence invalid. However, inserting *wa* clarifies that he sometimes profits and sometimes loses, which is a natural occurrence in life.

As for the subtle rhetorical nuances that create coherence between sentences without relying on *wa*, they establish cohesion through implicit connections rather than an explicit linking word. An example is found in the Quran:

"Indeed, those who disbelieve—it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them—they will not believe.
Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and their hearing, and over their eyes is a veil. And for them is a great punishment." (Al-Baqarah 6-7)

Here, *"They will not believe"* reinforces *"It is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them,"* and *"Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and their hearing"* serves as an even stronger confirmation. The independence of these clauses, without explicit conjunctions, enhances their force, decisiveness, and emphasis, thereby reinforcing textual cohesion without an explicit linker. The reasoning is that someone whose state remains unchanged regardless of warning is in deep ignorance and has inevitably been sealed off from guidance (Al-Jurjani, 1992, p. 176). Confirmation is inherently tied to what is being affirmed and does not require an explicit connector.

On the other hand, instances where separation is necessary include the Quranic verse:

"And when they meet those who believe, they say, 'We have believed.' But when they are alone with their devils, they say, 'Indeed, we are with you; we were only mocking.'

Allah mocks them and prolongs them in their transgression, wandering blindly." (Al-Baqarah 14-15)

At first glance, one might expect *"Allah mocks them"* to be conjoined with *"We were only mocking,"* for two reasons:

1. The two statements share a common theme—mockery. The verb is central in both clauses, representing an action and its reaction.

2. Similar constructions in the Quran do use coordination, such as:

"They seek to deceive Allah, but He deceives them." (An-Nisa 142)

"And they planned, and Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planners." (Aal-Imran 53-54)

So why is *"Allah mocks them"* separated from *"We were only mocking"*?

Al-Jurjani justifies this by highlighting the shift in speech mode. *"We were only mocking"* is a quotation from the hypocrites, not a statement from Allah. In contrast, *"Allah mocks them"* is a divine statement reporting His response to their hypocrisy. Thus, conjoining a divine statement with a human quotation is inappropriate.

Furthermore, independent sentences that are not explicitly linked to previous ones carry greater force and clarity, whether used for emphasis, clarification, contrast, or retribution. In this case, the separation actually enhances textual coherence. This independence is a hallmark of Arabic rhetorical style, adding richness and depth to its expressive capacity.

By contrast, the coordination in:

"They seek to deceive Allah, but He deceives them."

or

"And they planned, and Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planners."

is justified because the speech remains in the same mode—a divine statement about the hypocrites, rather than a mix of reported speech and direct assertion.

Thus, the mode of discourse—whether it is a divine statement or a quotation—plays a key role in determining whether coordination or separation is appropriate. If the discourse level remains uniform, coordination occurs; if it shifts, separation is necessary. And Allah, the Most High, knows best.

Conclusion:

First and foremost, it is necessary to highlight the key features, fundamental data, and central considerations, as they represent the essence and overall outcomes of the topic under discussion, from beginning to end.

It can be said that meaning—whether implicit or explicit—emerges from the interconnection of linguistic structures, the harmony of verbal embellishments, and the intertwining of rhetorical elements. It forms the foundation of textual interactions aimed at achieving communicative purposes. As has been stated: “The definition of language is that it consists of sounds by which each people express their objectives” (Ibn Jinni, 2006, p. 67).

Due to the vast scope of its manifestations and the diverse ways it appears in linguistic discourse, meaning is present in syntax, rhetoric, morphology, phonetics, and all other linguistic domains.

Linguistic studies, with all their diversity and abundance, have explored these mechanisms and spheres, conducting thorough investigations to determine the extent to which they provide linguistic tools and means capable of effectively conveying meaning with clarity and elegance, using multiple approaches and varied methods. This has

become evident in the topic under analysis, revealing itself as an artistic tableau showcasing the beauty of the Arabic language and its deep, multifaceted, and rich expressive capabilities.

This study has examined the issue of coordination and separation in language, focusing on the core aspect of linking sentences using the coordinating conjunction **waaw** (و) or omitting it—similar to how individual words may be conjoined. This domain is rich with textual cohesion elements and is governed by both grammatical and semantic considerations.

From a grammatical perspective, for example, a sentence is connected to the previous one if the first has a syntactic function. Consider the statement: **"The state launched a project whose challenges are immediate, and whose benefits are forthcoming."** Here, the phrase **"whose benefits are forthcoming"** follows the grammatical ruling applied to **"whose challenges are immediate,"** as it serves as an adjective for **"project."** The presence of the conjunction **waaw** between these parts of the sentence is essential because the latter clause presents a contrasting aspect of the former.

However, coordination can also occur without relying on **waaw**. In the verse: **"When they meet those who believe, they say, 'We believe,' but when they are alone with their devils, they say, 'Indeed, we are with you; we were only mocking.'"** (Al-Baqara 2:14),
the phrase **"Indeed, we are only mocking"** serves to emphasize **"Indeed, we are with you"** without adding new meaning. Since the second clause is not distinct from the first, it does not require an explicit conjunction for connection.

On the other hand, semantic considerations are broader, more flexible, and more expressive than grammatical rules. These considerations are determined by logical and cultural associations, as well as contextual relationships—such as pairing beauty with ugliness, knowledge with ignorance, standing with sitting, and tallness with shortness. These pairs are naturally linked in human cognition as opposites, equivalents, or similarities, such that understanding one necessitates awareness of the other. If the conjunction were omitted in these cases, the intended meaning might become distorted.

For instance, stating **"Knowledge is light"** or **"Zayd is tall"** naturally evokes the contrast **"Ignorance is darkness"** or **"Amr is short."**

Secondly, while this discussion has focused on a purely linguistic matter, it is essential—out of fairness, acknowledgment, and respect—to recognize the profound intellectual and cultural achievements of our predecessors. Their contributions have been inscribed in history with golden letters, leaving enduring marks on the fabric of time. These were civilizations that laid the foundations for intellectual, scientific, and cultural progress.

Despite the challenges they faced—where even securing daily sustenance required practicing a trade or craft, and acquiring writing materials like paper and ink was a struggle—our ancestors reached remarkable heights in knowledge and civilization. This stands in stark contrast to today's scholars, who benefit from ideal conditions and abundant resources that greatly facilitate academic and intellectual pursuits.

Yet, our predecessors left an indelible legacy, achieving milestones that touched the sky, excelling in scientific and cultural advancements, and elevating human civilization.

This affirms that progress is not linked to racial superiority, ethnic distinction, or the genius of one nation over another. Rather, it is the result of a **civilizational transformation** that occurs when a nation consolidates its foundational principles, clarifies its objectives, and solidifies its existence. Once a civilization defines its major concerns and aspirations, its progress becomes an inevitable outcome.

This is what happened in the past when Muslim civilizations flourished, and today, this progress is unfolding elsewhere in the world.

May peace and blessings be upon the leader of the first and last generations, the Seal of the Prophets, the Imam of the righteous, the model for the virtuous and their followers. Peace be upon all the messengers, and all praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

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