

**The Use of the Definite and the Indefinite in
the Ever-Glorious Qur'an**

Basheer Ibrahim Elghayesh

Faculty of Languages and Translation, Al Azhar University

Faculty of Science and Arts, Shaqraa University

استخدام المعرفة والنكرة في القرآن الكريم

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى التمييز بين المعرفة والنكرة وفق الاستخدام القرآني لكلا الصيغتين. تركز الدراسة الحالية على الكلمات التي تُستخدم في كلا الصيغتين في نفس السورة أو في نفس السياق. تُلقي الدراسة الضوء على الإسم المعرّف ب"أل". تحاول الدراسة إثبات أن السياق هو العنصر الرئيسي الذي يحدد منطقيّة استخدام أي من الصيغتين في القرآن. إضافة إلى ما سبق فإن الدراسة تؤكد أن أيًا من الصيغتين لا يمكن أن يحل محل الآخر.

Abstract

This paper attempts to differentiate between the definite and the indefinite in the Qur'anic use of both forms. The current study focuses on words that are used in both forms in the same Surah or at least in the same context. The type of the definite on which the paper sheds light is the noun defined with /?al/ (the). The study attempts to prove that the context is the main element that determines the rationale behind using either form in the Qur'an. In addition, the paper concludes that neither form can replace the other.

Key Words: definite – indefinite – context – the Qur'an

The Use of the Definite and the Indefinite in the Ever-Glorious Qur'an

1. Introduction

The Noble Qur'an has always been the main source of linguistic rules for Arabic scholars. One of these rules is the definiteness of nouns. In Arabic, a noun is either definite or indefinite. This paper attempts to differentiate between the two terms in the light of the Qur'anic use of some Arabic nouns. The main aim of the study is to show the various uses of the definite and indefinite in the Qur'an. Some words are used in both forms in the Qur'an, e.g. "الفضل" /ʔalfaḍl/ and "فضل" /faḍl/, "الحياة" /ʔalḥayāh/ and "حياة" /ḥayāh/ (the grace, grace, life, the life), etc. Such words are the focus of the study, i.e. to show the semantic and pragmatic use behind using either form in the Qur'an.

2. Data and Methodology

Due to the enormous number of word forms in the Qur'an, approximately 77439 words in 114 Surahs (chapters), the study focuses on the word forms frequently used as both definite and indefinite in the same Surah. The downsized process is governed by the frequency of words and intertextual influence. Therefore, we will select some of those frequent word pairs used in the Qur'an. The process of choosing word pairs will focus on pairs that are found mostly in the same surah, if possible. Hence, it will be easier to show the context and contrast the use of both forms.

The study is descriptive and analytic. It starts by describing the direct meaning of the two forms. Then, it analyses the two to show if they differ in meaning. This is accomplished by making use of tools such as the context in which both words are used. The study also uses morphological tools to show how these words are formed in Arabic. Finally, the paper makes use of the conceptual meaning and the different contexts in which these words are used.

3. Definiteness and Indefiniteness

In English, the original form of definiteness is the definite article “the”. Those of indefiniteness are the indefinite articles “a” and “an”. In fact, definiteness has received more attention than indefiniteness and has been classified into a number of types. These types include: demonstrative noun phrase (NP), possessive noun phrase, proper nouns, pronouns, and “the” noun phrase (Prince, 1992: 299).

On its part, indefinites include the zero determiner NPs, the “a, an” NPs, and NPs that start with “any, no, most...”. The main function of an indefinite NP is to introduce something new into discourse. The definite NPs, on their part, refer to an existing entity that a hearer/listener knows about earlier (cf. Heim, 1982).

Due to the fact that the paper analyses definiteness and indefiniteness in the Qur'an, the focus will be on their definitions and uses in Classical Arabic. An indefinite is a word that refers to something unknown, e.g. ‘رجل’ /rajol/ (man) which does not show whom we talk about, but if we say ‘الرجل’ /ar-rajol/ (the man), where the addition of /?al/ (the) to the Arabic word makes it definite and becomes known whom we refer to. In their interpretation of the Qur'an, some of the Arab linguist exegetists used the indefinite to denote a number of meanings. For instance, it may mean glorification, diversity, parting, designation, completeness, elaboration, contempt, etc. However, Abdelmuttalib (1994: 341) states that the contexts and meanings served by indefiniteness are (almost) mainly four: those denoting specificity, magnification or contempt, camouflage and concealing, or unwillingness to specify.

However, such varied meanings are mostly related to the speaker and his intention of using the indefinite form. As-suyouti (2008: 405) argues that the use of the indefinite serves more reasons, not less than six. He states that an indefinite is used to indicate individuality, genus, glorification, multitude, contempt, and diminution. The current analysis considers all such meanings.

Arab linguists agree that the indefinite is the origin and the definite is a branch of it (cf. Al-Anbary, 2015: 235 & Abdelmuttalib, 1994: 339). In fact, every definite has an indefinite form, while not every indefinite has a definite form, e.g. Arabic interrogative nouns. Also, the word 'حيوان' /ḥayawān/ (animal) is common to include all living beings, humans and others, but the word 'الإنسان' /al-ʔinsān/ (the human being) does not by any means include animals.

3.1. Types of Definiteness

Arab linguists have not agreed on the exact number of definite forms in Arabic. Some of them categorise definite forms into seven types, i.e. proper nouns, pronouns, demonstratives, relatives, nouns with /ʔal/ (the), nouns added to a definite noun, and a vocative noun. Other linguists would not count the vocative as one of the definite forms.

In the current paper, the focus is only on the noun defined with /ʔal/ (the). /ʔal/ is of two types in Arabic: A) the /ʔal/ that indicates genus refers to one member of a whole genus. Sometimes it refers to the whole genus. For instance, "خلق" /ḫuliqal-ʔinsānu min ʕajal/ (the man was created from haste), which refers to the whole mankind. B) the /ʔal/ that indicates previous knowledge, i.e. indicates a specified thing, e.g. "فعضى فرعون الرسول" /faʕaṣa firʕawnur-rasūl/ (and Firaun disobeyed the messenger), where 'the messenger' refers to a certain person, i.e. Moses¹.

4. Definite and Indefinite Nouns in the Qur'an

In this section, the focus is on the selected examples from the Qur'an, as mentioned earlier. We selected a form that is used as both definite and indefinite in the same Surah, if possible. Hence, it may be easier to compare and contrast the contexts in which it is used. In some cases, the same word is used, but in different

¹ C.f. www.khayma.com/almoza/almaref.htm

surahs. Following is a table of most of the word pairs and an instance of their places in the Qur'an, the name of the Surah followed by the number of the verse.

Indefinite	Place	Definite	Place
كتاب /kitāb/	الرعد /?ar-raʿd/ 8	الكتاب /?alkitāb/	الرعد /?ar-raʿd/ 39
قرآن /qurʿān/	يونس /yūnis/ 15	القرآن /?alqurʿān/	يونس /yūnis/ 37
مكر /makr/	النمل /?an-naml/ 50	المكر /?almakr/	فاطر /Fāṭir/ 43
عذاب /ʿaḏāb/	البقرة /?al-baqarah/ 7	العذاب /?alʿaḏāb/	البقرة /?al-baqarah/ 49
ضلال /ḍalāl/	إبراهيم /?ibrāhīm/ 3	الضلال /?aḍḍalāl/	إبراهيم /?ibrāhīm/ 18
حياة /ḥayāh/	البقرة /?al-baqarah/ 179	الحياة /?alḥayāh/	العنكبوت /?alʿankabūt/ 64
نار /nār/	البقرة /?al-baqarah/ 17	النار /?an-nār/	البقرة /?al-baqarah/ 24
جنة /jannah/	آل عمران /?alaʿimrān/ 133	الجنة /?aljannah/	آل عمران /?alaʿimrān/ 142
وعد /waʿd/	القصص /?al-qasṣ/ 61	الوعد /?alwaʿd/	مريم /maryam/ 54
فضل /faḍl/	البقرة /?al-baqarah/ 198	الفضل /?alfaḍl/	البقرة /?al-baqarah/ 105

ولي /waliy/	النساء /?an-nisā?/ 123	الولي /?alwaliy/	الشورى /?ash-shora/ 28
مولى /mawlā/	الدخان /?ad-duḡān/ 41	المولى /?almawlā/	الحج /?alhaj/ 13
نصير /naṣīr/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 107	النصير /?an-naṣīr/	الأطفال /?alʿanfāl/ 40
سحر /siḥr/	المائدة /?almāʿidah/ 110	السحر /?as-siḥr/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 102
بلد /balad/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 126	البلد /?albalad/	إبراهيم /?ibrāhīm/ 35
بلدة /baldah/	الفرقان /?alforqān/ 49	البلدة /?albaldah/	النمل /?an-naml/ 91
إله /?ilāh/	ص /ṣād/ 5	الإله /?alʿilāh/	Never found singular
آلهة /?ālihah/	الأنعام /?alʿanʿām/ 19	الآلهة /?alʿālihah/	ص /ṣād/ 5
قرية /qaryah/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 259	القرية /?alqaryah/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 58
قرى /qurā/	الحشر /?alḥashr/ 14	القرى /?alqurā/	الحشر /?alḥashr/ 7
عسرة /ʿusrah/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 280	العسرة /?alʿusrah/	التوبة /?at-tawbah/ 117

عسر /ʕusr/	الطلاق /?aṭ-ṭalāq/ 7	العسر /ʔalʕusr/	الشرح /?ash-sharḥ/ 5, 6
يسر /yusr/	الشرح /?ash-sharḥ/ 5, 6	اليسر /ʔalyusr/	الليل /ʔal-layl/ 7
نعيم /naʕīm/	المطففين /?almuṭafifīn/ 22	النعيم /?an-naʕīm/	المطففين /?almuṭafifīn/ 24
هدى /hudā/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 2	الهدى /ʔalhudā/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 16
صراط /ṣirāṭ/	يس /yāsīn/ 4	الصراط /?aṣ-ṣirāṭ/	يس /yāsīn/ 66
خلق /ḫalq/	الإسراء /?alʔisrāʔ/ 49	الخلق /ʔalḫalq/	المؤمنون /?almuʔminūn/ 107
سلام /salām/	مريم /maryam/ 15	السلام /?as-salām/	مريم /maryam/ 32
أمر /ʔamr/	مريم /maryam/ 35	الأمر /ʔalʔamr/	مريم /maryam/ 39
شر /shar/	الزلزلة /?az-zalzalah/ 8	الشر /?ash-shar/	فصلت /?fuṣ-ṣilat/ 49
خير /ḫayr/	المزمل /?almuzamil/ 20	الخير /ʔalḫayr/	العاديات /?alʕādiyāt/ 8
ضر /ḍur/	الأنبياء /?alʔanbiyāʔ/ 84	الضر /ʔaḍ-ḍur/	الأنبياء /?alʔanbiyāʔ/ 83

فتنة /fitnah/	الأنبياء /?alʔanbiyāʔ/ 111	الفتنة /ʔalfitnah/	التوبة /?at-tawbah/ 47
بيت /bayt/	آل عمران /?alaʕimrān/ 96	البيت /ʔalbayt/	آل عمران /?alaʕimrān/ 97
نفس /nafs/	الزمر /?az-zumar/ 56	النفس /?an-nafs/	الفجر /ʔalfajr/ 27
موعظة /mawʕizah/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 66	الموعظة /?almawʕizah/	النحل /?an-naḥl/ 125
آية /ʔāyah/	الأنعام /?alʔanʕām/ 109	الآية /ʔalʔāyah/	النازعات /?an-nāziʕāt/ 20
آيات /ʔāyāt/	العنكبوت /?alʕankabūt/ 50	الآيات /ʔalʔāyāt/	العنكبوت /?alʕankabūt/ 50
ماء /māʔ/	النور /ʔan-nūr/ 45	الماء /ʔalmāʔ/	الأنبياء /?alʔanbiyāʔ/ 30
ظالم /zālim/	الكهف /ʔalkahf/ 35	الظالم /?az-zālim/	الفرقان /?alforqān/ 27
ظالمون /zālimūn/	العنكبوت /?alʕankabūt/ 14	الظالمون /?az-zālimūn/	العنكبوت /?alʕankabūt/ 49
رسول /rasūl/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 129	الرسول /?ar-rasūl/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 143
نبي /nabiy/	آل عمران /?ālaʕimrān/ 146	النبي /ʔan-nabiy/	آل عمران /?ālaʕimrān/ 68

صرح /ṣarḥ/	القصص /?alqashaṣ/ 38	الصرح /?aṣ-ṣarḥ/	النمل /?an-naml/ 44
نذير /naḏīr/	فاطر /fāṭir/ 24	النذير /?an-naḏīr/	فاطر / fāṭir/ 37
ربا /ribā/	الروم /?ar-rūm/ 39	الربا /?ar-ribā/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 275
ساعة /sāʿah/	النحل /?an-naḥl/ 61	الساعة /?as-sāʿah/	النحل /?an-naḥl/ 77

Table 1: Instances of Definite and Indefinite Word Pairs in the Qur'an

The following table includes most of the word pairs that are found in the same Surah or sometimes in the same verse. The name of the Surah is followed by the number of the verse.

Indefinite	Place	Definite	Place
حياة /ḥayāh/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 96	الحياة /?alḥayāh/	البقرة /?albaqarah/ 85
بلد /balad/	الأعراف /?alʿaṣrāf/ 57	البلد /?albalad/	الأعراف /?alʿaṣrāf/ 58
قرية /qaryah/	الأعراف /?alʿaṣrāf/ 4	القرية /?alqayah/	الأعراف /?alʿaṣrāf/ 161, يوسف /yusuf/ 82
سلام /salām/	مريم /maryam/ 15	السلام /?as-salām/	مريم /maryam/ 32
أمر /?amr/	مريم /maryam/ 35	الأمر /?alʿamr/	مريم /maryam/ 39

ضر /ḡur/	الأنبياء /?alʔanbiyāʔ/ 84	الضر /?aḡ-ḡur/	الأنبياء /?alʔanbiyāʔ/ 83
بيت /bayt/	آل عمران /?alaʕimrān/ 96	البيت /?albayt/	آل عمران /?alaʕimrān/ 97
ساعة /sāʕah/	النحل /?an-naḡl/ 61	الساعة /?as-sāʕah/	النحل /?an-naḡl/ 77
نذير /naḡīr/	فاطر /fāʕir/ 24	النذير /?an-naḡīr/	فاطر /fāʕir/ 37
آيات /ʔāyāt/	العنكبوت /?alʕankabūt/ 50	الآيات /?alʔāyāt/	العنكبوت /?alʕankabūt/ 50
كتاب /kitāb/	الرعد /?ar-raʕd/ 38	الكتاب /?alkitāb/	الرعد /?ar-raʕd/ 39
ضلال /ḡalāl/	إبراهيم /?ibrāhīm/ 3	الضلال /?aḡ-ḡalāl/	إبراهيم /?ibrāhīm/ 18

Table 2: Definite and Indefinite Word pairs in the same Surah

1. “حياة” /ḡayāh/ (Life)

The Qur'an uses the word “حياة” /ḡayāh/ either in the indefinite or in the definite. For instance, in Surat Al-Baqarah, Allah says “ولكم في القصاص حياة” /walakum fil-qīṣāṣi ḡayāh/ (and in retaliation you have life) (2: 179). The Qur'anic use of indefiniteness is viewed as a better means of conveying the intended meaning than definiteness, i.e. not referring to life in general but to the type of a specific life. Life is protected in Islam and has its sacredness. That is why the verse makes retaliation a means of protecting lives, if a man knows that if he kills, he will be killed in return, this will deter him from murdering anyone and hence both he and the other person are intact and their lives are preserved (cf. Al-Jurjani, 2007: 290).

In addition, both of them benefit from retaliation “قصاص” /qiṣāṣ/; it saved their lives (cf. Az-zamakhshari, 2003).

The use of the indefinite form “حياة” /ḥayāh/ is repeated in the same surah; Al- Baqarah, again in verse 96, which reads “ولتجدنهم أحرص الناس على حياة” /walatajidan-nahum ?ahraṣan-nāsi ṣalā ḥayāh/ (you will find them (the Jews) the greediest of mankind for life). The Qur'an describes how keen the Jews are on not only preserving but also extending their lives. The use of indefiniteness is to show that they seek a specific life being added to theirs and so they live longer. This kind of extra life is served by the use of the indefinite form. Here, the indefinite form stresses the fact that they desire for a certain kind of life, a prolonged one (Hassan et al., 2013: 251-52). Therefore, we know that they are keen on that specific kind of life, extended life or life added to their lives. Hence, indefiniteness serves a specific kind of life.

However, the use of definiteness may serve to show how important and valuable this life is to who works for it. In verse 85 of surat Al-Baqarah, Allah the Almighty says “إلا خزي في الحياة الدنيا” /?il-lā ḫizyun fil-ḥayātid-dunyā/ (...except disgrace in the life of this world). The Qur'an still talks about the Jews and that they do not stick to the teachings of the Book and do not preserve their lives. The use of the definite form “الحياة” /al-ḥayāh/ (the life) refers only to this life and shows how despicable it is especially when accompanied by the word “الدنيا” /?ad-dunyā/ (of this world) and compared to the Afterlife. In fact, the use of the definite form is repeatedly used in the Qur'an in the same form “الحياة الدنيا” /?alḥayātud-dunyā/ (the life of this world) to affirm how unworthy this life is. For instance, in surat Al-Ankabout, verse 64 reads “وما هذه الحياة الدنيا إلا لهو ولعب” /wamā hāḏihil-ḥayātud-dunyā ?il-lā lahwun wa laʿib/ (and this life of the world is nothing but amusement and play). When the word “الحياة” /?alḥayāh/ (the life of this world) is used in the definite form, language users could understand that it is glorified, but in this verse Allah shows how despicable it is and unworthy. On the other hand, when He talks

about the Hereafter, He says in the same verse “وإن الدار الآخرة لهي الحيوان” /wa ?in-nad-dāral-?āḫirata lahiyal-ḥayawān/ (and the Hereafter is the real life). He asserts that the Hereafter is the real kind of life where there is no death or end for that life. Here, the definite form “الحيوان” /?alḥayawān/ is used instead of the word “الحياة” /?alḥayāh/ to stress that meaning, the afterlife is the real life.

2. “بلد” /balad/ (place or land)

The word “بلد” /balad/ is mentioned in a number of verses sometimes as definite and in others as indefinite. For instance, in Surat Al-Baqarah, Allah says: “وإذ قال إبراهيم رب اجعل هذا بلدا آمنا” /wa ?ið qāla ?brāhīmu rabb-ijʕal hāða baladan ?āminan/ (2 : 126) (when Ibrahim said: Oh Lord make this (valley) a safe place). While in Surat Ibrahim, He says: “وإذ قال إبراهيم رب اجعل هذا البلد آمنا” /wa ?ið qāla ?brāhīmu rabb-ijʕal hāðal-balada ?āminan/ (14 : 35) (when Ibrahim said: Oh Lord make this place a safe one).

The context of the two verses is almost the same and the words are said by the same person who is praying for the same place. Ibrahim (pbuh) leaves his wife and son in a deserted place, so he prays to Allah to protect the place and make it a safe one. Yet, in the first verse, the Qur'an uses the indefinite form “بلد” /balad/, while in the second, the definite form “البلد” /?albalad/ is used. Syntactically speaking linguists say that in the case of using the definite form, it acts as a substitute or an adjective of the first object, i.e. “هذا” (this). When used in the indefinite form, it becomes a second object.

Contextually speaking, Qur'an exegetists such as Ar-razi state that the use of the indefinite form in the first verse while the definite in the second is due to two reasons: a) the first prayer was before the real village or place existed, while the second prayer was when there was already buildings and a concrete place existed. b) It could be that the prayers were after the existence of the place meant, i.e. Mecca. Hence we can say that in the case of indefinite form, there is a hidden definite noun, i.e. “اجعل هذا البلد بلدا آمنا” /?ijʕal hāðal-balada baladan ?āminan/ (make this place a

safe place), but it is hidden and uses the indefinite for the sake of exaggeration, make this place one of the places full of safety (cf. Hassan et al., 2013: 252 – 53).

The same instance is found in Surat Al-Araf in verses 57 and 58 respectively. Allah Glorified be He says “حتى إذا أقلت سحابا ثقالا سقناه لبلد ميت” /hattā ?iḏā ?aqallat saḥāban Ōiḡālan suqnāhu libaladin mayyit/ (Till when they have carried heavy-laden clouds (with rain), We drive them to a land that is dead) (7 : 57). Then He says: “والبلد الطيب يخرج نباته بإذن ربه” /wal-baladuṭ-ṭayyibu yaḡruju nabātuḥu bi?iḏni rabbih/ (and the vegetation of the good land comes forth by the permission of its Lord) (7 : 58).

Both verses are in the same Surah. In the first verse, the use of the indefinite form is for the sake of generalization, i.e. any land that is in need for rain wherever that land could be. But, the second verse speaks of a specific land, the good one. Therefore, it needs to be specified by using the definite form defined by /?al/.

3. “سلام” /salām/ (peace)

In Surat Maryam, when Allah the Almighty talks about Yahia (pbuh), He says: “وسلام عليه يوم ولد ويوم يموت” /wa salāmun Ṣalayhi yawma wulida wa yawma yamūt/ (and peace be upon him the day when he is born and the day when he dies...) (19: 15). However, when He talks about Isa (pbuh), He says “والسلام علي يوم ولدت ويوم أموت” /was-salāmu Ṣalayya yawma wulidtu wa yawma ?amūt/ (and the peace be upon me the day when I was born and the day when I die...) (19 : 33).

The question is why the Qur'an uses the indefinite form in the first instance, but the definite form in the second. The answer could be that the shift from the indefinite, in the case of Yahia, to the definite in the case of Isa, is because the Arabic word “السلام” /?as-salām/ refers to one of Allah's Glorified Names. The use of it conveys the speaker's need for safety and security. Besides, it means that peace is not only for the speaker, but also for everyone present at the time. Such benefits

are found in the second instance where Isa is praying for himself. Therefore, he needs to seek peace and safety from Allah by using one of His Names; “السلام” /ʔas-salām/ where /ʔal/ indicates genus and therefore denotes generalization, i.e. peace for everyone present.

In the case of Yahia, it is Allah who speaks and therefore it is not a prayer for peace on Yahia's part. It is Allah Who greets him. Such a greeting from Allah is enough to guarantee the addressee all the peace and safety sought.

4. “أمر” /ʔamr/ (thing or matter)

Allah – Glorified be He – says in Surat Maryam “إذا قضى أمرا فإنما يقول له كن” /ʔiðā qadā ʔamran taʔin-namā yaqūlu lahū kun fayakūn/ (Whenever He decrees a things, He just says (to it) Be, and it is) (19 : 35). In the same surah, another verse reads: “وأأنذرهم يوم الحسرة إذ قضى الأمر وهم في غفلة وهم لا يؤمنون” /wa ʔanḏirhum yawmal-ḥasrati ʔið quḏiyal-ʔamru wahum fī ʔaflatin wahum lā yuʔminūn/ (And warn them of that Day of Anguish, when the matter is determined whilst heedlessly they disbelieve) (19 : 39).

The Qur'an uses the indefinite form “أمر” /ʔamr/ in the context of talking about the impossibility that Allah has a son and that Isa has been created like anything else, i.e. with one word of Allah “be”. The same use of the same word is repeated in a number of places in the Qur'an. For instance, in surat At-Tawbah verse 117 in the same context; talking about the fact that Isa is not the son God and that he is merely one of Allah's creatures. The word “أمر” /ʔamr/ is mentioned 14 times in the Qur'an, either in the definite or indefinite form. It has been used to refer to a multitude of meanings. In the case of our example here, the indefinite word refers to Isa (pbuh) or the creation of him.

In this context, the word “أمر” /ʔamr/ is all-inclusive of everything that Allah creates with one word “be”. This is supported by the fact that whenever the indefinite is used in conditional or negative clauses, it denotes generalization. Yet,

when the Qur'an uses the definite form "الأمر" /?al?amr/ in the second verse, it refers to the process of reckoning on the Judgement Day. In fact, there is a Hadith which narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) was asked about the end of reckoning, he said "when the ram, i.e. death, is slaughtered while the two teams, i.e. believers and non-believers, are looking".

5. "قرية" /qaryah/ (village)

In Surat Yousuf, Allah says: "وسئل القرية" /was-?alil-qaryah/ (and ask the (people of) village) (12: 82). He, also, says in Surat Al-Araf: "وإذ قيل لهم اسكنوا هذه القرية" /wa ?ið qīla lahumu-skunū hāðihil-qaryah/ (and when they were told to dwell in that village) (7: 161). In these two instances, the Qur'an uses the definite form to refer to a specific place. In the case of Yousuf, the village meant is the land of Egypt itself where the brothers of Yousuf met him after many years. When they returned to their father without their younger brother who was accused of robbery and jailed by Yousuf in Egypt, they tell him that it was not their fault and he can ask the village where they were. In the second verse, Moses (pbuh) tells his people that Allah orders them to dwell in a specific village, the Holy Land of Jerusalem.

However, the Qur'an resorts to the use of indefinite form when the meaning is general, not referring to a certain place. In Surat Al-Araf, Allah says: "وكم من قرية" /wakam min qaryatin ?ahlaknāha/ (and many villages We have destroyed) (7: 4). Here, the indefinite form serves to show that the destruction was not sent to a specific one, but to all those who disbelieved.

6. "ساعة" /sāʿah/ (hour, time)

Allah the Almighty says in Surat An-nahl verse 61 "فإذا جاء أجلهم لا يستأخرون" /fa?iðā jā?a ?ajaluhum lā yasta?χirūna sāʿah/ (when it is their time, they will never be adjourned even an hour). In the same Surah verse 77, He says: "وما أمر" /wamā?amrus-sāʿati ?illākalamhil-baṣar/ (and the order of the Judgement Day is just like a blink of an eye). The word "ساعة" /sāʿah/ is used first

in the indefinite and later in the definite. The first verse speaks about death and the end of one's life. It affirms that every person will die and no one will ever have a prolonged life even for a slight unit of time, an hour. Therefore, the word /sāʿah/ refers to a unit of time no matter how long it is. In fact, the indefinite form serves vagueness so that a person knows that when their time comes, they will never be able to lengthen it. Yet, in the second verse, the definite form /ʔas-sāʿah/ refers to a specific time, the Day of Judgement. When the Qur'an uses the definite word /ʔas-sāʿah/, it always refers to that specific day.

7. “ضر” /ḡur/ (harm)

The word “ضر” /ḡar/ with a fatha on the first letter means any kind of harm that may inflect a person in his body, money or anything else. If it is said with a ḡamma on the first letter /ḡur/, it means physical harm such as illness (cf. Az-zamaḡshari: 2003). In Surat Al-Anbiyaʔ (the prophets) verse 83 and 84, Allah says: “رب أني مسني الضر” /rabbi ʔannī massaniyaḡ-ḡur/ (Oh Lord, I have been inflected with the harm) and “فكشفتنا ما به من ضر” /fakaḡafnā mā bihi min ḡur/ (so, We healed what he has of harm). The first verse is a prayer of the prophet Ayyoub (pbuh) who was inflected with a disease in his body for a long period of time. That is why the Qur'an uses the definite form /ʔaḡ-ḡur/ to affirm that it is a physical harm, a specific kind of harm. Ayyoub asks His Lord to heal his illness, then, in the second verse, the Qur'an asserts that his prayer was answered, yet using the indefinite form /ḡur/. This is to show that Allah has healed him from all kinds of harm, physical and others whether in his money or offspring.

8. “نذير” /naḡīr/ (warner)

In Surat Fatir verse 24, Allah says “وإن من أمة إلا خلا فيها نذير” /waʔin min ʔummatin ʔillā ḡalā fihā naḡīr/ (and in every nation, there was sent a warner). Here, the word /naḡīr/ is used in the indefinite form in the context of telling the Prophet (pbuh) that there have been many prophets before him. It indicates that the number of prophets is huge. Therefore, the use of the indefinite denotes multitude. Hence,

it is not only the Prophet who has faced all kinds of torture or disbelieving for the sake of his message, but also all other prophets. Yet, when the Qur'an speaks about a specific prophet, the use of definite is chosen. In Surat Fatir verse 37, Allah says: "وجاءكم النذير" /wa jāʔakumun-naḏīr/ (and the warner has come to you). Here, the disbelievers are in the Hell and they yell and cry to get out, but the reply comes to them that Allah has sent to them the Prophet. Each nation has their own warner, one of them, but they disbelieved.

5. Conclusion

The use of either definite or indefinite forms is governed by the context in which it is used. However, no one can say that either of them is better than the other because it is the meaning and the contextual use of the form that prefer one to the other. The Qur'anic use of these forms can be viewed within the overall picture of the whole Qur'anic use of the definite and indefinite. It cannot be judged word by word.

Arab linguists has tried to enclose the contexts in which the indefinite forms are used. Abdelmuttalib (1994: 341) states that these contexts can be limited to: a) denoting individuality or genus, b) glorification or despicableness, c) intending camouflage, or d) meaning no specification.

As-suyouti (2008: 407) deals with the reasons for using the definite, especially those forms are made definite by the /ʔal/ (the). He affirms that the /ʔal/ denotes something known whether present or mental, generalization, or to define the content. On his part, Abdelmuttalib (1994: 347) asserts that the use of /ʔal/ is linked to the word form because the addition of the definite article would deepen the essence of the lexeme. The article also represents the concept of generalization. He stresses the fact that the use of the definite article is common in the context of talking about something familiar to the speaker and the addressee.

In brief, the paper concludes that both definite and indefinite forms are used in the Qur'an to serve certain linguistic and rhetorical purposes. Neither the definite can replace the indefinite nor can the indefinite convey the same rhetorical and linguistic content delivered by the definite. All such benefits depend on the context in which either form is used.

References

- Abdelmuttalib, M. (1994). البلاغة والأسلوبية (*Rhetoric and Stylistics*) (1st ed.), Cairo, Egyptian International Publication Company (Longman).
- Al-Anbari, A. (2015). أسرار العربية (*Secrets of Arabic*), Edited by Muhammad Radi Madkour and Wael Abdel-bari, reviewed by Faisal Al hafyan. Kuwait, Al-waey Al-Islami.
- Al-Jurjani, A. (2007). دلائل الإعجاز (*Evidence of Miraculousness*), Edited by Muhammad Addayah and Fayez Addayah. Damascus , Dar Al-fikr.
- Al-Qazwini, J. (n.d.). الإيضاح في علوم البلاغة (*Clarification of Rhetoric*), Online, available at: www.al-mustafa.com
- As-Suyouti, J. (2008). الإتقان في علوم القرآن (*Mastering the Sciences of the Qur'an*) (1st ed.) edited by Shuaib Al-arnaut, Damascus , Ar-resalah Institution – Nasheroun.
- Az-Zamakhshari. (2003) الكشف عن حقائق التنزيل وعيون الأقاويل في وجوه التأويل (*Revealing the Facts of Descendence and the true arguments in interpretation*) (1st ed.). Bayrout, Dar Ihyaa At-turath Al-Arabi.
- Az-Zarkashi, M. (1971). البرهان في علوم القرآن (*Evidence in the sciences of the Qur'an*), Edited by Muhammad Abul-fadl Ibrahim, Bayrout, Dar Al-Maarefa.
- Bosch, P. (1992). Lexical Meaning and Conceptual Representation. In P. Bosch & P. Grestl (Eds.), *Discourse and Lexical Meaning* (Proceedings of Workshop of the DEG Sonderforschungsbereich 340, November 30th – December 1st), (pp. 19 – 33). IBM. Heidelberg.
- Hassan, F., Mustafa, I., Ismail, H. (2013). مقاصد التعريف والتكبير للألفاظ المتماثلة من القرآن الكريم (*the goals of definiteness and indefiniteness of similar words in the Qur'an*), *Zakho University Journal, Volume 1(B), no., 1*, 247 – 261.
- Heim, I. (1982). The Semantics of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrase, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, Doctoral Dissertation
- Prince, Ellen F. (1992). The ZPG Letter: Subjects, definiteness and information in status. In W. C. Mann & S. A. Thompson (Eds.), *Discourse Description: Diverse Analyses of a Fund-raising Text* (pp. 295 – 326). Philadelphia: John Benjamins
- www.khayma.com/almozaly/almaref.htm