Syntax Errors in the Qur'an

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the thought of an orientalist– 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi–which states that the Qur'an has no perfection. He poured his thoughts into a book *Is the Qur'an Infallible?* In his book, he states that the Qur'an contains 22 Arabic syntax errors. His thoughts effected in many Muslims doubtful towards the authenticity of the Qur'an. In addition, non-Muslims also increasingly undermine the authenticity of it. Considering that this issue is a matter that must be addressed, the researcher will research further in this case. The purpose of this study is to refute the thoughts of 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi and to maintain the purity, image, and authenticity of the Qur'an. The research method used in this research is descriptive analysis with the qualitative approach. The finding of this research indicates that 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi's thoughts on Qur'anic verses are wrong and this is due to his lack of

understanding of Arabic theories especially the theories of
Arabic syntax.

Keywords: *Oriental Studies, Syntax Errors, Qur'an.*

Abstrak

KESALAHAN SINTAKSIS DALAM AL-QUR'AN. Penelitian
ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pemikiran seorang orientalis–'Abdallah
'Abd al-Fadi–yang menyatakan bahwa Al-Qur'an tidak memiliki
kesempurnaan. Pemikirannya tersebut ia tuangkan ke dalam
suatu buku yang diberi judul *Is the Qur'an Infallible? (Apakah Al-
Qur'an Itu Sempurna?).* Dalam bukunya ia menyatakan bahwa
Al-Qur'an memiliki 22 kesalahan sintaksis Arab. Pemikirannya
tersebut mengakibatkan banyak muslim merasa ragu terhadap
keotentikan Al-Qur'an. Selain itu, non-muslim juga semakin
merendahan kesempurnaan kitab suci Al-Qur'an. Mengingat
bahwa permasalahan ini merupakan suatu hal yang harus
segera diatasi, maka peneliti meneliti lebih lanjut mengenai
hal ini. Tujuan dilakukannya penelitian ini adalah untuk
membantah pemikiran 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi serta untuk
menjaga kemurnian, citra, dan keotentikan Al-Qur'an. Metode
penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode
analisis deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Hasil dari
penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran 'Abdallah 'Abd
al-Fadi terhadap ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an adalah salah dan hal ini
disebabkan oleh kurang fahamnya beliau terhadap teori-teori
bahasa Arab terutama teori-teori ilmu sintaksis Arab.

Kata Kunci: *Kajian Orientalis, Kesalahan Sintaksis, Al-Qur'an.*

A. Introduction

The Arabic language is a unique language than any other
languages. When compared with other languages, the uniqueness
of Arabic language lies on its syntax. As it is known that the Arabic
language is highly inflected language that assigns the role or function
of a word according to its case ending, not according to its position
in a sentence. For example, the word *madrasah* can be read with a

rafa' sign, *nashb*, and *jar* according to the role. While in the English language, the uniqueness of syntax cannot be found.

Arabic syntax is very important in the Arabic language because language is a system consisting of components of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.[1] Therefore, it is required for everyone to master the syntax of a language to learn the language itself since the syntax is one of the most important components for learning a language.[2] Therefore, mastering Arabic syntax is very important in learning the Arabic language. Indeed, Arabic syntax cannot be separated from other Arabic sciences. Arab syntax is also an important science in keeping the Arabic grammar theory from damaged and mixed with the dialect of *'Amiyyah*.[3]

The famous Arabic syntax experts have focused their works on meanings and *i'rab* of the Qur'an. They also agree on the prescribed way of reading the Qur'an. So is their dependencies on Qur'an in establishing Arab syntax theories. Indeed, every word in the Qur'an contains the foundations of Arab syntax theory.[4] Therefore, every theory that contained in Arabic syntax books comes from the Qur'an. The Qur'an is a reference book for Arab syntax experts. They also set the Qur'an as a guide that their theory is the correct theory.

However, there are still many people who deny the truth of the Qur'an and one of them is the orientalists. There are some orientalists explore and study the religion of Islam to defend Islam. William Montogomery is one orientalist who is claimed to be an objective and most sympathetic orientalist towards Islam.[5]

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1   Jamat Jamil, "*Fi'il Mu'tal* dalam Buku *Akhlak lil Banin* Juz 1 Karya Umar bin Ahmad Baraja': Analisis Morfofonemis", *Journal of Arabic Learning and Teaching 3*, no. 3 (2014): 15.

2   Ulil Albab, "Performansi dan Gramatika Bahasa Arab Sebagai Bahasa Kedua", *Arabiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab dan Kebahasaaraban 2*, no. 1 (2015): 75.

3   Toni Pransiska, "Konsep *I'rab* dalam Ilmu Nahwu", *Jurnal al-Mahara 1*, no. 1 (2015): 79.

4   Muhammad al-Mukhtatar Walad Abbah, *Tarikh an-Nahwiy al-'Arabiy* (Libanon: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2008), 575.

5   Muhammad Roihan Daulay, "Studi Pendekatan Al-Qur'an", *Jurnal Thariqah Ilmiah 1*, no. 1 (2014): 42.

However, there are some orientalists who just wants to question and undermine people's belief in the perfection and authenticity of the Qur'an. One aspect that has been questioned by the orientalists against the perfection of the Qur'an is the aspect of its syntax which is judged to be contrary to the syntactic theories of Arabic. And it is reflected in a book entitled Is The Qur'an Infallible by 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi.

Since centuries ago, linguists have admitted that the Qur'an is the Hakim of other Arabic sciences. The Qur'an is also the highest Arabic book of all aspects.[6] Among the beauty of the Qur'an lies in the syntactic beauty.[7]

Therefore, if there is a contradiction between the syntactic theory and the Qur'an, empirically the errors are not derived from the syntactic theory and the Qur'an but derived from the orientalists that caused by their lack of understanding of the theories of Arabic especially the syntactic theories of the Arabic language.

B.   Discussion

1.   'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi's View to the Syntax Errors in the Qur'an

Since centuries ago, the glory of Muslims has spread all over the world. Many mathematicians, astronomers, biologists, and others come from among the Muslims. So from that point, westerners have become interested in exploring and studying Arabic language and the religion of Islam since the 10th century.[8] From the studies that have conducted by the westerners, many of them have compiled their studies into a book of approximately 60.000 books about the near orient.[9]

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6 Muhammad Muhammad Daud, *Kamal al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah baina Haqa'iq al-I'jaz wa Awham al-Khushum* (al-Qahirah: Maktabah al-Adab, 2007), 21.

7 Muhammad Mahmud Qadli, *I'rab Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (al-Qahirah: Dar ash-Shahwah, 2010), ii.

8 Muhammad Aqil Luthfan, "Orientalisme: antara Lawan dan Kawan", *Jurnal Wahana Akademika 15*, no. 1 (2013): 136.

9 Edward Wadie Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 204.

However, need to know that among the orientalists who explore the Arabic language is not only for positive purposes such as the orientalist who devote himself solely to scientific knowledge. But there are some of the orientalists too who with negative purposes.[10]

Today, studies of orientalists become relevant for re-appointment as adopting the ideas and views of orientalists is a trend among Muslim intellectuals. Talking about the orientalist issues that exploring and studying the religion of Islam, the main purpose of the studies by the orientalists is the study of Qur'an.[11] They have always doubted and spread their doubts about the perfection and authenticity of Qur'an's contents so as to create doubts among Muslims against the holy book of Qur'an.[12]

Among the orientalists who with negative purposes was 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi. In his writing,[13] he states that the Qur'an has two Arabic syntactic errors that are not proper in the holy book of the Qur'an that is the Qur'an has no concordance between *'adad* and *ma'dud*. The two errors are contained in Q.S. al-A'raf [7]: 160 and Q.S. at-Tahrim [66]: 4.

And in Q.S. al-A'raf [7]: 160 Allah says, "And We divided them into twelve tribes, each of which is large."

$$\text{وَقَطَّعْنَاهُمُ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ أَسْبَاطًا أُمَمًا}$$

The Arabic rendering of this verse "*Wa qattha'nahum ithnatay 'asyrata asbathan umaman*". There are two grammatical errors in this verse. The first is the feminine number *ithnatay 'asyrata,* and the second is the plural noun *asbathan*. The word *asbathan* is masculine and requires a masculine number, also, a noun used in conjunction with a number 11 and 12 should be in a singular form. According to the theory of Arabic syntax for number 11 and 12 should be

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10 Agustiar, "Orientalis dan Perannya dalam Mempelajari Bahasa Arab", *Jurnal Ushuluddin 17*, no. 2 (2011): 157.

11 Kurdi Fadal, "Pandangan Orientalis terhadap Al-Qur'an: "Teori Pengaruh" Al-Qur'an Theodor Nöldeke", *Jurnal Religia 14*, no. 2 (2011): 190.

12 Fadal, 41.

13 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi, *Is the Qur'an Infallible?* (Austria: Light of Life, 2001), 173.

concordance between *'adad* and *ma'dud* in term of the gender and the *ma'dud* should be in a singular form. Therefore the Qur'an should have said *ithnay 'ashara sibthan*.[14]

Similarly, in Q.S. at-Tahrim [66]: 4 Allah says, "If you both repent to Allah, then surely your heart has been inclined (to receive kindness)."

$$إِن تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا$$

The Arabic rendering of this verse "*In tatuba ila Allah fa qad shaghat qulubukuma*". Al-Baidawi says that Hafsha and 'Aisyah were being addressed with this verse. But despite this, the Arabic word *qulubukuma* is in the plural form and it related to the pronoun *kuma*. There is an error in this verse because how can two people have more than two hearts. Therefore the Qur'an should have said *qalbakuma*.[15]

Thus the views of the orientalists who have been described above are empirical evidence that the Qur'an is a holy scripture that is still in doubt about its authenticity. From this empirical evidence, Zakaria Batrousin is one of the orientalists who concludes that the Qur'an is not Allah's creation. But the Qur'an is the creation of the prophet Muhammad because it is impossible for Allah to make a mistake.[16]

2. The Islamic Scholars' View to the Syntax Errors by 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi

Many of the orientalists reject and not accept the facts of the Qur'an that it is the most authentic and perfect Holy Scripture. The authenticity, excellence, and perfect of the Qur'an have been agreed upon by the Muslims and so are some the non-Muslims from the past to the present day from Morocco to Merauke.[17]

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14 Al-Fadi, 175.

15 Al-Fadi, 185.

16 Amnah Tidjani, "Klarifikasi al-Darwish atas Pandangan Orientalis Tentang Kontradiksi Ayat Al-Qur'an dengan Kaidah Nahw", *Mutawatir:Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadits 4*, no. 1 (2014): 139.

17 Syamsuddin Arif, "Al-Qur'an, Orientalisme, dan Luxenberg", *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah dan Pemikiran Islam 6*, no. 1 (2005): 56.

Therefore, many of the orientalists always try to spread their misguided thinking and idea to the whole world by saying that the Qur'an is not perfect.[18] However, their efforts are all unsuccessful because the Qur'an is the first and primary source of law in the Islamic religion.[19] So, it is really possible for a legal source which is the Qur'an to contain such an error.

Then the following is the result of research and discussion on the Arabic syntax errors in the Qur'an by 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi. Two syntactic Arabic errors have been found that relate to the theory of *'adad* and *ma'dud* in the Qur'an written in his book *Is the Qur'an Infallible?* Al-Fadi assumes that the verses contained in the Qur'an are not based on syntactic theories.

There are several theories relating to *'adad* and *ma'dud*. Firstly, if the *'adad* is between 3 and 10, the *ma'dud* must be in the plural form, the gender of the *ma'dud* must be the opposite of the gender of *'adad*, and the *ma'dud* must be read with *majrur*. As for the *'adad* between 11 and 99, the *ma'dud* must be in a singular form and the *ma'dud* must be read with *manshub*. And for *'adad* 100, 1000, and so on, the *ma'dud* also must be in a singular form but the *ma'dud* must be read with *majrur*.[20]

So in Q.S. al-A'raf [7]: 160 Allah says, "And We divided them into twelve tribes, each of which is large."

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The Arabic rendering of this verse "*Wa qattha'nahum ithnatay 'asyrata asbathan umaman*". There are two grammatical errors in this verse. The first is the feminine number *ithnatay 'asyrata,* and the second is the plural noun *asbathan*. The word *asbathan* is masculine

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18 Abdul Kholik, "Sunnah dalam Perspektif Orientalis", *Jurnal El-Islam 2*, no. 2 (2015): 216.

19 Khaeruddin Yusuf, "Orientalis dan Duplikasi Bahasa Al-Qur'an: Telaah dan Sanggahan atas Karya Christoph Luxenberg", *Hunafa: Jurnal Studia Islamika 9*, no. 1 (2012): 150.

20 Muthafa al-Ghulayainiy, *Jami' ad-Durus al-'Arabiyyah* (al-Qahirah: Dar as-Salam, 2009), 558.

and requires a masculine number, also, a noun used in conjunction with a number 11 and 12 should be in a singular form. According to the theory of Arabic syntax for number 11 and 12 should be concordance between *'adad* and *ma'dud* in term of the gender and the *ma'dud* should be in a singular form. Therefore the Qur'an should have said *ithnay 'ashara sibthan.*[21]

In fact what the orientalists believe is wrong because when something is based on something wrong then it is wrong. The orientalists have established and suspected that the word *asbathan* becomes the *ma'dud* for the *'adad ithnatay 'asyrata*. However, that is the wrong determination.

In that verse, in fact, there is one word that was disposed of which is the word *firqatan* or *qabilatan*. And the disposed word is the *ma'dud* for the *'adad ithnatay 'asyrata*. Thus, the word *asbāthan* according to Arabic syntax becomes *badal* of the *ma'dud* which is disposed of and the word *umaman* becomes *badal* after the *badal*.[22] So, when we add the disposed word into the verse it becomes,

<div dir="rtl">

وَقَطَّعْنَاهُمُ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ فِرقة أو قبيلة أَسْبَاطًا أُمَّمًا

</div>

As it is known that disposing of the *ma'dud* in a sentence is constituted by the Arab syntactic theories. Among the examples of disposing of the *ma'dud* in a sentence are contained in the Qur'an Allah says, "And upon them, there are nineteen (guardian angels)."

<div dir="rtl">

عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ

</div>

There is one word that is disposed from the verse which is the word *malakan*. And the disposed word is the *ma'dud* for *'adad tis'ata 'asyara*. So when we add the disposed word into the verse it becomes,

<div dir="rtl">

عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ ملكا

</div>

21 Al-Ghulayainiy, 175.

22 Abu Hayyan, *Tafsir al-Bahr al-Muhith* (n.p.: Dar al-Fikr, 1983), 198.

As for the fourth verse in Surah at-Tahrim Allah says, "If you both repent to Allah, then, in fact, your heart has been inclined (to receive kindness)."

<div dir="rtl">إِن تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا</div>

The Arabic rendering of this verse *in tatuba ila Allah fa qad shaghat qulubukuma*. Al-Baidawi says that Hafsha and 'Aisyah were being addressed with this verse. But despite of this, the Arabic word *qulubukuma* is in the plural form and it related to the pronoun *kuma*. There is an error in this verse because how can two people have more than two hearts. Therefore the Qur'an should have said *qalbakuma*.[23]

In fact, the arrangement of the word in the verse that has been used in the Qur'an is a well-known word order and it is the most widely used. Some verses have been found using such that kind of wording. One of it states in Q.S. al-Ma'idah [5]: 38 Allah says, "The man who stole and the woman who stole, cut their both hands."

<div dir="rtl">وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا</div>

Need to know that actually, the order of words in these verses are all inseparable from the theories of Arabic syntax. The Arabic syntax experts have included and explained such wordings in their essays. Truly placing the plural form in the place of the double form or *mutsanna* is allowed in the theories of Arabic syntax.[24]

And the wording as in the verse—which mentions the plural form but the meaning of the word is a singular or double form—is a rule that the Arabs do in their language.[25]

From the theories that have been described above, it can be concluded that such wording is a common case among Arabs. Also

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23 Hayyan, 185.
24 Hayyan, 222.
25 Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuthi, *al-Muzhir fi 'Ulum al-Lughah wa Anwa'uha* (Beirut: Munshawarat al-Maktabah al-'Ashriyyah, 2014), 333.

found in some *syi'ir* written by the Arabs using the wording as in the Surah at-Tahrim. Among them are the *syi'ir* of Khitam al-Mujasyi'iy,

<div dir="rtl">

ومهمهين قذفين مرتين   *   ظهراهما مثل ظهور الترسين

</div>

Indeed the poet Khitam al-Mujasyi'iy has combined two wordings of this case namely the first by matching to the word (ظهراهما) and it is the origin. And the second is by mentioning plural form as in word (ظهورالترسين).

The commentator explains that when the wording uses a double form, it will incriminate the Arabs in speaking. So when the sentence is safe from coercion, the phrase will change from the double form to the plural form.[26]

Therefore, there is no Arabic syntax error from the wording of the verse in Surah at-Tahrim. In fact, the verse is certainly based on the syntactic theories of Arabic and it based on the way of speaking Arabs as well. And that error is only from the people who do not understand how is the speaking of the Arabs and their ignorance of such forms and word orders.

Indeed, what is believed by 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi is a defective belief because in fact when something is built upon the unlawful then it is wrong. And it would be ambiguous because of the flawed thing. And he also thought that the words in the Qur'an were wrong because he did not know the signs of *rafa'* except *dlammah*, signs of *nashab* except *fathah*, and the signs of *jar* except *kasrah*.

So if 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi and the other orientalists refer to Arabic syntax books and commentaries, surely they will find and know in fact the words and verses in the Qur'an have absolutely no errors, moreover, Qur'an is based on the sciences of the Arabic and especially the sciences of Arabic syntax and tafsir. As it known that the tafsir is the main knowledge of the study of the Qur'an.[27]

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26 Muhammad Thahir ibn 'Ashur, *Tafsir at-Tahrir wa at-Tanwir* (Libya: ad-Dar al-Jamahiriyyah, 2010), 356.

27 Ibn 'Ashur, 44.

C.   Conclusion

From the research described above, it can be concluded that 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi is an orientalist who doubts the perfection and authenticity of Qur'an from all aspects. And one of the aspects is the language of Qur'an that related to the theory of the Arabic syntax which is the theory of *'adad* and *ma'dud*. His thoughts are poured in a book entitled is the Qur'an infallible. His states that the Qur'an has two errors regarding the theory of *'adad* and *ma'dud* which stated at Surah al-A'raf and Surah at-Tahrim. However the thoughts of 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Fadi against the two verses of the Qur'an are wrong and this is due to his lack of accuracy with Arabic theories, especially the theories of Arabic syntax.

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