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Rhetorical Question in Al Imam Al Hussain Selected Speeches

A paper

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
(أَأَمِنْتُمْ مَّنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورٌ)
صدق الله العلي العظيم
(الملك ، ١٦)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Do you feel secure that He, who is over the heaven (Allah) ,will not cause the earth to sink with you, then behold it shakes (as in an earthquake)

**God Almighty has spoken the truth.
(Ali, 1987:540).**

To

**my dear father,
my dear mother**

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Abstract

This research paper examines the rhetorical question types employed by Al-Imam Al-Hussain in his selected speeches. It aims at : 1) Identifying types of rhetorical question Al- Imam Al-Hussain uses in his speeches?2)Finding out the most prevailing types that distinguish Al-Imam Al-Hussain's speeches?. It hypothesized that 1) Only Positive and negative are types of rhetorical questions Al-Imam Al-Hussain uses in his speeches. 2)Positive rhetorical question is most prevailing type that distinguishes Al-Imam Al-Hussain's speeches. It concludes that Positive , negative and wh -rhetorical are types of rhetorical questions Al-Imam Al-Hussain uses in his speeches. 2)Negative rhetorical question is most prevailing type that distinguishes Al-Imam Al-Hussain's speeches.

Key Terms: Question, Types of Question, Rhetorical Question, Imam Hussain's Speech

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Problem

In English, there are four main types of questions: general or yes/no questions, wh-questions, alternative questions, and Tag questions. And there are three minor types of questions: rhetorical question, echo questions and exclamatory question.

The realm of religious discourse is rich with rhetorical devices such as rhetorical question that leaders use to inspire, challenge, and mobilize their followers. Thus, rhetorical question is that which do not expect an answer. It is used simply as a way of drawing attention to something. The current study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1)What types of rhetorical questions do Al-Imam Al-Hussain use in his speeches?
- 2)What are the most prevailing types that distinguish Al-Imam Al-Hussain's speeches?

1.2 Aims

This study aims at:

1. Identifying types of rhetorical questions Al-Imam Al-Hussain uses in his speeches.
2. Finding out the most prevailing types that distinguish Al-Imam Al-Hussain's speeches.

1.3 Hypotheses

It hypothesized that

1. Only Positive and negative are types of rhetorical questions Al-Imam Al-Hussain uses in his speeches.

2)Positive rhetorical question is most prevailing type that distinguishes Al-Imam Al-Hussain's speeches.

1.4 Procedures

This study includes the following procedures

1. Presenting a theoretical framework about types of question., especially rhetorical question.

2. Analyzing selected speeches of Imam Al-Hussain.

3.Drawing some conclusions to estimate the validity of the hypotheses of the current work.

1.5 Limits

The scope of this research is limited to the exploration of rhetorical questions within the context of Imam Al-Hussain's speeches and their significance in religious discourse.

1.6 Value

This study is significant for the field of rhetorical studies as it sheds light on the use of rhetorical questions in religious speeches. It offers valuable perspectives for those interested in rhetoric, religious studies, and historical discourse.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Background

2.1 The Definition of a Question

Biber et al. (2013:243) define a question as "a sentence that seeks information or an answer through the use of interrogative words or intonation. It is a topic of discussion or uncertainty that requires a decision."

Richards et al. (1998:172) describe a question as "a sentence directed towards a listener or reader, asking for their opinion, belief, or factual information."

In English, there are two types of questions – major and minor (Biber et al., 2013).

2.2 Types of Questions

There are two types of questions in the English language: major and minor (Biber et al., 2013).

2.2.1 The Major Type

There are various types of questions that serve different purposes in communication. Here are some major types:

2.1.1.1 Yes-No Questions

Quirk and Greenbaum (1990:232) explain that "yes-no questions are formed by placing the operator before the subject and giving the sentence a rising intonation."

For example,

"Do you have a car?" (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1990:232).

2.1.1.2 Wh-Questions

Salim (2003:199) states that wh-questions allow for multiple possible replies and begin with an interrogative word such as who, whom, what, which, or where. For instance,

"What time is it?" (Salim, 2003:199).

2.1.1.3 Tag Questions

Leech (2006:57) suggests that "tag questions are brief inquiries added to statements in order to seek confirmation from the listener." They consist of a statement followed by a mini-question. Example:

"He cannot recognize her, can he?" (Leech, 2006:57).

2.1.1.4 Alternative Questions

Alternative questions always contain the word "or" and require a reply related to the given options (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1990:201).

2.3 The Minor Types

2.3.1 Exclamatory Questions

Salim (2005:202) defines exclamatory questions as questions that "don't seek information. They are used to express the speaker's strong feelings and ask the listener to agree." For example,
, "Isn't it a nice trip?" (Salim, 2005:202).

2.3.2 Echo Questions

Leech (2006:40) explains that an echo question is a kind of question that repeats or echoes a previous statement, seeking clarification, confirmation, or agreement. Example:

"You're moving where?" (Leech, 2006:40).

2.3.3 Rhetorical Questions

Leech (2006:103) defines rhetorical questions as questions "that are not aimed at acquiring information but instead imply that the answer is obvious." They serve to make a strong statement. Examples include

"Who can say what will happen?" and "What difference does it make?" (Leech, 2006:103).

2.3.3.1 Types of Rhetorical Questions

Positive Rhetorical Question

A positive rhetorical question draws attention to a negative situation where the answer is obviously "No" or there is no answer “ Is that a reason for despair?(Surely that is not a reason....) (Swan, 1995:477).

Negative Rhetorical Question

Negative rhetorical questions use negative forms and introduce surprise or disbelief with a positive connotation . “Haven’t I done enough for you?(I done enough for you”. (Quirk, 1973:192).

Wh Rhetorical Question

Wh rhetorical questions begin with "Wh" words like who, what, where, when, why, or how. They serve to make a point, create emphasis, engage the audience, or stimulate deep thinking (Leech, 2006:103).

"Why haven't we found a cure for cancer yet?"

Rhetorical Conditional Clauses

According to Leech (2006:201) Rhetorical conditional clauses are a type of adverbial clause used in English grammar to state a hypothesis or condition, which can be real (factual) or imagined (counterfactual). They are often used to make a point or illustrate a situation in a more vivid or persuasive manner. A sentence containing one or more conditional clauses and a main clause — which expresses the result of the condition — is called a conditional sentence or conditional construction.

- General rule/law of nature: "If you heat ice, it melts."
- Open future condition: "If it rains tomorrow, we will cancel the picnic."
- Unlikely future condition: "If I won the lottery, I would travel the world."
- Impossible future condition: "If pigs could fly, we'd all be dodging them in the sky."
- Impossible past condition: "If I had been born a century earlier, I would have witnessed the industrial revolution."
- Unknown past condition: "If you had told me, I could have helped."

These types of clauses are not only used to discuss real possibilities but also to explore hypothetical scenarios, often with an underlying message or to provoke thought. The use of the word "if" is common in introducing these clauses, but other words like "unless," "provided that," and "as long as" can also be used¹. Conditional clauses can be placed at the beginning or the end of a sentence, depending on the emphasis and rhythm desired in the communication².

Rhetorical conditional clauses are used to make a persuasive or rhetorical point. They often employ hypothetical situations or unlikely scenarios to enhance persuasion (Leech, 2006:201).

Chapter Three

Data Analysis

3.1 Text Analysis

Text 1

أَلَسْتُ ابْنُ بِنْتِ نَبِيِّكُمْ وَابْنُ وَصِيِّهِ وَابْنُ عَمِّهِ وَأَوَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْمُسَدِّقِ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ بِمَا جَاءَ بِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّهِ
؟”

(Web source 1)

"Am I not the son of your Prophet's daughter? Is the wasi (vicegerent) of your Prophet and his cousin and the first person, who expressed belief in Allah and confirmed what was brought by His Prophet, not my father?" (Web source 2).

Analysis: Al_Imam Al-Hussain (peace upon him) uses a negative rhetorical question to highlight his relationship to Prophet Muhammad and his status with Al-Imam Ali. He mentions that it is permissible to kill someone in his status.

Text 2

”أَوَلَيْسَ حَمْزَةُ سَيِّدُ الشُّهَدَاءِ عَمِّي

Is the Doyen of Martyrs Hamza bin Abdul Muttalib not the uncle of my father?

(Ibid)

Analysis: This Arabic question reinforces Al-Imam Al-Hussain's noble lineage by connecting him to renowned figures in Islam.

Text 3

أَوَلَيْسَ جَعْفَرُ الطَّيَّارُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ بِجَنَاحَيْنِ عَمِّي

(Ibid)

Is the martyr Ja'far son of Abu Talib who has two wings and flies with Allah's angels not my uncle? (Ibid)

Analysis: This Arabic question further emphasizes Al-Imam Al-Hussain's noble lineage and righteous nature by connecting him to his uncle, Ja'far.

Text 4

أَوَلَمْ يَبْلُغْكُمْ مَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لِي وَلِأَخِي: هَذَانِ سَيِّدَا شَبَابِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ؟
(Ibid)

"Have you not heard that the Holy Prophet has said about me and my brother: 'These two sons of mine are the chiefs of the young men of Paradise'." (Ibid)

Analysis: By mentioning Prophet Muhammad's speech about him and his brother, Al-Imam Al-Hussain reinforces his divine legitimacy and righteous nature.

Text 5

فَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ هَذَا، أَفَتَشْكُونَ أَنَّي ابْنُ بِنْتِ نَبِيِّكُمْ
(Ibid)

"If you are doubtful about this tradition, can you doubt even this that I am the son of your Prophet's daughter?" (Ibid)

Analysis: This English question challenges any doubts or skepticism regarding the hadith mentioned earlier. Al-Imam Al-Hussain emphasizes that those people know the fact of his lineage, leaving no doubt.

Text 6

!؟"أَطْلُبُونِي بِقَتْلِ مَنْكُمْ قَتْلُهُ، أَوْ مَالٍ لَكُمْ اسْتَهْلَكْتُهُ، أَوْ بِقِصَاصِ جِرَاحَةٍ
(Ibid)

"You should tell honestly whether I have killed anyone from amongst you so that you may take revenge! Is it that I have appropriated your wealth and you are claiming it?" (Ibid)

Analysis: Al-Imam Al-Hussain challenges false accusations, highlighting the lack of justification for seeking revenge or making false claims against him.

Text 7

”أَلَمْ تَكْتُبُوا إِلَيَّ أَنْ قَدْ أُيْنَعَتِ الثِّمَارُ وَاخْضَرَّ الْجَنَابُ
(Ibid)

"Did you yourselves not write letters to me saying: 'The fruits have become ripe and the lands are green and fresh and the soldiers of Iraq are ready to sacrifice their lives for you and you should, therefore, proceed to Iraq as early as possible?'"
(Ibid)

Analysis: Al-Imam Al-Hussain asks a rhetorical question to remind the people that they had urged him to come to Iraq through their letters. By using this question, he highlights the hypocrisy and betrayal of those who had called upon him for support and then turned against him.

No	Types of Rhetorical Questions	Frequency	Percentages

1	Negative Rhetorical Question	5	71.43%
2	Positive Rhetorical Question	1	14.29%
3	Wh- rhetorical Question	1	14.29%
4	Rhetorical Conditional Clauses	0	0%
	Total	7	100%

The above table shows that negative rhetorical questions are most frequently exploited with the percentage (71. 43%). It indicates that Al –the Imam suggests things that are actually positive. He emphasizes his lineage and status as the son of Prophet Muhammad's daughter and the wasi (vicegerent) of the Prophet, challenging the audience to consider whether it is permissible to harm someone of his stature. In sum, people Knew him. As for the positive rhetorical question scores (14. 29%) percentage. Wherein wh – rhetorical question scores (14.29 %). Regarding the rhetorical conditional clause, it appears with a (0%) ratio.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

4.1 Conclusion

It concludes that

1. Positive , negative and wh -rhetorical are types of rhetorical questions Al-Imam Al-Hussain uses in his speeches.

2)Negative rhetorical question is most prevailing type that distinguishes Al-Imam Al-Hussain's speeches.

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