

## *Investigating the Effect of Linguistic Knowledge on Jurisprudential Inference from the Qur'anic Text: A Mixed-Methods Study*

Hadi Khoshnoudi <sup>1</sup> 

Assistant professor, Department of Jurisprudence, Shahid Mahallati University of Islamic Sciences, Qom, Iran.

Behnam Abbasi Aval 

Assistant professor of Theology, Farhangian University, Tehran, Iran.

Seyyed Ali Hashemi 

Lecturer, Department of Theology, Shahid Mahallati University of Islamic Sciences, Qom, Iran.

Seyyed Husein Hashemi 

Assistant professor, Department of Jurisprudence, Shahid Mahallati University of Islamic Sciences, Qom, Iran.

Article History: Received 20 February 2025; Accepted 21 May 2025

### ABSTRACT:

Original Paper

The comprehension of Qur'anic legal texts (*āyāt al-aḥkām*) is a complex process central to Islamic jurisprudence. While traditional hermeneutics (*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*) provides interpretive principles, the specific cognitive-linguistic inference types mobilized by jurists and their teachability remain underexplored in empirical research. Therefore, the current research aimed to explore the inference types mobilized during the jurisprudential interpretation of Qur'anic texts and then investigate the effect of their explicit training on jurisprudential comprehension among advanced learners of seminary schools in Iran.

To this purpose, a sequential mixed-methods design was employed. The initial qualitative phase used a phenomenographic approach, analyzing data from expert interviews (n = 6), documentary research, and a literature review to identify key inference types. The subsequent quantitative phase utilized a pre-test/ intervention/ post-test design with an intact class of senior jurisprudence learners (N=17). A researcher-developed test measured comprehension before and after a five-session intervention that provided explicit instruction on the identified linguistic inferences. The qualitative phase identified nine core linguistic inference types essential for jurisprudential comprehension, including Backward Build-Up, Elaboration,

1. Corresponding Author. Email Address: Khoshnoudi.h@smc.ac.ir  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.37264/IJQS.V4I1.10>

Causation, Pragmatism, Analogy, Prediction, Instrumentation, Semantic Framing, and Cognitive Space Blending. The quantitative phase also revealed a statistically significant improvement in jurisprudential comprehension following the intervention. A paired-samples t-test showed a significant mean score increase from 11.71 (SD = 2.28) in the pre-test to 16.76 (SD = 1.20) in the post-test ( $t(16) = -13.73, p < .001$ ), with a mean gain of 5.06 points. The findings confirm that jurisprudential reasoning operates through a definable set of linguistic inferences that must be learned.

**KEYWORDS:** The Qur'an, Inference, Instruction, Jurisprudence, Legal Verses, *āyāt al-aḥkām*, Text Comprehension, t-test.

---

## 1. Introduction

Deciphering meaning has long been a central concern across diverse philosophical and linguistic schools of thought, as meaning has functioned as a fundamental pillar of human understanding throughout history. Yunesi (2021) argues that both Eastern and Western traditions have adopted a wide range of philosophical, methodological, and hermeneutic approaches to meaning interpretation. Tayeb Hosseini (2025) further notes that interpreting meaning and unraveling, decoding, or revealing the objectives of texts has constituted a major area of inquiry within Islamic jurisprudence, emphasizing that the processes through which meaning is constructed, conveyed, and interpreted serve as a pivotal and stringent criterion for the interpretation of Qur'anic texts. In support of this position, Elahidoost and Askari (2022) maintain that semantics, namely, the conception and comprehension of literal, symbolic, and metaphorical meanings, along with their conceptual, collective, connotative, denotative, and thematic interpretations, forms the foundation of jurisprudential understanding of sacred texts and narrations.

Among the linguistic tools that exert a substantial influence on meaning construction in discourse, including legal Qur'anic discourse employed for jurisprudential interpretation, inference occupies a prominent position. Inference operates at two primary levels of linguistic analysis, namely semantics and pragmatics, and is therefore closely associated with discourse comprehension. In a similar vein, contemporary linguists and researchers have underscored the central role of inference in overall discourse comprehension, given that a significant proportion of information in any discourse remains implicit (McDonald et al. 2021).

Consistent with this perspective, numerous scholars have focused on the types of inferences involved in textual understanding, as well as on the role of the human mind and prior knowledge in text comprehension through

inferential processes (e.g., Pressley 2002; Kintsch 2004; Graesser & Kreuz 1993). Reviewing empirical studies on inference across various discourse types, Clinton et al. (2020) conclude that inference generation across text types not only facilitates the interpretation of individual pieces of information but also fundamentally enables readers to establish connections among ideas and maintain coherence throughout the discourse. Despite this, its impact on jurisprudential texts remains underexplored.

Despite the centrality of textual meaning in Islamic jurisprudence, a substantial gap persists between linguistic comprehension and jurisprudential inferencing in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses. The literature on classical principles of jurisprudence emphasizes the role of textual indications as the primary basis for deriving rulings; however, much contemporary juridical training continues to rely on implicit exegetical traditions rather than on explicit and systematic instruction in the linguistic inferencing mechanisms that mediate understanding. Inference, whether semantic, pragmatic, or discourse-based, is seldom examined as a cognitive-linguistic construct within jurisprudential pedagogy, despite functioning as the mental bridge linking literal text to juridical conclusions. This epistemic gap results in a methodological blind spot, whereby jurists frequently generate inferences without having been explicitly trained in inferencing as a cognitive-linguistic skill.

Furthermore, although modern linguistic theories have consistently demonstrated that text comprehension depends as much on the successful generation of inferences as on the decoding of explicit content (Kintsch 2004; Graesser & Kreuz 1993), jurisprudential scholarship has largely conceptualized inference as a static tool embedded within jurisprudential methodology rather than as a dynamic cognitive process subject to training, variation, or development. Consequently, students of jurisprudence may possess strong theological and methodological foundations in principles of jurisprudence (*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*), yet still encounter difficulty in deriving jurisprudential implications when the required inferential steps are pragmatically or conceptually complex.

This challenge is particularly apparent in instances where Qur'anic meaning is layered, literal, symbolic, thematic, or contextual, thus requiring multilayered inferencing skills comparable to those identified in discourse comprehension research. The problem is further exacerbated by the absence of empirical research examining whether explicit instruction in linguistic inferencing enhances jurisprudential reading comprehension. While theoretical discussions exist within both jurisprudence and linguistics, there remains a lack of evidence-based inquiry assessing whether students' ability

to engage with Qur'anic legal discourse can be measurably improved through targeted inferential training.

Accordingly, the research questions of the present study are as follows: (a) what inference types are mobilized during jurisprudential interpretation of Qur'anic texts, and (b) whether explicit training in these inference types improves jurisprudential comprehension among advanced students. It is worth noting that the current study concentrates mainly on the linguistic processes that are preconditions for jurisprudential processes of *ijtihād* rather than *ijtihād* itself. Thus, jurisprudential inferencing in the current research is limited to text interpretation that serves as a preliminary step to *ijtihād*. In other words, the present study addresses a foundational yet underexplored epistemic question: Does strengthening linguistic inferencing skills enhance the accuracy and depth of juridical understanding of Qur'anic discourse?

Bridging this gap is essential not only for improving jurisprudential pedagogy but also for ensuring that the derivation of rulings remains grounded in methodologically validated comprehension processes rather than in tacit interpretive intuition. To address these two primary research questions, an innovative mixed-methods design is employed, as elaborated below.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Underpinnings of the Research

#### 2.1.1. Theory of “Spirit of Meaning” (*Rūḥ al-Ma‘nā*)

The theory of “words being coined for the spirit of meanings” is an interpretive and linguistic rule that claims that words are not coined for specific sensory or material meanings, but for a general, abstract, and comprehensive meaning called the “spirit of meaning.” The spirit of meaning is the core and common element of a word that remains after removing all material and particular constraints and that encompasses all possible instances of that word, whether material or immaterial (Tayeb Hosseini 2025). For example, the word “light” is not coined merely for physical light but for the truth of being “manifest in itself and a manifestation of the other” (Khomeini 1991, 200). In the contemporary era, the scope of application of this theory has expanded and is now used as a basis for extending inference from the Qur'an toward the development of Qur'an-based humanities (Tayeb Hosseini 2025). This rule is inseparably linked with key concepts such as the development of meaning, shared

semantic domains, *ta'wīl* (esoteric interpretation), and the inner meanings of the Qur'an. According to this theory, the interpreter (here, the jurist), by referring to the "spirit of meaning" and moving beyond the apparent and limiting sense of words, attains a broad and multilayered interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an. For example, *ṣirāṭ* is not merely a physical road but a divine strategy and way of life, and *mīzān* is not only a scale but encompasses every means of measuring truth, including reason, justice, and *sharī'ah* (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī 1982, 100). Consequently, when applied as a semantic and interpretive framework, this principle enables exegetes and jurists to abstract Qur'anic concepts from their immediate historical referents and to rearticulate them at a higher level of generality. This abstraction facilitates the extension of Qur'anic discourse to novel epistemic domains, including contemporary questions in the human sciences, without relying on literalist or historically fixed interpretations (Tayeb Hosseini 2025).

### 2.1.2. Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory constitutes a foundational cognitive-pragmatic framework for understanding discourse by underlining the ostensive–inferential processes involved in communication (Sperber and Wilson 1995). This theory contends that although linguistic codes (grammar, lexicon) provide the input, successful comprehension hinges on the hearer's ability to infer the speaker's intended meaning based on contextually available evidence (Wilson and Sperber 2006). The theory is built upon two core principles. The first is a cognitive principle holding that human cognition is inherently geared toward the maximization of relevance; the second, a communicative principle, postulates that any text conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance, thereby facilitating its own understanding (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 260). Based on these two principles, the output of this process is a continuum of meaning, ranging from explicatures (propositions developed by decoding and inferentially enriching the logical form of the utterance) to implicatures (contextually derived meanings that are fully implicit). The goal of the hearer is not to find a "correct" interpretation, but rather the first interpretation that satisfies the expectation of relevance, at which point processing stops.

In the context of the present research, the Qur'anic text, as an act of ostensive communication, carries a presumption of optimal relevance. The jurist's task is to infer the intended legal and theological meanings by decoding the linguistic input (Classical Arabic) and then enriching it into explicatures by resolving ambiguity, assigning reference, and recovering ellipsis, while accessing a vast contextual network (co-text of other verses,

*asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasion of revelation), historical knowledge, and the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) to derive contextual implications (legal rulings).

### 2.1.3. Cognitive Linguistics

This theoretical framework posits that language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty but is deeply grounded in and structured by human embodiment, general cognitive abilities, and interaction with the world (Langacker 1987; Lakoff 1987). The core tenet of cognitive linguistics is that linguistic forms (words, grammar, and syntax) are inherently meaningful because they are linked to and evoke underlying conceptual structures. Accordingly, meaning is equated with conceptualization, or the dynamic process of embodied understanding (Evans and Green 2006). Thus, the interpreter draws on embodied cognition, image schemas, conceptual metaphor and metonymy, symbolic assembly, encyclopedic semantics, and radial categories of best examples to decipher meaning.

Examining this theory from the perspective of the current research reveals that, for a study on jurisprudential inferencing of Qur'anic texts, cognitive linguistics provides a powerful toolkit for analyzing the deep conceptual structures that underpin legal reasoning. The Qur'anic text is rich in abstract theological and legal concepts that are systematically understood via embodied and metaphorical cognition. Therefore, differences in juristic inferences can be scientifically analyzed as stemming from divergent conceptualizations, namely, different mappings of conceptual metaphors, the activation of different frames, or appeals to different prototypes within a category. Moreover, consistent with the second research question, a learner's progression in interpretation can be measured by their increasing ability to articulate and reason with these underlying conceptual models, moving beyond a surface-level, literal reading of the sacred text.

## 2.2. Related Research

In this section, a number of Persian and English studies related to the context of the current research are briefly discussed. McDonald et al. (2021) investigated the extent to which explicit instruction in four inference types, anaphoric, background knowledge, predictive, and retrospective, can improve reading comprehension. The research is grounded in the theory that inference generation is fundamental to deep text understanding. The results showed that this explicit instruction, though initially challenging, successfully enhanced students' metacognitive awareness and reading comprehension. The study concludes that moving beyond mere assessment

to direct teaching of inferential processes is crucial for helping students become proficient readers across different academic genres.

Theoretically, this study converges with the present research by conceptualizing inference not as an automatic by-product of reading, but as a cognitive skill that can be explicitly taught and systematically developed. Practically, its findings support the pedagogical premise of the current study that explicit instruction in linguistically grounded inference types can enhance comprehension in complex, rule-governed texts, including Qur'anic legal discourse.

In a similar study, Clinton et al. (2020) systematically reviewed 19 studies to compare inferential comprehension between narrative and expository texts. The method involved a robust meta-analytic synthesis of studies that directly compared inferential comprehension scores across the two genres. The results revealed that inferential comprehension is consistently higher for narrative texts. In conclusion, the study confirms that expository texts pose a greater challenge for inference-making and calls for future research to identify the specific text features and instructional methods that could mitigate this genre disparity.

Theoretically, these findings converge with the present research by underscoring the heightened inferential demands of non-narrative, rule-governed texts, a category to which Qur'anic legal discourse closely corresponds. Practically, the study substantiates the need for targeted inferential instruction in complex expository genres, thereby reinforcing the rationale for explicitly teaching linguistic inference types to facilitate jurisprudential comprehension of Qur'anic and Classical Arabic legal texts.

In another linguistic study, McNamara (2020) argued that while integration is the keystone of comprehension, inferencing is the essential mechanism that enables it. Grounded in the Construction–Integration model, the article theoretically posits that comprehension relies on linking textual ideas with prior knowledge. Through the synthesis of diverse empirical studies, the analysis demonstrates that the perceived importance of factors such as vocabulary or working memory depends largely on how comprehension is measured; deeper comprehension tasks consistently highlight inference generation as the critical skill. The conclusion asserts that inferencing is the fundamental driver of deep understanding and learning from text.

Theoretically, this position converges with the present study by framing jurisprudential comprehension as a process of constructing and integrating multilayered meanings through inferential mechanisms rather than surface-

level decoding. Practically, it lends strong support to the instructional intervention of the current research, suggesting that enhancing learners' inferencing abilities is more decisive for understanding complex Qur'anic legal texts than improving isolated linguistic subskills alone.

In addition, several studies conducted in Iran have examined this issue from jurisprudential perspectives on semantics and meaning-making through linguistic tools, including inference. For instance, Tayeb Hosseini (2025) analyzes the theory of "words being coined for the spirit of meanings," a hermeneutical approach in Qur'anic exegesis that posits that words were originally coined for a universal, abstract essence rather than for specific, material meanings. Theoretically, the study is grounded in the frameworks of Islamic philosophy and mysticism, linking the concept to related ideas such as esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*), semantic extension, and polysemy. Using a descriptive-analytical method, the author traces the evolution of this theory among Shia commentators, from early figures such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī to contemporary scholars including Tabataba'i, Imam Khomeini, and Javadi Amoli.

The findings indicate that while the theory was historically used to interpret divine attributes, contemporary Shia exegetes have significantly expanded its application, transforming it into a broad interpretive tool for deriving novel, context-responsive meanings from the Qur'an that address modern epistemological needs. The study concludes that this theory, when systematized, can serve as a foundational methodology for developing Qur'an-based humanities and responding to contemporary intellectual challenges.

From a theoretical perspective, this research converges with the present study by conceptualizing jurisprudential meaning construction as an inferential process operating through abstraction, semantic extension, and access to underlying conceptual essences rather than surface lexical meanings. Practically, it provides a strong jurisprudential justification for explicitly teaching semantic and conceptual inference types, as such training enables learners to systematically operationalize abstract Qur'anic meanings in legal reasoning rather than relying on intuitive or unsystematic interpretive practices.

Last but not least, Elahidoost and Askari (2022) critically examined the application of the "Spirit of Meaning" (*Rūḥ al-Ma'nā*) theory within the science of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence). Using a theoretical and analytical methodology focused on the concept of *waḍ'* (linguistic designation), the authors found the theory's utility in *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* to be limited. They highlight significant criticisms, particularly the

argument that a word cannot be assigned to a meaning beyond the conceptual grasp of its original coiner, and conclude that despite its value in fields such as philosophy and Qur'anic exegesis, the Spirit of Meaning theory is ultimately incompatible with the methodological foundations of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* due to unresolved conceptual problems. This critique converges with the present research by reinforcing the need to distinguish between philosophical–semantic abstraction and methodologically regulated inferencing within jurisprudential reasoning. Practically, it underscores the importance of operationalizing linguistic inference types that remain compatible with *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, thereby justifying the current study's focus on empirically identifiable and teachable inferential mechanisms rather than unrestricted semantic generalization.

The distinguishing features of the current research lie in its linguistic approach to implicit meaning, the results of which may offer theoretical insights into the unresolved conceptual problems outlined above. Moreover, the present study incorporates a robust experimental phase that investigates the efficacy of these insights in the actual practice of jurists.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Design of the Research

The present research adopted a mixed-methods design to address both research questions. Accordingly, the study was conducted in two distinct phases. Phase One, the qualitative phase, employed an integrative qualitative design to collect primary data through phenomenography, documentary research, and a systematic review of the literature. This phase aimed to address the first research question concerning the types of inferences employed within the jurisprudential profession. The integration of these qualitative approaches was carried out in an iterative fashion until data saturation was achieved. Phase Two, the quantitative phase, employed an experimental approach to investigate the effect of linguistic instruction concerning Qur'anic inferences on jurisprudential comprehension.

These two phases were implemented sequentially, constituting an exploratory–explanatory mixed-methods design in which the findings of the qualitative phase informed the design and implementation of the subsequent quantitative phase. The rationale for adopting a mixed-methods design was to arrive at a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. As noted by Creswell and Guetterman (2019), mixed-methods research enables a deeper and more robust understanding of

research problems than unitary research designs.

## *3.2. Sampling and Participants*

### *3.2.1. Phase One*

In the phenomenographic phase of the study, a primary panel of experts, including six elite jurists, was selected from the seminary schools and two universities in the city of Qom through purposive sampling based on clearly defined inclusion criteria. According to Morse (1994), phenomenographic research is not dependent upon sample size because, in the qualitative paradigm, the generalizability of findings is not a primary objective; thus, six interviewees, in integration with a systematic review, lay the groundwork for capturing deep experiential insights. First, all participants possessed advanced expertise in jurisprudence, demonstrated through formal academic qualifications and/or long-standing professional engagement in jurisprudential practice. Second, they had substantial experience with Qur'anic interpretation and the application of jurisprudential inferences in scholarly or professional contexts. Third, participants were selected on the basis of their recognized scholarly credibility, as evidenced by peer recognition, teaching experience, publications, or institutional roles.

Finally, the number of participants was determined in accordance with phenomenographic research conventions, which emphasize depth of experience and richness of meaning over sample size and consider small, information-rich samples sufficient for achieving analytical saturation. In addition, in this phase, two primary data sources were selected through a systematic review of the literature and documentary research. The interviews from the expert panel and the data from the literature review and documentary research were examined through content analysis to shed light on the main linguistic inference types used in jurisprudential comprehension.

### *3.2.2. Phase Two*

In the experimental phase of the study, an intact group of senior students of Islamic jurisprudence (N=17) was selected through convenience sampling from a seminary school in Qom. The use of an intact-group design was necessitated by both pedagogical and institutional constraints, as the participants constituted a naturally occurring cohort enrolled in an advanced jurisprudential course, and random assignment or group expansion was neither feasible nor ethically appropriate in this instructional context. In

such educational settings, particularly within specialized and elite programs such as advanced seminary jurisprudence, intact groups with relatively small sample sizes are common and methodologically acceptable, especially when the aim is to examine within-group change rather than population-level generalization.

Moreover, experimental studies conducted in highly specialized domains frequently rely on small but homogeneous samples, where participants share a comparable level of expertise, thereby enhancing internal validity despite limited sample size. Prior to analysis, standardized scores (z-scores) were examined to identify any values exceeding the conventional threshold ( $\pm 3.00$ ), and boxplots were inspected to detect potential extreme values. In addition, distributional assumptions were evaluated to ensure that no single observation exerted undue influence on the results. The screening process indicated that no statistically or substantively problematic outliers were present; therefore, all participants' data were retained for subsequent analyses.

### 3.3. Instrument

The only research instrument employed in the quantitative phase of the study was a researcher-developed jurisprudential comprehension test constructed from authentic Qur'anic passages pertaining to *āyāt al-aḥkām*. The test consisted of 20 items designed to operationalize the core linguistic inference types identified in Phase One. The items required context-sensitive interpretation rather than surface-level recall and were developed in consultation with two experts in Qur'anic jurisprudence to ensure content representativeness and textual authenticity. A parallel form of the same test, matched for difficulty, structure, and thematic scope, was prepared and administered as the posttest to minimize practice effects. Content validity was further reinforced through expert judgment, while internal consistency and item functionality were verified through pilot analysis prior to administration.

### 3.4. Procedure of the Study

The research was conducted in two sequential phases corresponding to the qualitative and quantitative components of the mixed-methods design.

In the first (exploratory) phase, data collection commenced with the purposive selection of a panel of six elite jurists from two universities and seminary institutions in Qom. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to

elicit the experts' conceptualizations of meaning construction in Qur'anic jurisprudential interpretation. In parallel, a systematic review of jurisprudential commentaries and relevant theoretical literature was undertaken to identify recurrent interpretive mechanisms. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed alongside the textual materials using directed content analysis.

The coding process proceeded in three iterative stages: initial open coding was employed to identify meaning units related to interpretive practices; axial coding was then used to organize these units into conceptually related categories; and finally, selective coding was applied to refine and integrate the categories into a coherent taxonomy of linguistic inference types employed in jurisprudential reasoning. To enhance the credibility and dependability of the qualitative analysis, a subset of the data was independently coded by a second researcher, and inter-coder agreement was calculated, with discrepancies resolved through discussion until consensus was reached.

The second (explanatory) phase examined the pedagogical utility of the inference types identified in the qualitative phase. An intact class of senior students of Islamic jurisprudence (N=17) was recruited, and baseline comprehension of jurisprudential Qur'anic passages was measured through a pretest. Prior to the instructional intervention, the dataset was screened for outliers and assessed for normality. Participants then received explicit, researcher-designed instruction targeting the identified inference types, implemented over a specified instructional period under controlled classroom conditions. Following the intervention, a posttest mirroring the structure, content, and difficulty level of the pretest was administered to assess changes in jurisprudential comprehension. Pretest and posttest scores were compared using a paired-sample statistical procedure to determine whether the instructional intervention resulted in a statistically significant improvement in performance.

## *4. Results and Discussion*

### *4.1. Results*

The current research was conducted in two different phases. The earlier qualitative phase adopted an exploratory stance and examined three sources of data (interviews with experts, documentary research, and a systematic review of the literature) to identify the major types of linguistic inferences used in jurisprudential comprehension of religious texts, particularly Qur'anic discourse. The findings of this phase are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Major types of linguistic inferences used in jurisprudential text comprehension

| Inference Type           | Inference Description                                                                   | Linguistic Role        | Qur'anic Example                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Explanation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Backward-Build Up     | Preserving coherence by bridging current linguistic data to previous Qur'anic discourse | Coherence Making       | يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ (Q. 4:43)                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Connecting the verse elements to purification rules elsewhere in the Qur'an.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 2. Elaboration           | Enriching explicit command through prior scriptural/jurisprudential knowledge           | Situational Enrichment | أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا (Q. 17:78)                                                                                                                                                                                                            | The verse establishes prayer times; detailed rulings (units, manner, & conditions) are derived from hadith.                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3. Causation             | Establishing cause–effect relations between religious commands                          | Causal Reasoning       | يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا حَتَّىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا حَتَّىٰ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (Q. 2:183)                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Fasting is causally linked to attaining spiritual purification, forming a basis for broader causal reasoning in fasting laws.                                                                                                                                                         |
| 4. Pragmatism            | Interpreting implied divine intent ( <i>maqāṣid al-sharī'ah</i> )                       | Global Meaning Making  | يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُضَاعَفَةً (Q. 3:130)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | From the prohibition of usury, the broader legal principle of fairness and justice is inferred.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5. Analogy               | Extending rulings to unmentioned cases                                                  | Meaning Generalization | يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْمِرِ وَقُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِنَّهُمَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا (Q. 2:219)                                                                                                                                                                                                | The prohibition of wine is analogically extended to narcotics, ecstasy and etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 6. Prediction            | Anticipating upcoming ungiven information based on the current text                     | Ambiguity Removing     | وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا (Q. 5:38)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | From the verse, legal rules of theft and robbery are predicted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 7. Instrumentation       | Inferring tools/means of an action from given information and implicit details          | Gap Filling            | يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ (Q. 5:6)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | The act of ablution is commanded; the instrument (water) is inferred from human prior knowledge and cognitive-semantic schemas.                                                                                                                                                       |
| 8. Semantic Frame        | Activating the broader legal-cultural frame of a verse                                  | Semantic Analysis      | يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ (Q. 62:9)                                                                                                                                                                                                   | The verse activates the full Friday prayer frame: obligation, sermon, prohibition of trade, and communal function.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 9. Cognitive Space Blend | Integrating information from different legal sources into a single, coherent model      | Conceptual Neologism   | لَا إِجْرَاءَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ (Q. 2:256)<br>قَابِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّىٰ يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ (Q. 9:29) | Blending the principle of “no compulsion in religion” in the first verse by submission in the second, thus the emerging theme is a distinction between the sphere of faith and the sphere of political sovereignty (where force is permissible for defense and establishing justice). |

The findings of the first phase of the research revealed that nine major types of linguistic inference are involved in jurisprudential understanding of the Qur'anic text. However, it is worth noting that other kinds of linguistic

inference may also be involved, but they can be subsumed under one of the aforementioned categories.

The second phase of the study examined whether raising awareness of these linguistic inference types enhances legal-jurisprudential understanding among novice students of jurisprudence. To this end, a pre-test/intervention/posttest design was employed, and the participants underwent five sessions of direct instruction on linguistic inferences used in the understanding of Arabic texts. During the instructional period, examples from classical but non-Qur'anic Arabic texts were utilized. More importantly, the inference categories employed in the intervention sessions were selected based on the findings of the first phase of the research. Subsequently, the posttest was administered, and the effect of instruction on Qur'anic text comprehension in legal verses (*āyāt al-aḥkām*) was examined through a paired t-test using SPSS software (Version 23). The findings of this section are presented below.

Table 2. Statistics for Paired Samples

| Pair 1              | Mean    | N  | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------------------|---------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| Pretest-Inference   | 11.7059 | 17 | 2.28486        | .55416          |
| Post-test-Inference | 16.7647 | 17 | 1.20049        | .29116          |

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 reveals that participants' mean score on inference ability increased from 11.71 (SD= 2.28) in the pretest to 16.76 (SD=1.20) in the post-test. This improvement suggests a notable enhancement in participants' inferential performance following the intervention. The smaller post-test standard deviation also indicates a reduction in score variability, implying more consistent performance across participants.

Table 3. Paired Samples Test Result

| Pair 1             | Paired Differences |                   |                    |                                              |          | t       | df | Sig.<br>(2-tailed) |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------|---------|----|--------------------|
|                    | Mean               | Std.<br>Deviation | Std. Error<br>Mean | 95% Confidence Interval<br>of the Difference |          |         |    |                    |
|                    |                    |                   |                    | Lower                                        | Upper    |         |    |                    |
| Pretest-Inference  | -5.05882           | 1.51948           | .36853             | -5.84007                                     | -4.27758 | -13.727 | 16 | .000               |
| Posttest-Inference |                    |                   |                    |                                              |          |         |    |                    |

The paired-samples t-test revealed a significant difference between pretest and post-test inference scores,  $t(16) = -13.73$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean increase of 5.06 points indicates substantial improvement in participants' inferential performance after the intervention. The 95% confidence interval  $[-5.84, -4.28]$  confirms that the observed gain is statistically reliable and unlikely to be due to chance. These findings suggest that explicit instruction

in linguistic text inferences can facilitate short-term improvements in novice jurists' comprehension of Qur'anic jurisprudential discourse within the instructional context examined.

## 4.2. Discussion

As stated above, the present mixed-methods study first sought to identify the inferential operations jurists mobilize when interpreting Qur'anic legal texts and then to test whether explicit training in those inference types can improve jurisprudential comprehension among advanced students of jurisprudence in the seminary schools of Qom. The qualitative (phenomenographic) phase revealed nine distinct clusters of linguistic inference, ranging from backward build-up (textual bridging) to elaboration, causation, pragmatism, analogy, prediction, instrumentation, semantic frame, and cognitive space blend. These categories provide a richly articulated typology of how scholars traverse from linguistic cues to derived legal meaning in Qur'anic exegesis. This typology aligns with and extends cognitive reading research on inference as central to comprehension (e.g., McNamara 2020) by situating inference within a highly interpretive, jurisprudential domain.

In general reading research, inference is needed to connect propositions, fill gaps, and resolve ambiguity; in this study, the nine types map closely onto those general categories while also carrying juridical import—e.g., instrumentation is a gap-filling move, pragmatism negotiates implied intentions, and analogy generalizes rules to new contexts. This alignment demonstrates that reading research and jurisprudential exegesis share common cognitive machinery; however, jurisprudence demands extra rigor in boundary conditions and normative constraints.

In the quantitative phase, the intervention (five sessions of direct instruction on these inference types) yielded a strong, statistically significant gain (mean increase of approximately 5.06,  $t(16) = -13.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This result demonstrates that even advanced students' jurisprudential interpretive competence is susceptible to targeted metacognitive training. The narrowing of posttest variance suggests not only an increase in average performance but also a more uniform mastery across participants. This finding echoes prior inference–instruction studies (e.g., McDonald et al. 2021), which show that explicit inference training enhances comprehension and reduces inter-reader differences.

Beyond the statistics, the qualitative and quantitative phases inform one another: the nine inference types do not merely describe “what happens”

implicitly in expert exegetical practice, but also serve as scaffoldable strategies for learners. The intervention's success validates the typology's pedagogical viability. Yet, caution is warranted: the training used non-Qur'anic Arabic texts during sessions, which raises the question of transfer fidelity to actual Qur'anic verses under jurisprudential pressure. The strong results suggest robust transfer; however, future studies should examine longer-term retention, transfer across jurisprudential schools, and differential effects on more esoteric inference types, such as cognitive space blend.

Moreover, the study contributes to the discourse on the boundary between *tafsīr* and *fiqh*. The nine inference types dwell at the intersection of literal, coherent, and normative reading. The present study operationalizes that intersection: the inference types are linguistic-cognitive mechanisms, not purely doctrinal heuristics. Thus, learners are not forced into doctrinal stances prematurely but instead learn how meaning is constructed before determining which meaning ought to be preferred. In this light, the training can be understood as cultivating hermeneutic discipline rather than juridical allegiance.

Finally, the study points to future directions. One is cross-*madhhab* replication to test whether the nine inference types hold across legal schools or whether additional culturally or doctrinally specific inferences emerge. Another is embedding the intervention in a longitudinal jurisprudence program to determine whether scaffolding inferential reasoning early shapes students' interpretive trajectories. Additionally, pairing inference training with deliberative discussion of doctrinal choices could integrate the cognitive and normative dimensions of jurisprudence more holistically.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, this study established a nine-type framework of linguistic inference as the engine of jurisprudential interpretation and empirically demonstrated that explicit instruction in those inference types significantly enhances students' comprehension of Qur'anic legal texts. The synergy between qualitative discovery and quantitative validation underscores the pedagogical value of making implicit inferential practices explicit. The current findings have implications from different perspectives. From the perspective of theory and methodology, the results bolster the view that jurisprudential meaning-making is fundamentally a cognitive-linguistic act, not merely doctrinal deduction.

The nine-type typology can serve as a lens in future *tafsīr* and *fiqh* studies to examine how inference strategies may differ across legal traditions,

textual genres, or exegetical modes. Methodologically, the mixed-methods approach points the way toward integrating qualitative, phenomenographic insight with experimental intervention in Islamic studies, a hybrid method that can mediate between deep hermeneutic insight and pedagogical efficacy. From a pedagogical perspective, for Iranian seminary schools and institutions training jurists, embedding an “Inference in Jurisprudence” module early in the curriculum may accelerate interpretive maturity. The lesson design might pair linguistic examples with authentic jurisprudential texts, progressively scaffolding from easier inferences (e.g., backward build-up) to more complex ones (e.g., cognitive space blend). Educators should monitor retention and scaffold reflection on how inference interacts with normative reasoning. Moreover, peer discussion of inference choices could foster metacognitive awareness, helping students internalize which inferential moves are permissible or preferable in specific jurisprudential contexts.

Like any other research, the current study suffered from a variety of limitations. First, the study’s relatively small sample and short intervention span caution against overgeneralization. Future work should replicate the experiment with larger cohorts across legal schools and examine whether inference training influences not only comprehension but also the quality of juridical reasoning (e.g., consistency, alignment with doctrine, originality). Another fruitful direction is comparing inference usage in student versus expert jurists (e.g., through think-aloud protocols) to determine which inference types characterize mastery. Finally, tracking outcomes longitudinally can reveal whether inference training contributes to lifelong juristic maturation or whether its effects are only transient. Overall, this study offers a novel bridge between cognitive reading theory and jurisprudential education: inference is not merely a tool of comprehension but also a scaffold for responsible, nuanced legal interpretation.

## *Acknowledgements*

We would like to express our gratitude to the scholars and expert interviewees whose invaluable insights formed the foundation of this study. Our sincere thanks also go to the learners who participated in this research. We are grateful to our colleagues in both the Department of Jurisprudence and the broader academic community for their continued support of interdisciplinary work. Finally, we appreciate the editorial team of the Journal of Interdisciplinary Qur'anic Studies for their constructive feedback.

## References

- Clinton, V., Taylor, T., Bajpayee, S., Davison, M. L., Carlson, S. E., & Seipel, B. (2020). Inferential comprehension differences between narrative and expository texts: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 33(9), 2223–2248. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-020-10044-2>
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Elahidoost, H., & Askari, M. H. (2022). The application of the theory of the spirit of meaning in the science of the principles of jurisprudence. *Imamiyyeh Principles of Jurisprudence Studies*, 18, 131–142.
- Evans, V., & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive linguistics: An introduction*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315864327>
- Graesser, A. C., & Kreuz, R. J. (1993). A theory of inference generation during text comprehension. *Discourse Processes*, 16(1–2), 145–160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01638539309544833>
- Kintsch, W. (2004). The construction-integration model of text comprehension and its implications for instruction. In Ruddell, R. B. & Unrau, N. J. (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (1270–1328). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Lakoff, G. (1987). Cognitive models and prototype theory. In Neisser U. (Ed.), *Concepts and conceptual development: Ecological and intellectual factors in categorization* (63–100). Cambridge University Press.
- Langacker R. W. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- McDonald, A., Morrison, T. G., Wilcox, B., & Billen, M. T. (2021). Improving Children's Reading Comprehension by Teaching Inferences. *Reading Psychology*, 42(3), 264–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2021.1888351>
- McNamara, D. S. (2021). If integration is the keystone of comprehension: Inferencing is the key. *Discourse Processes*, 58(1), 86–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2020.1788323>
- Morse, J. M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (220–235). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Khomeini, R. (1991). *Sharhe Chehel Hadith [Interpretation of forty hadith]*. Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works.
- Pressley, M. (2002). Comprehension strategies instruction. In Block, C. C. &

- Pressley, M. (Eds.), *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices* (11–27). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, M. (1982) *Al-Hikmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Aṣfār al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*. Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī
- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Tayeb Hosseini, S. M. (2025). The Theory of "Words Being Established for the Spirits of Meanings" in the Thought of Imami Exegetes. *Imamiyya commentary*, 1(1), 32-56. <https://doi.org/10.22034/exeg.2025.13833>
- Yunesi H. A. (2021). Comparison of Mulla Sadra's Coining Words for the Spirits of Meanings and Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation. *Pazhouhesh Name-ye Qur'an va Hadith*, 14 (28), 297-318.
- Wilson, D., & Sperber, D. (2006). Relevance Theory. In L. R. Horn, & G. Ward (Eds.), *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, (607-632). Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470756959.ch27>

