

TEXTUAL CONSISTENCY AND ITS MECHANISMS IN QURANIC INTERPRETATION: AL-RAZI'S INTERPRETATION OF MAFATIH AL-GHAYB AS A MODEL



Chaima bedadda *
University El oued
bedadda-chaima@univ-eloued.dz
Meriem gheraissa
University El oued
gheraissa-meriem@univ-eloued.dz

Date of submission: 01/02/2026 Date of acceptance: 24/05/2026 Date of publication: 08/06/2026



Abstract:

In the modern era, the field of linguistic studies has witnessed a study focused on a broader level than the sentence, represented by the text. When examining the theoretical and applied data provided by the textual study, the researcher notes points of similarity between it and the Arabic heritage in various fields.

In this research paper, we will seek to shed light on the applied aspect that distinguishes the Arabic and Islamic linguistic heritage; specifically, the interpretive study of the concept of coherence and its mechanisms in Al-Razi's interpretation.

key words: Text linguistics, coherence, Quranic interpretation, keys to the unseen, Al-Razi.

1.Introduction:

Even if the term of coherence used in the field of textual studies is new and means simply a criterion for the cohesion of surface constructions, our textual heritage of Arab civilization in its different fields has clearly and practically applied these new ideologies and methods. Among these fields, the science of Tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis)

* Corresponding Author

has taken into account the textuality of the Qur'an to the greatest extent, taking advantage of wide possibilities for the presence of all the above-mentioned ideas and strategies, especially, the criterion of cohesion with respect to the antecedents of pronouns and the demonstrative noun, ellipses and others.

So, among these Tafsirs we can mention Mafatih al-Ghayb (The Keys to the Unseen) by Al-Razi as it contains many issues that show the clear presence of the coherence criterion in his exegetical practice, especially in its procedural form. Hence, the reason behind the preparation of this research paper, entitled: "Textual Coherence and Its Mechanisms in Qur'anic Exegesis: Al-Razi's Mafatih al-Ghayb as a Model", is to know the extent to which the signs of the coherence criterion are present in Al-Razi's Tafsir. The first part introduces the theory and mechanism of the coherence criterion and the second part elucidates the practices of Mafatih al-Ghayb in respect of the coherence criterion. This part will be approached descriptively.

2. Coherence and Its Mechanisms in the Contemporary Textual Lesson:

One of the criteria conditioning the textuality of utterances is coherence. It is realized through a set of textual mechanisms. In this chapter, we attempt to tackle the notion of coherence and its most salient mechanisms.

1.2 Coherence:

In order to explain coherence we need to specify both the linguistic and the terminological meanings of the mechanism of coherence.

A/ Linguistic Meaning:

The Arabic word for coherence is taken from the word "وسق" (wasaq). Ibn Manzur in 711 AH said "al-wasaq: what the night encompasses and contains; the night was 'wasaq' and 'ittasaq'; everything that is joined together is 'ittasaq'". In this, the road 'yataasaq' and 'yattasaq' means it joins (al-Kisai), and the moon 'ittasaq' means it became steady. (And so I swear: by the glow of sunset, by the cloak of night with its hidden mysteries, and by the moon in its moment of complete illumination.)[Quran 84:16-18]. Al-Farra said: 'what it includes' means what is gathered and joined. The moon's coherence means its fullness, gathering, and steadiness [...] and to 'wasaq' something means to gather and carry it. The term al-Wasaq means the joining of one thing to another. The 'istawsqu' of Uhud means they gathered together as sheep

are gathered [...] Coherence means regularity.... From the above ¹ explanation of coherence, it seems that this term is related to its linguistic meaning of gathering something together in a specific manner.

B/ Terminological Meaning:

According to the Dictionary of Discourse Analysis, coherence is "(the set of linguistic means that link elements within a sentence and between sentences, allowing an utterance, whether oral or written, to appear as a text)". By the same token, coherence is understood as the ² interface of textual criteria, through the surface of texts by the connection of linguistic tools in sequences under the authority of grammatical rules³.

2.2 Consistency Mechanisms:

Some scholars identify a set of mechanisms -Linguistic mechanisms are among the tools of text linguistics that aid in text analysis ⁴- that contribute to establishing this consistency, which will be discussed below.

2.3 Reference (Anaphora):

In modern textual studies, the term reference has generally been defined as: "the return of some expressed elements to other elements that we estimate within the text or the context"⁵. In other words, reference indicates the importance of some linguistic elements for other elements that may be explicitly mentioned in the text or implied and understood through the context. Thus, there are two types of reference:

A/Contextual Reference (External Reference):

According to de Beaugrande (1998, p. 332), an outside world reference is "reference to the unmentioned", which includes whatever is relevant outside of the text. Reference is not determined by the words, but by the communicative situation of the text in terms of a world knowledge⁶. That is, it is the reference which includes the referent as one of the elements of the context.

B/ Internal Reference (Textual Reference):

Palek (2007, p. 211) ⁷ describes textual reference as "a linguistic expression related to another linguistic expression within the text", which in turn subdivides into the following two types:

- Anaphora is a linguistic device where a word or expression points back to an earlier element within the same discourse⁸, or in other words, a reference to what has been previously mentioned in the text.

▪ This occurs when a deictic element refers to a subsequent element in the text⁹ and the referent is a term that appears later in the text.

2.4 Ellipsis:

De Beaugrande defines ellipsis as "the omission of surface expressions whose conceptual content can be inferred, expanded, or modified mentally by the incomplete expressions"¹⁰. Ellipsis can be analyzed in three ways¹¹ :

A. Nominal Ellipsis:

So named because the omitted element is a noun.

B. Verbal Ellipsis:

In this case, what is omitted is a verb (or a verb and its subject, by implication).

C. Structural Ellipsis:

An ellipsis can involve omission of entire structures such as a sentence, a clause, a phrase, or a word.

2.5 Substitution:

Substitution, another type of cohesion, refers to the replacement of one expression with another within the same text¹² . From a textual point of view, substitution can be classified into three types according to Abu Ghazala and Khalil¹³ :

A/Nominal Substitution:

Here, the nouns are being replaced with other, another, one, etc¹⁴.

B/Verbal Substitution:

This is done by using the auxiliary verb "do" in place of previously mentioned verbs in the same or similar context.

C/Structural Substitution:

In this type the replaced expression is complex, such as the whole sentence or larger, and is replaced with words such as "that", "thus", etc.

2.6 Conjunction:

Conjunctions, the cohesion device which appears between sentences, is a technique that connects the sentences of a text¹⁵ and their structures by relying on various tools¹⁶ without going inside the sentences themselves. It is also classified into several types.

A/ Additive Cohesion (Cumulative):

This relation connects both the pieces of information by combining them¹⁷.

B/ Adversative Cohesion (Contrasting):

This type connects two related pieces of information that have a conflicting or opposing relationship¹⁸. The most common tools are "but" and "rather".

C/ Causal Cohesion (Distributive):

This type refers to the word or words that show the logical relation between the two statements, one of which is the reason and the other one is the result¹⁹: "fa" (فـ), "lam al-ta'lil" (لام التعليل), "hatta" (حتى), and "li-hatha" (لهذا)...

2.7 Lexical Cohesion:

Lexical cohesion mainly refers to lexical relations²⁰. In other words, it deals with word-to-word relationships or word combinations in the text. There are two main lexical patterns:

A/ Repetition:

The term "repetition" has not witnessed widespread disagreement in defining its meaning; its concept is clear, evident, and relatively stable²¹, Repetition according to Halliday and Ruqayya Hassan is the recurrence of a lexical item in a text, whether in the same form as before or in the form of a synonym, a near-synonym or a superordinate (a more general word).²²

B/ Collocation:

Collocation is a linguistic term that refers to the regular co-occurrence of two or more words in similar linguistic contexts²³. Collocational relations are semantic relations between lexemes of one language, such as antonymy, contrast, part-whole, inclusion, etc²⁴.

3. Cohesion and Its Mechanisms in Al-Razi's Tafsir:

The cohesion criterion appears in different forms throughout Al-Razi's exegesis but is of more interest to us here as a procedural method expressed in interpretive activity -Interpretation and exegesis are overlapping terms; interpretation means clarifying the text, while exegesis goes beyond that to independent reasoning²⁵ -The following are the mechanisms of the criterion of cohesion, we cannot enter into details of the mechanisms of cohesion extracted from his interpretation keys because of the amount of his work.

Thus, in most aspects of the research paper, we will suffice with a single evidence for each mechanism without exploring branches, except that sometimes we reinforce the evidence that may be ambiguous. Among the models of the actual practice of the concept of reference is his explanation of the verse:

Among those chosen for distinction were certain prophets, the lineage of Adam, the companions of Noah's voyage, and the offspring of Abraham and Jacob. To them, when the recitation of the All-Merciful reached their ears, they would bow down in prostration, their eyes brimming with tears.

In light of this, God Almighty has honored each of these prophets. Ultimately, He referenced them collectively by stating, 'These are the ones God has blessed,' indicating the gift of prophethood along with the other graces noted. Then he said 'Those', by which he meant every one of the prophets mentioned in this surah from Zakariya to the Prophet Idris, then he grouped the descendants, saying 'Children of Adam', then said 'Children of those who were carried with Noah'. The Prophet Idris, peace be upon him, is a descendant of Adam, yet his lineage does not trace back through Noah's line, as he preceded Noah peace be upon him according to the established narratives. And the one of those who were carried by (the Ark) with Noah peace be upon him who is last in distinction is (the most exalted is) Abraham, peace be upon him. And all his sons were the sons of Sam, son of Noah peace be upon him. And Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, peace be upon them, are his ancestors. Then he specified him as a descendant of the prophets of Israel (Jacob), namely, Moses, Aaron, Zakariya, Yahya, and Jesus from his mother's side. Thus, Allah, the Exalted, arranged the states of the prophets, peace be upon them, mentioned in this order, indicating that as they were distinguished by their deeds, they have an additional distinction by their lineage from these prophets.

He then explained that they are among those whom We have guided and chosen, indicating that they were specifically selected for these stations for the guidance of Allah Almighty for them and because He chose them for the message²⁶. The implication (الإحالة باسم الإشارة) mentioned by the Imam were realized through numerous indications, the most important of which is his statement that the referent mentioned earlier in the text implies his understanding and classification of this example within the category of prior textual reference (الإحالة النصية القبلية).

Although we cannot take this as certain proof of Al-Razi's grasp of reference in its entirety, another example of it is found in his explanation of the verse of Allah Almighty: "So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?" (Ar-Rahman 13) .

He said: "This verse contains discussions: (First) To whom is the address directed? We say there are several opinions: (First) Humans and jinn, and this has three aspects: (One) It is said that 'al-anam' (الأنام) is a name for both jinn and humans, as previously mentioned, so the pronoun returns to the generic sense in 'al-anam.' (Second) 'Al-anam' is the name for 'humans' and 'jinn,' since the intended meaning becomes clear later with the phrase 'and created the jinn,' so the pronoun returns to them." Why would it not, when it is permissible for the pronoun to refer to the intended meaning even if not explicitly mentioned? You say: 'I do not know which is better, Zaid or Amr.' (Third) The addressees are intended in the intention, not the wording, as if it said: 'So which of the favors of your Lord do you two deny?' O mankind (النفال). The second and third [verses] either masculine or feminine: so the pronoun returns to them and the address is to them. Another implication is that 'So which of the favors of your Lord do you deny?' is said in the singular, to stress the point²⁷.

It also shows that Al-Razi had a full understanding of the notion of reference and its various categories.

He sought to discover the object of the attached pronoun in the two words, and this was by part (one hand) and the other hand, that is, the possibility of referring to what was not mentioned indicated by "the intended" and "nothing mentioned from it". That is, his adherence to the binary division of reference according to the criterion of the presence or absence of the referent. Collectively this is known as the interpretive procedural framework²⁸.

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's exegetical works at times utilized syntactic omissions. This can be observed in his treatment of the Quranic verse, "So whoever among you is ill or on a journey [then] an equal number of days [are to be made up]" (2:184), referring to breaking one's fast, and similarly in the verse, "So whoever among you is ill or has an ailment of the head [then] a ransom [as substitute] of fasting or charity" (2:196), concerning shaving. The importance of the ellipsis is that the addressees have the knowledge of the ellipsis. This is an example of ellipsis. This also gives us a hypothesis about the nature of ellipsis and gives us a procedural grasp of the semantics of this construction. He identified

ellipsis in texts, claiming that ellipsis is allowed in utterances because of (verbal-textual) signs in the text or because of (realistic-communicative) knowledge of the addressees. Accordingly, he treated verbal-textual and realistic-communicative cues for ellipsis as two types of their occurrence. Regarding what he intended by the substitution mechanism in al-Razi's meaning, many examples exist of it. The first example is his explanation of the words of Allah, the Almighty.

The trumpet will be blown after, and everyone in the heavens and on the earth will fall dead except whom Allah wills. Then the trumpet blows again they stand looking on at (Az-Zumar: 68). Thus "another" (here) means: The trumpet blows once then it blows again. The omission is stylistically good because "another" indicates the omitted blowing and it is understood²⁹. Here, the exegete did not actually refer to the meaning of textual substitution, since the omitted element-the word "blowing"-is the very element replaced, and the word "another" is the textual substitute, which acts as a contextual clue compensating for the absence of the omitted word "blowing"³⁰.

He further highlights the practical methodology employed by Al-Razi, which is particularly evident in Al-Razi's exegesis of Quranic verses featuring multiple, interlinked conjunctive clauses. This is illustrated in his analysis of the divine verse:

(On that Day, faces will be whitened and faces will be blackened. Those with blackened faces hear, "Did you disbelieve after your belief?" [Ai-Imran 3:106] (Then taste the punishment for what you used to deny.) When Allah talks about these two groups with the statement: "On the Day when faces will be whitened and faces will be blackened", he always mentions whitened faces before he mentions blackened faces. But when judgment is to be pronounced, Allah talks about the judgment for the blackened faces first, although it should have been in the opposite order. One of them is that the joint conjunction "and" (wa) is for aggregation and not for sequence. The purpose of creation is mercy and not punishment. The Prophet, peace be upon him, narrated from Allah, the Exalted, "I created them to benefit Me, not to benefit themselves.". The³¹ exegete explained that the conjunction "and" (wa) here is only to combine the clauses, with no other function than that which other conjunctions have.

An example of solidarity (التضام) and repetition can be seen in Al-Razi's exegetical work, where he focuses on the correspondence between the terms mentioned in a verse. For example, he writes: "Know that there is a correspondence between usury (الربا) and charity (الصدقة) in terms of opposition, because charity involves the reduction of wealth due to God's command, while usury involves seeking an increase in wealth despite God's prohibition. Thus, they are opposites. For this reason, God Almighty said: 'God nullifies usury and increases charity.' When this type of relationship occurs between these two rulings, it is natural that the ruling on usury is mentioned after the ruling on charity"³². Thus, from his analytic and procedural approach to the opposition between the two, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's exegetical works explicitly articulate the concept of solidarity/contingency, demonstrating a clear interconnection between the two within the texts.

As far as repetition is concerned, he defined it in terms of its purpose, saying that "Repetition for the sake of emphasis is frequent in the Qur'an"³³. Emphasis is the purpose that it serves in many instances.

4. Conclusion:

We give our main conclusions at the end of this paper, but we summarize them here:

A notable manifestation of robust textual coherence appears in Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's exegetical work, which aligns with contemporary standards of cohesive discourse. Accordingly, the exegetical approach of al-Razi demonstrably utilizes referentiality, a recognized mechanism of modern coherence. Within this framework, ellipsis emerges as a pivotal cohesive device in his hermeneutical system. Furthermore, al-Razi's methodology incorporates substitution, another form of coherence identified in modern analysis. His interpretive strategy also exhibits the feature of connection, evident from an analysis of interrelated verses in his commentary "Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb" (The Keys to the Unseen). Additionally, studies in exegetical literature, particularly focusing on al-Razi's writings, have examined lexical cohesion through the lenses of solidarity and reiteration.

Footnotes

¹ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, ed. ‘Abdullah al-Kabīr et al., Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d., vol. 5, pp. 4836–4837.

² Patrick Charaud and Dominique Maingueneau et al., *Dictionary of Discourse Analysis*, trans. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Muhairī and Ḥamādī Ṣamūd, n.d., Tunis: Publications of Dār Sinātr — National Centre for Translation, 2008, p. 100.

³ See: Maryam Ghraïsa, *Textual Practice in the Science of Tafsīr: Tafsīr between al-Rāzī’s Mafātīh al-Ghayb and Ibn ‘Ashūr’s al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* [PhD dissertation], El Oued: University of Martyr Ḥamma al-Akhdar, Faculty of Arts and Languages, 2022, p. 35.

⁴ See: Muhammad Al-Salih Atiq Al-Arabi and Asmahan Masra’, Morphological Analysis of the Words of the Holy Qur’an in Light of Digital Transformation, *Qabas Journal for Human and Social Studies*, Al-Wadi, Algeria, Volume 09, Issue 02, December 2025, p. 139.

⁵ Maḥmūd Sulaymān Ḥusayn al-Hawwāsha, *The Effect of Cohesion Elements on Textual Coherence — A Textual Study through Sūrat Yūsuf* [Master’s thesis], Mutah University, 2008, p. 65.

⁶ See: Robert de Beaugrand, *Text, Discourse and Action*, trans. Tamām Ḥassān, 1st ed., Cairo: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1998, p. 332.

⁷ Bohumil Balík, “Textual Reference — Cross-Reference: A Contribution to Supra-grammar,” in *Linguistics of the Text: Toward New Horizons* (eds. Sa‘īd Ḥasan Biḥīrī), 1st ed., Cairo: Maktabat Zahrā’ al-Sharq, 2007, p. 211.

⁸ Ṣubḥī Ibrāhīm al-Faqī, *Textual Linguistics between Theory and Practice — A Study on the Meccan Sūras*, 1st ed., Cairo: Dār Qubā’, 2000, p. 38.

⁹ See: Jalāl Muṣṭafāwī, *Textual Cohesion and Harmony in Sūrat al-Kahf — An Approach in the Light of Text Linguistics* [PhD dissertation], Tlemcen: Abū Bakr Belkaïd University, Faculty of Arts and Languages, n.d., p. 269.

¹⁰ Robert de Beaugrand, *Text, Discourse and Action* (op. cit.), p. 301.

¹¹ See: Ṭāhir Sulaymān Ḥamūda, *The Phenomenon of Ellipsis in Linguistic Study*, reprint, Alexandria: Al-Dār al-Jāmi‘iyya, 1998, pp. 199–253.

¹² See: Maḥmūd Aḥmad Naḥla, *New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research*, 1st ed., Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 2011, p. 213.

¹³ See: Ilhām Abū Ghazāla and Aḥmad 'Alī Khalīl, *An Introduction to Text Linguistics*, 1st ed., [Beirut?]: Dār al-Kātib Press, 1992, pp. 96–97.

¹⁴ See: Aḥmad Ḥusānī, *Textual Linguistic Foundations — A Study in Cognitive Bases and Methodological Premises*, [Journal of the College of Islamic and Arabic Studies], UAE, No. 50, 2016, p. 236.

¹⁵ See: Asmā' Rafaṭ Shihāb, *Towards the Text: Between Theory and Practice*, 1st ed., Alexandria: Dār al-Wafā', 2016, pp. 85–86.

¹⁶ Maryam Ghraïsa, *Textual Practice in the Science of Tafsīr*, p. 93.

¹⁷ See: Muḥammad Yāsīn 'Alyūwī al-Shukkūrī, *Textual Linguistics: Applied Studies*, Amman: Academic Book Centre, 2020, p. 41.

¹⁸ See: Jalāl Muṣṭafāwī, *An Introduction to Text Linguistics: Images of Cohesion and Relations of Harmony in Sūrat al-Kahf*, reprint, Algeria: New University Publishing, 2017, p. 175.

And: Muṣṭafā Ḥamīda, *Conjunctive Styles in the Holy Qur'ān*, 1st ed., Beirut: Librarie du Liban Publishers, 1999, p. 384.

¹⁹ See: Ḥanān Sa'ādāt 'Awda, *The Letters of Ibn Ḥazm: A Study of the Two Treatises "Ṭawq al-Ḥamāma" and "Fī Mudāwāt al-Nufūs" as a Model — A Study in Text Linguistics*, 1st ed., Jordan: The National Library of Jordan, 2015, p. 103.

²⁰ See: Ḥusām Aḥmad Faraj, *Theory of Text Linguistics — A Methodological Vision in Constructing Prose Text*, 2nd ed., Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 2009, p. 106.

And: Nadā Mar'ashlī Huwwārī, *Stylistics: Structure — Function*, 1st ed., Beirut: Dār al-Nahda al-Arabiyya, 2015, p. 89.

²¹ See: Asma Zwaghi, The Rhetoric of Repetition and its Impact on Building Educational Awareness and Contemporary Advocacy Discourse, Qabas Journal for Human and Social Studies, El Oued, Algeria, Volume 09, Issue 02, December 2025, p. 1294.

²² Maryam Ghraïsa, *Textual Practice in the Science of Tafsīr*, p. 108.

²³ See: Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science, *Unified Dictionary of Linguistic Terms — English, French, Arabic*, 2nd ed., Casablanca: New Najah Press, 2003, p. 32.

²⁴ And: Razīq Bouzghaya, *Papers in Text Linguistics*, 1st ed., Algeria: Al-Muthaqqaf for Publishing and Distribution, 2018, p. 73.

²⁵ See: Amna Ahmed Abdul Rahim Daqamseh and Thaer Muhammad Ibrahim, The Methodology of Dr. Muhammad Ratib Al-Nabulsi in his Interpretation "Al-Nabulsi Interpretation": An Applied Reading in

Principles and Objectives, Qabas Journal for Human and Social Studies, Al-Wadi, Algeria, Volume 09, Issue 02, December 2025, p. 1617.

²⁶ Al-Ṭayyib al-ʿAzālī Qawāwa, “The Concept of Textual Cohesion among the Ancients and the Moderns,” *Journal of Arabic Language and Literature*, University of El Oued: Mansour Press, No. 4, 2012, p. 197.

²⁷ Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, ed. [critical edition], 1st ed., Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981, vol. 21, pp. 234–235.

²⁸ See: Maryam Ghraïsa, “The Concept of Reference in the Exegesis *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* by al-Rāzī,” [Proceedings of the First National Symposium on Textual Linguistic Terminology in Arabic Discourse (Reception and Production)], Yahia Faris University — Medea, 1 December 2021.

²⁹ Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 27, p. 19.

³⁰ Maryam Ghraïsa, *Textual Practice in the Science of Tafsīr*, p. 82.

³¹ Al-Rāzī, *ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 187.

³² Al-Rāzī, *ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 91.

³³ Al-Rāzī, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 207.