Unveiling Masculine Hegemony in Classical Qur'anic Exegesis: A Critical Discourse Analysis of *Taghlīb* in Arabic Grammatical Culture

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Abstract

This article investigates the role of *taghlīb* as the predominance of masculine forms in Arabic as a mechanism of masculine hegemony within classical Qur'anic exegesis. Departing from the assumption that grammatical structures are value neutral, the study conceptualizes *taghlīb* as a cultural and axiological formation that shapes interpretive authority and symbolic power. Employing qualitative library research and Critical Discourse Analysis, the article examines classical *tafsīr* texts alongside Arabic grammatical treatises to trace how masculine grammatical norms are naturalized and reproduced in exegetical discourse. The findings reveal that masculine forms function not merely as linguistic conventions but as epistemic defaults that marginalize female subjectivity and normalize gender hierarchy in interpretive practices. This hegemonic structure does not originate from the Qur'anic text itself but emerges from the interaction between grammatical culture, patriarchal social contexts, and traditional hermeneutical frameworks. By distinguishing grammatical form from ethical and theological meaning, the study argues for a culturally and philosophically informed reinterpretation that challenges masculine dominance without rupturing the continuity of classical scholarship. This research contributes to the philosophy of culture by demonstrating how language operates as a vehicle of symbolic power and value construction in religious interpretation.

Keywords: *Taghlīb*, Masculine Hegemony, Qur'anic Exegesis, Arabic Grammatical Culture, Critical Discourse Analysis, Symbolic Power.

INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a neutral medium of communication; it is a cultural system through which values, hierarchies, and forms of authority are produced and sustained (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). Within religious traditions, grammatical structures often function as symbolic frameworks that shape interpretive horizons and regulate access to meaning. In the context of Qur'anic interpretation, Arabic grammar has long been treated as an objective and technical apparatus, detached from ideological or axiological considerations. However, contemporary philosophy of language and cultural hermeneutics increasingly challenge this assumption by emphasizing that linguistic systems are historically situated and embedded in relations of power (Arkoun, 1990; Foucault, 1980).

One of the most influential grammatical principles in Arabic is *taghlīb*, a convention that prioritizes masculine forms to represent mixed or universal categories. In classical grammatical theory, *taghlīb* is commonly justified as a rule of linguistic efficiency and clarity (Ibn Mālik, n.d.; Ibn ʿAqīl, n.d.). Yet when this principle is repeatedly mobilized in Qur'anic exegesis, it does more than organize syntax; it establishes masculine forms as epistemic defaults through which religious meaning is constructed. As a result, masculinity becomes normalized as the primary symbolic reference for moral agency,

authority, and subjectivity, while femininity is rendered secondary, implicit, or derivative (Rofiah, 2006).

Classical Qur'anic exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn Kathīr routinely interpret masculine grammatical forms as universally inclusive, asserting that women are implicitly addressed within masculine expressions. Although such interpretations appear linguistically valid, they rarely interrogate the cultural implications of this grammatical dominance. The repeated acceptance of masculine universality reflects a broader process of hegemonic normalization, in which linguistic conventions align with patriarchal social structures to reinforce gender hierarchy within interpretive discourse (Wadud, 1999). In this sense, *taghlib* operates not only as a grammatical rule but as a cultural mechanism of symbolic power.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, hegemony is sustained not through overt coercion but through the naturalization of dominant meanings (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001). The persistent use of masculine grammatical forms as neutral or universal in classical exegesis exemplifies this process. Over time, grammatical masculinity becomes indistinguishable from theological normativity, making alternative readings appear linguistically or doctrinally illegitimate. This conflation obscures the distinction between the Qur'anic text as a source of ethical meaning and the grammatical culture through which that meaning is mediated.

Recent scholarship in gender studies, linguistic anthropology, and Islamic hermeneutics has begun to question the presumed neutrality of Arabic grammatical structures. Scholars such as Wadud (1999), Rofiah (2006), and Arkoun (1990) argue that language functions as a site of epistemic formation, where cultural assumptions are embedded in interpretive practices. Their work suggests that gender bias in religious discourse is not inherent in revelation but emerges from historically contingent linguistic and hermeneutical frameworks. However, despite these contributions, the specific role of *taghlib* as a mechanism of masculine hegemony within classical Qur'anic exegesis remains underexplored.

This article addresses that gap by examining *taghlib* through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, situating Arabic grammar within its broader cultural and axiological context. Rather than treating grammatical rules as fixed or sacred, the study approaches them as symbolic systems shaped by social values and power relations (Bourdieu, 1991). By analyzing classical exegetical texts alongside grammatical treatises, the article seeks to demonstrate how masculine dominance is linguistically constructed, reproduced, and legitimized within Qur'anic interpretation.

METHODOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive research design grounded in textual analysis, with the primary aim of examining how grammatical structures operate as cultural and axiological mechanisms within classical Qur'anic exegesis. Rather than approaching language as a neutral technical system, the research framework conceptualizes Arabic grammar as a symbolic order through which values, hierarchies, and forms of interpretive authority are produced and legitimized (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). The methodological orientation of this study is therefore interdisciplinary, integrating linguistic analysis, cultural hermeneutics, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual foundation of this research rests on the assumption that language functions as a site of hegemony, where dominant meanings are naturalized and alternative interpretations are marginalized. Drawing on Gramscian theory, hegemony is understood not as direct domination but as the internalization of cultural norms that

appear self-evident and uncontested (Gramsci, 1971). Within this framework, *taghlīb* is treated not merely as a grammatical convention but as a cultural mechanism that privileges masculine forms as universal representational standards.

This study further employs Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power to explain how grammatical masculinity acquires normative authority in exegetical discourse (Bourdieu, 1991). Symbolic power operates through misrecognition, whereby historically contingent linguistic practices are perceived as natural or divinely sanctioned. In classical Qur'anic exegesis, masculine grammatical forms are repeatedly interpreted as neutral and inclusive, thereby concealing the gendered assumptions embedded within the grammatical culture itself. This process contributes to the construction of masculine hegemony at the level of meaning production.

Methodological Approach

Methodologically, the study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis as its principal analytical tool. CDA is particularly suitable for this research because it enables the examination of how discourse structures reproduce power relations and ideological assumptions within texts (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001). Rather than focusing solely on linguistic form, CDA investigates the interaction between textual features, social context, and cultural values.

In applying CDA, the research analyzes selected passages from classical Qur'anic exegesis in which masculine grammatical forms function as interpretive defaults. These texts are read in conjunction with classical Arabic grammatical treatises in order to trace how the principle of *taghlīb* is theorized, justified, and operationalized. Attention is given to patterns of inclusion and exclusion, the normalization of masculine subjectivity, and the implicit positioning of women within exegetical discourse. Through this approach, the study seeks to uncover how grammatical rules participate in the reproduction of gender hierarchy at the discursive level.

Data Sources and Analytical Strategy

The primary sources of this study consist of classical Qur'anic commentaries, including works by al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn Kathīr, alongside foundational Arabic grammatical texts such as *Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik* and its commentaries. These sources are selected because of their enduring authority in shaping both grammatical doctrine and exegetical practice. Secondary sources include contemporary scholarship in gender studies, philosophy of language, and Islamic hermeneutics, which provide critical perspectives on the relationship between language, culture, and power (Wadud, 1999; Rofiah, 2006; Arkoun, 1990).

The analytical strategy follows a close-reading method combined with thematic coding. Textual segments that employ masculine grammatical forms as universal references are identified and analyzed to determine how meaning is framed and whose subjectivity is foregrounded. These findings are then interpreted within the broader conceptual framework of hegemony and symbolic power, allowing the study to move beyond descriptive analysis toward critical interpretation.

Analytical Orientation and Research Contribution

The methodological and conceptual framework of this study is oriented toward unveiling the cultural logic that underpins grammatical practices in religious interpretation. By situating *taghlīb* within a nexus of language, power, and values, the research challenges the assumption that grammatical conventions are ideologically neutral. At the same time, the study does not seek to invalidate classical scholarship but to critically re-contextualize it within its historical and cultural conditions of production.

Through this framework, the article contributes to the philosophy of culture by demonstrating how linguistic structures function as vehicles of symbolic power and value formation in religious discourse. It also provides a methodological model for

examining sacred texts that is both critically rigorous and culturally sensitive, enabling reinterpretation without epistemic rupture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Taghlīb as a Grammatical Default and Epistemic Normalization

The analysis of classical Arabic grammatical treatises reveals that *taghlīb* functions as a structural principle that consistently privileges masculine forms as the default mode of representation. In works such as *Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik* and its commentaries, the prioritization of masculine grammatical forms is presented as a technical necessity rather than a value-laden choice (Ibn Mālik, n.d.; Ibn ʿAqīl, n.d.). This grammatical logic establishes masculinity as the unmarked category, while femininity appears as marked, secondary, or exceptional.

From a critical discourse perspective, this grammatical default operates as a form of epistemic normalization. Masculine forms are not merely frequent; they become cognitively dominant, shaping how subjects are imagined and addressed in discourse (Fairclough, 1995). The result is a linguistic environment in which masculine representation is perceived as natural and universal, thereby concealing the cultural assumptions embedded within the grammatical system itself. This finding supports the argument that *taghlīb* functions as an epistemic structure rather than a neutral syntactic rule.

Beyond its syntactic function, *taghlīb* also shapes the cognitive economy of interpretation by regulating what is considered linguistically visible and meaningful. When masculine forms are repeatedly employed as the grammatical default, they condition readers and interpreters to associate universality, authority, and normativity with masculine subject positions. This process gradually narrows the horizon of interpretation, as alternative grammatical possibilities—such as feminine or explicitly inclusive constructions—are perceived as exceptional or stylistically marked rather than equally legitimate. In this sense, grammatical defaulting operates not only at the level of form but also at the level of epistemic expectation.

From the standpoint of discourse theory, epistemic normalization involves the stabilization of meaning through repetition and institutional endorsement. Classical grammatical manuals, widely taught and transmitted across generations, function as authoritative sites where linguistic norms are codified and naturalized. Once embedded in educational and scholarly traditions, these norms acquire a prescriptive force that extends beyond language instruction into broader interpretive practices. As a result, *taghlīb* becomes internalized by exegetes as an unquestionable rule, shaping their interpretive reflexes long before any conscious hermeneutical choice is made (van Dijk, 2001).

This normalization has significant implications for the construction of subjectivity within religious discourse. By consistently framing the masculine as the unmarked grammatical subject, classical grammar implicitly centers male experience as the default referent of human agency. Female subjectivity, when present, is rendered grammatically dependent on masculine inclusion rather than articulated as an autonomous category. Such linguistic asymmetry reinforces a hierarchical structure of representation in which women appear as secondary participants in moral, legal, and theological narratives (Rofiah, 2006).

Moreover, the epistemic authority of *taghlīb* is reinforced by its perceived alignment with the sacred language of the Qur'an. Because Arabic grammar is often regarded as intrinsically tied to the integrity of revelation, grammatical conventions are shielded from critical scrutiny. This sacralization of grammatical form contributes to what Bourdieu (1991) describes as symbolic misrecognition, whereby historically contingent structures

are perceived as natural, timeless, or divinely sanctioned. Consequently, questioning the masculine default is easily misconstrued as questioning the text itself, rather than the cultural grammar that mediates its interpretation.

The cumulative effect of these processes is the transformation of a technical grammatical rule into an epistemic framework that governs meaning production. *Taghlib*, in this sense, functions as a silent regulator of interpretive possibility, delimiting which readings appear linguistically legitimate and which are dismissed as anomalous. This finding underscores the need to distinguish between grammatical economy and ethical significance, particularly in contexts where language serves as the primary medium for transmitting religious values.

By revealing how *taghlib* operates as a mechanism of epistemic normalization, this analysis challenges the assumption that grammatical dominance is merely a matter of linguistic efficiency. Instead, it demonstrates that grammatical defaults are deeply implicated in the construction of cultural hierarchies and value systems. Recognizing this dynamic is a crucial step toward developing a more reflexive approach to Qur'anic interpretation—one that remains attentive to the power of language in shaping moral imagination while remaining faithful to the broader ethical vision of the text.

Reproduction of Masculine Hegemony in Classical Qur'anic Exegesis

The examination of classical Qur'anic exegesis demonstrates that the grammatical dominance of masculine forms is systematically reproduced at the level of interpretation. Exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn Kathīr frequently interpret masculine plural forms as universally inclusive, asserting that women are implicitly addressed within masculine grammatical expressions. While linguistically defensible, this interpretive strategy rarely engages in reflexive critique regarding its cultural implications.

Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, this pattern can be understood as a mechanism of hegemonic reproduction. Masculine grammatical forms are repeatedly aligned with moral agency, religious obligation, and ethical authority, while women's subjectivity remains implicit and structurally subordinate (Wadud, 1999; Rofiah, 2006). Over time, this interpretive habit consolidates masculine hegemony by transforming grammatical convention into theological common sense. The masculine subject emerges as the normative bearer of religious meaning, whereas feminine presence is acknowledged only through inclusion by default.

This process of hegemonic reproduction operates through what Critical Discourse Analysis identifies as discursive routinization. Once masculine grammatical forms are consistently interpreted as universally representative, they cease to appear as interpretive choices and instead function as taken-for-granted assumptions embedded within exegetical reasoning (Fairclough, 1995). In classical Qur'anic exegesis, this routinization manifests in explanatory patterns where masculine address is immediately equated with general humanity, without any sustained reflection on how such equivalence is linguistically and culturally constructed.

The absence of reflexive critique is particularly significant. By accepting grammatical masculinity as a transparent vehicle of universality, exegetes effectively collapse the distinction between grammatical convention and theological meaning. Masculine forms are no longer read as one possible mode of address among others, but as the natural expression of divine intent. This interpretive move exemplifies what Gramscian theory describes as hegemonic consent: domination that is secured not through coercion, but through the internalization of dominant norms as common sense (Gramsci, 1971).

At the level of subject construction, this interpretive strategy systematically privileges male experience as the implicit norm of religious life. Moral responsibility, ethical agency, and legal accountability are predominantly articulated through masculine grammatical subjects, while women appear as secondary participants whose inclusion depends on exegetical reassurance rather than explicit textual presence. Although classical exegetes

often emphasize that women are included "by implication," such inclusion remains structurally asymmetrical. It affirms participation without granting discursive centrality, thereby reinforcing gender hierarchy within the interpretive imagination (Wadud, 1999). Moreover, the alignment of masculine grammar with ethical authority contributes to a symbolic economy in which masculinity becomes synonymous with normative religiosity. Over time, this association shapes how religious roles, virtues, and responsibilities are conceptualized. Masculine subjectivity is positioned as the default locus of action and accountability, while feminine subjectivity is framed as contingent or derivative. This dynamic illustrates how grammatical structures can mediate social power by shaping the terms under which religious meaning is articulated and recognized (Bourdieu, 1991).

The durability of this hegemonic pattern is further reinforced by the institutional authority of classical tafsīr. As canonical texts, works by al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn Kathīr are repeatedly cited, taught, and transmitted as normative references. Their interpretive conventions thus acquire a self-reinforcing legitimacy, making alternative readings appear methodologically unsound or linguistically unwarranted. In this way, masculine hegemony is reproduced not through explicit exclusion of women, but through the stabilization of interpretive norms that center masculinity as the primary symbolic reference.

This analysis suggests that masculine hegemony in classical Qur'anic exegesis should be understood as a cumulative discursive effect rather than an intentional ideological project. It emerges at the intersection of grammatical convention, cultural context, and hermeneutical habit. Recognizing this intersection allows for a more nuanced critique— one that acknowledges the scholarly integrity of classical exegetes while critically examining the linguistic and cultural conditions that shaped their interpretive choices.

Language, Misrecognition, and Symbolic Power

The findings further indicate that the power of *taghlīb* lies in its capacity for misrecognition. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, grammatical masculinity gains authority precisely because it is not recognized as a form of domination (Bourdieu, 1991). Instead, it is perceived as an objective feature of language or even as an extension of divine intent.

This misrecognition is evident in exegetical discourse that equates grammatical structure with theological necessity. Once masculine forms are treated as inherently universal, questioning them appears linguistically improper or doctrinally suspect. As a result, the distinction between the Qur'anic message and the grammatical culture through which it is interpreted becomes blurred. The analysis confirms that masculine hegemony in classical exegesis is sustained not through explicit exclusion but through the naturalization of linguistic dominance.

This process of misrecognition operates through the conversion of historical linguistic conventions into seemingly timeless norms. In Bourdieu's terms, symbolic power functions most effectively when its arbitrary foundations are obscured, allowing domination to be exercised without appearing as such (Bourdieu, 1991). In the context of classical Qur'anic exegesis, *taghlīb* exemplifies this mechanism by transforming a pragmatic grammatical strategy into an unquestioned principle of universality. Masculine grammatical dominance is thus experienced not as a social or cultural imposition, but as a neutral linguistic reality.

The authority of this linguistic reality is further reinforced by its proximity to the sacred. Because Arabic grammar is often treated as inseparable from the divine articulation of the Qur'an, grammatical norms acquire a quasi-theological status. This sacralization of grammar intensifies misrecognition by shielding linguistic structures from critical interrogation. What is historically produced within a specific cultural milieu is

reinterpreted as divinely sanctioned, thereby foreclosing the possibility of distinguishing between revelation and its grammatical mediation.

Misrecognition also functions at the level of interpretive habitus. Classical exegetes, trained within established grammatical traditions, internalize the masculine default as a natural interpretive reflex rather than a choice requiring justification. This internalization ensures the reproduction of symbolic power across generations, as grammatical assumptions are transmitted through pedagogy, commentary, and citation practices. Over time, masculine grammatical dominance becomes embedded within the very conditions of scholarly competence, making alternative interpretive strategies appear methodologically illegitimate or linguistically unsound.

Furthermore, symbolic power operates through the regulation of interpretive boundaries. By defining masculine forms as universally inclusive, exegetical discourse limits the range of questions that can be asked about gender representation in the Qur'an. Feminine visibility is acknowledged only insofar as it conforms to masculine universality, while explicit attention to gendered address is often dismissed as unnecessary or disruptive. This boundary-setting function exemplifies how language not only reflects power relations but actively organizes them.

The cumulative effect of misrecognition is the normalization of gender hierarchy within religious meaning-making. Masculine subjectivity becomes the implicit standard against which ethical responsibility, legal obligation, and spiritual agency are measured. Feminine subjectivity, while not erased, remains discursively dependent and symbolically peripheral. This asymmetry persists precisely because it is rarely articulated as a problem; it is embedded within what appears to be the natural order of language itself.

Grammatical Culture and Patriarchal Contexts

The study also reveals that the operation of *taghlīb* in classical exegesis cannot be separated from its broader socio-historical context. Classical exegetes were embedded in patriarchal societies in which male authority structured legal, political, and intellectual life. The grammatical culture that privileged masculine forms both reflected and reinforced these social arrangements.

This convergence between linguistic structure and social hierarchy illustrates how grammatical practices function as cultural artifacts rather than timeless norms. As Arkoun (1990) argues, religious texts are always mediated through historically situated epistemes. The findings of this study reinforce this claim by showing that gender bias in interpretation arises not from the Qur'anic text itself but from the interaction between language, culture, and inherited interpretive frameworks.

Within patriarchal social formations, language does not merely mirror social relations but actively participates in their reproduction. The privileging of masculine grammatical forms in classical Arabic reflects a broader cultural logic in which male experience is positioned as normative and authoritative. In such contexts, grammar becomes an instrument through which social hierarchies are symbolically stabilized, translating structures of dominance into seemingly neutral linguistic conventions. This dynamic underscores the inseparability of grammatical practice from the socio-political conditions under which it develops.

The authority of classical exegesis further intensifies this convergence between language and patriarchy. Exegetes operated within intellectual traditions dominated by male scholars, addressing primarily male audiences and responding to legal and theological questions framed by male-centered social realities. As a result, grammatical interpretations that foreground masculine universality resonated with prevailing assumptions about gender roles and authority. Rather than appearing as ideological impositions, these interpretations aligned seamlessly with the lived social order, reinforcing their plausibility and durability.

From a cultural-philosophical perspective, grammatical culture functions as a repository of collective assumptions about order, hierarchy, and normativity. The repeated use of masculine forms as generic markers reflects an episteme in which gender differentiation is hierarchically organized. This episteme shapes not only how texts are interpreted but also how subjects are imagined within religious discourse. Masculinity becomes associated with rationality, agency, and public responsibility, while femininity is relegated to the margins of explicit textual address.

Arkoun's insistence on the historicity of Islamic thought provides a crucial framework for understanding this phenomenon. By emphasizing the role of epistemological closure in classical traditions, Arkoun (1990) highlights how certain interpretive possibilities are foreclosed by dominant modes of knowledge production. The operation of *taghlib* exemplifies such closure, as grammatical conventions restrict the range of meanings deemed legitimate within exegetical discourse. Gender-inclusive or alternative grammatical readings are rendered inconceivable not because they contradict the text, but because they fall outside the inherited grammatical imagination.

The findings of this study thus challenge essentialist readings of Arabic grammar as inherently neutral or divinely fixed. Instead, they reveal grammar as a historically contingent system shaped by cultural values and social power relations. The patriarchal context of classical exegesis does not merely influence interpretation externally; it is internalized within the grammatical structures that mediate access to the text. Consequently, gender bias emerges as an effect of cultural mediation rather than textual prescription.

Recognizing grammatical culture as a product of patriarchal contexts opens space for critical re-engagement with the exegetical tradition. It allows scholars to differentiate between the ethical vision of the Qur'an and the historical grammars that have shaped its reception. Such differentiation is essential for developing interpretive approaches that remain rooted in tradition while being attentive to questions of justice, inclusion, and cultural transformation.

Toward a Critical Reinterpretation Beyond *Taghlīb*

While *taghlib* has long been treated as an unquestionable grammatical principle, the results of this analysis suggest that it need not determine interpretive outcomes. Several Qur'anic passages employ feminine forms or emphasize ethical reciprocity between genders, indicating that the Qur'anic discourse itself is not uniformly masculine-centered. This observation aligns with contemporary hermeneutical approaches that distinguish between grammatical form and ethical meaning (Wadud, 1999).

By applying a culturally informed and philosophically grounded critique, it becomes possible to re-read classical exegesis without dismissing its scholarly value. Critical engagement with *taghlib* allows interpreters to recognize grammatical masculinity as a historical convention rather than a theological imperative. Such recognition opens space for interpretations that affirm gender equity while remaining faithful to the textual and intellectual tradition.

This critical reorientation requires a methodological shift from grammatical determinism toward ethical reflexivity. Rather than treating grammatical form as the primary determinant of meaning, interpretation can be guided by the Qur'an's broader ethical architecture, which consistently emphasizes justice, moral responsibility, and reciprocal human dignity. When read through this lens, grammatical masculinity no longer functions as a limit on interpretation but as one historical mode through which meaning has been articulated. Such an approach resonates with contemporary hermeneutical theories that prioritize moral coherence over formal literalism (Wadud, 1999).

Moving beyond *taghlib* does not entail abandoning the classical exegetical tradition. On the contrary, it involves engaging that tradition critically by uncovering the linguistic and cultural assumptions that shaped its interpretive strategies. This form of critique

acknowledges the intellectual rigor of classical scholars while recognizing the historical conditions that informed their readings. By distinguishing between grammatical convention and ethical intent, interpreters can preserve the integrity of the tradition without reproducing its limitations.

From a philosophical standpoint, this reinterpretive move reflects a broader understanding of tradition as dynamic rather than static. Traditions endure not by rigid repetition, but through continuous reinterpretation in response to changing moral and cultural horizons. As Gadamerian hermeneutics suggests, understanding emerges through a dialogical process in which past interpretations are revisited and re-evaluated in light of present concerns. Within this dialogical framework, *taghlīb* becomes one interpretive horizon among others, rather than an immutable rule governing meaning.

Furthermore, a critical reinterpretation beyond *taghlīb* contributes to the de-naturalization of symbolic power embedded in language. By making grammatical assumptions visible, interpreters disrupt the process of misrecognition that sustains masculine hegemony. This disruption does not negate linguistic tradition but renders it accountable to ethical scrutiny. In doing so, language is reclaimed as a site of moral deliberation rather than passive inheritance.

The implications of this approach extend beyond gender analysis. Questioning grammatical defaults invites a broader reflection on how linguistic structures shape religious thought, authority, and subjectivity. It encourages scholars to examine other areas where grammatical or discursive conventions have been conflated with theological necessity. Such reflexivity is essential for sustaining a critical philosophy of culture that remains attentive to the interplay between language, power, and value.

Ultimately, moving beyond *taghlīb* affirms that faithfulness to the Qur'an does not require uncritical adherence to inherited grammatical hierarchies. Instead, it calls for an interpretive ethic that recognizes the historical mediation of language while remaining committed to the Qur'an's moral vision. In this sense, critical reinterpretation becomes not a rupture with tradition, but a continuation of its deepest intellectual impulse: the pursuit of meaning grounded in justice and ethical responsibility.

Language as a Site of Axiological Struggle

The results of this study demonstrate that Arabic grammatical culture operates as a site of axiological struggle, where values are embedded, contested, and transmitted through language. *Taghlīb* functions as a key mechanism in this process by encoding masculine dominance within the structure of discourse. Through repeated exegetical use, this dominance is legitimized and rendered invisible.

From the perspective of the philosophy of culture, these findings underscore the importance of examining how linguistic systems shape moral imagination and symbolic order. Masculine hegemony in classical Qur'anic exegesis emerges not as an intentional distortion but as a cumulative effect of grammatical norms, cultural values, and interpretive habits. Recognizing this process enables a more reflexive and ethically responsive engagement with religious texts, one that separates the enduring moral vision of the Qur'an from the historically contingent linguistic forms through which it has been articulated.

This axiological struggle unfolds through the everyday operations of language rather than through overt ideological confrontation. Grammatical structures, once stabilized within scholarly and religious traditions, function as carriers of value that shape interpretive sensibilities. In the case of *taghlīb*, masculine grammatical dominance becomes a normative orientation through which ethical meaning is filtered. What is presented as linguistic efficiency thus acquires evaluative force, privileging certain forms of subjectivity while marginalizing others without explicit exclusion.

Language, in this sense, acts as a mediating space between text and value. It does not merely transmit meaning but actively participates in the construction of moral

hierarchies. Through exegetical repetition, grammatical masculinity is endowed with symbolic legitimacy, aligning masculine subjectivity with universality, authority, and moral agency. This alignment reflects what philosophy of culture identifies as the sedimentation of values within symbolic forms—processes by which cultural norms are embedded in seemingly neutral systems of representation (Bourdieu, 1991).

The struggle over values is further intensified by the sacred status of the Qur'anic language. Because Arabic is perceived as the medium of revelation, its grammatical conventions are often insulated from critical evaluation. This insulation allows axiological assumptions to persist unchallenged, reinforcing symbolic orders that appear divinely ordained rather than culturally mediated. As a result, the evaluative dimensions of language remain obscured, even as they continue to shape religious understanding and ethical orientation.

Importantly, the axiological struggle identified in this study is not reducible to a binary opposition between tradition and critique. Rather, it reflects an internal tension within the tradition itself, where inherited grammatical norms coexist with ethical principles that emphasize justice, reciprocity, and human dignity. The Qur'anic discourse contains multiple linguistic and moral resources that resist reduction to a single grammatical logic. Recognizing these resources enables interpreters to engage the text in ways that are both critically aware and tradition-sensitive.

By framing language as a site of axiological struggle, this study invites a rethinking of interpretive responsibility. Scholars are not merely transmitters of inherited meanings but active participants in the negotiation of values. Grammatical choices, interpretive emphases, and analytical frameworks all contribute to how religious texts function within cultural and moral life. A reflexive awareness of this responsibility is essential for developing interpretations that are attentive to both linguistic structure and ethical consequence.

Ultimately, acknowledging the axiological dimensions of grammatical culture allows for a more nuanced philosophy of religious interpretation. It affirms that fidelity to the Qur'an involves not only linguistic accuracy but also ethical discernment. By disentangling moral vision from grammatical dominance, interpreters can contribute to an ongoing cultural conversation in which language remains a dynamic space for the articulation, contestation, and renewal of values.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that *taghlīb*, commonly regarded as a neutral grammatical convention in Arabic, operates as a cultural and axiological mechanism that contributes to the reproduction of masculine hegemony in classical Qur'anic exegesis. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis of grammatical theory and exegetical practice, the findings reveal that masculine grammatical forms function as epistemic defaults, shaping interpretive authority and normalizing gender hierarchy within religious discourse.

The analysis shows that gender bias in classical exegesis does not originate from the Qur'anic text itself, but rather from the grammatical culture and socio-historical contexts through which the text has been interpreted. The repeated treatment of masculine forms as universally inclusive obscures the distinction between linguistic convention and ethical-theological meaning, leading to the naturalization of masculine subjectivity as the normative bearer of religious values. In this process, language becomes a vehicle of symbolic power, silently mediating relations of dominance while presenting them as neutral or inevitable.

By situating *taghlīb* within the broader framework of philosophy of culture, this study highlights how linguistic structures participate in the formation of moral imagination and value systems. Grammatical rules, far from being purely technical, embody cultural

assumptions that influence how authority, agency, and subjectivity are distributed in interpretive traditions. Recognizing this dynamic allows for a critical re-engagement with classical exegesis that neither dismisses its intellectual legacy nor accepts its assumptions uncritically.

Ultimately, unveiling masculine hegemony in classical Qur'anic exegesis is not an attempt to impose external ideological frameworks, but a methodological effort to distinguish between historically contingent linguistic forms and the ethical vision of the Qur'an. Such a distinction opens the possibility for more inclusive and reflexive interpretations that remain grounded in tradition while responsive to contemporary concerns of justice and equality. In this sense, the study affirms that critical awareness of language is essential for preserving the integrity of religious interpretation in changing cultural contexts.

Acknowledgment

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