

## Oral Exegesis as Text: Study of Hamza Yusuf's Communication, Characteristics, and Contextuality Aspects

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### ***Abstract:***

*Oral practice can be principally viewed as text because it is classified as meaningful action. Often occurring in religious traditions, meaningful action can take the form of delivering oral exegesis both in everyday life and in the virtual world, as Hamza Yusuf did. Employing an interdisciplinary approach, namely communication, orality and contextuality, we attempt to analyze the phenomenon of the contemporary Quran. The result unveils that inquiry as a text appears to produce a clear construction of understanding. From a communication point of view, Yusuf's oral exegesis, especially the interpretation of QS. al-Hujurat (49) verse 13, tries to convey the basic concepts of humanity which are really needed in the contemporary era prioritizing collective and behavioral ideas. Furthermore, Yusuf's practice of oral exegesis also fulfills all the characteristics of orality with interpretive contextual material that comes from the history of his life with intercultural communication nuance.*

**Keywords:** oral exegesis, Hamza Yusuf, communication, orality, contextualization

### **Abstrak:**

Praktek lisan secara prinsip dapat dilihat sebagai teks karena ia dikategorikan sebagai aksi bermakna. Seringkali terdapat pada tradisi keagamaan, aksi bermakna dapat berupa penyampaian tafsir lisan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari dan dunia virtual, sebagaimana dilakukan Hamza Yusuf. Menerapkan sebuah pendekatan interdisipliner, yaitu komunikasi, kelisanan, dan kontekstualitas, penulis berupaya menganalisis fenomena al-Qur'an kontemporer ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan penyelidikan sebagai sebuah teks tampak menghasilkan konstruksi pemahaman jelas. Dari sudut pandang komunikasi, tafsir lisan Yusuf, khususnya tafsir QS. al-Hujurat (49) ayat 13, mencoba untuk menyampaikan konsep dasar kemanusiaan yang sangat dibutuhkan dalam era kontemporer yang mengutamakan ide kolektif dan sikap. Lebih dari itu, praktek tafsir lisan Yusuf juga memenuhi semua karakteristik kelisanan dengan materi kontekstual tafsir yang berasal dari kesejarahan hidupnya dengan nuansa komunikasi intercultural.

**Kata Kunci:** tafsir lisan, Hamza Yusuf, komunikasi, kelisanan, kontekstualisasi

## INTRODUCTION

Technological advances have brought about quite a big transformation in the study of the Quran interpretation. The presentation of the meaning of the Quran is not only in written form, but extends to formats on various social media platforms, especially oral interpretation or oral exegesis. This type of interpretation is currently prevalent in Muslim communities considering that the technical delivery is easy, such as by using YouTube. Such interpretive traditions show that religion has moved and blended with the digital world in all its forms and functions. This new relationship changed how humans were religious and how religion influenced society and culture. Digital religion is a blending of modern media society with contemporary religious practices and beliefs. Digital religion is not only about having religion in digital media, but rather about blending all cultural and societal components related to religion with all elements related to digital society.<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon of oral exegesis on YouTube is part of a religious tradition that has shifted from face-to-face religion to digital religion.

In the midst of the onslaught of non-written interpretations in the modern era, the audio-video dimension of oral history is realized to be underutilized. Michael Frisch assumes that only in text can material be dismantled efficiently and effectively because it is easy to read. In contrast, audio or video documents must be experienced in real time.<sup>2</sup> There may be difficulties in reading an oral exegesis of the Quran on YouTube because it is an audio-video document. When someone listens to an audio, especially talking about the interpretation of the Quran, he will find it challenging to understand the interpreter's delivery because he has not experienced what is being said. It is true that the written interpretation is not experienced by the reader either, but at least the analysis can be applied

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Helland, "Digital Religion," dalam *Handbook of religion and society*, ed. oleh David Yamane (Cham: Springer, 2016), hal. 177-96  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31395-5>.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Frisch, "Oral History and the Digital Revolution: Toward a Post-Documentary Sensibility," dalam *The oral history reader*, ed. oleh Robert Perks dan Alistair Thompson (London: Routledge, 2006), hal. 103  
<https://citescerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=3bbf121444ed53c41591df99fb6c2f09b5c09b9d>.

freely, concretely and in a wider scope. In our standpoint, the drawbacks of audio-video analysis encourage an effort to read in text realm. This means that even though oral exegesis is not a text, it can be analogous to a text to reveal the meaning behind its existence in cyberspace.

Based on the explanation above, we will examine how to read oral exegesis as a text. One of the figures, in our observation, is representative to study in this case is Hamza Yusuf, an American Muslim scholar with the YouTube media platform. Many previous studies that are relevant to our present research have emerged. For instance, Andreas Gorke wrote about oral tafsir in his article entitled "*Redefining the Borders of Tafsir: Oral Exegesis, Lay Exegesis, and Regional Particularities*" fueled by the lack of discussion about this subject.<sup>3</sup> Other studies use different terms, but with the same meaning, such as oral interpretation,<sup>4</sup> audiovisual interpretation,<sup>5</sup> oral exegesis,<sup>6</sup> social media interpretation,<sup>7</sup> digital hermeneutics,<sup>8</sup> and so on. Although not all of them focus on oral exegesis, these studies examine the phenomenon of interpretation in the modern era beyond its written form in conventional tafsīr. Classification of studies regarding the theme of oral exegesis can also be observed based on prominent figures, such as M.

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<sup>3</sup> Andreas Gorke, "Redefining the Borders of Tafsir: Oral Exegesis, Lay Exegesis and Regional Particularities," dalam *Tafsir and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*, ed. oleh Andreas Görke dan Johanna Pink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), hal. 363–80.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Alwi HS, "Perbandingan Tafsir Tulis dan Lisan M. Quraish Shihab tentang QS. al-Qalam dalam Tafsir al-Misbah (Analisa Ciri Kelisanan Aditif Alih-Alih Subordinatif)," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 18.1 (2019), 34–49 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18592/jiiu.v18i1.2866>.

<sup>5</sup> Ali Hamdan dan Miski, "Dimensi Sosial dalam Wacana Tafsir Audiovisual: Studi atas Tafsir Ilmi, 'Lebah Menurut al-Qur'an dan Sains,' Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an Kemenag RI di Youtube," *RELIGIA: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman*, 22.2 (2019), 248–66.

<sup>6</sup> Gorke.

<sup>7</sup> Fadhli Lukman, "Tafsir Sosial Media di Indonesia," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara*, 2.2 (2016), 117–139 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v2i2.59>.

<sup>8</sup> Fadhli Lukman, "Digital Hermeneutics and A New Face of The Quran Commentary: The Quran in Indonesians Facebook," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 56.1 (2018), 95–120 <https://doi.org/doi:10.14421/ajis.2018.561.95-120>.

Quraish Shihab,<sup>9</sup> Gus Ahmad Bahauddin Nursalim,<sup>10</sup> Ustadz Abdul Somad,<sup>11</sup> KH. Maimun Zubair,<sup>12</sup> Ustadz Hanan Attaki,<sup>13</sup> and others. With diverse approaches, the studies have produced different research results.

Studies on Hamza Yusuf himself have been carried out several times, such as “*Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity in the Discourse of Muslim Televangelist: The Case Study of Hamza Yusuf*” by Shaimaa El Naggar and “*Foregrounding and Metaphor: A Stylistic Study on Hamza Yusuf's Religious Poem*” by Suryo Ediyono and Sopyan Ali.<sup>14</sup> Shaimaa's article examines the historical approach in religious discourse by exploring the process of persuasion in a conversation by Hamza Yusuf (Muslim televangelist), namely the process of interdiscursivity and intertextuality. Meanwhile, Suryo and Sopyan's research focuses on semantic analysis and sound patterns (phonology) of Hamza Yusuf's religious poetry. As far as I observed, there has been no research that specifically examines Hamza Yusuf's oral exegesis. In addition, the perspective that we use to study virtual interpretation is quite varied, namely the communication, oral characteristics, and contextuality aspect of Hamza Yusuf. These various approaches are part of an interdisciplinary study, which is a process of answering, solving problems, and highlighting a topic that is immensely broad and complex to be explored in just

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<sup>9</sup> HS.

<sup>10</sup> Tri Budi Prastyo dan Hidayatul Fikra, “Analisis Wacana Islam Moderat: Kajian Tafsir Lisan Perspektif Gus Ahmad Bahauddin Nursalim,” *Matan : Journal of Islam and Muslim Society*, 4.1 (2022), 56–66 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20884/1.matan.2022.4.1.5197>.

<sup>11</sup> Rofiq Hidayat dkk., “Analisis Wacana Kepemimpinan Islam: Kajian Tafsir Lisan Ustadz Abdul Somad,” *Annual Conference on Islamic Studies and Humanities*, 1.1 (2022), 53–64.

<sup>12</sup> Nova Saha Fasadena dan Wardatul Jannah, “Kajian Tafsir Lisan tentang non-Muslim Perspektif Kiai Haji Maimun Zubair,” *Al-Manar: Jurnal Kajian Alquran Dan Hadis*, 8.2 (2022), 51–64 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35719/amn.v8i2.25>.

<sup>13</sup> Bunga Surawijaya Ningsih, Izzatul Hasanah, dan M. Devan Ainun Na'im, “Kajian Tafsir Lisan tentang Kata Shift Pemuda" Hijrah" Menurut Ustadz Teuku Hanan Attaki di Instagram,” *Al-Manar: Jurnal Kajian Alquran Dan Hadis*, 8.1 (2022), 1–26 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35719/amn.v8i1.20>.

<sup>14</sup> Shaimaa El Naggar, “Intertekstuality and Interdiscursivity in the Discourse of Muslim Televangelist: The Case Study of Hamza Yusuf,” *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 6.1 (2012), 76–95; Suryo Ediyono dan Sopyan Ali, “Foregrounding and Metaphor: A Stylistic Study on Hamza Yusuf's Religious Poem,” *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 9.6 (2019), 746–53 <https://doi.org/DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0906.2I>.

one discipline.<sup>15</sup> Oral exegesis does not only concern religious doctrine, but also contains the concepts of communication, orality, and the social context of the interpreter.

## METHOD

This is library research by exploring sources and data from library literature and oral exegesis on the YouTube platform. The research data sources are divided into primary and secondary ones. The primary source is oral exegesis of QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49): 13 by Hamza Yusuf, an American Muslim scholar. Meanwhile, secondary sources are references related to the research theme, such as communication, spoken language discourse and oral exegesis, contextual approaches to the text, and the study of the Quran itself. The data analysis we employed was by using a communication approach to discern the elements, nuances, and paradigms of discourse in oral exegesis. To comprehend the character of spoken language in Yusuf's oral exegesis, we also applied an analysis of the oral character. The third analysis of this research is a contextual approach to see how Yusuf's social and cultural milieu influence his oral exegesis on YouTube. All of these analytical techniques, based on Paul Ricoeur's theory, do not depart from the conception that oral exegesis can be viewed as a text because it is a meaningful action.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### A. Examining Spoken Language as Text: A Communication Perspective

To convey ideas, a man can utilize the spoken language inherent in him. Spoken language is a human natural language that is expressed using the means of speaking and articulation that already exist in humans.<sup>16</sup> Spoken language, therefore, is classified as an act because there is a conveying activity in the process.

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<sup>15</sup> Julie Thompson Klein dan Willian H. Newell, "Advancing Interdisciplinary Studies," *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum: A Comprehensive Guide to Purposes, Structures, Practices, and Change*, 1997, 393–415.

<sup>16</sup> B. H. Hoed, "Komunikasi Lisan Sebagai Dasar Tradisi Lisan:," dalam *Metodologi Kajian Tradisi Lisan*, ed. oleh Pudentia (Jakarta: Asosiasi Tradisi Lisan (ATL), 2008), hal. 204.

The idea that we want to deliver certainly has its own meaning for the speaker himself and the audiences of the speech. When meaningful action is to be seen as text, it must meet four criteria. *First*, fixation of action. Meaningful action is an object of knowledge provided that it is considered the same as the fixation of written discourse. This provision presupposes a simple way of being meaningful that also applies to dialogical situations in terms of language. Meaningful actions can be understood in the interaction process which is somewhat similar to the conversation process in the aspect of discourse.

*Second*, automatization of action. If the text is separated from the author, then the action is also separated from the agent and there is a development of the consequences of the action itself. The automatization of human action is a social dimension of action. An action is a social phenomenon not only because it is carried out by several agents where their respective roles cannot be distinguished from the roles of others, but also our actions give us a way out and have impacts that we do not intend. *Third*, relevance and importance. A meaningful action is an action of “importance” that transcends its “relevance” to the initial situation. This provision is similar to how the text breaks away from the rules of discourse and arrives at fancy references. *Fourth*, human action as an open work. The meaning of human action is also something that is thrust into the infinite realm of possible readers. The assessors are not contemporary, but historical as Hegel said. Like a text, human action is also an open work.<sup>17</sup>

We consider that the four criteria above indicate that spoken language can be studied because it is also part of the object of science. In this context, spoken language as text can be seen as an object of communication science. Muhammad I. Ayish proposed four dichotomous themes that can help understand a conception of communication, especially Islamic communication, one of which is the individualism-conformity paradigm.<sup>18</sup> Individualism is a central value in the

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text,” *New Literary History*, 5.1 (1973), 91–117 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/468410>.

<sup>18</sup> The other three paradigms, *transcendentalism-existentialism*, *intuitive-rational processes*, and *egalitarian-hierarchical*, could be further read in Ayish’s article. Muhammad I. Ayish, “Beyond Western-Oriented Communication Theories A Normative Arab-Islamic Perspective,”

Islamic worldview. Unlike the conception of Western culture as something unifying which may limit group involvement, individualism in Islamic culture teaches recognition of individuals and group. The individualism-conformity orientation in Islamic culture produces a pattern of the communication process. Moreover, communication in Islam, spiritual, and social, describes a process to facilitate the integration of an individual into a broader community. It is a process of reconciling the inner self of the believer with the self of the people who believe collectively in society. In the concept of worship, all acts of communication are not only used as a tool to harmonize the individual self with the collective ethos, but are also elevated to the status of acts of worship which then receive rewards from God.

Apart from the Islamic communication paradigm above, communication can be described by answering several interrogative terms. Harold Dwight Lasswell, as quoted by Deddy Mulyana, offers that the terms are “*who*” (who transmits the message or information), “*says what*” (what message being conveyed), “*in which channel*” (what channel or media being used), “*to whom*” (who receives the message), “*and with what effect*” (how the effect occurs from the communication).<sup>19</sup> Questioning each of these phrases will reveal the components of the communication itself so that it can reveal the main purpose of a statement being conveyed. This is not something that contradicts the paradigm explained previously, but will complement the object of study in this research which focuses on oral interpretation. Presenting several different theoretical perspectives will certainly provide more colorful and in-depth conclusions.

The recipient of the message in Islamic communication is called the object of *da'wah*. In QS. an-Nahl/16: 125, God classified various objects of *da'wah* based on their conditions. If the person being preached to is in a confident condition, the arguments and calls to him are performed using the method of *hikmah*. However,

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*Javnost - The Public: Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture*, 10.2 (2003), 79–92 <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2003.11008829>.

<sup>19</sup> Deddy Mulyana, *Ilmu Komunikasi: Suatu Pengantar* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2008).

the *mau'izah hasanah* method is the second one that is practiced if the object of the *da'wah* is in a state of doubt and is full of willingness to accept the call. *Da'wah* targets who are forced, hostile, and refuse the preaching are more suited to being called out with appropriate *mujādalāh*. Therefore, the *da'wah* arguments presented are determined by the circumstances of the *da'wah* object at hand.<sup>20</sup> *Da'wah* with *hikmah* is a call of revelation, true and firm words, avoiding ambiguous language, and with evidence that leads to intellectualism. *Mau'izah hasanah* is a beautiful expression that is sincere and content without rudeness. As for appropriate *mujādalāh*, it is more about religious differences with logical arguments.<sup>21</sup>

## B. Contextualization in Oral Exegesis

The contextual approach has received considerable attention to be immediately applied to the study of religion. To restore more emphasis on context as an important addition to the text that has been lacking, John P. Burris proposes the use of extensive historical methods as a basis for re-understanding the principal foundations of the study of religion.<sup>22</sup> Richard C. Martin sees a decline in productive integration between textual and contextual types of study in the study of the Quran due to the polemic among proponents of these two types of study. In contextual studies, the normative rules and conditions that apply to the implementation and liturgical use of reading the Quran are sought to be explained.<sup>23</sup> These two scholars show the urgency of contextuality in understanding religion, particularly the Quran. In reality, experts have used many contextual methods in understanding the text of the Quran in different forms and types.

K. Ammer, as quoted by Ahmad Mukhtar Umar, offers four types of context in text. *First*, language context. The meaning, especially in Arabic, of a

<sup>20</sup> Fakhr al-Razi, *Tafsīr Maḥāṭib al-Ġayb*, j. 20 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), p. 140.

<sup>21</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), p. 691.

<sup>22</sup> John P. Burris, "Text and Context in The Study of Religion," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 15.1 (2003), 28–47 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23550010>.

<sup>23</sup> Richard C. Martin, "Understanding the Qur'an in Text and Context," *History of Religions*, 21.4 (1982), 361–384 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062330>.

word will be different when the word paired with it is different. The differences in meaning of the words arranged are due to differences in readers' understanding of the words and they have unique meanings. *Second*, emotive context. Each word implies a level of emotion in it, starting from soft, medium, and strong. One word, for example, gives a soft meaning, but when replaced with another word in the same area of meaning, it becomes strong. *Third*, situational context. A sentence fragment may give different connotations when used in different situations. Happy and sad moods can be described with the same expression, but produce different meanings. *Fourth*, cultural context. Cultural traditions between the rich and poor also do not rule out the possibility of differences in understanding an object with different words due to the cultural caste between the two. According to Izzuddin Musthafa et al., the four contexts above are needed as an approach to uncovering the meaning of a text.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from the various models of contextualization of religious texts, the first thing that must be understood is that the presence of these models cannot be separated from the possibility of multiple interpretations of the text by readers. Contextual understanding is another form of consequence of ambivalence in the meaning of a text besides textual understanding. In order to create the Quran as a solution to life's problems, a textual approach alone is not enough to rely on in understanding the meaning of religious texts like the Quran. In this way, the Quran, which acts as a theological and practical foundation for Muslims, can produce answers to changes and developments in the modern era.<sup>25</sup> In facing the challenges of the time, the contextualization carried out by each individual has a typical understanding of one another. This massive difference is caused by

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<sup>24</sup> Izzuddin Mustafa, Dede Ahmad Ghazali, dan Isop Syafei, "Pendekatan semantik kontekstual menurut para Linguis Barat dan Timur," 2020, 1–14 <https://etheses.uinsgd.ac.id/306237>. Izzuddin et al. referred the four contextual approaches of K. Ammer from *Ilm al-Dilalah* by Ahmad Mukhtar Umar. The other article discussing these four is *al-Nazariyyah al-Siyāqīyah wa Nazariyyah al-Huqul al-Dilāliyah* by Nasih al-Mustafa Afnadi.

<sup>25</sup> Hendri Hermawan Adinugraha dan Ahmad Hasan Asy'ari Ulama'i, "Memahami Studi Islam Dengan Pendekatan Tekstual Dan Kontekstual," *Farabi: Jurnal Pemikiran Konstruktif Bidang Filsafat dan Dakwah*, 17.1 (2020), 26–28 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30603/jf.v17i1.1281>.

varieties in the time and place in which the reader of the text lives. Additionally, context can also be in the form of differences in the character, trait, and behavior of the owners of the text which cannot be equated among them.

The existence of disparities in background and context in reading texts is also agreed by Abdullah Saeed. As quoted from Lenni Lestari, Saeed said that there are Muslim scholars who are classified as contextualists. These scholars are a group that believes the content of the Quran can be applied at any time and place with different interpretations. Figures from this group include Fazlur Rahman, Amina Wadud, Muhammad Shahrur, and Khaled Abou El Fadl. Content, in Saeed's view, is divided into narrow and broad context. Studies with a narrow context relate to words or sentences around the Quran. Meanwhile, studies in a broader context include two aspects, namely the socio-historical context of revelation and the context in which the Quran is interpreted. One interesting fact is, for the contextuality group, understanding the verses of the Quran must reach the level of ethical values.<sup>26</sup> If until these days, the collection of classical commentaries has focused on aspects of law, faith, language and other branches of Islamic knowledge, then, to make the Quran less rigid and more flexible, the ethics of the Quran must also be explored.<sup>27</sup> This effort aims to obtain the ethical and moral side of the Quran and not only focus on discussions that have become inevitable in religion.

Not only text, interpretations conveyed orally also contain contextual model. Oral interpretation of the Quran or verbalization of the interpretation of the Quran even necessitates retransmitting the meaning of the content of *Kalāmullāh's* message in today's context with the characteristics of its oral

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<sup>26</sup> Lenni Lestari, "Refleksi Abdullah Saeed Tentang Pendekatan Kontekstual Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Ethico-Legal Dalam Alquran," *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an dan Tafsir*, 2.1 (2017), 15–29 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v2i1.247>. The more profound discussion of Abdullah Saeed's contextualist thought could be referred to his writing entitled *Some Reflections on the Contextualist Approach to Ethico-legal Texts of the Quran*.

<sup>27</sup> Exploration of flexible ethics of the Qur'an received significant changes through contemporary approaches. To understand how contemporary approach of exegesis is discussed, see Fiki Oktama Putra, "Analisis Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman tentang Rekonstruksi Metode Tafsir Kontemporer," *Pappasang: Jurnal Studi Alquran-Hadis dan Pemikiran Islam*, 6.2 (2024), 366–84 <<https://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.46870/jiat.v6i2.1112>>.

discourse. This practice is actually the initial performance of the interpretation of the Quran itself by the Prophet Muhammad saw. with the people of Arabia as the target for delivering the interpretation. The involvement of the context of the speaker and the interlocutor is due to their existence in the same context which makes the utterance of the interpretation of the Quran very contextual. From here, it is understood that oral interpretation always involves oral components, namely the exegetes or interpreter, audience of the interpretation, the interpretation speech, and the context of the interpretation speech.<sup>28</sup> In our perspective, even though at first glance they appear different, the text of the interpretation of the Quran and the speech of the interpretation of the Quran actually have the same characteristics but in different forms. As mentioned previously, oral exegesis can also be viewed as a text because, as understood by Ricoeur, it is a meaningful action.

The characteristics of oral exegesis have various forms in accordance with the oral character itself.<sup>29</sup> This is because oral exegesis uses human verbal as a medium for conveying interpretations of the Quran. The first character is additive rather than subordinate. With this character, the interpreter does not pay attention to the effectiveness, rigidity and rules of a sentence and is as comfortable as possible conveying his speech to the listener with additional sentences if necessary. The second character is aggregative rather than analytic. This character shows the addition of epithets and expressions in explaining something that is a little complicated to the audience so that the speaker's aggregation can be seen and then there is confidence in what is being said. The third character is redundant or copious. This means that the speaker repeats something in saying something to the conversation partner, even in different sentences. In oral traditions, speech can simply disappear and, with this character, the listener can remain focused.

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<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Alwi dan Iin Parningsih, "Verbalisasi al-Qur'an: Metode Tafsir Kontekstual Berbasis Kelisanan al-Qur'an (Studi QS. al-Baqarah: 256 tentang Pemaksaan Agama)," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 22.2 (2020), 120-34  
<https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v22i2.8238>.

<sup>29</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Kelisanan Dan Keaksaraan*, terj. Rika Iffati (Yogyakarta: Gading, 2013), p. 55-79.

The fourth character is conservative or traditionalist. The mindset and knowledge of the oral community is relatively conservative or traditional, which is as much as possible maintained and preserved in memory by repeatedly saying it. The community avoids and closes the opportunity for new things to come in because it burdens the memory. The fifth character is close to the human lifeworld. The conservatism and non-critical character of the oral community requires speakers to verbalize their knowledge by referring to the daily life of the community. There is a blending of their knowledge with intimate and direct human interaction so that information is easy to understand. The sixth character is agonistically toned. The transmission of identical expressions by an oral community shows a reciprocal dynamic with others which creates a competitive relationship. This is expressed by, for example, the polarization of good against bad which is a peculiar art of oral communities.

The seventh character is empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced. Oral communities learn something with empathic, close, and communal identification. They enter other people's discussions, feelings, thoughts, and situations as if they are undergoing other people's experiences. The eighth character is homeostatic. Oral traditions do not have dictionary, so word meanings encounter direct semantic validation. This results in the expressions of an oral community being defined as relevant to the situation in which they are used. The oral community will eliminate memories that are no longer relevant to the present. The last character is situational rather than abstract. The concept of oral community reference is situational in nature and is close to daily life when referring to certain objects. Everything will be recognized as a representation of the reality they know.

### **C. Hamza Yusuf and His Oral Exegesis (QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49): 13)**

Hamza Yusuf is the president and leader of the Zaytuna Institute. Born (in Washington state in 1953) and raised (in Northern California to be precise) in America, he became a Muslim in 1977 and then traveled abroad to obtain a license

to teach various Islamic sciences from several well-known scholars in various countries. Some of the areas Yusuf visited to study were the UAE, Saudi Arabia, North and West Africa. After ten years studying abroad, he returned to California and took a degree in religious and health studies. After that, he has traveled all over the world to teach Islam to the public and become an international speaker on topics related to Islam and Muslims. In 1996, he founded the Zaytuna Institute which has gained an international reputation for presenting classical Islamic views in the West. He was the first American lecturer to teach at The Karaouine in Fes, Morocco, one of the oldest and most prestigious universities and mosques in the world. In addition, he has translated several traditional Arabic texts and poetry into modern English. He lives in Northern California with his wife and five children.<sup>30</sup>

Having full name, Hamza Yusuf Hanson (from Mark Hanson), he is better known as a prominent American *shaykh*, public intellectual, and educator. He regularly appears on *the Muslim 500* as one of the most influential Muslims in the world. Another source says that Hamza Yusuf is the most influential Islamic scholar in the West. He became known as a Muslim public figure in the mid-1990s because his impact on Muslims in the East and West was quite large. Yusuf's big impact was due to his efforts to establish Zaytuna College (formerly Zaytuna Institute) as the first accredited Muslim college in America which acts as a pedagogical institution. In 2019, Yusuf was appointed as a member of *the Unalienable Rights* commission convened by the Trump administration's secretary of state, Mike Pompeo. Yusuf was also appointed as vice president of *the Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies* forum and *the Global Center for Guidance and Renewal*, both of which were initiated by his teacher, Abdallah bin Bayyah,

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<sup>30</sup> The biography can be observed in Hamza Yusuf's writing. Hamza Yusuf, "Religion, Violence, and the Modern World," Sandala. org (Seasons), 2004, <https://traditionalhikma.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2-5-Religion-Violence.pdf>; Hamza Yusuf, "Generous Tolerance in Islam and Its Effects on the Life of a Muslim," *Seasons: Semiannual Journal of Zaytuna Institute 2* (2005): 26–42, [https://www.livingislam.org/ir/d2/gt2\\_e.pdf](https://www.livingislam.org/ir/d2/gt2_e.pdf).

under the auspices of the United Arab Emirates. Furthermore, Yusuf also serves as a member of *the Fatwa Council* there.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from his formal education completed in 2020 in the field of Islamic Studies from the Graduate Theological Union, California for his doctoral degree, Yusuf also received other types of education, such as *madrasah* in Tunisia, Spain, and several other countries. This American cleric has many teachers for his informal education and has obtained teaching licenses in various branches of Islamic scholarship, such as the Quran, *'aqīdah*, and Sufism. Some of his published works are "*The Burda of al-Busiri: The Poem of the Cloak*" (2002), "*Purification of the Heart: Signs, Symptoms, and Cures of the Spiritual Diseases of the Heart*" (2004), "*The Content of Character: Ethical Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad*" (2005), "*Caesarean Moon Births: Calculations, Moon Sighting, and the Prophetic Way*" (2007), *The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi*" (2007), "*Agenda to Change our Condition*" (2008), "*The Prayer of the Oppressed*" (2010), "*Walk on Water: The Wisdom of Jesus from Traditional Arabic Sources*" (2010), and "*Pearls of the Faith*" (2017). Additionally, he has written encyclopedia entries, academic papers, and articles related to Muslim bioethics, legal theory, abortion, and others.<sup>32</sup>

### 1. The Communication Paradigm of Hamza Yusuf's Oral Exegesis

Before entering the communication paradigm, we first explain the interrogative terms of oral interpretation. The communicator is the person who conveys the interpretation and meaning of the QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13. In one article, Yusuf is referred to as a Muslim scholar with a sufism orientation who played an important role in the development of the American Sufi movement

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<sup>31</sup> Walaa Quisay, "Hanson, Hamza Yusuf," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion, 2023, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.838>; Rasheed A. Rabbi, "Hamza Yusuf: A 20th-Century Reviver of Islam in the West," in *Great Muslim Leaders: Lessons for Education*, ed. Melanie C. Brooks and Miriam D. Ezzani (US: Information Age Publishing, 2023), 185, <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YdG4EAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA185&dq=hamza+yusuf&ots=9chSeoTNvj&sig=frZ79UIKJIYC-zCLNi9D6qbCzsU>.

<sup>32</sup> "Hamza Yusuf President of Zaytuna College: Biography" <https://zaytuna.edu/faculty-details/Hamza-Yusuf>.

which offered universalist teachings and then shifted to more public Islamic institutions.<sup>33</sup> Other source says that Yusuf is an American neo-traditionalist who is an exponent of traditional Islam in both the Arab and Western world. Yusuf's labeling as a neo-traditionalist is due to his understanding of traditionalism in the modern world.<sup>34</sup> Thanks to the work of scholars in the modern era like Yusuf, the voice of traditional Islamic thought can still be heard even amidst the onslaught of Western ideology.<sup>35</sup> Besides, Yusuf's interest in Sufism and traditionalism can be seen from the discussion of his doctoral dissertation which delves a text entitled *al-Murshid al-Mu'īn* written in 1008 AH or 1600 AD by Ibn 'Ashir (d. 1040 AH/1631 AD).<sup>36</sup>

The message delivered is an interpretation of QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13 based on what is understood by Yusuf. The key message that can be drawn here is how he highlights the interpretation of the verse from the perspective of the essence of morals. From a moral perspective, this verse is closely related to the moral behavior of a human being. The differentiation of human nature featured by male, female, nation and tribe is not a foundation in justifying human status. However, the parameter that should be relied upon is moral nobility towards fellow humans, universe, and God. This is a universal message that Yusuf is trying to convey to his audience even though there is no command in the verse to have the

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<sup>33</sup> Marcia Hermansen, "American Sufis and American Islam: From Private Spirituality to the Public Sphere," *Islamic Movements and Islam in the Multicultural World: Islamic Movements and Formation of Islamic Ideologies in the Information Age*, 2014, 189–208 [https://kpfu.ru/portal/docs/F271163889/71\\_1.\\_Islam.v.multikulturnom.mirc.\\_21.03.2014.pdfpage=189](https://kpfu.ru/portal/docs/F271163889/71_1._Islam.v.multikulturnom.mirc._21.03.2014.pdfpage=189).

<sup>34</sup> Mark Sedgwick, "The Modernity of Neo-Traditionalist Islam," dalam *Muslim Subjectivities in Global Modernity: Islamic Tradition and the Construction of Modern Muslim Identities*, ed. oleh Dietrich Jung dan Kirstine Sinclair (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2020), hal. 121–146 [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004425576\\_008](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004425576_008).

<sup>35</sup> Joseph E. B. Lombard, "The decline of knowledge and the rise of ideology in the modern Islamic world," *Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition: Essays by Western Muslim Scholars*, 2004, 39–78 [http://ibir-api.hbku.edu.qa/sites/default/files/2021-07/The\\_Decline\\_of\\_Knowledge\\_and\\_the\\_Rise\\_of\\_Ideology\\_in\\_the\\_Modern\\_Islamic\\_World.pdf](http://ibir-api.hbku.edu.qa/sites/default/files/2021-07/The_Decline_of_Knowledge_and_the_Rise_of_Ideology_in_the_Modern_Islamic_World.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Hamza Yusuf Hanson, "The Normative Islamic Tradition in North and West Africa: A Case Study of Transmission of Authority and Distillation of Knowledge in Ibn 'Ashir's *Al-Murshid al-mu'īn* (The Helpful Guide)" (Graduate Theological Union, 2020) <https://search.proquest.com/openview/5d2c720097aa504cab2a01203dd1fe56/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.

essence of admirable character as a human being.<sup>37</sup> In the oral interpretation of the same verse, M. Quraish Shihab also took the key message as did Yusuf which is related to man and humanity. After that, Quraish Shihab explained the interpretation of each passage in the verse.<sup>38</sup>

The message delivery medium used is YouTube. In this video platform, Yusuf has a personal channel called "*Hamza Yusuf*" with more or less 138,000 subscribers. In fact, this channel does not produce special sessions related to interpretation of the Quran, but there is a playlist called "*Sacred Text Messages Podcast – Shaykh Hamza Yusuf*." Unlike common oral interpretations on YouTube, the interpretation of the Quran in it is not included in the video title, but what is visible is the main message of the verse interpreted by Yusuf. Not only explaining the interpretation of the Quran, Yusuf also includes commentaries of a hadith, pointing out its main message which is the theme and title of the video. The meaning of the Quran and hadith are referred to the works of great scholars. Therefore, Yusuf's oral interpretation emphasizes the main message of the Quran, rather than prioritizing chapter and verse as a component of the Quran.<sup>39</sup>

The message which is in the form of an interpretation of QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13 is intended for people who want to learn important lessons from the Quran regarding the meaning of the sacred text contained in it, especially in the verse. This message is presented for listeners who want to see how the meaning of the Quran is still as relevant 14 centuries ago as it is today. Furthermore, the oral interpretation in the "*Sacred Text Messages Podcast*" is intended for audiences who need divine guidance in an era where the material is viewed too much, while

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<sup>37</sup> For further information, kindly visit Hamza Yusuf's Youtube channel. The fragment of *tafsīr yā ayyuhannās* could be heard in the minute of 1.12, *inna khalaqnākum min dhakarīn wa unthā* in the minute of 2.41, *waja'alnākum shu'ūban wa qabā'ila* in the minute of 5.24, *lita'arafū* in the minute of 11.36, and *inna akramakum 'indallāhi atqākum* in the minute of 13.30. Hamza Yusuf, "(1/2) Quran and the Content of Character: Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Podcast S2-E03" (Hamza Yusuf, 2021) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7g932HUGIA&list=PLWosYrkNwE\\_K9VRWJofr4nyFT\\_XHRi8SV&index=14](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7g932HUGIA&list=PLWosYrkNwE_K9VRWJofr4nyFT_XHRi8SV&index=14).

<sup>38</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Surat Al-Hujurāt/49: 13-18" (Metro TV, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aa6c55P4KTY&t=635s>.

<sup>39</sup> Yusuf, "(1/2) Quran and the Content of Character: Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Podcast S2-E03."

the spiritual is still given very little attention. Therefore, this oral interpretation will provide communicants with an antidote to the imprisonment of modernity by connecting with God and His apostles. The antidote is timeless wisdom from a sacred source which will then lead to truth, goodness, and beauty. However, Hamza Yusuf's channel does not limit who can be the recipient of the message regardless of the intention and purpose because the video is open to the public.<sup>40</sup> It is admittedly difficult to track the impact of Hamza Yusuf's oral interpretation on YouTube. This effort requires conducting observations and interviews with viewers of Yusuf's oral interpretation, especially those discussing the QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13. The deployment of listeners certainly comes from all corners of the world. However, it is hoped that the themes presented by Yusuf in the playlist will have a positive effect on Muslims in this modern era with the unexpected "madness" contained in it. Regarding the oral interpretation of QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13, Yusuf wants to emphasize the essence of character that can be applied today.<sup>41</sup> The positive impact that Yusuf wants is also reflected in Quraish Shihab's oral interpretation of the same verse, namely the importance of morals as an indicator of devotion. The essence of piety begins from the heart but cannot be measured through the heart. Quraish Shihab added that morals are the fruit of piety.<sup>42</sup> In this context, the oral interpretation of QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13 emphasizes always improving morals to then be implemented in the era of modernity.

**Table 1.** The Introgrative Term of Oral Interpretation

Who	Says what	In which channel	To whom	With what effect
Hamza Yusuf, an American Muslim	The essence of morals ( <i>akhlāq</i> ) in	A playlist entitled <i>Sacred Text</i>	All citizens of the world who need	The audience has morals and character

<sup>40</sup> Yusuf, "(1/2) Quran and the Content of Character: Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Podcast S2-E03."

<sup>41</sup> Yusuf, "(1/2) Quran and the Content of Character: Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Podcast S2-E03."

<sup>42</sup> Shihab, "Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Surat Al-Hujurat/49: 13-18."

scholar, whose orientation is neo-traditionalism and sufism	the al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13	<i>Messages Podcast – Shaykh Hamza Yusuf</i> on Hamza Yusuf's Youtube channel	spiritual guidance in facing modernity	that are in accordance with the Quran
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Looking at the context of the verse in Yusuf's oral interpretation, we explore the individualism-conformity communication paradigm in the interpretation of the QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13. This is quite reasonable, because, in general, this verse discusses the basic nature of humans who are created differently and whose judgment is based on piety, not anything else. Meanwhile, the individualism-conformity paradigm in communication examines the construction of relationships among human beings in a speech as a principle in Islamic teachings. Apart from paying attention to individuals, Islam also does not allow people to focus on themselves only, but also on how they are integrated into society.<sup>43</sup> In the oral interpretation of QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13 by Yusuf, this construction was visible from the beginning of the process of communicating the interpretation of the Quran. Yusuf, before entering the interpretation of the verse, clearly explains how this verse pays more attention to good relations among human beings. In society, it is not permitted for humans to make fun of each other, insult or hurt other people. We are required to treat people with good character and behavior. We should not treat other humans badly, perhaps in accordance with the beginning of this verse which calls all humans. It doesn't matter whether he is a Muslim or not, Islam makes no difference in doing good to anyone.

Addressing humans being created from a man and a woman, Yusuf said that the condition of humans who have the same origin, which in the Quran is called *Banū Ādam*, means they cannot get out of the tribal mentality. This kind of

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<sup>43</sup> Ayish.

tribalism has started since the presence of the Prophet Adam as. as the first messenger of Allah Almighty which then gave birth to small tribes based on the area, place, and culture where humans later lived. According to Yusuf, humans cannot completely get out of this tribal way of thinking because it is a character that is inherent in humans themselves. In the interpretation of *shu'ūb* and *qabā'il*, there are advantages and disadvantages to the creation of humans in the form of tribes and nations. The existence of ethnic groups allows humans to protect each other because they are considered family and support each other. Meanwhile, ethnicity can also have a negative impact, where people from different ethnic groups are seen as lower and more inferior by other ethnic groups. Yusuf said the difference between modern and traditional society concerns social strata. Modern society is justified based on their class in society, while traditional society prioritizes lineage to judge a person.

Regarding the interpretation of the verse fragment, (لَتَعَارَفُوا) *so that you know each other*, the creation of humans based on tribes and nations, Yusuf explained that humans are expected to benefit from others, because they are given different gifts and advantages. This interpretation is in line with what Quraish Shihab conveyed in his oral exegesis of the verse that getting to know each other can lead us to benefit from each other.<sup>44</sup> Yusuf added that it is not only about getting to know other people but also knowing what their actions are. People often have bad prejudices because they don't know each other. Furthermore, Yusuf stated that this verse reminds of equality (*taswiyah*), that humans are equal in their humanity, superiority is not determined by ethnicity, race, skin color and belief, but character.

When showing human nature in a fragment of the verse, ( إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ )  
(اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَمُ) *indeed the most noble among you are the most pious*, Yusuf made details, namely essence and accident, as a consideration for assessing human

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<sup>44</sup> Shihab.

character to describe devotion (*taqwa*). A nobler and better view of a human being comes from human essence, not accident. Essence is something that reflects a human being and is integrated within that human being, like character. Accident is human traits that are temporary, changeable, and not primary or secondary, like skin color. However, this essence has the potential to be good or bad, depending on the person holding the control. Humans are able to recognize the good path through *fitrah* within them. Regarding this, Yusuf said that there are indeed people with demonic souls, but there are not many of them.

Bearing in mind that the majority of people understand what the good way is and what the bad one, what we have to do is get used to good character and behavior until it becomes a habit that is difficult to change.<sup>45</sup> The interpretation of All-Knowing in *al-'alīm* and *al-khabīr* escaped Yusuf's attention so it has not been explained. However, in Quraish Shihab's oral interpretation, the two names of Allah Almighty are the sign of human limits. *al-Khabīr*, in particular, speaks about the nature of Allah Almighty who knows all the details, an ability that humans do not have. This is the reason why the only person entitled to know the nobility of a human being is Allah Almighty, not themselves. The descendants of Adam and Eve were only commanded to become noble human beings by always improving their *taqwa*, because according to Quraish Shihab, morals are the fruit of *taqwa*.<sup>46</sup>

Based on the explanation above, there are two important things that Yusuf wants to convey when viewed from the perspective of the individualism-conformity paradigm. *First*, fellow humans, regardless of any differences, must help each other. *Second*, humans are obliged to always elevate the quality of their character. In our opinion, these two messages are common ideas in contemporary moral discussions since every human being can implement them as basic moral considerations. Yusuf's two messages are the intrinsic value and dignity of humans.<sup>47</sup> As Ruti Teitel said, the meaning of humanity comes from the ideas of

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<sup>45</sup> Yusuf, "(1/2) Quran and the Content of Character: Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Podcast S2-E03."

<sup>46</sup> Shihab.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Dean, *The Value of Humanity in Kant's Moral Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), h. 3.

"collective" and "behavior."<sup>48</sup> Yusuf's first message is a collective idea of humanity, while his second one is more inclined to the idea of humanity's behavior. If the collective idea is embodied by helping each other and not hurting them, then the idea of behavior is formed through consistency in paying attention and maintaining character so that it is always noble before God.

## 2. Characteristics and Contextuality of Hamza Yusuf's Oral Exegesis

We will describe the character of oral exegesis in the case of Hamza Yusuf. As is understood from spoken language in general, oral interpretation lacks clarity in terms of punctuation and pronunciation, such as full stop and comma. Because of this, the character is referred to as additive rather than subordinate, where the interpreter does not pay attention to linguistic rules in speaking and tends to prioritize the convenience of speech. This kind of case occurs when interpreting a fragment of the verse, (إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى) *We have created you from a man and a woman*, where Yusuf said, "*this is a reminder that all of humanity has been created from one male and one female and in modern biology they actually have designated these first two they call them Adam and Eve.*" We highlight the use of the pronoun "*they*" for which there is no previous reference. In written language, it is very commonly known that a pronoun requires the place it refers to before. Meanwhile, in spoken language, some people may understand that the pronoun refers to a person or group of people, even though it is not clearly stated in the conversation.

The next character of Yusuf's oral exegesis is aggregative rather than analytic. For example, Yusuf said, "*one of the things about human beings is that we are tribal by nature, we fall into tribes and we get we fall into tribal mentalities so a lot of what's happening today is really tribalism.*" One thing that Yusuf exaggerates or aggregates is about tribal message. He adds one more term, namely

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<sup>48</sup> Ruti G. Teitel, "For Humanity," *Journal of Human Rights*, 3.2 (2004), 225–37  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1475483042000210748>.

tribalism, which may be a bit confusing for listeners, but can convince them. In maintaining the concentration of his interlocutor, Yusuf is redundant or copious. This narrative can be heard when he interprets the meaning, (يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ) *O mankind*, with “*so it's saying oh humanity oh humankind all mankind.*” In this interpretation, there are three expressions with the same meaning which are repeated, namely humanity, humankind, and mankind which means man. One of Yusuf's opinions that indicates that he is a traditionalist is when interpreting the words *shu'ūb* and *qabā'il*. According to him, *sha'b* is intended for non-Arabs, while *qabā'il* is a term for Arabs. To maintain this view, Yusuf said, “*I think that's a better way to look at it.*” This way of communication is called conservative or traditionalist.

The intersection of Yusuf's life journey also cannot escape being used as an oral interpretation of the verse. He argues that tribes have disappeared in the West, but not in some places, “*if you go to Africa where I live for instance in West Africa tribes are still very much a central part of the way they live and experience the world.*” Yusuf's experience in West Africa, which still has a strong tribal atmosphere, is close to the human lifeworld. Speaking in a competitive tone or agonistically toned, Yusuf is frontal when expressing his disagreement with some ideas of modernity, such as judgment through skin color or sexuality. Yusuf firmly rejects this, “*a lot of modern people now are promoting this idea no this is essential to my nature this is going to define my being like your sexuality defines your being these aren't uh traditionally this was no nobody had that understanding.*” Yusuf's empathy also cannot be hidden when explaining interpretations. His involvement with other people's realities and experiencing their life is unveiled when he shares that he usually guesses someone's ethnicity based on faces or just a hunch (physiognomy). One day, he misguessed someone's ethnicity, causing the person to feel offended and angry. This incident made Yusuf stop doing it, “*so I stopped doing it because they would take it as an offense.*” This communication speech is characterized as empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced.

Yusuf's oral interpretation contains several terms from his own thoughts, such as essence and accident. These two words can only be understood in the context of the oral community of those listening to Yusuf's oral exegesis and are difficult to understand when presented in different situations and circumstances. Both are things that are inherent in humans, but what becomes the basis for judgment is the essence. Yusuf said, "*they have this distinction between essence and accident so an essence is what defines you an accident is something that is secondary to your nature.*" In dictionary, the meaning of these two terms may be different from what Yusuf understands, so this verbal character is called homeostatic. In several places, Yusuf chooses to use words that may be close to his daily life to refer to an object, such as the expression "*the Scottish still do they have the highlanders.*" Our point of emphasis is the use of the word "*highlanders*" which means mountain people, even though it is possible that Scottish who are indigenous people do not live in mountain areas. We argue that the choice of "*highlander*" is situational and avoids abstracting an object with words that Yusuf himself does not understand. This character is called situational rather than abstract.<sup>49</sup>

**Table 2.** The Character of Oral Exegesis

Oral Exegesis Character	Available
<i>additive rather than subordinate</i>	✓
<i>aggregative rather than analytic</i>	✓
<i>redundant or copious</i>	✓
<i>conservative or traditionalist</i>	✓
<i>close to the human lifeworld</i>	✓
<i>agonistically toned</i>	✓
<i>empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced</i>	✓
<i>Homeostatic</i>	✓

<sup>49</sup> The entire oral expression of Yusuf could be heard in Hamza Yusuf's Youtube Channel. Yusuf, "(1/2) Quran and the Content of Character: Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Podcast S2-E03."

<i>situational rather than abstract</i>	✓
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Moving on to the discussion of contextuality, Yusuf explicitly includes this in his oral interpretation. As far as we observe, only three parts of QS. al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13 which shows Yusuf's contextual nuances in interpreting. We will explain Yusuf's contextual side from the beginning of the verse to make it more systematic. The fragment, (إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى) *indeed We created you from a male and a female*, is colored by Yusuf with the context of scientific discoveries in science, namely the findings of modern biology and the documentary *The Journey of Man*, that the first two humans were Adam and Eve and we are all connected to these two creature.

Slightly different, the fragment, (وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ) *and We made you into nations and tribes*, is inserted in a more varied context. Several variations in the context of this interpretation include the tribal dynamics of the people of Arabia, Yemen, European countries and West Africa as well as Yusuf's encounter with an ethnic community in Mexico who interacts with Spaniards. In Arabia, there were *Mudar* and *Rabi'ah*, who were the two dominant ethnic groups from which all the different ethnic groups emerged. Meanwhile, there are also Yemeni ethnic groups, where their *sha'b* are *Himyar* and *Kahlan*, from whom all the different ethnic groups emerged. Although no longer seen, the Irish people used to be an ethnic group and became a tribal society which they called clans or group. The same thing happened to the Scottish and the French. All these societies are different who are actually tribal societies.

The Scottish used to be a tribe that had inhabitants of the mountain plains and some of them turned into clans. However, they are now people (society). Likewise, the Anglo-Saxons used to be a tribal society, but not anymore. Therefore, European societies were once tribal groups, now their tribes are greatly reduced. Nonetheless, according to Yusuf, there are still Laplanders, just like there

are aboriginal (indigenous) Europeans, as in Finland. If we go to Greece, there are still families like that which are similar to tribes which have clans and groups. However, in general, tribes have been eliminated in the West. If we go to Africa, West Africa for example (where Yusuf once lived), ethnicity is still very much a central part of the way they live and experience the world.

After explaining his interpretation of *sha'b* and *qabā'il* by providing examples, Yusuf shared his personal experience regarding his encounters with tribal communities. Yusuf said that he once asked whether someone was Indian when he was in Mexico. The person asked felt offended because Mexican society looked down on Indians. In many cases, this distinction concerns class, as occurs in industrialized and post-industrialized societies, which determines the value of an individual. The difference with previous societies, they linked it to lineage and where they come from.

The last phrase that contains quite a lot of contexts from Yusuf is, ( إِنَّ

أَكْرَمَكُمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَّقِيهِمْ ) *indeed the most noble among you in the sight of Allah is*

*the most pious*, consisting of a figure speech, problems of modern society, tradition of Native American tribe (Navajo), and the different gifts of each nation. He said, in an extraordinary speech in Washington DC, Dr. King said that he wanted to live in a country where people were judged by the essence of their character, not by the color of their skin. Then Yusuf's interpretation moves on to the phenomenon where many modern humans now promote the idea that "*this idea is important to my nature*", "*this will define my existence*", just as sexuality defines our existence. The present moment is the age of post-industrial culture, where people joke with God, make fun of God, but God will not be mocked or ridiculed.

Yusuf pertained again on the context of the nations he knows. Native Americans have what they call in the Navajo Tradition the walking path. There is a belief in their traditions that everyone will walk a path in their life, they are the ones who choose their path. Yusuf linked this traditional belief to God's deeds in giving us two paths, the path of truth or virtue and the path of evil or injustice.

Amazingly, Yusuf added, humans know these differences through *fiṭrah* (principled character). All humans, in Yusuf's understanding, have gifts. The gift of Indo-Europeans, Indians, Persians, and Greeks was in knowledge. If we go to China and Africa, we will find different gifts as well.<sup>50</sup>

Based on what has been explained, Yusuf's contextualization of the verse is quite diverse, ranging from scientific findings, socio-cultural dynamics of tribal communities, and issues of modernity. These three things illustrate Yusuf's contextuality which cannot be separated from the historical aspects of his life. Theoretically, a contextual approach places an author in his historical milieu. The contextualists argue that we gain a complete understanding of a text when we relate it to the author's influences and concerns.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, what Yusuf did was an intercultural communication which could prevent ethnic conflicts fueled by racial, religious and clan tensions.<sup>52</sup> By mastering the cultural ins and outs of the international world, the contextuality of Yusuf's oral interpretation has a positive impact on the sustainability of heterogeneous communities. Context argumentation, thus, not only acts as an explanation of the text of the holy book, but also plays a crucial role in maintaining harmony in world society.

## CONCLUSION

A study as a text is proven to produce a clear construction of understanding. From a communication point of view, Yusuf's oral exegesis, especially the interpretation of al-Ḥujurāt (49) verse 13, attempts to convey the basic concepts of humanity which are extremely needed in the contemporary era which prioritizes collective and behavior ideas. Likewise, Yusuf's performance of oral interpretation also fulfills all his orality character with interpretive contextual materials derived from the history of his life. The socio-cultural context that Yusuf

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<sup>50</sup> The oral expression of Yusuf could be visited to his Youtube channel. Yusuf, "(1/2) Quran and the Content of Character: Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Podcast S2-E03."

<sup>51</sup> Mark Bevir, "The contextual approach," dalam *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. oleh George Klosko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), hal. 11–24.

<sup>52</sup> James W. Neuliep, *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach*, 7th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2016), h. 6.

communicates not only increases knowledge of the meaning of the Quran, but also minimizes ethnic conflicts. This is because Yusuf carries out cultural recognition in the world community so that everyone feels involved and appreciated. This intercultural communication, therefore, has an impact on doctrinal and empirical levels. In terms of religious teachings, people receive spiritual guidance in the era of modernity, on the other hand, it also creates socio-cultural harmony and peace in heterogeneous communities.

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