

## An Analysis on Shihab's Methodology: How do Pronouns Applied?

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### Abstract

Shihab is an Islamic scholar who have prolifically produced a comprehensive 30 chapters of Qur'anic exegesis entitled *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*. This book is perceived as the latest Qur'anic exegesis produced by Muslim scholar of the Archipelago. He stresses on the importance of understanding the Qur'an contextually, supported by a strong understanding of the language and not focusing only on the textual meaning. In relation to this, his work has used a lot of linguistics approaches as to obtain the actual verses exegeses. Therefore, this study seeks to analyse critically his linguistics exegesis, and the focus rests on the debate on pronouns. To obtain a expliciter perspective, this study has adopted the library research and document analysis method by making language and reliable popular Qur'anic exegesis books as primary sources of reference. The outcome of this study finds that Shihab had applied five rules in relation to pronouns, all of which have been approved by scholars and exegetes.

**Keywords:** Arabic, syntax, linguistics, Indonesia, exegesis, pronouns

### 1. Introduction

*Tafsir* (exegesis) of the Qur'an is the most important science for Muslims. All matters concerning the Islamic way of life are connected to it in one sense or another since the right application of Islam is based on proper understanding of the guidance from Allah. Without *tafsir* there would be no right understanding of various passages of the Qur'an. There are a number of reasons why *tafsir* is of great importance (Von Denver, 1983), but the basic reason is the following: Allah has sent the Qur'an as a book of guidance to mankind. Man's purpose is to worship Allah, i.e. to seek His pleasure by living the way of life Allah has invited him to adopt. He can do so within the framework of the guidance that Allah has revealed concerning this, but he can do so only if he properly understands its meanings and implications.

Arabic is the most developed Semitic language today and it is one of the major languages of the world. Arabic is spoken in large parts of the world extending from the Arabian Peninsula to the Atlantic Ocean. It has become an interest for millions of non-Arab Muslims, who do not speak it as a native language, to learn it at different levels, mainly because it is the language of the holy book, the Qur'an, and all Islamic terms are in Arabic (Hanan et al., 2013).

Islamic laws and principles, like all laws, have certain general and specific goal which they are designed to achieve. In order to achieve these goals, the laws address society under a given set of circumstances, at the other times to particular people in special situations, and at other times to particular people in all situations. Hence the language by which these laws are delivered has to accurately distinguish between the various cases in order to avoid any confusion and misinterpretation. The Arabic language in wich the Qur'an was qonveyed has a number of words, phrases and grammatical construction wich express the various shades of meanings necessary to clarify the intent of the laws (Ameenah, 2002).

### 2. Method

This article represents a humble attempt to explore and analysis of Shihab's linguistic method focusing on the rules of pronouns to strengthen his argument pertaining the Qur'anic exegesis. The elaborations begins with a brief biography to know his persona and works as an eminent exegete in Indonesia, followed by definition of the terms. Therefore, the data collection is the most common method to obtain data or facts related to the subject of research. The first source is *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* written by Shihab himself. Other sources include books, journals,

written papers and other suitable materials. All of these materials will be discussed in this article through the adoption of the library research method.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 *Shihab: A Brief Biography and Works*

Shihab was born in Rappang, South Sulawesi on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1944. His early education was obtained from his father, Abdulrahman Shihab. His love towards the Qur'an blossomed from the age of six (Shihab, 1992). As a son of a famous exegete, he was often brought by his mother to attend religious classes given by his father. His mother also sparked his interest, as her constant encouragements and guidance resulted in his decision to further his studies in the same field (Naja, 2007). Other than his parents' early involvements at home, he also studied at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hadith al-Faqihyyah, Malang. Soon after, in 1958 the state of Sulawesi awarded him a scholarship to study at the University of al-Azhar, Cairo, Egypt, and he was accepted to move up to grade two *thanawiyah* al-Azhar. His academic journey later took him to the Department of Theology, University of al-Azhar majoring in *Tafsir* and *Hadith*. He completed his bachelor degree in 1967. Two years later in 1969, he managed to obtain a master degree in the same field (Shihab, 2011a).

In 1980, Shihab furthered his Ph.D degree in the same university. He completed his study in two years and obtained *mumtaz ma' a martabah al-sharaf al-ula* grade 'an exemplary scholar with outstanding performance'. His outstanding results qualified him as the first South East Asian student to obtain a Ph.D degree in Qur'anic sciences from al-Azhar University (Subhan, 1993). The process of intellectual growth experienced by Shihab for 13 years at the University of al-Azhar shaped his form of thought. In addition, he is also known as a religious figure, educator and he also has his own publication house, Lentera Hati Publisher. Furthermore, Al-Darraz (1991) has stated that a scholarly work could not escape seven points, namely: a totally new article, completing the incomplete, explaining the vague and difficult, summarizing the long, updating the mixed, purifying the wrong and collecting the scattered. According to Ibrahim and Usman (2013a) Shihab does all these things well, and even links the limitations which often happen when someone wants to clarify the terms of Islamic scholarship in Arabic into Indonesian language quite successfully. Therefore, there is no doubt that this Indonesian scholar is named a credible and respectable expert in the Qur'anic exegesis. To better gain understanding on Shihab contributions in Qur'anic exegesis, the researchers elaborated on his academic writings as mentioned below:

Shihab is able to connect his ideas to the readers well proven with several of his books reprinted several times as well as becoming best sellers. One of his works entitled *Tafsir al-Amanah* and *Membumikan al-Qur'an: Fungsi Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* obtained appreciation as the most in demand books in 1993 published by Mizan Publication (Subhan, 1993). His academic works published for the public are in analytic and global exegesis. Shihab began his writing with applying this method in 1986 (four years after completing his Ph.D) until 2008 with six publications.

Other than that, he wrote books pertaining to the thematic exegesis from 1991 until 2011 with fourteen works published. It is an indicator that the approach applied is continuously practiced in all his works. He also wrote books pertaining to Islamic knowledge in general. Based on the books reviewed, Shihab's career in writing on general Islamic knowledge from 1984 until 2011 with sixteen publications altogether. In addition, Shihab's writings in the field of religious issues were also evident. He is very much careful in producing works related to legal opinion '*fatwa*' or providing answers pertaining to religious doubts. He often rejects tasks in managing activities relating to *fatwa*. He requests them to be handled by others who are more knowledgeable in the said field. But due to ample requests by many as well as encouragements obtained from friends and the fear of accusations of hiding knowledge, he finally agreed to fulfill the responsibility whole heartedly (Shihab, 2011b).

Shihab's masterpiece work is *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* as well as dozens of other books. This book is perceived as the latest Qur'anic exegesis produced by Muslim scholar of the Archipelago. It is a complete exegesis consists of 30 parts and 15 volumes. It is written when he was Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia in Egypt and is completed after four years. It started in Cairo on Friday 18 June 1999 and finished in Jakarta on Friday, 5 September 2003 after spending approximately seven hours per day (Ibrahim & Usman, 2013b).

#### 3.2 *The Notion of Pronouns: Arabic Terminology*

A pronoun '*al-damir*' plays a significant role in the Arabic sentence structure. It is an important characteristic in the sentence construction of the Arabic language. Linguistically, pronoun means the secret and something hidden inside. It also means keeping something secret in one's heart (Ibn Manzur, 2012). It is derived from the letters

*dad mim ra* with two meanings, with the first is: showing carefulness in something, whereas the second meaning shows something non-existent and hidden or shielded (Faris, 1979).

A pronoun may be defined as a part of speech belonging to the broad class of nominals that stand or substitute for a noun. Unlike nouns, pronouns form small, closed classes, whose reference can only be determined from the context of the utterance in which they are used. In inflected language like Arabic, pronouns often have heterogeneous inflectional pattern which differ from those of nouns themselves, and indeed Arabic is no exception here (Appleyard, 2008).

In regard to the term of *al-damir* it means something used as a substitute to explain the word *al-mutakallim* 'addresser or the first-person speaker', *al-mukhatab* 'addressee, or the second-person' or *al-ghaib* 'the subject of discourse or third-person' (al-Ghalayayni, 1989). It is placed on the original word replaced, for example *ahmad talib, huwa mujtahid* 'Ahmad is a student, He is a hardworking student'. Thus, *damir al-ghaib* for *huwa* 'he' is used as a substitute to explain the third person point of view it is placed on the original word replaced which is Ahmad. There are some scholars who define it as a proper noun showing the masculine and feminine third-person, the masculine and feminine second-person, and the first person (Fawwal, 1992).

Based on this definition, it can be concluded that *al-damir* in Arabic, assumes the role as a pronoun, either for the first, second or the third person.

### 3.2.1 The Explicit Pronouns

Moreover, Ya'qub (2006) states that the pronouns in Arabic are divided into two types: explicit '*bariz*' and implicit '*mustatir*'. Explicit pronouns which is pronounced, such as the two pronouns (*ana*) and (*tu*) in *ana katabtu* 'I wrote'. They are divided into bound '*muttasilah*' and independent '*munfasilah*'. The bound pronouns occur added to finite verbs as objects, or added to nouns as possessives and prepositions as objects. The forms in both functions are identical except in the first person singular (Appleyard, 2008), and they are as follows:

Table 1. The bound pronouns

	singular	dual	plural
1 <sup>st</sup> pers.	-i / -ya -ni		-na
2 <sup>nd</sup> pers. masc.	-ka	-kuma	-kum
2 <sup>nd</sup> pers. fem.	-ki	-kuma	-kunna
3 <sup>rd</sup> pers. masc.	-hu / -hi	-huma / -hima	-hum / -him
3 <sup>rd</sup> pers. fem.	-ha	huma / -hima	-hunna / -hinna

Table 2. The independent pronouns

	singular	dual	plural
1 <sup>st</sup> pers.	<i>ana</i> (I)		<i>nahnu</i> (we)
2 <sup>nd</sup> pers. masc.	<i>anta</i> (you)	<i>antum</i> (you two)	<i>antum</i> (you)
2 <sup>nd</sup> pers. fem.	<i>anti</i> (you)	<i>antum</i> (you two)	<i>antunna</i> (you)
3 <sup>rd</sup> pers. masc.	<i>huwa</i> (he)	<i>huma</i> (they two)	<i>hum</i> (they)
3 <sup>rd</sup> pers. fem.	<i>hiya</i> (she)	<i>huma</i> (they two)	<i>hunna</i> (they)

In lieu of that, Ya'qub (2006) states that bound pronouns are divided into three types according to their case:

In the nominative case '*al-raf'*' and its connect with verb only: these are *-tu, -naa, -ta, -ti, -tuma, -tum, -tunna, -aa, -taa, -uu, and na*. Example: *qumtu* 'I stood up'.

- i. In the accusative case '*al-nasb*' and its connect with verb only: these are *-ni / -i, -naa, -ka, -ki, -kuma, -kum, -kunna, -hu, -ha, -huma, -hum, -hunna*. Example: *akramani rabbi* 'my God honored me'.

In the genitive case '*al-jar*', as the pronouns above (accusative) but its connect with nouns. Example: *kitabii* 'my book'.

Other than that, the independent pronouns are referred to as subject pronouns since they can serve as the subjects of verbs or of equational sentences and they correspond to the set of English subject pronouns (Ryding, 2005), and they are as follows:

Furthermore, the independent pronouns come under two cases:

i. Nominative, as seen above.

ii. Accusative: the first person *iyayya* for singular and *iyyana* for plural, the second person *iyyaka* and *iyyaki* for singular, *iyyakuma* for dual, *iyyakum* and *iyyakunna* for plural, and the third person (*iyyahu* and *iyyaha*) for singular, *iyyahuma* for dual, *iyyahum* and *iyyahunna* for plural.

### 3.2.2 The Implicit Pronouns

The implicit pronouns are not pronounced, but counted, such as the subject of the verb *yajtahidu*, which is the implicit pronoun *huwa* to mean *huwa yajtahidu* 'he works hard'. They are divided into two types:

Permissibility '*jawazan*', when its able to connect with explicit pronouns. It occurs on the verb used for the third person singular (masculine or feminine), such as *Sa'id ijtahada* 'Sa'id was vigorously' or *Fatimah tajtahidu* 'Fatimah was vigorously' (al-Ghalayayni, 1989). In both sentences, Sa'id or Fatimah should be implicit pronouns are assumed to be *huwa* or *hiya* referring to Sa'id or Fatimah.

i. Obligatory '*wujuban*', when unable to connect with explicit pronouns, and occurs in some circumstances following (al-Ghalayayni, 1989):

- 1) The verb used to addresser either singular or plural conditions, e.g. *ajtahidu* 'I work hard', *najtahidu* 'We work hard'.
- 2) The verb used to indicate a singular addressee, such as *ijtahid* 'you, work hard!'
- 3) Infinitive noun '*ism fi'l*' used to addresser or addressee, such as *uffin* 'uhh', *sah* 'silent'.
- 4) Exclamation verb '*fi'l al-ta'jub*' using pattern *ma afa'ala*, such as *ma ahsana al-ilm* 'how beautiful knowledge!'
- 5) Particles of exception '*af'al istithna*', namely: *khala*, *ada*, *khasya*, *laysa*, *la yakun*, such as *ja'a al-qawm ma khala zuhayran* 'the people had come except Zuhair'.
- 6) Verbal noun '*al-masdar*', such as *sabran ala shadaid* 'have patience with difficulties'.

Theoretically, to pursuing this idea, the structure of pronouns with the (slightly simplified) in figure 1: (Note 1)

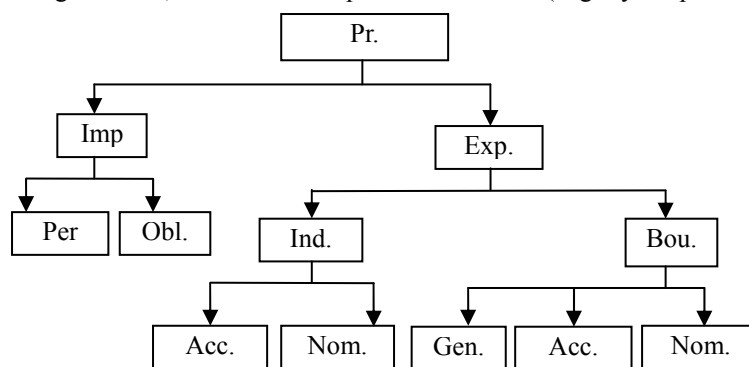


Figure 1. The structure of Arabic pronouns

### 3.3 Pronouns: The Rules and Analysis

Shihab was very concerned about the importance of language in exegeting the Qur'an. One of his approaches is defining the Qur'an based on pronouns arguments. This study finds there are five pronouns rules that he has applied in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, and they are:

I. RULE: There are two names mentioned in some cases, but the pronoun only applies to one of the names as it has covered others, although what is implied is actually both.

This rule means that there is a time when the Qur'an speaks of two things, but it uses a pronoun that refers to one of the things concerned. This is because, the pronoun used covers both things that are mentioned (al-Sabt, 2001). The use of this rule is also highlighted by the scholars, such as Ashur (1984), al-Zarkashi (1988) and also al-Qurtubi (1964).

The example of the rule is when Shihab interpreted *sura al-Tawbah* (The Repentance) verse 62 as follows:

"*Yahlifuna billahi lakum liyurdukum wallahu wa rasuluhu ahaqqu an yurduhu in kanu mu'minin.*"

*“They swear by Allah to you [Muslims] to satisfy you. But Allah and His Messenger are more worthy for them to satisfy, if they should be believers.”*

According to Shihab (2010) the pronoun of *yurduhu* ‘to please Him’ uses a singular form, which is intended for Allah and His Prophet. He states that the pronoun on that verse only refers to one, which is Allah as, in reality, it is only His blessings and mercy that must be sought. Other than that, the aim is not to make it ‘The Almighty’ synonymous with any creature, despite the high position that the creature occupies.

Based on his exegesis, it is understood that the pronoun of *hu* ‘Him’ using the singular form on the utterance of *yurduhu* only refers to one, which is Allah. This is in spite of the fact that the reference is used for two *an yurduhuma* ‘to please them both’, which are Allah and the Prophet. This is because, the meaning of the verse demands that only Allah’s blessings matter, while the blessings of the Prophet is also confined in those of Allah. The other aim is not to make Allah’s position similar to that of His creations, although the Prophet’s position itself is very noble and high. Therefore, the justification as put forth by Shihab means that it is unfavourable to represent Allah and the Prophet in one pronoun.

In this vein, the views of exegetes contradict with Shihab’s exegesis. Ibn ‘Atiyyah (2001) for instance, states that there are times when the pronoun used refers to both, as dictated by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as follows:

*‘Adi b. Hatim reported: that a person recited a sermon before the Messenger of Allah thus: He who obeys Allah and His Apostle, he in fact follows the right path, and he who disobeys both of them, he goes astray. Upon this the Messenger of Allah said: What a bad speaker you are; say: He who disobeys Allah and His Apostle. Ibn Numair added: He in fact went astray.*

The *hadith* clearly demonstrates that Allah and the Prophet (pbuh) are represented by a pronoun that refers to both at the same time, which is *huma* ‘both of them’ (Muslim, 2000). However, Ibn ‘Atiyyah also confirms the rule of exegesis mentioned above. Moreover, Appleyard (2008) states that pronouns are also subject to agreement with their referents in terms of gender and number, but in Arabic they do not exhibit case marking.

Thus, Al-Zarkashi (1988) reveals the secret behind the usage of the singular pronoun referring to the Prophet (pbuh) in the verse above. Al-Zarkashi states that this is explained by Rasulullah’s duties and uniqueness in preaching and asking human to follow the path of Allah and it becomes an argument to them after they are given explanation about things that they are supposed to do and things that they are prohibited from doing. The mention of the name of Allah here implies a sign of glorification ‘*ta‘ziman*’ towards Him, and the meaning is not affected, although the pronoun only refers to the Prophet (pbuh). The content of the meaning of this verse is similar to that of others, which is shown in *sura al-Anfal* (The Spoils of War) verse 20 and *al-Nur* (The Light) verse 48.

II. RULE: On its original position, *damir al-ghaib* must precede it.

The above rule has been mentioned by al-Qattan (1992) and al-Zarkashi (1988) where the aim is to know beforehand the meaning implied by the pronouns. Therefore, *damir al-ghaib* cannot be referred to the utterance after it, either in terms of utterance or positioning, unless there is indication ‘*qarinah*’ showing that the returning place is on the same utterance. As expressed by ibn Malik in his book *Tashil al-Fawaid* as cited by al-Qattan, it is stated that at the original place of pronouns must be put first and it cannot be otherwise, unless there is evidence stating so. The evidence is either stated clearly by the utterance, or known through the existence of the evidence which is sensory ‘*hissi*’ in attribute, or coming in the form of analysis ‘*ilmi*’. The evidence does mention it is either part of, all of, half of, or anything that is included in any possible form.

Based on the statement above, *damir al-ghaib* as a reference is an utterance performed previously either in the form of explicit ‘*malfuzan*’ or implicit ‘*mutadamminan*’. Therefore, when the exegete comes to any verses containing *damir al-ghaib*, then he must refer it to the previous utterance. This cannot be disobeyed, or violated, except for when there is an indicator or other reasons that enable the non-referencing of *damir al-ghaib* to the previous utterance.

Another rule that is consistent with the above rule is as has been mentioned by al-Sabt (2001) which means that sometimes, the place of reference of *damir al-ghaib* is not mentioned, but understood based on the context of the verse. Thus, there are many verses in the Qur’an in which the antecedent of the pronoun is absent. The context plays a significant role in determining the antecedent. However, resorting to the interpretations of the Qur’an is decisive in deciding what the antecedent is, particularly when the pronoun is located in the first verse of the *sura* (Abdulwahid, 2009). The example of the rule being used (pronouns described in an explicit manner) in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* can be seen in *sura al-Qadr* (The Power) verse 1 as in the following:

*“Inna anzalnahu fi laylatil qadr.”*

*“Indeed, We sent the Qur'an down during the Night of Decree.”*

While exegeting *anzalnahu* ‘We sent it down’, Shihab (2010) states that on that verse, the utterance of *al-Qur'an* is not stated clearly, only demonstrated by the pronoun of *hu* ‘it’. Presumably, this is to bring an impact towards the grandness of the decree of Allah, as one of the forms of worship known in language is not to utter the name being worshipped, as long as there is *qarinah* which can bring the listeners or the speakers to the worshipped. (Note 2)

Based on this exegesis, the pronoun implied on the utterance *anzalnahu* is the Qur'an, as the utterance *al-inzal* ‘sent down’ on this verse definitely shows ‘*iltizam*’ that the reference ‘*marji*’ implied by the pronoun is the Qur'an, and this is supported by the context of the verse being discussed. With this, the utterance of *al-Qur'an* does not have to be used in this verse as addressers or addressees have understood that ‘We sent down’ is definitely the Qur'an before (al-Qurtubi, 1964). Such an exegesis is also proffered by al-Shanqiti (1995) who states that the context of the verse proving that the pronoun *hu* is the fourth verse “*tannazalu al-malaikah wa al-ruh fiha*” ‘The angels and the Spirit descend there’ where *al-ruh* ‘the Spirit’ is Jibril, so the pronoun on *anzalna* refers to something other than Jibril. Thus, Al-Alusi (1994) states that as for the secret of the usage of *damir al-gahib*, the utterance of *al-Qur'an* is not stated clearly on the previous verse showing the wondrous and ultimate position of the Qur'an.

Other than that, an example of the rule being used on the pronoun described implicitly is shown in Shihab's exegesis in *sura Sad* (The Letter Sad) verse 67 to 69 as follows:

*“Qul huwa naba'un 'azim. Antum 'anhu mu'ridun. Ma kana liya min 'ilmin bil mala'il a'la idh yakhtasimun.”*

*“Say, "It is great news. From which you turn away. I had no knowledge of the exalted assembly [of angels] when they were disputing [the creation of Adam].”*

According to Shihab (2010) the utterance of *huwa* ‘he’ can be understood in terms of the deliverance of Muhammad (pbuh) and as contained in the previous verses, among which the teachings of unification ‘*tawheed*’ or information of the Qur'an on the truth of the Hereafter and the quarrellings of the inhabitants of Hell. The verse also serves as a new elaboration, therefore, *huwa* does not pertain to previous elaborations but to the future, as evidenced by verse 71 (*sura Sad*) and so on, which account for the story of Adam (as), the Angels and the Satan's hesitance to succumb to Adam (as). If this is the meaning that you choose, then *yakhtasimun* ‘they were disputing’ on verse 69 denotes the difference of the attitude of the angels and the Satan towards Adam (as). Even before protesting, the Satan has already been regarded as one of the members of *al-mala' al-a'la* ‘the exalted assembly of angels’, especially when at the time it was ‘included’ in the group of angels, whereby although the Satan does not come from the angels, they are the Jinns. The first opinion is better and consolidated by verse 68 which stresses on why they have deviated. On this note, everyone knows that the ‘deviance’ implied does not have anything to do with the reluctance of the Satan to surrender, but more to the Qur'anic demands which include the truth of the Hereafter and the existence of Heaven and Hell.

According to this exegesis, Shihab has given two views which explain about the referent pronoun of *huwa* in *sura Sad* verse 67. The first view suggests that the reference goes back to the news about the Hereafter and how it is in the Afterlife. This has been discussed in the previous verses. The second view refers back to the reluctance of Satan to surrender to Adam (as), in reference to verse 71. Shihab leans more towards the first view, having done a preponderant ‘*tarjih*’ on the second view. The implied meaning explained by the pronoun *huwa* on that verse, according to him, is the explanation on everything that has been conveyed by Muhammad (pbuh) as also contained in the verses before it, such as the teachings of *tawheed*, the truth of the Hereafter and the quarrellings of the inhabitants of Hell.

Furthermore, the exegesis is also shared by al-Qurtubi (1964) who goes on to explain that *huwa* refers to the deliverance of Muhammad (pbuh) on the reminder from the judgement ‘*hisab*’, rewards ‘*thawab*’ and punishment ‘*iqab*’. This is implied by great news ‘*khabarun 'azim*’, as shown in *sura al-Naba'* (The Tidings) verses 1 and 2. Hence, Ibn Kathir (1999) states that *huwa* refers to the Qur'an. Although at a glance, the exegeses of Ibn Kathir and Shihab are different, but the reality is same. This is because, the Qur'an contains a lot of messages from Allah to His followers, and the messages are very important for them to remember. This is to ensure their success in both their lives and in their afterlife.

III. RULE: The re-positioning of pronoun is sometimes on the utterance only and not on the meaning.

This rule is stated by al-Qattan (1992), it demands for the exegetes to always be alert with the existence of pronouns on any one verse. There is a time when the pronouns are not limited to utterances in the verse, but

containing the whole meaning that can be supported by the utterance referred by the pronouns. The example is given by Shihab exegesis in *sura Luqman* verse 5 as follows (Note 3):

“*Ulaika ʿala hudan min rabbihim wa ulaika humul muflihun*”.

“*Those are on [right] guidance from their Lord, and it is those who are the successful.*”

Shihab (2010) states that an utterance of *hum* ‘those’ in the above verse functions to limit happiness only to those discussed in the verse. It is as if other happy people are not measured as such. Such a redaction only aims at mirroring how great the happiness is, and not in the redactive exegesis.

It can be grasped from this exegesis that the pronoun of *hum* refers to the meaning of happiness possessed by anyone discussed in the particular verse, constituted by those who perform their prayer, paying *zakah* (alms-giving) and believe in the Afterlife. Notwithstanding, there is no comprehension on people other than those implied as happy, blessed people. The use of *hum* only seeks to depict the degree of blessing or happiness. Put simply, the re-positioning of *hum* refers only to the utterance and the meaning. Additionally, Shihab exegesis has been strengthened by al-Biqāʿi (1992) in his Book. He states that the phrase *wa ulaika hum* ‘and it is those who are’ specifies the utterance *al-muflihun* ‘the successful’, or everyone who has all the attributes that can render them *al-muflihun*.

IV. RULE: Sometimes pronoun is connected with something, but the meaning is for something else.

This rule is stated by al-Zarkashi (1988), it demands for the sensitivity of the exegetes to always take the Qur’an seriously, especially in regard of the verses that contain pronouns. This is because there are the contexts in the previous verses that discuss something in particular, but the pronoun in the next verses does not refer to the particular thing, and instead refers to something else. We see an example given by Shihab when exegeting *sura ʿAbasa* (He Frowned) verse 12 below:

“*Faman sya’a zakarahu.*”

“*So whoever wills may remember it.*”

Shihab (2010) states the pronoun of *hu* in the utterance of *zakarahu* ‘remember’, some would see it as referring to Allah. Indeed, in the Qur’an it is not rare to find that the pronoun refers to Allah although there is no previous utterance that refers to Him.

Based on the exegesis, the context of the verse discussed lies in discussing on the Qur’an, as mentioned in verses 2 to 4. However, in this fifth verse, the pronoun of *hu* does not refer to the Qur’an but refers to Allah. In relation to this, it is found that Shihab exegesis is also put forth by ʿAshur (1984) who states that the referent of *hu* in the utterance *zakarahu* can refer to either the Qur’an or to Allah. The reference of *damir al-ghaib* to Allah has been found a great deal in the Qur’an, although it is quite scarcely found in the discussions of verses. This is caused by the order and rules of Allah passed down through the Qur’an. Ibn Kathir (2000) explains that *zakarahu* means remembering Allah in all aspects of life. This is despite the fact that bearing ‘*ihimal*’ points to the pronoun of *hu* referring to the decree of the Qur’an, as stated in the discussion of the verses.

V. RULE: In several pronoun the meaning is gathered to maintain the appropriateness of utterances and meaning, and the best way to start is by safeguarding the appropriate degree of utterance and then the suitability of the meaning concerned.

This rule is stated by al-Sabt (2001), and the instance of use is when Shihab interprets *sura al-ʿAdiyat* (The Courser) verse 7 as follows:

“*Wa innahu ʿala dhalika lasyahid*”.

“*And indeed, he is to that a witness.*”

Shihab (2010) states that the scholars have differing views on who is meant by the utterance *innahu* (And indeed he). Is ‘he’ refers to Allah or the deviant and greedy human? By observing the order of verses’ redaction, that has, all in all, discussed deviant and greedy human, additional to the aim of maintaining the coherence of meaning and order of the redaction of the previous verses, of course it is more precise if this seventh verse makes reference to human beings.

Leaning on this exegesis, Shihab attempts to make consistent between an utterance and the meaning of the verse. At this point, the order of utterance before verse 7 refers to deviants and greedy persons. To maintain the appropriacy of meaning, then the pronoun *hu* in verse 7 refers to human and not Allah, according to Shihab. In relation to this, the finding reveals that it is also put forth by the exegetes, such as ʿAshur (1984), al-Zamakhshari (1998), al-Saʿdi (2000), and ibn Kathir (2000). However, al-Tabari (2001) understands that *hu* in the verse refers

to Allah based on several exegeses that he had composed. Apart from that, the closet pronoun reference (verse 6) indeed refers to Allah, so much so that the pronoun must refer to the closest utterance. Nonetheless, following Abu Hayyan (2000) this cannot be made a point of argument when both references contain a similar meaning. Meanwhile, Ibn ʿAtiyyah (2001) and al-Mawardi (2008) only state the possibility that the pronoun either refers to Allah or human, but they do not show any inclination to choose either one.

Conclusively, despite the fact that Shihab's exegesis is dissimilar to other popular exegetes like al-Tabari. His exegesis also strong as supported by the rule of exegesis mentioned above. Thus, al-Naysaburi (1996) states that *hu* refers to human, for the sake of maintaining the consistency of meaning.

#### 4. Conclusion

We have seen up to this point that Shihab is known as the greatest exegete in Indonesia. His passion towards the Qur'an and its exegesis was initiated by his parents which later developed while he was studying at Pondok Darul Hadith al-Faqihyyah. His thirst to learn academic traditions had sent him abroad, to the University of al-Azhar, Egypt. He even obtained his Ph.D from the same university. Shihab had experienced the process of intellectual development in the said institution for almost 13 years.

Shihab has very much stressed on the importance of understanding the verses' meanings based on the linguistic analysis, in order for the meaning and the actual message required by the verses to be able to be highlighted. This importance is well-acknowledged and used by him in exegeting Qur'anic verses in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*. One of the approaches adopted is based on the analysis of pronouns. Therefore, this study finds that the five rules of pronouns that he has adopted are to ensure that the exegesis produced is in line with the requirements of Islamic law. All the five rules adopted are indeed endorsed and concluded by the Muslim scholar and great exegetes. However, there are some of his arguments, which are meant to solidify his exegeses, are in conflict with those of other exegetes. This is justified by the fact that Shihab had been too laid-back and nonchalant about seeking for support from the Hadiths of the Prophet (pbuh). This is something that should not have happened in the first place, as the Hadiths serve as an aid to provide actual understanding over the meaning of the Qur'an.

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## Notes

Note 1. We adopt the following abbreviation conventions: Pr. = Pronouns, Exp. = Explicit, Imp. = Implicit, Bou. = Bound, Ind. = Independent, Obl. = Obligatory, Perm. = Permissibility, Nom. = Nominative, Acc. = Accusative, and Gen. = Genitive.

Note 2. Also see the application of this rule in Shihab's *Tafsir* on *sura <sup>c</sup>Abasa* (He Frowned) verse 1 and *al-Rahman* (The Beneficent) verse 26.

Note 3. Also see the application of this rule in Shihab's *Tafsir* on *sura Fatir* (Originator) verse 11.

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