

**A Cognitive Semantic
Approach to Nontemporal Functions
of Past Tense in the Qur'an**

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Abstract

The past tense is used in the Qur'an with a high frequency to refer to past occurrences. However, the function of the past tense is not always limited to this prototypical aim and when placed in different structures, it has found a metaphorical function, encoding modal concepts that are the metaphorical expansion of the prototypical meanings of words. Taking a cognitive semantic approach, and using the theory of conceptual metaphor and mental space the present descriptive-analytical study aimed to examine this type of application of the past tense in the Qur'an. Considering the fact that using the past tense has occasionally caused difficulty in understanding the Qur'anic ayahs and as a result has made different interpretations possible, analyzing the quality and functions of such verbs seems to be essential. The results show that in different structures including conditionals and subjunctives, the past tense has no temporal function, but metaphorically indicates modal concepts such as being unreal and hypothetical.

Keywords: tense, past tense, modality, conceptual metaphor, mental space

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