Is *wa* a Polysemous Connective? A Case Study of the Qurʾānic *wāw al-ʿaṭf*

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Abstract

The ways in which parts of a compound statement are related to each other are often easy to understand but hard to explain. A case in point is the "*wāw* of attachment" or *al-wāw al-ʿāṭifa*, which associates nouns, verbs and clauses but provides no clues as to its exact interpretation. The particle *wa* is often interpreted in the target language as "but", "even if" or "although". Does this make *wa* polysemous, comprising related but different meanings? This article argues that *wa* is part of an incremental reading process that unfolds until the meaning of the text is fully recovered. It shows that the functions of the particle *wa* can be grouped under four headings: adversative relations where certain features of the items complement each other, additive relations where items are grouped together, consecutive relations indicating the passing of time, and causal relations indicating cause and effect.

Keywords: connective conjunction; discourse particle; information structure; propositional logic; cohesive relations

Introduction

The Arab grammarian Ibn Hišām (d. 761/1360) mentions 15 types of the particle *wa* in Arabic. This article focuses on *al-wāw al-ʿāṭifa*, "the *wāw* of attachment", that connects clauses or sentences of equal importance as compared to the *wa* of subordinate conjunction. This coordinate conjunction (henceforth CC) is defined by Ibn Hišām as follows:

al-ʾawwal al-ʿāṭifa wa-maʿnāhā muṭlaqu l-ğamʿi fa-taʿṭufu š-šayʾa ʿalā muṣāḥabatin naḥwa fa-ʾanğaynāhu wa-ʾaṣḥāba s-safīnati wa-ʿalā sābiqihi naḥwa wa-la-qad ʾarsalnā nūḥan wa-ʾibrāhīma wa-ʿalā lāḥiqihi naḥwa ka-ḏālika yūḥī ʾilayka wa-ʾilā llaḏīna min qablika. (Ibn Hišām 1969, vol. 2, 408)[1]

[The first type of *wa* is] the *wāw* of attachment. This means a simple connection [i.e., it functions essentially as a connective]. [The CC *wa*] conjoins syntactic components [lit. 'things'], while indicating simultaneity,[2] e.g., We delivered him, together [*wa-*] with the companions of the Ark (Q. 29:15). It [also] connects a component with [another component which form a temporal sequence aspect] that precedes it, e.g., We have also sent forth Noah and [*wa-*] Abraham (Q. 57:26). Or it connects a component with [another component which forms a temporal sequence aspect] one that follows it, e.g., Thus He reveals to you and to [*wa-ʾilā*] those who preceded you (Q.42:3).

Ibn Hišām treats the "*wāw* of attachment" as a phrasal level conjunction dealing with elliptic clauses, and contextualised in terms of time. Thus, in his view, the clause *ka-ḏālika yūḥī ʾilayka wa-ʾilā llaḏīna min qablika* (Q. 42:3) can be reconstructed as **ka-ḏālika yūḥī ʾilayka wa- yūḥī ʾilā llaḏīna min qablika*, "Thus, He reveals to you and reveals to those who preceded you."

Apart from being a phrasal level conjunction, the CC has other distinctive features that have received scant attention. One key question is that of temporal order. A compound statement such as *lam yalid wa-lam yūlad* (Q. 112:3), "He did not beget and is not begotten," does not create any problems since it is obvious to all that a person needs to have been born before producing offspring. Formally stated, the scheme for logical conjunction has the property of commutativity where ¬A & ¬B has the same meaning as ¬B & ¬A. For example, Q. 112:3 can be inserted into this scheme as ¬ yalid & ¬ yulad or equivalently as ¬ yulad & ¬ yalid.

At second glance, however, things are not always as straightforward. The sentence *ʿalimat nafsun mā qaddamat wa-ʾaḫḫarat* (Q. 82:5), "Then each soul will know what it advanced and what it deferred," informs us that every soul will know what happened earlier in life and in the hereafter, thereby hinting (when viewed in the context of Q. 82:4) at the causal relationship between moral behaviour and eternal rewards. By contrast, the sentence *wa-ʾinna lanā la-l-ʾāḫirata wa-l-ʾūlā* (Q. 92:13), "And ours is the last day and the first," plainly runs counter to the usual flow of time as we perceive it intuitively. What leads us to accept a statement of the latter kind as intelligible and valid? To begin, take the following three sentences:

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1   See also Ibn Yaʿīš (2001, vol. 5, 6–7); Reckendorf (1921, 320).

2   Sāmarrāʾī (2000, vol. 3, 216) mentions that *muṭlaq l-ğamʿ* has three possible indications: simultaneity (e.g., *ğāʾa muḥammadun wa-zaydun*, "Both Muḥammad and Zayd came at the same time"); sequentiality ("First came Muḥammad and then Zayd came"); and non-sequentiality ("Zayd came first and not Muḥammad").

(1) *wa-law šāʾa llāhu la-ḏahaba bi-samʿihim **wa**-ʾabṣārihim* (Q. 2:20)
If Allāh had willed, He would have taken away their hearing and sight.

(2) *qālū naʿbudu ʾilāhaka wa-ʾilāha ʾābāʾika ʾibrāhīma **wa**-ʾismāʿīla **wa**-ʾisḥāqa* (Q. 2:133)
We will worship your God and the God of your forefathers, Abraham and Ismaʿil and Ishaq.[3]

(3) *wa-qatala dāwūdu ǧālūta **wa**-ʾātāhu llāhu l-mulka wa-l-ḥikmata **wa**-ʾallamahu mimmā yašāʾu* (Q. 2:251)
David killed Goliath and Allāh bestowed on him the kingship and the wisdom, and taught him what He pleased.

In examples (1) and (2) *wa* connects phrases (nominal phrases or prepositional phrases), whereas in example (3) it connects clauses and a phrase. Even though *wa* seems to be the simplest and most common conjunction, defining it solely as a CC does not exhaust its functions as is clear when we omit *wa* from sentences (1)–(3):

*(1) *wa-law šāʾa llāhu la-ḏahaba bi-samʿihim Ø ʾabṣārihim*
If Allāh had willed, He would have taken away their hearing Ø sight.

When *wa* is omitted, the sentence becomes semantically unclear. Both *samʿihim* and *ʾabṣārihim* are in the genitive case following the preposition *bi*. Hence, they are grammatically connected, but the type of relationship between them would be unclear when *wa* is omitted. For example, the hearer could have equally well interpreted the clause **wa-law šāʾa llāhu la-ḏahaba bi-samʿihim Ø ʾabṣārihim* as "If Allāh had willed, He would have taken away their hearing **than [ṯumma]** their sight."

*(2) *qālū naʿbudu ʾilāhaka wa-ʾilāha ʾābāʾika ʾibrāhīma Ø ʾismāʿīla Ø ʾisḥāqa*
We will worship your God the God of your forefathers, Abraham, Ismaʿil, Ishaq.

When *wa* is omitted the sentence remains grammatical, and *wa* can simply be replaced by a comma in the translation.[4]

*(3) *wa-qatala dāwūdu ǧālūta Ø ʾātāhu llāhu l-mulka wa-l-ḥikmata*
David killed Goliath Ø Allāh bestowed on him the kingship and the wisdom.

Western scholars usually characterise the CC *wa* in (3), for example, by polysemy and polyfunctionality. For example, *wa* can indicate a temporal sequence or a cause-and-

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3   We argue that the function of the first conjunction *wa-* (*ʾilāhaka wa-ʾilāha*) is not the same in *ʾibrāhīma **wa**-ʾismāʿīla **wa**-ʾisḥāqa*. If *wa-* is omitted the hearer might interpret *ʾilāha ʾābāʾika* as the apposition of *ʾilāhaka*.

4   Beeston (1970, 57) notes that from time to time the connectives *wa* and *fa* serve to mark structural division within a sentence, and in such cases they must not be translated in English as "and".

effect relationship (Shizuka 1999, 223–24). These can also be seen in example (3), but when *wa* is deleted these relations are still understood.

This linguistic exercise (i.e., deleting *wa*) suggests that there should be a preliminary distinction between two categories of *wa*:
(1) At the phrasal level[5] *wa* serves as a connective conjunction that connects two or more items having identical syntactic status.
(2) At the sentential level *wa* functions as a discourse marker signalling a relation between the clauses, but the type of relation between these clauses is inferred due to the combination of the information structure and logic.

Perspectives on the Connective Conjunction *wa*

There are several representative approaches to the CC *wa* in Arabic. As mentioned above, Shizuka (1999) argues that the connectives *wa* and *fa* have various interpretations. Shizuka's first aim was to describe the function of these two connectives; the second was to clarify the features distinguishing them. At the phrasal level he shows that *wa* connects nouns at the same syntactic level, as in *qāma zaydun wa-ʿamrun*, "Zayd and ʿAmr stood." The particle *fa*, however, imposes an order on them: *qāma zaydun fa-ʿamrun*, "Zayd stood and then ʿAmr." At the sentential level Shizuka claimed that these connectives can indicate four different types of relations. The first relation is additive, e.g., *zaydun ṭālibun wa-ʿamrun ʿāmilun*, "Zaid is a student, and ʿAmr is a worker." These two clauses cannot be joined by the connective *fa* because *wa* presents the two clauses as describing independent and additive situations and *fa* does not have this usage. The second relation is temporal, e.g., *daḫala zaydun wa-ğalasa ʿalā kursiyyin*, "Zaid entered and then sat down on a chair." Usually the connective *wa* indicates simultaneity, whereas *fa* indicates sequence; but as the example shows, *wa* may also indicate temporal sequence. The third relation is causal. This relation can be indicated by both *fa* and *wa*. Finally, there is the adversative relation, for example, *zaydun ḏakiyyun wa-ʾaḫūhu ʾaḥmaqu*, "Zayd is clever but his brother is stupid."[6] The adversative relation is not much different from the additive relation, except for the fact that the connected components are semantically opposites.

Shizuka's study shows that syntactically *wa* connects phrases and clauses, but pragmatically accomplishes four relations: additive, sequential, causal, and adversative. He remarks, however, that "when items connected by *wa* are regarded as having a temporal sequence, the interpretation depends on the internal meaning of the predicates

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5   The expressions "phrasal level" and "sentential level" are taken from Shizuka (1999). These terms are also used by Badawi, Carter and Gully (2004, 544).
6   See also Bellfouḏīl (2017, 55–57); Fareh (1998, 311); Blachère (1958, 157); Badawi, Carter and Gully (2004, 542).

and is not caused by the function of *wa* itself" (Shizuka 1999, 232).[7] Shizuka provides no explanation for this observation and it remains unclear whether the relation between the clauses might be inferred without using *wa*. If so, what is the real function of *wa*?

A plausible explanation can be found in Carston's (1993) study. She analyses *and*-conjunctions mentioned in the literature such as:
(a) He handed her the scalpel and she made the incision.
(b) We spent the day in town and I went to Harrods.
(c) She fed him poisoned stew and he died.
(d) I left the door open and the cat got in.

According to Carston (1993, 80) "the word 'and' is taken to be pretty well semantically empty, that is, it is taken to be the natural language equivalent of the truth-functional logical conjunction operator." In her opinion, various sorts of relations between clauses are derived inferentially when the decoded semantic content intersects with general knowledge assumptions about the way things are related. Hence even when the conjunction "and" is removed, we still understand that in (a) there is a temporal relation, that is, the incision comes after the scalpel has been handed over, and that the two actions are separated by a few seconds. A quite different temporal relation is understood in (b), where the event of going to Harrods is interpreted as contained within the period of time spent in town. In (c) and (d) a causal relation can be inferred since feeding someone poison is a sufficient cause of death, and leaving the door open lets the cat get in.[8]

Yagi and Yunis Ali (2008) discuss the use and function of the Arabic CC *wa* on the basis of the Gricean cooperative principle to examine logical relations when "and" is removed. They suggest that the CC *wa* is used to imply sequence. However, they also wonder what makes Arabic speakers use the conjunction *wa* to imply sequence when they can use the conjunctions *fa* or *tumma* to express succession and immediacy. Furthermore, there are many examples in Arabic in which the conjunction *wa* does not necessarily indicate sequence. Consider, for example, the sentence *iḫtalaf zaydun wa-ʿamrun*, "Zayd and ʿAmr disagreed," where it cannot be claimed that the CC *wa* implies sequence (Yagi and Yunis Ali 2008, 619).

According to Yagi and Yunis Ali (2008, 621) *wa* can be regarded as a logical conjunction which is commutative in a mathematical sense (i.e., p & q ≡ q & p). Allwood, Anderson and Osten (1977, 33–34) state:

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7   Badawi, Carter and Gully (2004, 548–49) mention three types of relations indicated by *wa*: adversative, consequential and emphatic. See also Cantarino (1975, vol. 3, 18–19).
8   See also Van Benthem et al. (1991, vol. 1, 197–98).

> In logic, p & q is always equivalent to q & p. This makes the logical conjunction a-temporal and unable to handle the temporal aspects of 'and' ... There are many other uses of 'and' in everyday language. Often these should not be analyzed as a logical conjunction.

The following example can help clarify this peculiarity: *rakiba dāwūdu sayyāratahu wa-ʾaġlaqa bābahā wa-nṭalaqa bihā musriʿan*, "David drove his car, closed the door, and tore off." The correct temporal order of this sentence is *daḫala dāwūdu sayyāratahu wa-ʾaġlaqa bābahā wa-rakibahā* or *wa-nṭalaqa bihā musriʿan*, "David entered his car, closed the door and drove away or tore off hastily." Thus, had the speaker really wanted to indicate a sequence of events in the example above, *fa* or *ṯumma* would have been used.

Thus, overall, two approaches to the CC *wa* can be distinguished in Western scholarship: a semantic approach which regards the conjunction *wa* as a polysemous connective, and the pragmatic approach, which acknowledges that the various interpretations of *wa* are not strictly implied by *wa* and there are other factors that affect the interpretation of the sentence containing *wa*. That said, one issue still remains which is not covered by either: if, after omission of the conjunction *wa*, the meaning of the sentence does not change, because the same relation between the connected clause is inferred, why was *wa* inserted in the first place?

Analysis

We first need to settle on a model for a discussion of the function of *wa*. Our framework seeks to classify the Qurʾānic verses according to their structure, and the inferred relation among the connected clauses or phrases. To do so, the first step was to collect all verses including the conjunction *wa* from ten representative suras (2, 8, 10, 12, 17, 36, 58, 59, 76, 80). These were then divided into four groups: adversative relations, additive relations, consecutive relations, and causal relations.

To illustrate how these relations are inferred, a "decision tree" was developed that shows the stages of interpreting the utterance. Drawing on the work of Fraser (1999), *wa* is shown to be a discourse marker. Specifically, whereas *wa* does not appear to be mandatory on the sentential level where *wa* functions as a discourse marker, the same does not always hold when *wa* works on the phrasal level. In this case *wa* functions as a conjunction, namely as a syntactic device linking two or more segments which share one property. Then, this analysis is contrasted with some of the observations put forward by Steiner (2000), who argues that there is no basis for the conventional view that the biblical -ו (*wĕ*) is polysemous.

Adversative Relations

Scholars and Qurʾān translators in various contexts assign an adversative meaning to the conjunction *wa* (when preceding the imperative), as seen in the following example, in which Fakhry[9] (1998, 356) translates *wa* as "but":

> (4) *yā-ʾayyuhā llaḏīna ʾāmanū ʾiḏā tanāğaytum fa-lā tatanāğaw bi-l-ʾiṯmi wa-l-ʾudwāni wa-maʿṣiyati r-rasūli **wa**-tanāğaw bi-l-birri wa-t-taqwā wa-ttaqū llāha llaḏī ʾilayhi tuḥšarūna* (Q. 58:9)
> O believers, if you converse secretly among yourselves, then do not converse in sin, and aggression and disobedience of the Apostle; **but** converse in righteousness and piety, and fear Allāh unto Whom you shall be gathered.

However, as Steiner (2000, 257) says, the fact that the biblical -ו (*wĕ*) is replaced by "but" or any other adversative conjunction is hardly proof that -ו (*wĕ*) in the conjunctive context has an adversative meaning. This argument also applies to the English translation of Q. 58:9. However, if the translation of *wa* as "but" is accepted, how is the contrastive or adversative relationship between the conjoined clauses inferred? Steiner (2000, 260) says that if there is anything in biblical verses that explicitly signals contrast, it is word order. For example:

> (Gen 40:21–22) וַיָּשֶׁב אֶת שַׂר הַמַּשְׁקִים עַל מַשְׁקֵהוּ ... וְאֵת שַׂר הָאֹפִים תָּלָה
> He restored the chief cupbearer [VO] (…) but the chief baker he impaled [OV].

Inversion of word order (i.e., of the verbs) signals the utterance's adversative meaning. In the Qurʾān, adversative meaning can be found, among other places, in the so-called parallelism structure, namely a literary unit consisting of two verses formed from two, or more rarely three, stichoi combined, in which the stichoi or members are in some way "parallel" in that they constitute variations on the same idea. This may be done by the second member repeating the content of the first in different words (synonymous parallelism) or by setting it off sharply against a contrasting thought (antithetical parallelism); alternatively, it can simply take the thought further and complete it (synthetic parallelism). In general, parallelism comprises successive components of a literary unit. The simplest model of parallelism consists of two half-lines that constitute a line or verse. The half-line is also called a stich, stichos, hemistich or colon. Two parallel half-lines that form a verse are termed distich, bicolon or couplet (Dror 2017, 168). For example:

> (5) *wa-minhum man yuʾminu bihi **wa**-minhum man lā yuʾminu bihi* (Q. 10:40)
> Some of them believe in it, **and** some do not.[10]

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9 The translations of the Qurʾānic verses are taken from Fakhry (1998); sometimes a few changes have been made. In Q. 58:9, however, we keep his original translation of *wa* to show that *wa* is polysemous.

10 For additional examples, see Dror (2017).

Q. 10:40 exemplifies an antithetical parallelism expressing contrast or opposition expressed by the adverb *lā* "not".

There are two main types of antithetical parallelisms. The first type is considered a complete antithetical parallelism in which there is complete symmetry between the elements of the half-lines. The second type is regarded as an incomplete grammatical parallelism because not all the constituents of the first half-line have corresponding constituents in the second half-line. The two types share the occurrence of the connective conjunction *wa* between the two half-lines (Dror 2017, 173). Clearly, expressing contrasting actions or concepts by strict parallelism can enhance the effectiveness of the distinction between the two opposing sides (Dror 2017, 174), hence, that the adversative meaning is achieved by the structure and not by *wa*.

However, parallelism is not the only structure conveying an adversative relation between two connected clauses. In example (4), believers are warned not to commit sins by holding secret talks, thereby disobeying God Almighty and His Messenger; rather, their discussions should be pure.

It might be argued that by using the same verb, the first usage is a prohibition (*lā tatanāǧaw*), whereas the second is a command (*tanāǧaw*), which produces the adversative meaning.

Consider a further example:

> (6) *ḏālika bi-ʾannahum qālū ʾinnamā l-bayʿu miṯlu r-ribā **wa**-ʾaḥalla llāhu l-bayʿa wa-ḥarrama r-ribā* (Q. 2:275)
> For they claim that trading is like usury, **whereas** Allāh made trading lawful and prohibited usury.

Ibn Kaṯīr (1924, vol. 1, 530) explains Q. 2:275 as follows:

> *(wa-ʾaḥalla llāhu l-bayʿa wa-ḥarrama r-ribā) yaḥtamilu ʾan yakūna min tamāmi l-kalāmi raddan ʿalayhim ʾayy ʿalā mā qālūhu mina l-iʿtirāḍi*
> (And Allāh made trading lawful and prohibited usury) it is plausible [that this clause] completes the whole utterance [by providing] a reply/a refutation [to the people's claims], which means this answer opposes what they said [that trading is like usury].

This can by expressed by the following scheme:

> T: considering trading as forbidden
> U: considering usury as forbidden
> p: people
> g: God
> (Tp & Up) & (Ug & ¬Tg)

The people consider trading and usury as forbidden and God considers usury as forbidden but not trading.

In discourse, the speaker provides some information to the hearer who exploits the information structure to "connect the dots" through other cues in the discourse and with background knowledge about how to interpret things. This suggests that on the theoretical level the inferential process can be presented by a "decision tree":

Identification of the discourse particle *wa*

wa signals a relationship between the clauses

The addressee is attentive to additional cues/information structures

The string of words is grammatically structured and associated with a logical statement

The message is fully recoverable

Both "discourse particle" and "information structure" require definition. The study of discourse markers has expanded significantly in recent years, and employs a range of terminology including cue phrases, discourse connectives, discourse operators, discourse signalling devices, phatic devices, pragmatic connectives, pragmatic expressions, pragmatic markers, pragmatic operators, semantic conjunct and sentence connectives (Fraser 1999, 932). However, regardless of terminology, it implies a relationship between one aspect of the discourse segment to other aspects of the discourse segment. For example: "He drove the truck through the parking lot and into the street. Then he almost cut me off. After that, he ran a red light. *However*, those weren't his worst offenses." In this utterance, the discourse marker "however" relates the segment it introduces ("Those weren't his worst offenses") to the segments immediately prior to it ("He almost cut me off; after that, he ran a red light") (Fraser 1999, 938).

Discourse particles in English have at least six characterisations.[11] (1) Connectivity, i.e., the particles are used to relate utterances or other discourse units, e.g., "You take the first turn on the left. So we don't go past the university (then)." The discourse particle *so* relates two segments and marks an implied conclusion. (2) Optionality, i.e., the particles that can be removed from the text without causing any syntactic change in the

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11 Schourup (1999) mentions the "orality" of discourse particles, i.e., they are mostly used in speech although they might occur in writing. Cf. Fraser (1999, 944).

syntactic structure. If they are omitted, the relationship signalled by this particle is still clear to the hearer. For example, "The others are going to Stoke. However, I am going to Paris." The same message is understood when *however* is omitted: "The others are going to Stoke. I am going to Paris." The option to delete the discourse particles does not necessarily mean that they are redundant, however. They are required to guide (in the target language) the hearer/reader to a particular interpretation or to reinforce the interpretation intended by the speaker (Schourup 1999, 231–32). (3) Non-truth conditionality, i.e., the discourse particles contribute nothing to the truth conditions of the proposition expressed by an utterance (Schourup 1999, 232). In other words, although the discourse particles are introduced into sentences, they do not affect the propositional content, e.g., "She left very late. But she arrived on time." There are two propositions: "She left late and she arrived on time." Both are true even when the discourse particle "but" is omitted. (4) Initial position: most discourse particles appear in the initial position of the clause, probably for communicative reasons. In such cases, the interpretation of the utterance is restricted from the outset, so that the hearer/reader will not be concerned with that utterance's optional interpretations (Schourup 1999, 233). (5) Weak clause association, i.e., discourse markers are regarded as outside the sentence's propositional content, but also outside its syntactic structure, e.g., "I think it will fly. After all, we built it right": the discourse particle "after all" is not an integral syntactic element of the clause "we built it right". (6) Multi-categorical, i.e., discourse particles are categorised under different syntactic classes. For example, *now* is an adverb, *and* is a conjunction, *oh* is an interjection and *say* is a verb (Schourup 1999, 234).

In terms of text coherence, discourse particles in English are contextual coordinators of two kinds. First, they signal that something is to follow the first utterance. For example, the discourse particle *but* or *and* indicates that the speaker's action continues. Second, the discourse particle may indicate how the utterances are joined together; for example, *but* may indicate a contrasting idea. Thus Schourup, referring to Schiffrin (1987, 24) concludes: "Discourse particles contribute to coherence by establishing multiple contextual coordinates simultaneously, thus facilitating the integration of various components of talk. Coherence is seen as constructed through relations between adjacent discourse units." In other words, cohesion depends on the identification and understanding of the relation between the textual units. Discourse particles play an important role in identifying these relations (Schourup 1999, 239–240).

Fraser's definition will be discussed later since in his view "and" should not be considered a discourse marker in an elliptical sentence such as "Jack and Mary rode horses." A discourse marker introduces a separate message with its propositional content, whereas "and" in elliptical sentences functions purely as a conjunction. Furthermore, when discussing the grammatical status of discourse markers, Fraser (1999, 943) argued that they are not a separate syntactic category because conjunctions, adverbs and prepositional phrases can normally function as discourse markers. However, when considering the conjunction "and" there are a number of uses which

cannot be related to discourse markers, such as the use of "and" in the sentence "Oil and water don't mix."

The concept of information structure has been defined in multiple, somewhat contradictory, ways. In Lambrecht's (1995) theory, the study of information structure is not concerned with lexical and propositional content in the abstract but with the way this content is transmitted. In other words, information structure deals with the formal and communicative aspects of language (Lambrecht 1995, 1–3). For this reason, he proposed the following definition:

> Information structure: That component of sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs are paired with lexicogrammatical structures in accordance with the mental states of interlocutors who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts. (Lambrecht 1995, 5)

Lambrecht identifies three categories of information structure:
(a) Presupposition and assertion: presupposition is a set of propositions[12] which are evoked in the sentences and the speaker assumes that the hearer already knows them. Assertion means the proposition which is expressed, where it is expected that the hearer will know it after hearing the uttered sentence (Lambrecht 1995, 52).
(b) Identifiability and activation: a particular referent in the sentence is identifiable when it has a certain feature, such as a proper name (e.g. John, Nūḥ), and a definite noun (e.g., *al-qamar* "the moon") or a deictic (e.g., those ugly pictures, *hāḏā l-baytu kabīrun* "this house is big") (Lambrecht 1995, 87–88). Once a certain referent becomes identifiable by the speaker it can be "activated" at any time (Lambrecht 1995, 93–94).
(c) Topic and focus: Lambrecht (1995, 118, 207) defines "topic" as the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is about, while the "focus" is defined as the information unknown to the hearer. The issue is what makes an utterance an assertion.

To illustrate how the above explanations (discourse particle and information structure) can shed light on the function of *wa* and the way the relation between the connected sentences is inferred, we return to example (5). Here *wa* signals that there is a relation between the segments, namely, the hearer identifies that the clause following *wa* (*min-hum man lā yuʾminu bihi*) is related to the previous clause (*wa-minhum man yuʾminu bihi*). Though *wa* in this context can be removed, it is still required to guide the hearer toward the correct interpretation of the utterance, which means that it is not *wa* that establishes the logical relation between the clauses; instead the relationship is governed by the information structure, i.e., the syntactic/lexical component and the propositions are all combined and represented in a way communicating the intended meaning. Steiner

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12 "Proposition" is defined as a mental representation of the world. This representation is formed by the sum of propositions which the hearer knows or believes or considers uncontroversial at the time of speech (Lambrecht 1995, 43).

(2000) considered word order to be a factor signalling adversative meaning, and according to Lambrecht (1995, 337) word order indeed is one of the morpho-syntactic tools to express contrast. In example (5) there is an association between contrastive foci (*man yuʾminu bihi* and *man lā yuʾminu bihi*), and the two belong to the same group,[13] whereas the speaker assumes that this information is presupposed, namely, it is already available in the hearer's mind at the time of utterance.

After understanding that in the two related propositions there are two contrastive foci, and the intention of the speaker is recoverable, this structure can give rise to an efficient inferential process. This structural representation of information has a positive effect on the processing effort for all the information involved. Sperber and Wilson (1996, 48) called this "optimal relevance". It takes place when the effort invested in the information process decreases as the communicative benefit increases (Sperber and Wilson 1996, 48). Relevance Theory is a cognitive pragmatics theory of human communication. Sperber and Wilson claim that people have developed the ability to maximise the relevance of utterances that they exchange. Since the hearers cannot pay attention to all the information that reaches them, people developed linguistic tools which enable them to focus the attention of the hearer, who preselects it and interprets the speaker's intention (Yus 2009, 753–54).

Two contrastive foci are also present in example (6), which has the same inferential process as in example (5). The hearer first identifies that the first clause (*ḏālika bi-ʾannahum qālū ʾinnamā l-bayʿu miṯlu r-ribā*) is connected to the second through the connective *wa* (*wa-ʾaḥalla llāhu l-bayʿa wa-ḥarrama r-ribā*). In the first clause it is said that trade is like interest; hence, these two topics (*bayʿ* and *ribā*) become presupposed in the second clause, and the new information states that interest is prohibited while trade is allowed. Thus, in the end, the hearer recovers that the message of the whole utterance is that the second clause contradicts or dismisses the claim of those who consume interest.

The next sections provide additional examples.

The Additive Relation

"Additive" means that one thing is connectable to another or that two or more things are connectable. This meaning is expressed in all the examples presented in this section, in which *wa* associates two or more things. However, we still have to distinguish two types of *wa* as a simple conjunction and as a discourse marker. Although both relate two or more things, there is a difference between the two. Following Fraser (1999) (see above),

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13 According to Bayḍāwī (1996, vol. 3, 199) the anaphoric pronoun *hum* refers to the *mukaḏḏibīna* "liars," "disbelievers" (who are referred to by another name in Q. 10:27). On Judgment Day some will turn to God in repentance and some will remain unbelievers.

in elliptical cases or when two nouns are joined (e.g., oil and water don't mix), the "and" functions as a conjunction and not as a discourse particle.[14]

The conjunction is not even necessary here because we know beforehand that "to mix with each other" is a symmetric 2-fold relation; substances do not mix with themselves alone. We might as well say "Oil does not mix with water" or vice versa. In our case, the predicate M for "is a mixture" is negated:

> M: to mix with each other
> o: Oil
> w: Water
> ¬M(o,w)
> It is not the case that oil and water mix with each other.

Note here that Halliday and Hasan (1976, 233–35) also distinguish two types of "and": the "structural connective" or "structural signal", and the "cohesive connective". The first conjoins items (e.g., nouns, verbs, adverbs) which function as a single complex element of a structure; for example, "men and women" functions as a single whole. It constitutes a single element in the structure of a large unit, for example, as the subject in a clause. Additionally, these nouns are in a symmetrical relation, in that they can be rearranged in a different sequence such as "women and men" without altering the meaning. *wa* functioning as a discourse particle is restricted to a pair of sentences. It appears between sentences to give cohesion to the text, or rather to create text by cohering one sentence to another. In this case the sentences cannot be rearranged in a different sequence because they would not be interpretable.

wa Functions as a Conjunction

Fraser uses the term "ellipsis" whereas Steiner (2000, 261) uses the term "reduction". Thus, מְקַלֵּל אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ מוֹת יוּמָת (Exod 21:17), "If a man curses his father and his mother he shall be put to death," derives from מקלל אביו מות יומת ומקלל אמו מות יומת "If a man curses either his father he shall be put to death and if a man curses his mother he shall be put to death." However, this long utterance was reduced; therefore, according to Steiner the conjunction -וֹ (*wĕ*) is really copulative.

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14 For examples of elliptical structures in modern written Arabic, see Badawi, Carter and Gully (2004, 546–47).

Consider the following examples, each illustrating reduced or elliptical structures:

(7) *ḫatama llāhu ʿalā qulūbihim **wa**- ʿalā samʿihim wa-ʿalā ʾabṣārihim ġišāwatun* (Q. 2:7)
Allāh sealed their hearts and their hearing; and their sight is dimmed [literally 'and over their eyes is a veil'].

The underlying structure is: **ḫatama llāhu ʿalā qulūbihim **wa**-ḫatama llāhu ʿalā samʿihim*: "Allāh sealed their hearts and Allāh sealed their hearing, and Allāh sealed their sight."

(8) *yawma yafirru l-marʾu min ʾaḫīhi **wa-**ʾummihī **wa-**ʾabīhi **wa-**ṣāḥibatihi **wa-**banīhi* (Q. 80:34–36)
On the day when man shall run away from his brother and his mother and his father, his consort and his sons.

In example (8) the verb *yafirru* and the preposition *min* are both deleted, and the underlying structure should be **yawma yafirru l-marʾu min ʾaḫīhi **wa-** yafirru min ʾummihi **wa-** yafirru min ʾabīhi **wa-** yafirru min ṣāḥibatihi **wa-** yafirru min banīhi*: "On the day when man shall run away from his brother, and run away from his mother and run away from his father, and run away from his consort and run away from his sons."

However, reading Q. 80:34–36 without *wa* is apparently also possible (**yawma yafirru l-marʾu min ʾaḫīhi, ʾummihī, ʾabīhi, ṣāḥibatihi wa-banīhi*), and omitting *wa* and replacing it with a comma will not make the utterance ambiguous.

Consider a further example:

(9) *ʾaw ka-ṣayyibin mina s-samāʾi fīhi ẓ-ẓulumātun **wa-**raʿdun wa-barqun* (Q. 2:19)
[Or like a] cloudburst from the sky accompanied by [literally 'in it is'] darkness and thunder and lightning.

The underlying structure of Q. 2:19 should be ** ʾaw ka-ṣayyibin mina s-samāʾi fīhi ẓ-ẓulumātun wa- fīhi raʿdun wa- fīhi barqun*: "A cloudburst from the sky accompanied by darkness, accompanied by thunder and accompanied by lightning."

Examples (7)–(9) demonstrate reduction structures in which *wa* joins phrases. However, as example (10) shows, *wa* can also join clauses:

(10) *qūlū ʾāmannā bi-llāhi **wa**-mā ʾunzila ʾilaynā **wa**-mā ʾunzila ʾilā ʾibrāhīma **wa**-ʾismāʿīla **wa**-ʾishāqa **wa**-yaʿqūba **wa**-l-ʾasbāṭi **wa**-mā ʾūtiya mūsā **wa**-ʿīsā **wa**-mā ʾūtiya n-nabiyyūna min rabbihim* (Q. 2:136)
Say: We believe in Allāh and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ismaʿil and Jacob and the Tribes, and in what was imparted to Moses, Jesus and other prophets from their Lord.

In Q. 2:136 the verb *ʾāmannā* and the preposition *bi* which follows it are omitted, thus the underlying structure should be **qūlū ʾāmannā bi-llāhi **wa**-ʾāmannā bi mā ʾunzila ʾilaynā **wa**-ʾāmannā bi mā ʾunzila ʾilā ʾibrāhīma* (…) "Say: We believe in Allāh, and we believed in what has been revealed to us, and we believed in what was revealed to Abraham (…)."

It can be argued that *wa* is redundant and theoretically can be replaced by a comma. However, as the examples show, this argument is refutable because *wa* has a syntactic and semantic value. The omission of *wa* in example (7) will generate an incomprehensible utterance.[15] Furthermore, *wa* in some cases is required for correct parsing of the sentences and clauses. Thus, without the joining of the two phrases *mūsā* and *ʾaḫīhi* in example (11) by *wa* the hearer will mistakenly determine that *ʾaḫīhi* is the apposition of *mūsā* or the direct object of the verb *ʾawḥaynā* and hence will interpret Q. 10:87:

(11) *wa-ʾawḥaynā ʾilā mūsā wa-ʾaḫīhi* (Q. 10:87), And We revealed to Moses and his brother, wrongly as **wa-ʾawḥaynā ʾilā mūsā ʾaḫīhi*, And We revealed to Moses, his brother.

Another example is found in Q. 10:7–8:

(12) *ʾinna llaḏīna lā yarǧūna liqāʾanā* (Clause1) *wa-raḍū bi-l-ḥayāti d-dunyā* (Clause2) *wa-ṭmaʾannū bihā* (Clause3) *wa-llaḏīna hum ʿan ʾāyātinā ġāfilūna* (clause 4) *ʾulāʾika maʾwāhumu n-nāru* (Q. 10:7–8)
Those who do not hope to meet Us and are content with the present life and are at ease in it and those who are heedless of our signs, for those their refuge would be in the fire.

When omitting *wa* the hearer might understand that the two conjoined clauses (C2 and C3) function as the predicate of C1 and will interpret it as "Those who do not hope to meet Us are content with the present life and are at ease in it." (** ʾinna llaḏīna lā yarǧūna liqāʾanā raḍū bi-l-ḥayāti d-dunyā wa-ṭmaʾannū bihā*). This conclusion would be the

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15 Note that when *wa* joins two syntactic components it cannot be omitted because its omission would generate ungrammatical or ambiguous utterances (additional examples of such cases are Q. 2:45 and Q. 8:27). However, when it joins more than three syntactic components it can be omitted, while preserving the same message.

same if the context was enlarged because C4 opens with *llaḏīna* which indicates that a new sentence with a new topic has started.

Example 13 is not a case of reduction. However, *wa* functions as a conjunction, or as a structural signal conjoining two items functioning as one syntactic unit:

> (13) *wa-mina n-nāsi man yaqūlu ʾāmannā bi-llāhi **wa**-bi-l-yawmi l-ʾāḫiri* (Q. 2:8)
> There are some who say: 'We believe in Allāh and the Last Day.'

The underlying structure should not be understood (bearing in mind the context '*wa-mina n-nāsi man yaqūlu*') as: **wa-mina n-nāsi man yaqūlu ʾāmannā bi-llāhi wa-mina n-nāsi man yaqūlu ʾāmannā bi-l-yawmi l-ʾāḫiri*, "There are some who say: We believe in Allāh and there are some who say: We believe in the Last Day." According to this erroneous interpretation there are two groups and each of which believes in something different.

wa Functions as a Discourse Particle

The additive relation also exists when two clauses or two sentences are joined by *wa*. The topic of the verses in example (14) is the children of Israel. In Q. 2:40 God calls to them, saying "O Children of Israel, remember My blessing wherewith I blessed you, and fulfil My covenant and I shall fulfil your covenant, and have awe of none but Me." He then continues, saying:

> (14) **wa**-ʾāminū bi-mā ʾanzaltu muṣaddiqan li-mā maʿakum **wa**-lā takūnū ʾawwala kāfirin bihi **wa**-lā taštarū bi-ʾāyātī ṯamanan qalīlan wa-ʾiyyāya fa-ttaqūni **wa**-lā talbisū l-ḥaqqa bi-l-bāṭili **wa**-taktumū l-ḥaqqa wa-ʾantum taʿlamūna **wa**-ʾaqīmū ṣ-ṣalāta **wa**-ʾātū z-zakāta **wa**-rkaʿū maʿa r-rākiʿīna (Q. 2:41-43)
> And believe in what I have revealed (the Qurʾān), confirming that (Scripture) which is with you, and be not the first to deny it. Do not trade My Signs for a small price, and Me alone you should fear. And do not confuse truth with falsehood, and do not conceal the truth while you know it. Perform the prayer, give the alms-tax (zakat), and bow down with those who bow down.

As is understood from Q. 2:41–43, these verses define the necessary qualities of the true believer: to treat parents, kindred, orphans, and the needy with kindness, to behave fairly towards people, to attend and be steadfast in ritual prayers and to give charity. Thus, each clause adds another quality. However, the additive relation between the clauses is achieved through several devices. The first is that *wa* signals that the clauses are connected to each other, when the hearer already knows that these clauses refer to the believers. The new added information is expressed by various verbs in imperative forms.

In Q. 36:13 Allāh asks Muḥammad to describe a similar situation for unbelievers about the people of a town the messengers came to address. However, when these people met

the messengers, they expressed the same arguments that many disobedient unbelievers had formulated against the prophets, saying that Allāh as well as these messengers were mere mortals like themselves and Allāh had not bestowed anything special on them:

> (15) *qālū mā ʾantum ʾillā bašarun miṯlunā **wa**-mā ʾanzala r-raḥmānu min šayʾin* (Q. 36:15)
> They said: 'You are only mortals like ourselves and the All-Compassionate has not sent down anything.'

Here *wa*, which functions as a discourse particle, signals that the second clause is related to the first: when the second clause is introduced, the erroneous claim or the dispute among the people is presupposed by the hearers, so that when they hear that the second clause also starts with a negative expression, they infer that this clause states yet another wrong claim on the part of the disobedient.

Consecutive Relations

Chronological order and events connected by cause and effect are usually perceived as "If ... then" relations: "If I had done otherwise, things wouldn't be as they are now." This conditional relation between two events A and B is logically expressed by writing A ⊃ B for "if A then B". This is just another way of stating that either there is no A or there is B written as ¬A ∨ B, because, in a conditional, whenever there is A, there is also B. Phrased in still another way, we deny that there is a situation in which event A takes place and B does not; in writing ¬(A & ¬B) we basically say: "It is not the case that there is A and not (but not) B." To sum up, consecutive and causal relations allow us to infer an "and" even when "and" is only implicitly stated within the utterance.

When Sībawayhi discusses the particles as one of the parts of speech, he initially mentions *wa*:

> *wa-l-wāw fī qawlika (marartu bi-ʿamrin wa-zaydin) wa-ʾinnamā ǧīʾta bi-l-wāwi li-taḍumma l-ʾāḫira ʾilā l-ʾawwali wa-taǧmaʿahā wa-laysa fīhi dalīlun ʿalā ʾanna ʾaḥadahumā qabla l-ʾāḫari.* (Sībawayhi 1999, vol. 4, 339)[16]
> *wa* in the sentence (I passed on ʿAmr and Zayd), you introduced *wa* to add the second word to the first word and to connect both of them. [When *wa* is introduced] there is no indication that one word preceded chronologically the other word.

Sībawayhi's explanation asserts the main argument, namely that it is not *wa* itself that has multiple meanings; other factors are responsible for the inferred relation between the clauses.

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16   See also al-ʾAstarābāḏī (1998, vol. 4, 405-406) and al-ʾAnbārī (1957, 303).

Consider the following example:

> (16) *huwa llaḏī yusayyirukum fī l-barri wa-l-baḥri ḥattā ʾiḏā kuntum fī l-fulki **wa**-ğarayna bihim bi-rīḥin ṭayyibatin **wa**-fariḥū bihā ğāʾathā rīḥun ʿāṣifun **wa**-ğāʾahumu l-mawğu min kulli makānin **wa**-ẓannū ʾannahum ʾuḥīṭa bihim daʿawu llāha muḫliṣīna lahu d-dīna* (Q. 10:22)
>
> It is He who makes your journey on land and on sea; so that when you are in the ships, and they sail driven by a fair wind, and they rejoice in it. And then a stormy wind comes upon them and waves surge over them from every side, and they think that they are being overwhelmed. Then they call upon Allāh, making their faith pure for Him.

This verse tells the people through a parable that when people are in great difficulty and danger, they tend to call on Allah for help, because they know that He is the only one who can save them. The first sentence introduces the hearer to the parable: He is the One Who enables people to travel the whole earth. A voyage by ship is a known metaphor for human life and according to the principles of information-structure the representation of the entities in the discourse is based on the fact that there is information which the hearer presupposes at the time of the utterance.

In this message, several scenes are placed in chronological order, which dramatises the message: God allows the travellers to reach their destination with the help of winds that gladden every heart. Then, when a horrible thunderstorm strikes and waves buffet the ship on all sides, it makes the travellers realise that death is near, and they lose their hopes of survival. Then and there, they remember Allah and call upon Him sincerely, such that their thoughts are stripped of all sorts of polytheism and idol worship.

Causal Relations

> (17) *wa-ʾ ātaynā mūsā l-kitāba wa-ğaʿalnāhu hudan li-banī ʾisrāʾīla* (Q. 17:2)
>
> And We gave Moses the Book, and made it [i.e. the Book] a Guide for the Children of Israel.

In Q. 17:2 the discourse particle *wa* signals that the two clauses are related. The first clause indicates that Allāh is the topic. In the second clause the book, which is indicated by the anaphoric pronoun (*hu*), is presupposed, whereas the verb *ğaʿalnāhu* (and what follows it) functions as a focus-predicate. When relating this information (*ʾātaynā* and *ğaʿalnāhu*) a causal relation is evoked, namely, that the "Torah" which Allāh provided Moses was given for the guidance of the Children of Israel. A similar case is found in example (18):

> (18) *wa-la-qad ʾātaynā dāwūda wa-sulaymāna ʿilman **wa**-qālā l-ḥamdu li-llāhi llaḏī faḍḍalanā ʿalā kaṯīrin min ʿibādihi l-muʾminīna* (Q. 27:15)
>
> And We gave David and Solomon knowledge and they both said: 'Praise be to Allāh, Who preferred us above many of His believing servants.'

When the hearers understand that the two clauses are connected the inferential process begins. First the hearers notice that in the first clause there are identifiable elements, David and Solomon, when it is stated that they were given knowledge. In the second clause the topic (David and Solomon) is already established, and since Allāh gave them knowledge, they both thanked him.

Conclusion

There are two main approaches to the study of *wa*: the semantic approach, which attributes multiple meanings to *wa*, and the pragmatic approach, which acknowledges that *wa* is a connective. However, these are the context and the logic, which in fact affect the way the relation between the connected components is interpreted. However, neither of these approaches provides a satisfactory explanation for the issues raised here when presenting the three fundamental structures in which *wa* occurs (examples 1–3): if, according to the semantic approach *wa* carries semantic meaning which indicates the type of relationship between the coordinates clauses, how can this approach explain example (3) (**wa-qatala dāwūdu ǧālūta Øʾātāhu llāhu l-mulka wa-l-ḥikmata*), where the consequential relation is still understood when *wa* is omitted? Whereas, according to the pragmatic approach, factors such as word order or contradictory nouns help retrieve the relationship between clauses, does this mean that *wa* is redundant?

This article develops a pragmatic/syntactic approach which rejects the argument that *wa* is a polysemous connective. This rejection is based on the argument that *wa* has a specific syntactic function. A model explaining how the speaker retrieves the connection between the syntactic units and finally succeeds in retrieving the whole message is described. In terms of syntactic function, it is suggested that *wa* functions as a conjunction connecting two nominal phrases, verbal phrases or prepositional phrases, as shown in example (2): *qālū naʿbudu ʾilāhaka wa-ʾilāha ʾābāʾika ʾibrāhīma wa-ʾismāʿīla wa-ʾisḥāqa*. "Forefather to you" forms an extensional statement where the names of Abraham, Ismāʿīl and Isḥāq can be substituted for each other to exemplify what a "forefather" is. Hence, if in a composite statement like "*Ibrāhīm* is a forefather to you and Ismāʿil is a forefather to you and Isḥāq is a forefather to you", and one of these binary relations or two-place-predicate were omitted, the others would still remain intelligible. Since the basic pattern of the relation would be kept intact, deleting "and" would not cause ambiguity.

Additionally, *wa* serves as a conjunction when it connects to reduced structures in which the verb is omitted, as in example (1), *wa-law šāʾa llāhu la-ḏahaba bi-samʿihim wa-ʾabṣārihim*. This example contains an intentional statement. The relevant message is that God, if he chose to, could take away not just one but even two things at once. This triadic relation between God and two individuals would not be fundamentally changed if, for example, "hearing" and "sight" were exchanged for "taste" and "smell" or any other instantiation in the same semantic domain. If "and" were deleted, however, the

nature of the interplay among all these objects and their relations to each other would become incomprehensible.

Clearly *wa* also functions as a discourse particle, but this function is restricted to cases in which *wa* occurs between two or more clauses or sentences. In this case *wa* is crucial for the interpretation of the message because it informs the hearer as to which units are connected. Identifying this connection is the crucial first step; in the next stage the hearer processes the information, while combining known and new information, and how these are logically connected. When all the information is put together a full interpretation is achieved, and the hearer understands how the sentences are related. For example, the second sentence contradicts the first, or the second clause expresses the consequences of the action mentioned in the first sentence, or the action expressed in the second sentence follows chronologically from the action mentioned in the first sentence.

Yagi and Yunis Ali (2008, 621–24) discuss the use and function of the Arabic coordinating conjunction *wāw* on the basis of the Gricean cooperative principle and ask why Arabic speakers use the conjunction *wa* to imply sequence when they could use the conjunctions *fa* or *ṯumma* to express succession and immediacy. While this question remains unanswered, it is argued here that the parallel structure in this case is very clear since the opposition between the two conjuncts is obvious. Thus, inserting "but" instead of "and" would dilute the contrast (e.g. "black and white"). However, when the contrast is not as clear (perhaps because the conjuncts do not seem related at first glance) the word "but" is needed to emphasise that the two conjuncts are relevant to each other; in other words, somehow the content of one conjunct contrasts, negates, opposes, or devalues the other.[17]

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