Qur'anic figurative language to develop HOTS

by Mahrus Asád

Qur'anic Figurative Language to Develop High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and Religious Tolerance among Language Learners

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Abstract

Similar to other theistic texts, the Qur'an has some figurative languages which require deep thought for good comprehension. However, how these rhetorical imageries can inspire the development of higher order thinking skills (HOTS) and religious tolerance among language learners, two necessary skills in the information-laden era, is still less known. This study explores how the Qur'an's figurative languages serve as an inspiring basis to develop Bloom's revised taxonomy of analyzing and evaluating thinking skills in foreign language learning. Document analysis shows that many verses in *Sura* (Chapter) Joseph and other five chapters contain some simile, personification, and metaphor in recounting past prophetical and scientific events humans need to learn for life. Incorporated into learning materials, these figurative languages require the foreign language learners to use their skills of sensing, imagining, and making logical reasoning to discern the real meanings. The discussion of *Sura* Joseph in the Qur'an which recounts some prophets of Abraham's descendants can also increase religious tolerance among young followers of Abrahamic religions. The study recommends some strategies on how language teachers base their teaching and learning practices

on these religious scriptures to develop students' critical thinking and create a more harmonious global citizenship.

Keywords

higher order thinking skills (HOTS) – language learners – Qur'anic figurative languages – religious tolerance

1　　Introduction[1]

As a sacred theistic scripture, the Qur'an is an important life guidance among followers of Islam. While the population of Muslims is projected to rank the second in the world by 2100 after Christianity,[2] the Qur'an is one of the most read and studied holy books of all time.[3] Furthermore, despite an ongoing tension between religion and science, Qur'anic exegesis has become a source of scientific knowledge.[4] The hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality is the nexus between faith and reason (p. 4),[5] supporting for *ijtihad* (logical reasoning) and refusal for blind imitation,[6] not only for Muslims but also peoples outside this faith affiliation. Besides its main function as the source of spiritual intelligence,[7] the Qur'an provides inspiration for scientific studies such as the

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1　Date of Submission: 18.11.2020; Date of Acceptance: 07.07.2021.
2　World religions ranking-population growth by religion (1800–2100).
3　Ziauddin Sardar. *Reading the Qur'an: The contemporary relevance of the sacred text of Islam*, 2011, p. 67.
4　M. Hashim Kamali, Islam, Rationality and science, *Islam & Science*, vol. 1 no 1 (2003), pp. 115–122; Masud A. Choudhury, Introduction: Foundations of the Qur'anic worldview. In *Absolute reality in the Qur'an*. Palgrave Series in Islamic Theology, Law, and History. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016, p. 143; Zafar I. Ansari, Scientific exegesis of the Qur'an, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, vol. 3 no 1 (2010), pp. 91–104; M. Bucaille, Zakir Naik, Faisal Fahim, & Ahmad Deedat. *The Qur'an and modern science: Compatible or incompatible? The choice: Islam and Christianity, The Bible, The Qur'an and science*, UAE: Dubai, 2015, p. 162.
5　M. Hashim Kamali. *Reading the signs: A Qur'anic perspective on thinking*, Occasional paper series 26. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Advance Islamic Studies (IAIS), 2018.
6　S.M. Al-Karasneha, and A.M.J. Saleh, *Islamic perspective of creativity: A model for teachers of social studies as leaders, Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2 (2010), 412–426.
7　Benaouda Bensaid, Salah T. Machouche, and Fadila Grine, A Qur'anic framework for spiritual intelligence, *Religions, 5* (2014), pp. 179–198.

study of heart and cardiovascular system,[8] psychological counselling,[9] philosophy for life in modern world,[10] and an inspiration to literacy education.[11] This consideration enables the Qur'an to become one of the most influential theistic scriptures in the life of human beings. However, as a sacred literature, this holy book is full of figurative languages which may challenge readers' comprehension.

Figurative languages such as metaphor, personification, and similes have become a central focus in understanding textual evidence. Metaphor and imagery have been used in understanding literary works like poems and novels in which meaning is derived from structural manipulation, word choice, conceptual and imagery metaphor.[12] Nevertheless, despite this extensive use, figurative language is still considered challenging for language learners[13] as it requires HOTS like analyzing and evaluating,[14] so that students need special treatment in understanding figurative language.[15] To understand simile, personification, and metaphors, for instance, language learners need a deliberate exposure and exercise so that they can develop their HOTS which are necessary in their social life as global citizens.[16]

Given this importance of figurative language in scripture comprehension, however, research on emotions in understanding sacred scriptures like Bibles and Psalms is still rare.[17] Such this study is less frequent in other sacred books

8   M. Loukas, Y. Saad, R.S. Tubbs, and M.M. Shoja. The heart and cardiovascular system in the Qur'an and Hadeeth, *International Journal of Cardiology*, *140* no 1 (2010), pp. 19–23.

9   Shaima Ahammed, Applying Qur'anic Metaphors in Counseling. *International Journal of Advance Counselling*, 2010, pp. 248–255.

10   Sidiq Ahmad, Generic skills from Qur'anic perspective, *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, *1* (2012), pp. 43–53.

11   Ibrahima Diallo, 'Every little tree has its own bit of shade': Qur'an-based literacy of the Peul Fuuta community. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, *7* no 3 (2012), pp. 227–238.

12   Helen Chau Hu, Negotiating Semantics and Figurative Language in Four Poems by Sylvia Plath. *Word*, *53* no 2 (2002), pp. 197–215.

13   Z. Kövecses. A cognitive linguistic view of learning idioms in an FLT context. In M. Pütz, S. Niemeier, & R. Dirven (Eds.). *Applied cognitive linguistics II: Language pedagogy* (pp. 87–115). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001.

14   Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl, *Revised Bloom's taxonomy of learning*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2001, p. 87; Robert Marzano and John Kendall, *The New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2007, p. 194.

15   Ramin Ahrari and Ramineh Jamali, Collaborative translation tasks: The case of figurative language. *Cogent Education*, *5* no 1 (2001), pp. 1–13.

16   Gillian Lazar, Using figurative language to expand students' vocabulary. *ELT Journal*, *50* no 1, 1996, pp. 43–51.

17   Sigrid Eder, "Broken Hearted" and "Crushed in Spirit": Metaphors and Emotions in Psalm 34,19. *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, *30* no 1, (2016), pp. 1–15, 2016.

like the Qur'an as this study focuses. Let alone when it is related to the development of HOTS among language learners and their religious tolerance. Meanwhile, these two aspects are essential in today's more diverse world, especially in Indonesia, a majority Muslim country with highly diverse ethnicities and religions. Therefore, this study explores some figurative languages in some chapters of the Qur'an and how they can be used to develop the critical thinking skills and religious tolerance of the language learners. This research is necessary as it portrays how sacred holy book like Qur'an can support the development of critical thinking among its followers, a notion which is often considered unacceptable in some religious dogmas. At the same time, how these verses discuss some historical events in Abrahamic religion may provide a strong basis for religious tolerance in Islam, particularly among Muslim children, followers of the predominantly religion affiliation in Indonesia.

1.1   *Figurative Languages, Theistic Scriptures, and Language Learning*

Figurative language is a common linguistic feature of texts including theistic scriptures. Chapters and verses of Bibles and Torah have a large number of figurative languages, particularly metaphors and personification. Together with metaphor and pictorial comparison, figurative language has become an important element of Psalms.[18] This metaphor is also commonly found in the Qur'an, in which God signs need not only literal meaning but require thinking and reflection.[19] About one-eighth of verses in the Quran require readers to listen, think, reflect, observe, exercise intellect, take heed and remember, ask questions, develop insights.[20] Many verses in various chapters of Qur'an contain figurative languages such as metaphors, similes, and personifications. As an essential element of figurative language, metaphor is omniscient and 'evident in many facets of human life expression' (p. 1).[21] Meanwhile, personification enables authors to assign human features on non-human entities that they can act as living humans, enabling humans to express their emotions and deep experience in more multidimensional way.[22] One way of textual analysis

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18   Ibid., p. 7.

19   M.H. Kamali, *Reading the signs: A Qur'anic perspective on thinking*, 2018, p. 21. Occasional paper series 26. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Advance Islamic Studies (IAIS), 2018.

20   Ibid., p. 21.

21   Raymond W. Gibbs, "My Great Life with 'Metaphor and Symbol.'" *Metaphor and Symbol*, vol. 35 no 1 (2020), pp. 1–2.

22   Sigrid Eder, "Broken Hearted" and "Crushed in Spirit": Metaphors and Emotions in Psalm 34,19. *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament, 30* no 1, (2016), pp. 1–15, 2016.

of the Qur'an is by understanding the pragmatic relations between segments or utterances of the text.[23]

As an interplay between language and thoughts,[24] figurative language requires deeper thinking. This language expression carries some connotative implications which may go beyond denotative meaning. Figurative language has many types such as simile, personification, and metaphor (an explicit or implicit comparison which may have false literal meeting). Metaphor is actually more a conceptual system than a property of language[25] so that it has more connotative than denotative meaning. Therefore, to understand the meaning of figurative language like metaphor, readers need to be able to identify some possible relations between words and their relevant meanings.

A good comprehension of figurative language is necessary in language learning. It enables learners to develop their linguistic knowledge and competence. For example, metaphor supports students' vocabulary development which include idioms and collocations as well as widen their imagination.[26] Different types of figurative language such as simile, personification, idiom, hyperbole, allusion, onomatopoeia, and allusion are common features in literary works such as poems and short stories which are integral parts in language learning. Not only can the use of figurative languages support the learning of syntactical aspects but also semantics and pragmatics.[27] Exposure to various figurative languages allow learners to embrace themselves in imageries which increase their comprehension and engagement when reading literary works including theistic scriptures like Qur'an, Bibles and Psalms.

1.2 *Conceptual Metaphor, HOTS and Religious Tolerance*
As an important type of figurative language, metaphor is a common feature of human communication. It is a tool for expressing poetic imagination and rhetorical embellishment for extraordinary language.[28] Native speakers of all

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23   M. Selim Salwa El-Awa, *Textual relations in the Qur'an*. A doctoral thesis submitted to School of Oriental and African Studies, The University of London, 2017, p. 65.

24   A.N. Katz, Figurative language and figurative thought: A review. In Albert N. Katz, C. Cacciari, R.W. Gibbs, Jr. and M. Turner (Eds). *Figurative language and thought*, 1998, p. 65.

25   George Lakoff, *The contemporary theory of metaphor*. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought* (pp. 202–251). Cambridge University Press, 1993.

26   Gillian Lazar, Using figurative language to expand students' vocabulary. *ELT Journal*, 50 no 1 (1996), 43–51.

27   Anna Papafragou, Figurative language and the semantics-pragmatics distinction. *Language and literature: International Journal of Stylistics*, vol. 5 no 3 (1996), 179–193.

28   George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*. London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.

languages use a large number of metaphors when communicating about the world;[29] hence, metaphoric expressions can be found in all languages.[30] Broadly construed, conceptual metaphor is the way humans conceptualize one experience in terms of another. The more concrete or physical aspect is called source domain and the more abstract one is called target domain.[31] These two mental frames are connected by a correspondence of mapping. Conceptual metaphor can be correlation (correlation in experience) and resemblance (similarities between experiential domains),[32] which also relies on context, consisting of two aspects; linguistics (co-text) and non-linguistics (context).

Metaphor has some classifications. They include cognitive function, nature, conventionality, generality, and grounding.[33] For cognitive, metaphors can be structural (life is journey) and non-structural (good is up, bad is down). Nature means that metaphor is based on our general knowledge and life experience. As for conventionality, metaphor can be conventional (life is a journey) and unconventional or novel (life if a box of chocolate). With respect to generality, it can be generic (e.g., anger is hot fluid) and specific (e.g., the angry person is a kettle). Finally, grounding means that metaphor can be grounded in analogical relationship in bodily correlations in experience.

Metaphor has strong relation with thinking skill. Since it deals with connotation, comprehension is not solely derived from word meaning, but its relation to context. To obtain meaning, readers need to identify logical relation between words and their intended objective. In this case, metaphor requires readers to evaluate relation between words and conclude their logical meaning. Following Bloom's revised taxonomy, it should not only retrieve information but also evaluate and analyze the meaning,[34] which belong to HOTS. Not only are readers required to understand textual meaning but also analyze possible relation between related information in the text,[35] like verses or chapters of holy books such as Qur'an and Bible, to yield a relevant and logical comprehension.

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29   Ibid., p. 87.
30   Zoltan Kovesces, *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 93.
31   Ibid., p. 178.
32   Zoltan Kovesces. *Where metaphors come from? Reconsidering context in metaphor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 76.
33   Ibid., p. 76.
34   L. Anderson and A. Krathwol, *The revised Bloom's taxonomy of learning*, Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2001, p. 92.
35   R. Marzano and J. Kendall. *The new taxonomy of learning objectives*, 2007, p. 133.

Developed within metaphor, critical thinking is not contradictory to religion. Islam encourages thinking, rationality, and critical reasons. As an exceptional literary work, the Qur'an challenges readers to make rational understanding of its signs and draw logical conclusions to discover truth and right guidance.[36] It is also emphasized that uncovering the semiotic meanings of these sign require high level or response or thinking to see beyond the surface. This theistic scripture also invites its readers to listen, think, reflect, observe, exercise intellect, take heed and remember, ask questions, develop insights.[37] In Islam, logical reasoning activity, including evaluation and analysis in HOTS, is an integral part of religious manifestation.

Furthermore, supporting critical reasoning, Islam encourages religious tolerance. Religious diversity is a sign of God's creation.[38] As an integral part or species of Abrahamic religion,[39] Islam shares similarities with other faiths of Abrahamic religions such as Christianity and Judaism. Completing the teaching of other previous Abrahamic religions, the Qur'an contains stories and also talks about past accounts of previous prophets such as Abraham, Isaac, Ismail, Joseph, Jonah, David, and Jesus. The prophets are respected figures in Islamic theology. Rather than denying the validity of truth, Islam concerns more with the faiths of people and nations, their acceptance (*imān*) and rejection (*kufr*).[40]

Finally, despite differences in religious beliefs and affiliations, Islam also emphasizes universal humanity. Many verses in the Qur'an talk about human right equality in which humans are equal regardless of color, race, ethnicity, and religion. In relation to religious practices, it is necessary to study different religious traditions like Islam and Christianity through a single but reflected lens, that is a shared common ground of living with God.[41] Therefore, it is interesting to explore how this call for religious tolerance in Qur'an may be identified in the present verses studied so that they can be used to develop more tolerant followers of Abrahamic and other faith affiliations.

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36   M.H. Kamali. *Reading the signs: A Qur'anic perspective on thinking*, 2018, p. 21.

37   Ibid., p. 21.

38   M. Ayoub, *Contemporary approach to the Qur'an and Sunnah.* Hartford: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2016, p. 198.

39   Paul Heck, *Common ground: Islam, Christianity and religious tolerance.* Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009, p. 77.

40   M. Ayoub, *Contemporary approach to the Qur'an and Sunnah.* Hartford: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2016, p. 198.

41   Paul Heck. *Common ground: Islam, Christianity and religious tolerance*, 2009, p. 77.

2   Methodology

This study is a textual analysis of scripture verses from the Qur'an, the sacred book of Islam. Data were taken from six different chapters in the Qur'an which have figurative languages such as metaphor, personification, and imagery, and simile. They are chapters *Yūsuf*/Joseph (12 verses), *Al-Baqarah*/The Cow (2 verses), *An-Nabaa*/The News or Tiding (1 verse), *Al-Jum'at*/The Congregation (1 verse), *Alqari'ah*/The Calamity (1 verse) and *Al-Fiil*/The Elephant (1 verse). Of these chapters, Joseph has the largest number of figurative languages (12 verses) whereas other chapters have only 1–2 verses. Consisting of 111 verses, *Sura Yūsuf* describes the life of Joseph when he first revealed his dreams to his father, followed by some mischievous behaviors made by his siblings until his new life in Egypt where he became a respected authority and then a prophet. As such, this *Sura* serves as the main data of HOTS and religious tolerance whereas other chapters are complementary.

Procedures of data generation are as follows. First, the three researchers identified verses which contain figurative language from online Qur'an. The figurative languages include metaphor, personification, and simile. Then, they selected both Arabic transliteration and English translation of these verses. Words and phrases containing figurative languages in both Arabic transliteration and English translation were then bold as data source. Next, these transliteration and translation were analyzed to identify types of figurative languages used and their interpretations identified from some prominent references in Arabic rhetoric such as *Asrār al-Balāghoh* by Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani and *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* by al-Farraa' as well as some leading Qur'an commentaries such as *al-Kashshāf* by Az-Zamakhshari, *al-Bahr al-Muhith* by Abu Hayyan, *Munīr* by Wahbah Zuhaili, *Jami ul-Bayan fi Ta'wīl al-Qur'an* by Al-Thobari, and *Mafatih al-Ghaib* by Al-Rāzi. Finally, relation between identified figurative languages and aspects of HOTS as part of Bloom's renewed taxonomy[42,43] and religious inclusivism was explored.

As a qualitative inquiry, the study strongly maintains validity via interdisciplinary expertise.[44,45] All authors are fluent in both English and Arabic; they have the ability to explore the figurative languages identified in the

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42   L. Anderson & A. Krathwol, *The revised Bloom's taxonomy of learning*, 2001, p. 92.

43   R. Marzano & J. Kendall. *The new taxonomy of learning objectives*, 2007, p. 133.

44   David Silverman. *Doing qualitative research (4th ed.)*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2018, p. 214.

45   John Creswell. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014, p. 99.

Qur'anic chapters and verses selected as textual evidence. The third author is a native speaker of Arabic who also has strong knowledge of English language teaching. Furthermore, the main author has strong expertise in Qur'anic *tafsīr* or commentaries whereas the other two authors have a solid expertise in language education. These characteristics and traits enable the three researchers to carry out a deeper analysis and interpretation leading to more convincing arguments. Thus, the validity of this qualitative study of Qur'anic inspiration on HOTS and religious tolerance can be properly obtained and maintained.

3 Findings and Discussion

This section has two parts. The first part describes verses and chapters of the Qur'an which contain some figurative languages and their categories. The second one discusses and relate these verses to the development of HOTS and the possibility of nurturing religious tolerance among language learners.

3.1 *Findings of the Study*

3.1.1   Some Figurative Languages in the Qur'an

This study identifies about 13 verses from four different chapters of the Qur'an which contain some figurative languages. They are six verses (4, 26, 27, 31, 36, 43), of Chapter *Yusuf*/Joseph (12), Chapter *Al-Baqara*/The Cows (2) verses 187 and 261, *Alqari'ah*/The Calamity (101:4), *Ibrahim*/Abraham (14:24), *Al-Araf*/The Heights (7:40), and *An-Naba*/The News or Tiding (78:10). These verses are elaborated below in both Arabic transliteration and English translation.

The first part of *Sura Yūsuf* is verse 4.

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Idz qāla Yūsufu li abīhi yā abati innī ra aytu ahada 'ashara kawkaban wash shamsa walqamara ra aytuhum lī sājidīn	[Of these stories mention] when Joseph said to his father, "O my father, indeed I have seen [in a dream] eleven stars and the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating to me."

Using personification, this verse describes the stars, the sun and the moon as living creatures which can prostrate to Joseph. As prostration is human activity, Qur'an personifies the stars, the sun and the moon as living creatures who

can show physical salutation to a human named Joseph, paying high respect to his distinguished characteristics. These objects of solar system also represent siblings of Joseph who were envious and had planned a mischievous scenario to get Joseph off their family and house. To understand this verse, language learners need to identify the characteristics of stars, the sun, and the moon and how they can act like living humans, prostrating, which is only conducted by thinking beings.[46] They also need to analyze some possible connections between the act of prostrating and the characteristics of Joseph, a noble person who later became a prophet.

The second part is verse 26.

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Qāla hiya ... in kāna qamīsuhū qudda min qubulin fasadaqat wa huwa minal kāzibīn	[Joseph] said, "It was she who ..." "**If his shirt is torn from the front, then she has told the truth, and he is of the liars.**

As the verse mentions, torn in Joseph's front part of the shirt related to someone's lie and truthfulness needs deeper evaluation of information. Learners need to identify the relation between torn in shirt and being a liar or truthful. Torn in front page of Joseph's shirt means that it was torn by someone else in front of him. In this case, Joseph may have tried to seduce the woman that she tried to fight back by tearing his shirt. The torn of Joseph's shirt front part means that he is the sinner, not the female. Here, readers like language learners need to identify some possibly logical relations between different parts of torn shirt (front and back) with the act of fight and physical conflict between the two people, particularly a man and a woman.

The next part is verse 27.

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Wa in kāna qamīsuhū qudda min duburin fakazabat wa huwa minas sādiqīn	**But if his shirt is torn from the back, then she has lied, and he is of the truthful.**"

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46   Al-Zamakhsyari, *al-Kashshāf* Commentaries, *Dār al-Ma'rifah*, 2009, vol. 3, p. 225.

On the other hand, this verse also describes a different part of torn clothes, the back part. If Joseph's shirt was torn from the back, the woman had lied and Joseph was the truthful. This means, Joseph had run away to avoid the woman who had seduced him to commit indecent behavior. She then grabbed his shirt and torn its back part. Again, this verse requires language learners as readers to find a possible connection between part of torn shirt and truth and falsehood. They need to identify how the torn parts of shirt (back or front) relates to truth and falsehood in the context of relation between a male and female.

The other part is verse 31.

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Falammā ... wa qulna hāsha lillāhi mā hāza basharā; in hāzā illā malakun karīm	So when she heard of their scheming, ... and said, "**Perfect is Allah! This is not a man; this is none but a noble angel.**"

This verse compares human with a noble angel. Since human and angel are God's creatures which have different characteristics, readers need to identify some possible shared similarities between Joseph and an angel, either physical or psychological qualities. When reading this verse, language learners have to be able to identify some possible physical and psychological traits between them so that Joseph deserves to be called a noble angel. In this case, the attending women praised Joseph's physical good looking who looked like a noble angle. Moreover, as critical readers, language teachers and learners also need to connect the reaction of al-Aziz's wife and all her female companions towards Joseph. The dispute between Joseph and the wife of Aziz was finally solved by a miraculously speaking baby who could clearly explain the relation between Joseph's torn part of shirt and his truthfulness.[47]

The next part is verse 36.

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47   Abu Hayyan, *al-Bahr al-Muhit* Commentaries, *Dār al-Fikr*, 2010, vol. 6, p. 261.

Arabic transliteration	English translation
... *innī arānī a'siru khamranw wa qālal ākharu innī arānī aḥmilu fawqa ra'sī khubzan ta'kulut tairu minhu; nabbi'nā bi ta'wīlih; innā narāka minal muḥsinīn*	..., "Indeed, I have seen myself [in a dream] pressing wine." The other said, "Indeed, I have seen myself carrying upon my head [some] bread, from which the birds were eating. Inform us of its interpretation; indeed, we see you to be of those who do good."

This verse seems to offer more challenging task of thinking skills, which has at least two thinking processes. The first is explaining the process of wine pressing and carrying some bread on the head which are eaten by birds. Second, relating the possible relevant meaning of pressing wine and bread carrying to the future life that Joseph would experience later in his life. In this verse, readers need to find a logical connection between dream as a source information (serving drink and food for someone) and its interpretation in real life as target information (someone's good and bad luck).[48]

The last part of Chapter Joseph is verse 43.

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Wa qālal maliku innī arā sab'a baqarātin simāniny ya'kuluhunna sab'un 'ijāfunw wa sab'a sumbulātin khuḍrinw wa ukhara yābisāt; ...	

Similarly, this seems to be the most challenging task of evaluation and analysis which has two sections. The first part of the vision is seeing seven fat cows being eaten by the other seven lean cows and the second is seven green spikes (of grain) with the other seven dry grains. In this verse, readers are required to identify some possible connections between fat and lean cows and the second one is between green and dry spike of grains. Language learners need to identify some possible relationship between seven fat cows eaten by seven lean

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48   Ibid., vol. 6, p. 262.

ones and the seven green spikes of grain and the other seven dry ones, prosperity and poverty.[49]

In addition to verses of chapter Joseph, the study also identifies other verses which contain figurative languages. The first is chapter *Al-Baqarah*/The Cow (2:187).

Arabic transliteration	English translation
.... *hunna libāsullakum wa antum libāsullahunn;*	.... They are **clothing for you and you are clothing for them.**

This verse compares spouse (wife and husband) as clothing which can cover each other. Language learners need to identify some possible meanings of clothing for spouses since covering here means more psychological than physical. So, they need to explore the meaning of cloth as source information and covering as the target information. Learners need to find out how spouses (wives and husbands) can cover the psychological and physical needs of their partners, including marital consummation.[50]

Another verse is taken from the same chapter, *Al-Baqarah*/The Cow (2:261).

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Masalul lazīna yunfiqūna amwālahum fī sabīlil lāhi kamasali habbatin ambatat sab'a sanābila fī kulli sumbulatim mi'atu habbah; wallāhu yudā'ifu limai yashā; wallāhu Wāsi'un 'Alīm	The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah **is like a seed** [of grain] which **grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains.** And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills.

This verse describes the multiplication of rewards Allah the almighty has promised to generous people who spend their wealth in His ways. In this verse, one good deed humans perform is exemplified as a seed of grain which grows seven branches and from each branch grows a hundred grains. Thus, one seed

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49   Ibid., vol. 6, p. 263.
50   Al-Tabari, *Jāmi al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-quran, Cairo: Dār al-Hijr, 2001,* vol. 2, 2000, p. 489.

can produce 700 new grains and much more as He wishes. This mathematical calculation shows the generosity of God in rewarding the good deed and sacrifices of humans for His sake. In this context, readers need to explore some possible connections between the growing seeds and rewards from humanitarian donation which Allah the almighty has promised for those who believe in the life of hereafter.[51]

The third figurative language is identified from chapter *Ibrahim*/Abraham (14:24).

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Alam tara ... masalan kalimatan tayyibatan kashajaratin taiyibatin asluhā sābitunw wa far'uhā fis samā'	Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] **a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky?**

Using a simile, this verse compares a good word with a good tree (using the particle like) which has firmly fixed root inside the ground while its branches rise high in the sky. Here, readers need to identify some characteristics of a good tree as target information. Then, readers need to identify some possible relations between kalimatan tayyibatan or good words as source information and good tree as target one. In this context, kalimatan tayyibatan uttered by good people is like the roots of a tree usually which stands firmly on the ground while its branches stand up high into the sky, giving various benefits to humanity.[52]

The next figurative language is identified from chapter *Al-Araf*/The Heights (7:40).

Arabic transliteration	English translation
*Innal lazīna ... **wa laa yadkhulūnal jannata hattā yalijal jamalu fi sammil khiyāt**; ...*	Indeed, those who deny Our verses ... nor will they enter Paradise **until a camel enters into the eye of a needle**....

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51   Ibn Kathīr, Qur'an Commentaries, Beirut: *Sharikah Abna Sharif al-Anshāri*, 2007, vol. 1, p. 278.

52   Al-Tabari, *Jāmi al-Bayān fi Ta'wīl al-quran*, vol. 13, p. 635.

This verse describes camel, a mammal which has large body size and usually lives in dessert areas. Meanwhile, the eye of needle is very small that it is sometimes hard to see and identify with bare eyes. So, how readers can understand the possibility of a camel entering into the eye of a needle. Readers, including language learners, need to find a possible relation between a large sized-camel and the small eye of the needle. Since this is impossible to happen, language learners need to evaluate and conclude that it shows a strong impossibility for arrogant people to enter the paradise of God.[53]

The next verse is taken from chapter *Annaba*/The News or Tiding (78:10).

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Waja'alnal laila libāsa	And **made the night as clothing**.

This verse also mentions clothing, but not to represent someone (the spouse), but something (the night). Unlike the verse in Chapter Al-Baqarah which compares wife and husband to clothing, this verse compares night to clothing. In this case, spouses are living humans whereas night is non-living. In both verses, the clothing serves as a means to cover or protect something. Among spouse, wife is supposed to cover the weakness and fulfill the needs of husbands and vice versa whereas dark of night covers the earth.[54] Again, readers are required to explore some possible relations between night and the act of covering.

The other verse is identified in chapter *Al-Jum'at*/The Congregations (62:5).

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Masalul lazīna hum milut tawrāta summa lam yahmilūhā kamasalil himāri yah milu asfārā; ...	The **example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]**....

This verse of Chapter *Al-Jum'at* uses a simile (... who were entrusted with the Torah ... like donkey ...) to describe people who were entrusted with divine guidance of holy book of Torah but refused it as a donkey who carries volumes

53   Wahbah Zuhaili, *al-Munīr* Commentaries, Damascus: *Dār al-Fikr*, 2005, vol. 8, p. 569.
54   Al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashshaf* Commentaries, vol. 2, p. 151.

of books. In understanding this verse, readers need to identify two aspects. First, they need to find out some possible relations between human and a donkey which have different characteristics. Since donkey is often associated with foolishness and clumsiness, humans who do not take heed the guidance offered in Torah may also be considered ignorant and foolish. Second, they also need to identify the possible association between a donkey and volume of books as a source of knowledge. Since a donkey will not be able to read the books and gain knowledge from them, and so will the human beings who ignore the teaching of Torah.[55]

The last verse is taken from chapter *Alqari'ah*/The Calamity (101:4).

Arabic transliteration	English translation
Yauma ya kūnun nāsu kal farāshil mabthūth	It is the Day when **people will be like moths, dispersed.**

This verse uses simile (people will be like moths) to describe the condition of human beings during the doomsday as moths which are easily dispersed and blown away.[56] Moths are small and light insects which can be easily dispersed by strong wind. This comparison has some implied meanings. First, during the doomsday, humans are as fragile and weak as moths which can be easily blown away. Therefore, we are not supposed to become arrogant as our condition is not better than light and easily dispersed moths. Second, humans are also supposed to behave well during his life so that God will protect them during the doomsday and save them from the calamity of this day. Encountering this verse, readers need to identify some possible connections between the condition of dispersed moths and their future conditions during the doomsday. What matters more is how human beings who believe in the hereafter prepare themselves so that they will receive protection from Allah the Almighty from this severed condition in the doomsday.

Based on the above presented data, here is the summary of verses which contain figurative languages.

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55   Al-Rāzi, *Mafatih al-Ghaib* Commentaries, 2000, vol. 2, p. 347.
56   Wahbah Zuhaili, *Munīr* Commentaries, vol. 15, p. 772.

TABLE 1   Summary of figurative languages

Chapters/verses	English translation	Figurative languages
Yūsuf (12:4).	O my father, indeed I have seen [in a dream] eleven stars and the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating to me.	Personification, eleven stars, the sun and the moon, prostrating to a human, resemblance
Yūsuf (12:26).	If his shirt is torn from the front, then she has told the truth, and he is of the liars.	Metaphor, comparing parts of the torn shirt with truth and lie, correlation
Yūsuf (12:27).	But if his shirt is torn from the back, then she has lied, and he is of the truthful.	Metaphor, comparing parts of the torn shirt with truth and lie, correlation
Yūsuf (12:31).	Perfect is Allah! This is not a man; this is none but a noble angel."	Metaphor, comparing a man with a noble angel, resemblance
Yūsuf (12:36).	I have seen myself [in a dream] pressing wine." "Indeed, I have seen myself carrying upon my head [some] bread, from which the birds were eating.	Metaphor, pressing wine and carrying bread eaten by birds, correlation
Yūsuf (12:43).	Indeed, I have seen [in a dream] seven fat cows being eaten by seven [that were] lean, and seven green spikes [of grain] and others [that were] dry.	Metaphor, seven fat and lean cows, seven green and dry spikes (of grain), correlation
Al-Baqarah (2:187)	They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them.	Metaphor, comparing spouses as clothing, correlation
Al-Baqarah (2:261)	… who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is *like* a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes	Simile, comparing generous people with a seed growing seven spikes, correlation
Ibrahim (14:24).	A good word *like* a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky?	Simile, comparing good word with good tree, resemblance
Al-Araf (7:40)	… nor will they enter Paradise until a camel enters into the eye of a needle.	Metaphor, comparing arrogant people with camel entering the eye of a needle, correlation

TABLE 1   Summary of figurative languages (*cont.*)

Chapters/verses	English translation	Figurative languages
Annaba (78:10)	And made **the night** *as* **clothing**	Simile, night as clothing, resemblance
Al-Jum'at (62:5)	**The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did** not take it on is *like that of* a donkey who carries volumes [of books].	Simile, comparing donkeys carrying books with people ignoring the teaching of Torah, resemblance.
Alqari'ah (101:4)	... **people will be** *like* moths, dispersed.	Simile, comparing people with dispersed moths, resemblance

This table shows different types of figurative language these verses contain; metaphor, simile, and personification. These figurative languages have different meanings and need different ways of interpretation. Each of these 13 verses contains a pair of mental frames, the source and the target, which are connected by a correspondence of mapping. Most figurative languages (personification, simile and metaphor) in these verses are resemblance as they show similarities between source and target domains within unconventional or novel way.[57]

3.2   *Discussion*

3.2.1   Qur'anic Figurative Languages to Develop HOTS

As one of the most read theistic scriptures of all time,[58] the Qur'an provides a comprehensive account of all aspects of human life. Like other sacred texts, however, the Qur'an also offers some figurative languages such as simile, personification, and metaphor. These rhetorical features are to provide clear imageries on prophetic events and other didactic values so that readers may have a better understanding of the narrated stories. As Table 1 shows, many figurative languages the Qur'an contains need special attention, especially among language learners, so that they can grasp their correct meanings and

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57   Zoltan Kovesces. *Where metaphors come from? Reconsidering context in metaphor*, 2015, p. 87.

58   Ziauddin Sardar. *Reading the Qur'an: The contemporary relevance of the sacred text of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 67.

interpretations. In *Sura Yūsuf*, for instance, readers need to identify the relation between the eleven prostrating stars seen in Joseph's dream as source to the future condition of his 11 siblings as target domain.[59] In other verses of the same *sura*, readers also need to explore the possible logical relation between torn part of the shirt as source with being lie or truthful as the target domain between Joseph and al-Aziz's wife.[60] Expressing poetic imagination and rhetorical embellishment for extraordinary language,[61] these Arabic Qur'anic metaphors communicate about world[62] as other languages do.[63] The use of these figurative languages makes this theistic scripture more impressive in the eyes of its readers.

However, identifying some possible logical connections between these source and target domains in figurative languages[64] may be challenging. This task may become harder for foreign language learners such as English and Arabic among young Muslims. For instance, *Sura Al-Araf* verse 47 describes the impossibility of admission to *jannah* (paradise) for people who deny God's revelation as a large dessert mammal of camel and a small eye of needle which is sometimes hard to see and identify with bare eyes.[65] In this context, readers, including language learners, need to evaluate some possible relations between a large sized-camel and admission to a small eye of the needle. Language learners need to evaluate and conclude how it shows an impossibility for arrogant and disbelieving people that Allah will never accept their good deeds and admit them to his *jannah* (paradise).[66] In *Sura al-Jum'at* verse 5, a Qur'anic figurative language describes donkeys, books of Torah, and ignorance. This metaphor indicates an intertwining unity of some aspects. Donkeys which carry books (Torah) as a source of knowledge but ignore their contents as important life guidance. Due to ignorance, the four-leg animals consider these important guidance books nothing but an exhausting burden on their backs.[67]

In another verse, language learners may find a personification which assigns human features to non-human beings like the eleven prostrating stars to Joseph.[68] Again, to help understand this figurative language, language learners

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59   George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*. London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 178.
60   Al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshāf* Commentaries, vol. 2, p. 384.
61   George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, 2003, p. 179.
62   Ibid., p. 179.
63   Zoltan Kovesces. *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*, 2005, p. 93.
64   Ibid., 2003.
65   Al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 2, p. 230.
66   Ibid., 212.
67   Al-Jurjani, *Asrār al-Balāghah*, Jeddah: *Dār al-Madani*, vol. 2. p. 101.
68   Al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshāf* Commentaries, vol. 2, p. 384.

have to be exposed to exercises on different types of figurative languages[69]so that they can have sufficient knowledge on how to uncover their hidden meanings. To assist them to complete this challenging task, as readers, language learners have to be involved in different activities of uncovering the meanings of different figurative languages such as simile, personification, and metaphors so that they have a rich repertoire of this knowledge to support their reading comprehension. In an Arabic or English subject at high school, for instance, when discussing the translation of this verse, teachers can lead students to talk about this possible connection between a camel and a small eye of needle. The discussion may start from literal/denotative to connotative meaning. Meanwhile, the prostrating stars to Joseph can be used as a theme or scene in a drama class in which students and teachers discuss some aspects and examples of figurative languages identified from these Qur'anic verses.

In relation to learning, figurative language in Qur'anic verses support foreign language development. In line with previous studies, exposure to metaphor identified in these sacred verses supports students' vocabulary development[70] such as English and Arabic. Not only can language learners identify new idioms and collocations but also widen their imagination about prophetic stories. As literary works, the Qur'anic verses contain simile, personification, idiom, hyperbole, allusion, onomatopoeia, and allusion. Beyond syntactical and semantic aspects, these figurative languages also enrich learners' pragmatics knowledge.[71] For example, the word 'clothing' used to describe the role of spouse in *Sura al-Baqara* verse 187 demands readers to identify some possible meanings beyond syntactical and semantic domains.[72] These figurative languages enable learners to involve themselves in various imageries, thus, deepening their comprehension. This topic can be used in a classroom discussion of senior high school in which students are invited to express their ideas on the relationship between husband and wife in relation to the word 'clothing' identified from this Qur'anic verse.

Despite continuous dispute on the relation between religion and science, Qur'anic worldview has increasingly become the source of scientific knowledge.[73] The nexus between faith and reasons has become the hallmark

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69   Ramin Ahrari and Ramineh Jamali, Collaborative translation tasks: The case of figurative language. *Cogent Education*, vol. 5 no 1 (2001), pp. 1–13.

70   Gillian Lazar, Using figurative language to expand students' vocabulary. *ELT Journal*, vol. 50, no 1 (1996), pp. 43–51.

71   Anna Papafragou, Figurative language and the semantics-pragmatics distinction. *Language and literature: International Journal of Stylistics*, vol. 5, no 3 (1996), pp. 179–193.

72   Al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshāf* Commentaries, vol. 2, p. 165.

73   M. Hashim Kamali, Islam, Rationality and science, *Islam & Science*, vol. 1 no 1 (2003), pp. 115–122; Masud A. Choudhury, Introduction: Foundations of the Qur'anic worldview.

of Islamic spirituality,[74] encouraging *ijtihad* (logical reasoning) and refusing blind imitation.[75] For instance, *Sura al-Baqara* (2:261) describes how wealth spent in Allah's way will multiply like a seed of grain which grows seven spikes and each spike produces one hundred seeds. It may be challenging for human beings, particularly Muslim people, most of whom live in poverty, to perform this philanthropical activity without possessing a strong belief, that Allah the most giving and generous God will substitute the wealth spent in His way with bountiful rewards.[76] Modern management has shown the power of charity and other forms of social responsibility in reducing poverty and other social injustices. This verse has inspired the establishment of charity or philanthropy organizations necessary in today's world with increasing poverties and social inequalities.

Furthermore, Qur'an also serves as an influential source of HOTS. Giving high attention to the development of reasoning in humans, Qur'an inspires its readers to develop their critical thinking skills. It challenges readers such as Muslims and people of other faith affiliations who may have interests in exploring its magnificence, to make the best use of their logics and senses to ponder and think about world phenomena around them. Many verses in the Quran require readers to listen, think, reflect, observe, exercise intellect, take heed and remember, ask questions, develop insights.[77] As this study has identified, verse 4 of *Sura Yusuf* personifies stars, the sun and the moon as prostrating creatures, requiring language learners to think of its relation with Joseph's siblings who were mischievous to him before they experienced hardship in life and repented. Verses 26–27 of this chapter also offer metaphors of torn shirt with truthfulness and lie committed by either Joseph or the wife of al-Aziz,[78] asking readers to observe and evaluate its possible relation. Meanwhile, verse 31 compares Joseph to a noble angle, challenging readers to identify

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In *Absolute reality in the Qur'an. Palgrave Series in Islamic Theology, Law, and History.* Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016, p. 143; Zafar I. Ansari, Scientific exegesis of the Qur'an, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, vol. 3 no 1 (2010), pp. 91–104; M. Bucaille, Zakir Naik, Faisal Fahim, & Ahmad Deedat. *The Qur'an and modern science: Compatible or incompatible? The choice: Islam and Christianity, The Bible, The Qur'an and science*, UAE: Dubai, 2015, p. 162.

74 M. Hashim Kamali. *Reading the signs: A Qur'anic perspective on thinking*. Occasional paper series 26. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Advance Islamic Studies (IAIS), 2018.

75 S.M. Al-Karasneha, and A.M.J. Saleh, *Islamic perspective of creativity: A model for teachers of social studies as leaders*, Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2 (2010), pp. 412–426.

76 Abu Hayyan, *al-Bahr al-Muhith* Commentaries, *Dār al-Fikr*, vol. 6, 2010, p. 261.

77 M. Hashim Kamali. *Reading the signs: A Qur'anic perspective on thinking*. Occasional paper series 26, 2018.

78 Al-Zamakhshari, *Al-kashshāf*, vol. 2, p. 384.

some possible relations between Joseph as the source and angel as the target domain.[79] Complying with Bloom's revised taxonomy, these Qur'anic verses require language learners to evaluate and analyze the connected meaning.[80] Not only do these verses require readers to understand textual meaning but also analyze some possible logical connections between related information the verses contain.[81]

It is interesting to note that critical thinking developed in Qur'anic figurative languages is not contradictory to religion values. Encouraging thought, rationality and critical reasons, Qur'an challenges readers to make rational understanding of its signs and draw logical conclusions to discover truth and right guidance.[82] To uncover the semiotic meanings of Qur'anic signs needs high level thinking as readers are required to see something implicit beyond its surface. They need to identify some logical reasonings between what the verses say and their implicit meanings and interpretations. Again, in compliance with renewed Bloom's taxonomy for HOTS, readers are invited to ponder, evaluate and summarize the implied meanings and interpretation of these Qur'anic signs by their most sensible scientific justification. With this view, not only does Qur'an serve as a theistic guidance for spirituality but also a reference in all scientific human endeavors.[83,84,85,86,87] In a teaching scenario, for instance, these verses serve as an underlying theme by which students work in small groups, discussing and evaluating these figurative languages and how they relate to their real life today.

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79   Ibid., 392.
80   Loraine Anderson and David Krathwohl, *The revised Bloom's taxonomy of learning*, Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2001, p. 92.
81   Robert Marzano and John Kendall, *The New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2nd ed, 2007, p. 194.
82   M. Hashim Kamali. *Reading the signs: A Qur'anic perspective on thinking*. Occasional paper series 26. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Advance Islamic Studies (IAIS), 2018.
83   Benaouda Bensaid, Salah T. Machouche, and Fadila Grine, A Qur'anic framework for spiritual intelligence, *Religions, 5* (2014), pp. 179–198.
84   Loukas, Marios, Saad, Yousuf, Tubbs, Shane and Shoja, Mohamadali. The heart and cardiovascular system in the Qur'an and Hadeeth. *International Journal of Cardiology, 140* no 1 (2010), 19–23.
85   Shaima Ahammed, Applying Qur'anic Metaphors in Counseling. *International Journal of Advance Counselling,* 2010, pp. 248–255.
86   Sidiq Ahmad, Generic skills from Qur'anic perspective, *International Journal of Islamic Thought, 1* (2012), pp. 43–53.
87   Ibrahima Diallo, 'Every little tree has its own bit of shade': Qur'an-based literacy of the Peul Fuuta community. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning, 7* no 3 (2012), pp. 227–238.

3.2.2   Qur'anic Narrative and Religious Tolerance

Discussion on figurative languages in Chapters Joseph and Abraham in the Qur'an poses a significant description of religious tolerance. First, this chapter discusses the account of Joseph and his life in Egypt. Son of Jacob, Joseph is from the family of Israel. Narration of Israel children is also described in some other chapters of the Qur'an such as *al-Baqara, al-Maidah, al-Shaf, al-A'raf, Yunus, al-Jatsiyah, and al-Isra.* This monotheistic scripture of Islam has even some chapters named after people of Abrahamic faith such as *Ali Imrān* (3), Jonah (10), Hūd (11), Abraham (14) Maryam (19). This inclusion shows that the teaching of Islam is an integral part of that of Abrahamic faith affiliation. The inclusion of previous prophets in Qur'an shows that Islam actually stems from and extends the teaching of the previous Abrahamic religions. Although the sample verses do not directly discuss religious diversity and tolerance, exploration of *Sura* Joseph enables language teachers to draw their students' attention to this increasingly important issue in a more diverse and global world.

Meanwhile, Qur'anic narration emphasizes respect and tolerance for religious diversity. The fact that the Qur'an includes Chapter Abraham and other related chapters signifies the important role of Abraham in the existence of three Abrahamic religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It also confirms that religious diversity is an undeniable *āyāt* (signs) of God.[88] This confirms the fact that despite a few differences, the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) share some similarities worthy pondering and appreciating.[89] Followers of these three Abrahamic faiths and other faith affiliations need to realize their shared similarity as human beings. Humanity has made them equal and egalitarian. As global citizens, all humans, regardless of their faith affiliation, race and ethnicity, need to focus more on these shared commonalities through mutual cooperation and partnership for a more harmonious world. Including this theme in learning materials, language teachers can provide religious activities of different faith affiliations for their students. In an English or Arabic speaking class, for instance, teachers can invite students to discuss some similarities and differences of Abrahamic religions. When concluding the class, teachers emphasize the importance of embracing a common ground and respecting diversity.

As for language learning, this narration has some pedagogical implications. First, the figurative languages identifiable in the Qur'an should become

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88   M. Ayoub, *Contemporary approach to the Qur'an and Sunnah.* Hartford: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2016, p. 198.

89   Paul Heck. *Common ground: Islam, Christianity and religious tolerance.* Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009, p. 77.

a meaningful source of developing learner's higher order thinking skills. As scholars have denoted,[90,91]teachers need to explore personification, simile and metaphor and expose them to the students so that they become more accustomed to evaluating and summarizing the connection between source and target domains in figurative languages. However, as Qur'an is written in Arabic, all language teachers need to have sufficient knowledge and references in Arabic balāghoh and Qur'anic commentaries so that they can explain these Qur'anic figurative languages more comprehensively. Second, to maintain religious tolerance, description of other faith affiliation in theistic scriptures like the Qur'an should become the concerns of language teachers. They need to include this narration in their learning materials. Exposure to this inclusive narration of Abrahamic belief among Muslim learners, for instance, may increase their knowledge about inter-religiosity, thus, improving their tolerance and respect for other faith affiliations, particularly among those of Abrahamic beliefs.

4   Conclusions and Suggestions

The study comes with some conclusions and suggestions. First, Qur'anic verses have different types of figurative language in describing the past prophetic events and Islamic teaching. Some figurative languages include simile, metaphor and personification which provide imageries, adding clarity to the sacred messages delivered. However, understanding these figurative languages poses some challenges so that readers like language learners need deliberate exposure to be able to discern the implicit meanings of the theistic scriptures more comprehensively. Second, the use of these figurative languages can serve as important language learning materials to develop learners' Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Understanding imageries need deep analysis and evaluation, which are two important features of HOTS. Consequently, to help develop learners' critical thinking skills, language teachers needs to incorporate their relevant background knowledge into learning materials, including religious scriptures such as the Qur'an and the Bibles.

Furthermore, narration about the life of Abraham and Joseph in the Qur'an can serve as a means to develop religious tolerance among adherents of

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90   Zoltan Kovesces, *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 93.

91   Zoltan Kovesces, *Where metaphors come from: Reconsidering contexts in metaphor*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Islamic faith and other belief affiliations. Followers of Abrahamic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam need to realize and focus more on the shared common ground than differences of these faith affiliations to achieve a more harmonious global world. Finally, to be able to explore a deeper account of HOTS and religious tolerance among young people, further studies need to include the perspective and understanding of Islamic faith followers, especially young Indonesians, a predominantly Muslim country in the world. This inclusion will make arguments on critical thinking and religious tolerance among language learners more convincing and justifiable.

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