

Discourse Analysis of Quranic Citations concerning the Prophet's Campaigns in Tabari's Chronicle: Speech Acts and the Reproduction of Power

Hasanbeigi, Mohammad ¹  Mohammadi, Reza ²  HassaniNasab, Morteza ³ 

1. Associate Professor, Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Arak University, Arak, Iran (Corresponding Author).

2. Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran.

3. Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Arak University, Arak, Iran.

Corresponding Email: m-hassanbeigi@araku.ac.ir

 <https://doi.org/10.22034/jksl.2025.534737.1484>

Introduction

As one of the most important works of Islamic historiography, Tabari's Chronicle draws on verses of the Holy Quran in narrating the Prophet's military campaigns and thereby constructs a historical-religious discourse that reflects the relationship among language, ideology, and power. Within Bal'ami's text, these verses do more than provide religious citations: they perform discursive functions in legitimation, the redefinition of collective identity, and the regulation of power relations. A review of previous research shows that most studies have concentrated on the narrative, ideological, or textual features of Tabari's Chronicle and Bal'ami's translation, while overlooking the simultaneous analysis of the linguistic functions of the Quranic verses and their discursive mechanisms. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the language and structure of Quranic verses used in Tabari's Chronicle at the level of speech acts and within the framework of critical discourse analysis. It seeks to demonstrate how the Quran functions in Tabari's narrative as a meaning-producing and power-generating structure, and how lexical choices, imperative forms, and discursive oppositions formulate and reproduce relations of power.

Research Method

This descriptive-analytical study examines Quranic verses associated with the military campaigns mentioned in Tabari's Chronicle. Its theoretical approach combines two complementary frameworks. The first is John Searle's speech act theory, according to which the verses are examined in five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, declarations, and expressives. The second is Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, which focuses on three levels: text, discursive practice, and social context. The verses are analyzed in terms of syntactic structure, imperative



and prohibitive verbs, evaluative vocabulary, and argumentative logic. At the discursive level, their functions in legitimating power, reproducing the religious-political order, and redefining identity boundaries are then examined. The campaigns of Badr, Uhud, the Trench, Tabuk, and Banu Nadir, among other major episodes, constitute the principal field of analysis. This theoretical combination enables a systematic understanding of the role of religious language in organizing the social and political reality of early Islam.

Findings

The findings show that Quranic citations in Tabari's Chronicle create a discursive network aimed at consolidating the Prophet's authority, strengthening the cohesion of the Islamic community, and legitimating acts of jihad. At the level of speech acts, assertives have the highest frequency, accounting for 47.31%. Verses such as 'There is no blame upon the weak' and 'They will swear by God' describe reality, expose the conduct of the hypocrites, and portray the states of the believers, thereby reinforcing ethical norms and drawing a boundary between 'true faith' and 'hypocrisy.' Through these speech acts, Tabari's historical narrative itself acquires a form of religious authority.

Directives, at approximately 20.43%, play a central role in constructing a discourse of the necessity of obedience and steadfastness. Imperative verses such as 'Then let him fast' and challenging formulations such as 'Say: Then avert death from yourselves' move the addressee from the level of belief to that of practical action. In Tabari's Chronicle, these verses do not merely report military events; by emphasizing the believers' duties, they also shape a model of religious conduct.

Declarations, accounting for 15.05%, play the most prominent role in reconstructing legal and institutional structures. Verses such as 'They ask you concerning the spoils of war' redefine the structure of power by declaring rules governing ownership of the spoils and consolidating authority in the office of the Prophet. Other verses, such as 'If a wound has touched you ...,' reinterpret military defeat, transform a crisis of legitimacy into a discursive opportunity, and explain failure within the framework of divine testing.

From the perspective of discourse analysis, verses concerning the battles of Badr and the Trench employ terms such as 'confederates,' 'sedition,' and 'hypocrisy' to create a conceptual opposition between the 'unified community of believers' and the 'coalition of enemies,' thereby strengthening a discourse of resistance and solidarity. The emphasis on divine assistance and the presence of angels also constructs a discourse of 'divine soft power' and locates military action within a sacred and legitimate framework of meaning. In general, the Quranic verses in Tabari's Chronicle do

not function as passive quotations; rather, they serve as the driving force of a religious–political discourse and organize mechanisms of legitimation and meaning–making through their representation of events.

Conclusion

The results demonstrate that Quranic citations in Tabari's Chronicle have a thoroughly discursive and power–generating function. Combining Searle's and Fairclough's approaches reveals that the Quranic verses in the accounts of the Prophet's campaigns are neither merely explanatory nor ornamental. As active linguistic acts, they redefine and stabilize the social and political reality of the Prophet's era. Assertives organize moral boundaries by reinforcing foundational beliefs; directives mobilize audiences toward obedience, jihad, and steadfastness, converting religious values into social action; and declarations institutionalize the Prophet's political authority by establishing new legal and semantic structures.

From a discourse–analytical perspective, the verses construct binaries such as believer/hypocrite, divine justice/human doubt, and unity/division, thereby consolidating the collective identity of Muslims and transforming jihad from a military act into a religious obligation. The reinterpretation of defeats and crises within the framework of divine wisdom also helps reproduce public trust and sustain the Prophet's leadership. Accordingly, Quranic language in Tabari's Chronicle does not merely reflect reality; it constructs reality by producing and consolidating power and reinforcing the cohesion of the Islamic community. The study shows that discourse analysis of religious language in historical texts can lead to a deeper understanding of the nature of power and the formation of religious–political identity in early Islam.

Keywords:

Quranic citations; Tabari's Chronicle; speech acts; critical discourse analysis; reproduction of power; discourse of jihad.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics. The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Funding statement

The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other support were received during the preparation of this manuscript.



Refrence

The Holy Quran. [In Arabic]

Abdi, L., Eshkavari, M. J., & Kamali Sarvestani, K. (2022). A critique of Quranic citations concerning historical events in early Islam in *Tarikh al-Tabari: The case of the alleged secret love of the Prophet for Zaynab and the citation of verse 37 of Surat al-Ahzab*. *Sokhan-e Tarikh*, 16(39), 148-168.

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How to cite:

Hasanbeigi, Mohammad; Mohammadi, Reza; HassaniNasab, Morteza. (2026). Discourse Analysis of Quranic Citations concerning the Prophet's Campaigns in Tabari's Chronicle: Speech Acts and the Reproduction of Power. *Quran, Culture And Civilization*, 7 (3), 113–134. <https://doi.org/10.22034/jksl.2025.534737.1484>