

Breaking the Textual Surface: Sub-worlds and Role-enhancing Propositions in the First Prayer of Al-Şahîfah Al-Sajjâdiyyah

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Introduction

This study employs Paul Werth's Text World Theory (1999) as an interdisciplinary analytical framework to investigate the semantic structure and discourse worlds in the first prayer of *Al-Şahîfah Al-Sajjâdiyyah*, transmitted from Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidîn (P.B.E.H). The research aims to move beyond surface-level readings that merely reiterate doctrinal content and, instead, uncover the hidden layers of meaning, cognitive mechanisms, and ethical infrastructures embedded in this supplicatory text. The central problem addressed is the lack of systematic linguistic-cognitive analysis of Shi‘i supplicatory literature, particularly *al-Şahîfah*, which, despite its literary and theological significance, has rarely been examined through the lens of contemporary discourse analysis and cognitive poetics. The theoretical foundation rests on Werth's distinction between three interrelated levels: the discourse world (the immediate situational context of communication), the text world (the conceptual space built by linguistic elements and world-building components such as characters, time, place, objects, and relations), and sub-worlds (deviations from the text world's parameters through shifts in time, belief, conditionality, or quotation). The study also draws on later developments by Stockwell (2002) and Gavins (2007). Two hypotheses are formulated: (1) applying Werth's model to the first prayer reveals distinct textual world patterns organized around ethical concepts such as gratitude, justice, and love; (2) there exists an interactive, non-linear relationship among three primary worlds, the World of God, the World of Man, and the World of Ethics, traceable through deictic markers, reflective relations, and evaluative (modified) relations.

Methodology

The research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, based on Werth's Text World Theory, to analyze the semantic structure and discourse worlds in the first prayer of *Al-Şahîfah Al-Sajjâdiyyah* and to reveal their significance in deriving the concepts and messages latent in the supplicatory text. The entire text of the first prayer is treated as the primary corpus. The analysis proceeds in four stages: first, identification of the discourse world parameters (speaker, addressee, time, place, shared knowledge, presuppositions); second, extraction of text-world building elements (characters, temporal framework, spatial settings, objects/concepts); third, categorization of narrative and descriptive role-enhancing propositions; fourth, mapping of sub-worlds (conditional-hypothetical, temporal, mental-belief, and quoted/intertextual) and the interactive relations among discourse worlds. This layered method allows the study to demonstrate how the prayer constructs a multi-dimensional cognitive experience for the reader.

Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that the discourse world of the first prayer is situated within the post-Ashura context, characterized by an atmosphere of grief, political pressure, and taqiyyah (dissimulation). The speaker is Imam Al-Sajjād (P.B.E.H), the direct addressee is God, and the indirect addressee is the believing reader; shared knowledge encompasses monotheism, prophethood, resurrection, and Quranic teachings.

The text world of the prayer comprises central characters namely God, Man, and the angels constructed within a temporal framework that spans the past, present, and future, alongside spatial references to this world, the afterlife, and the Divine Throne. Objects and concepts such as divine blessings, obedience, sin, and repentance constitute the ontological fabric of this world. Narrative propositions establish causal-temporal sequences and distinguish five types of descriptive propositions: dynamic personal descriptions (e.g., sight falling short of perceiving God), inferential propositions (the conditional warning of losing humanity), educational propositions (guidance to repentance), temporal ordinary propositions (the determined term of life), and scene description as an ontological transition (praise that illuminates the darkness of the Barzakh). Taken together, these propositions construct a coherent and dynamic textual world.

The sub-world analysis identifies four major categories:

Conditional-hypothetical sub-worlds (using "if" and "would have" structures) that function as existential warnings, emphasizing the sensitivity of the blessing of knowledge and gratitude.

Temporal sub-worlds (flash-forwards to death, Barzakh, resurrection, Paradise, and Hell), which are most frequent in the opening section and create dramatic tension and future-oriented anticipation.

Mental-belief sub-worlds (beliefs, desires, intentions, wonder, confession of sin, hope for repentance, and aspiration for martyrdom), which are the most recurrent across all five sections of the prayer and represent the core monotheistic worldview.

The interactive relations among the three primary worlds are analysed through Werth's tripartite model:

Transparent relation: the direct representation of ethical concepts (e.g., praise, gratitude) as linguistic acts within the discourse world.

Reflective relation: the World of God and the World of Man define each other through binary oppositions (power vs. weakness, knowledge vs. ignorance), creating a structural interdependence.

Evaluative (modified) relation: the World of Ethics functions as a mediating bridge, modulating the intensity and manner of linguistic acts.

Crucially, this threefold interaction is hierarchical and functional, not parallel. The discourse world provides the ground; the World of Ethics acts as the evaluative regulator; and the World of God and the World of Man engage in reflective mirroring. Without the World of Ethics, the relationship between God and man would be either deterministic or undefined.

Conclusion

Werth's model, when applied to a religious-heritage text, uncovers linguistic-cognitive mechanisms that a surface-level reading cannot capture. The prayer constructs a multi-layered network of sub-worlds that guide the reader through a spiritual journey from present-day awareness to the historical past (the repentance of previous nations) and future eschatology (death, resurrection, Paradise) as well as aspirational realms (martyrdom). The theory's limitations become apparent with respect to metaphysical entities (Barzakh, divine grace, and repentance as effective agents of world-change), suggesting that Text World Theory requires an

ontological expansion to accommodate religious and theological dimensions. This interdisciplinary integration of linguistics, sociology, and cognitive poetics proves epistemologically indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of supplicatory discourse, yielding results that remain unattainable within narrowly circumscribed disciplinary frameworks. The study thus contributes both to the field of Arabic-Islamic literary studies and to the broader development of Text World Theory as a flexible analytical tool.

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