Mashadiruna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Quran dan Tafsir
Vol. 5, No. 2 (2026), pp. 207~218
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15575/mjiat.v5i2.52333

Tafsir *lughawī*: A Historical, Methodological, and Epistemological Study of Language Styles in the Interpretation of the Qur'an

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Analisis logis;
Kalam Khabari;
Surah al-'ashr

Article history:

Received 2025-11-26
Revised 2026-04-20
Accepted 2026-10-30

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the development and characteristics of lughawī interpretation (linguistic interpretation) as an important style in the study of Qur'anic interpretation. The main focus of this study is to explain the meaning, history of its emergence, and conceptual limitations of lughawī interpretation, outlining the factors that made it the most popular style of interpretation in the classical era, and analyzing the special characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of lughawī-style interpretation books. The study uses a qualitative approach with library research methods. Data were obtained from primary and secondary literature related to interpretation methodology and the development of Arabic language science. The main findings of the study indicate that the popularity of lughawī interpretation is driven by four main factors: theological motivation, namely the belief that the miracle of the Qur'an lies in its language; historical motivation, in the form of the need to maintain the purity of Arabic amidst the expansion of Islam; intellectual motivation, namely the development of naḥw, ṣarf, and balāghah; and interdisciplinary motivation, where lughawī interpretation becomes the basis for thematic interpretation, fiqh, and kalam. The research results show that lughawī interpretation not only interprets the text literally but also reveals the aesthetic aspects and semantic structure of revelation. In conclusion, lughawī interpretation affirms the position of Arabic as a divine medium that must be understood scientifically and theologically to achieve the authentic meaning of the Quran.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, as the last holy book revealed by Allah SWT, uses Arabic in a highly literary style *(uṣlūb)*. The beauty and depth of its enchanting language have been an extraordinary attraction since the beginning of its revelation, even being the reason for many companions to embrace Islam in the early period (Syafrijal, 2013). This aspect is also one of the miracles of the Quran, as the Quran was edited with fluent understanding and sentence structure in terms of its rules (Fauzani, 2024). Because the Qur'an serves as a guide for all aspects of life, efforts to understand and study its meanings are very important so that the beauty it contains can be accepted and

practiced. To access these divine messages, a deep and comprehensive understanding of the text is required, which then gave rise to various methods of interpretation or tafsir. One of the most fundamental and significant approaches to understanding the Qur'an is through linguistic analysis, known as *lughawī* interpretation. This method attempts to explain the meanings of the Qur'an using linguistic rules, focusing on aspects such as grammar (*naḥw)*, morphology *(ṣarf),* and rhetoric *(balāghah)* (Akbar & Maulana, 2022).

This interpretation interprets the Qur'an through semiotics and semantics which include etymology, lexical, and grammatical (Fitriana & Maab, 2023). Considering that the Qur'an uses Arabic which is rich in literature and eloquence, an interpreter *(mufassir)* who uses this style must have a deep mastery of the intricacies of the Arabic language. The seeds of a linguistic approach in interpreting the Qur'an have actually existed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW through the crossing reference route. The Prophet himself explained the verses to his companions, one of which was by using a linguistic approach such as finding equivalent words *(murādif)* (Akbar & Maulana, 2022). After the death of the Prophet, the companions continued this effort through ijtihad, where Abdullah bin Abbas became one of the most prominent figures. He is widely known for interpreting the Quran through classical Arabic language and poetry, which paved the way for the birth of the lughah madrasah. This practice was then continued by his students and the next generation, the *tābi'in* (Faqih, 2024).

Theoretically, the development of *lughawī* interpretation as a more systematic style began to develop rapidly in the second and third centuries of the Hijriah, this development was driven by several factors, including the integration between Arabs and non-Arabs and the fading of intuitive understanding of classical Arabic *(zauq 'arabi)* (Hayatuddin & Hakim, 2023, p. 317). This condition made scholars feel the need to strengthen Arabic language sciences in order to understand the meanings of the Qur'an correctly. The peak of its theoretical development occurred in the 5th century of the Hijriah, where the science of balaghah and language rules began to be integrated as interpretative tools (Zarchen & Umami, 2022). However, the application of *lughawī* interpretation is not free from scientific debate, along with the emergence of various schools of jurisprudence and theological schools in the medieval era, linguistic interpretations sometimes became a tool of legitimacy to defend the views of certain groups (Karimah & Hasyim, 2023, p. 102).

An example that is often cited is the interpretation of al-Kasysyaf by al-Zamakhsyari which is thick with *Mu'tazilah* views (Akbar & Maulana, 2022). Another criticism that emerged was that this style was considered to tend to be too long-winded in literal analysis, ignoring social realities and historical contexts such as *asbāb al-nuzūl*, and making language the main object of study to the point that it sometimes forgets the main purpose of the Qur'an as guidance (Firdaus & Surur, 2025). Despite facing various criticisms, *lughawī* interpretation continues to experience development and renewal that confirms its vital position in the study of the Qur'an. The peak of this renewal period was marked by the ideas of Amin al-Khuli who succeeded in developing a method of literary interpretation called *al-Tafsīr al-Adaīī* li al-Qur'an (Akbar & Maulana, 2022). This innovation shows that the linguistic approach is a dynamic and relevant field. By focusing on the linguistic aspects of revelation, *lughawī* interpretation continues to be one of the most effective ways to unlock deeper layers of meaning and appreciate the miracle and beauty of the language of the Qur'an.

Based on the background described above, this study aims to comprehensively understand the *lughawī* interpretation as an important feature in the interpretation of the Qur'an. The aspects discussed in this study include the *lughawī* interpretation from the historical, methodological and epistemological sides which are realized in several discussions starting from the definition and history of the development of *lughawī* interpretation, the scope or limitations of *lughawī* interpretation, the reasons why this interpretation was popular in the classical century, the special features or characteristics of lughawī interpretation and the advantages and disadvantages of *lughawī* interpretation. From the author's search results, there are several studies relevant to the topic the researcher is studying, such as Syafrijal in his article Tafsir *lughawī* explains that tafsir *lughawī* is a style of interpretation that interprets the Qur'an through semiotic and semantic analysis that includes etymological, morphological, lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical aspects. This study confirms that the emergence of tafsir *lughawī* occurred in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH, when there was interaction between Arabs and non-Arabs which caused a decrease in *zauq 'Arabi* (Arabic language feel). The focus of Syafrijal's research is more descriptive-linguistic, with an emphasis on the structure of linguistics such as *naḥw, ṣaraf,* and *balāghah* as an operational framework for interpretation (Syafrijal, 2013).

The findings of (Firdaus & Surur, 2025) study indicate that the emergence of *tafsīr lughawī* cannot be separated from three major phases, namely the formative stage, the consolidation stage, and the renewal stage. In addition, *tafsīr lughawī* has been subject to several criticisms, particularly its tendency to reflect the biases of certain ideological or theological groups. Notably, this interpretive approach reached its peak prominence during the renewal period, when Amin al-Khuli successfully reformulated it into a literary method of interpretation known as *al-Tafsīr al-Adabī li al-Qur'ān*. Since then, this method has been widely adopted by Muslim scholars in interpreting the Qur'an through a linguistic approach. M. Subkhi (2018) in Tafsir *lughawī*: Sejarah, Batasan, dan Polemik Penanahan Komentar highlights the

theoretical debate in the definition of tafsir lughawī as well as the boundaries between linguistic and rational approaches in tafsir. He emphasizes that tafsir *lughawī* not only examines the literal meaning, but also the semantic context that involves understanding the rhetorical beauty of the Qur'an. This study contributes to mapping the epistemology of tafsir *lughawī* in the classical Islamic scholarly tradition. Dedi Wahyudi (2020) in Tafsir lughawī: Historicity and Debate emphasizes the historical dimension by outlining three main phases of the development of lughawī interpretation, namely the formation phase (marḥalah al-takwin), strengthening (marḥalah al-ta'yesīl), and updates (marḥalah al-tajdid). It highlights how the role of figures such as al-Farra', az-Zamakhsyari, and Amin al-Khūlī shaped the linguistic pattern that continued to evolve from classical to modern. This study is relevant to understanding the historical and methodological foundations of linguistic interpretation (Frankl, 1985).

Badruzzaman M. Yunus (2015) in his book "Tafsir dari Segi Koraknya" (Tafsir from the Perspective of Its Characters) categorizes *lughawī* interpretation as one of the thematic interpretation styles based on a linguistic approach. He emphasizes that this approach has a fundamental position in bridging the gap between the linguistic form (structure) and the meaning (message) of the Qur'an. Lughawī interpretation is positioned as the epistemological foundation for other interpretation styles such as fiqh, philosophy, and Sufism. From these five studies, it can be concluded that previous studies have focused more on the definition and historicity of *lughawī* interpretation, while its methodological and epistemological aspects have not been studied in depth. Therefore, this study, entitled *"Lughawī* Interpretation: A Historical, Methodological, and Epistemological Study of Language Style in Quranic Interpretation," aims to comprehensively integrate these three aspects by tracing the historical roots, linguistic analysis methods used, and their epistemological implications in contemporary interpretation studies.

This study employed a qualitative method by applying library research because the data obtained were descriptive and derived from library sources. The data sources in this study consisted of secondary sources. Secondary sources in this study were books, scientific journals, and theses related to lughawī interpretation, Arabic, and linguistic approaches to interpreting the Qur'an. Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation studies. Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation studies, namely reviewing, recording, and organizing information from relevant written sources. The data analysis technique used in this study was the data interpretation method (Sugiyono, 2013).

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Definition, History of Emergence, and Limitations of Tafsir Lughawī

Lughawī interpretation is a style of interpretation that focuses on the linguistic study of the Quran through the tools of grammar, grammar, and rhetoric. This style arose from the need of early Muslims to accurately understand the wording and structure of the Quran, especially when Arabic language skills began to decline outside the Arabian Peninsula (Herlambang, 2020). Through a linguistic approach, *lughawī* exegesis positions Arabic not merely as a means of communication, but as a divine medium that holds miraculous value *(i'jāz)*. Therefore, a discussion of the meaning, history of its emergence, and methodological limitations of *lughawī* exegesis is essential for understanding its role in the classical Islamic exegetical tradition.

b. Understanding of Lughawī Interpretation

Lughawī interpretation is a style or approach to interpreting the Qur'an that emphasizes linguistic aspects. This approach is significant because the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, which has a very high level of literature, rhetoric, and linguistic beauty. To understand the definition of *Lughawī* interpretation comprehensively, it is important to analyze it from two perspectives: etymologically (linguistically) by analyzing the words "tafsir" and *"lughawī*" separately, and terminologically by combining the meanings of both into a complete concept in the study of the Qur'an, also defined as *bayānu ma'āni al-Qur'an bimā warada fī lughah al-'Arabi* (Hakim & Kholid, 2022).

Etymologically, the term "tafsir" is derived from the Arabic root فسر (fasara), which fundamentally conveys the meaning of "information" or "explanation." When the root is formed according to the wazan pattern فعل (fa'ala), its meaning expands to indicate the act of explaining, clarifying, or uncovering something. Therefore, in a broader sense, tafsir refers to an intellectual effort to uncover, clarify, and elaborate upon the meanings contained within the words and verses of the Qur'an. Through tafsir, the meanings of Qur'anic expressions are examined and explained so that their intended messages can be understood more clearly. This process involves efforts to reveal meanings that may not immediately appear from the literal wording alone. Thus, tafsir serves as an important means of facilitating a deeper understanding of the Qur'an and its messages (Yunus, 2025).

On the other hand, the word *"lughawī"* is rooted in the word لغى *(lagha),* which means "to be fond of or to adhere to something." This concept explains that when people are fond of and consistently use certain words, that

collection of words becomes their lughah, or language. Therefore, lughawī is everything related to language, whether used orally or in writing, and refers to aspects of language in general (Syafrijal, 2013).

When these two terms are combined, "Tafsir *lughawī*" can be defined terminologically as an interpretive method that attempts to explain the meanings of the Qur'an using linguistic rules. This explanation is carried out through semiotic and semantic interpretations that encompass various linguistic dimensions, such as etymology (word origins), morphology (word forms), lexical (word meanings), grammatical (grammar), and rhetoric (style of language) (Mahdy, 2024). This definition is reinforced by the views of experts, including M. Quraish Shihab. He defines lughawīyah interpretation as an approach that focuses on linguistic aspects, including uṣlub (language style) and Arabic language rules. This emphasizes that this type of interpretation looks not only at the literal meaning but also at the depth of the structure and style of the Quranic language (Akbar & Maulana, 2022).

Due to its depth and complexity, an interpreter using this approach is required to have a thorough understanding of the intricacies of Arabic. Ahmad Syurbasyi even places mastery of linguistics, including *naḥw* (syntax), *ṣarf* (morphology), etymology, *balaghah* (rhetoric), and *qirā'at* (various readings), as the primary requirement for an interpreter of the Qur'an. Without this capacity, the resulting interpretation risks being shallow or even erroneous (H. Z. Afifah et al., 2023). The scope of study in Tafsir *lughawī* is very broad. Muhammad 'Ali al-Rida'i al-Isfahani formulated at least eight aspects that are the focus of this interpretation. These aspects include: (1) *i'jāz* sastra and *balāghah* Al-Qur'an; (2) balaghah and *faṣaḥah* (eloquence) Al-Qur'an; (3) *naḥw* and *ṣarf* of Al-Qur'an lafaz; (4) Arabic and non-Arabic roots of words in Al-Qur'an; (5) *qirā'at* in each verse; (6) Arabic poetry, especially Jahiliyah poetry; (7) *wujuh wa al-naẓā'ir*, majaz (metaphor) and *ḥaqīqah* (denotative meaning); and (8) *gharīb* (foreign/rare words) and *mushkil* (difficult words) in the Qur'an (Mahdy, 2024).

Tafsīr lughawī can be understood as one of the fundamental approaches in Qur'anic studies that positions language as the primary key to uncovering the meaning of revelation. Emerging from a historical necessity to preserve the accuracy of understanding the sacred text, this approach has developed into a systematic method equipped with comprehensive linguistic analytical tools, encompassing various dimensions of language from etymology to rhetoric. Its definition, scope, and the stringent competency requirements for the *mufassir* indicate that t*afsīr lughawī* is not merely a literal reading, but rather a profound scholarly endeavor aimed at revealing both the beauty and the miraculous nature of the Qur'anic language. Therefore, understanding the characteristics and scope of *tafsīr lughawī* is essential for situating it proportionally within the exegetical tradition, as well as for serving as a foundation for the development of more integrative interpretive approaches in the contemporary era.

c. History of the Development of Tafsir Lughawī

Lughawī interpretation, or interpretation with a linguistic style, is an approach to understanding the Quran that is dominated more by linguistic explanations than by the main message of the verses themselves. This approach focuses on semiotic and semantic analysis, encompassing etymology, morphology *(ṣarf)*, lexical, grammatical *(naḥw)*, and rhetorical *(balāghah)* aspects. The development of this style of interpretation has long historical roots, beginning with the era of the Prophet Muhammad and reaching its peak as a mature methodology in the modern era.

In his book "Categorisation of the Science of Tafsir", Prof. Badruzzaman expressed that the tendency of language in the interpretation of the Qur'an has existed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is based on the words of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) when he was asked by a companion about the most important knowledge in the sight of Allah. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

إعْرَابُوا الْقُرْآنَ وَالْتَمِسُوا غَرَائِبَه

"I'rāb lah Al-Qur'an dan carilah ke Gharib, annya"

and the statement of Ibn 'Abbas:

الشعر ديوانُ العَرَبِ فَإِنْ خَفِيَ عَلَيْهِمْ الحَرْفُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِلُغَتِهِمْ رَجَعُوا إِلَى دِيوَانِهِمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا مَعْرِفَةَ ذَلِكَ

"Poetry is the diwan of the Arabs, if they do not know a letter of the Qur'an that Allah revealed in the Arabic language, they will look for it in a collection of poetry" (Yunus, 2025).

The seeds of *lughawī* interpretation have actually existed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, his companions, and his followers, although at that time the practice was still partial and not yet theoretical. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as the recipient and transmitter of revelation, the Prophet Muhammad

(PBUH) was the first interpreter of the Quran (Firdaus & Surur, 2025b). One method he employed was a linguistic approach, particularly by explaining the meaning of a word through its synonym (murādif). For instance, when interpreting the term وَسَطًا in QS. Al-Baqarah: 143, the Prophet explained it using the word الْعَدْل, which conveys the meaning of justice, fairness, or moderation.

During the Companions' era, after the Prophet Muhammad's death, the Companions continued the efforts of interpretation. The most prominent figure in the linguistic approach was Abdullah bin Abbas, who was therefore nicknamed Abu al-Tafsir (Father of Interpretation) (Syafrijal, 2013). Ibn Abbas often used classical Arabic poetry to explain the meaning of difficult Quranic vocabulary. His efforts are considered the forerunner of the madrasah *lughah* (linguistic schools) in Quranic studies (Nurhayat & Komarudin, 2024). One example is his interpretation of the word الرَّفَث in QS. Al-Baqarah: 187 using the term الْمُبَاشَرَة, which refers to sexual intercourse.

During the *Tābi'in* period, this tradition of interpretation was continued by the next generation of Tābi'in, who were the students of the Companions. Among them were Qatadah, Mujahid ibn Jabar, Ikrimah, and Hasan al-Basri, who carried on the understanding of interpretation from their teachers, especially Ibn Abbas. The phase of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, his Companions to the Tabi'in is called the pre-theoretical phase (Hakim & Kholid, 2022). The development of *lughawī* interpretation became more systematic and theoretical after the generation of the *Tābi'in,* especially when interaction between Arabs and non-Arabs became more widespread, leading to the loss of *zauq 'Araby* (Arabic linguistic feel). Scholars divide this development process into three main periods.(Firdaus & Surur, 2025).

d. Formation Period *(Marḥalah al-Takwīn)*

This period marked the beginning of the Islamic scholars' beginning to lay the foundations for lughawī interpretation. Some key figures during this period include:

a. Muqatil bin Sulaiman (d. 150 H) is considered a pioneer of interpretation based on a semantic approach. Through his work *al-Aśbah wa al-Naẓa'ir* fi al-Qur'an al-Karim, he showed that every word in the Qur'an can have alternative meanings (Firdaus & Surur, 2025).
b. Abu Zakariya Yahya bin Ziyad al-Farra' (d. 207 H), As a student of al-Kisa'i (one of the imams of *qirā'at*), al-Farra' often used the qirā'at approach in his interpretations. His work, *Ma'ānī* al-Qur'ān, is one of the monumental works in *lughawī* interpretations of the Kufa school of nahwu (Karimah & Hasyim, 2023).
c. Abu 'Ubaidah Ma'mar bin al-Muthanna (d. 210 H): Through his work Majaz al-Qur'ān, he became one of the pioneers who used the *balāghah* (rhetoric) approach in interpretation.
d. Al-Jahiz (d. 255 H) and 'Abdu al-Qahir al-Jurjani (d. 471 H): Both are known as the founders of the science of balāghah and bayān in the interpretation of the Qur'an, which provided a strong theoretical foundation for later commentators (Akbar & Maulana, 2022).

This period can be understood as a crucial formative phase in the development of *tafsīr lughawī*, during which scholars began to formulate conceptual and methodological frameworks grounded in linguistic analysis. The contributions of these figures reflect a shift from partial and fragmented interpretive practices toward a more systematic approach, drawing upon various linguistic disciplines such as semantics, *qirā'āt*, *naḥw*, and *balāghah*. The intellectual foundations they established not only enriched the corpus of classical Qur'anic exegesis but also served as a significant basis for the subsequent development of the theory and methodology of *tafsīr lughawī*.

e. Reinforcement Period (*Marḥalah al-Ta'sil*)

This period was marked by the strengthening of the foundations that had been built previously, with the main figure being al-Zamakhsyari (d. 538 H). Through his phenomenal work, *Al-Kasshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍal-Tanzīl*, al-Zamakhsyari raised the use of the science of balāghah to its peak. He is known as the developer of the theories of the science of bayān and his interpretations are the main reference in the aspect of the beauty of the language of the Qur'an (Firdaus & Surur, 2025). However, this period also gave rise to controversy. Al-Zamakhsyari, an adherent of Mu'tazilite theology, used linguistic analysis as a legitimizing tool to defend his group's beliefs. This sparked criticism that medieval linguistic interpretations had become tendentious, subjective, and ideological (Akbar & Maulana, 2022).

This period can be understood as a phase of consolidation in the development of tafsīr lughawī, marked by methodological maturity as well as the emergence of epistemological challenges. On the one hand, al-Zamakhsharī's contributions elevated linguistic analysis—particularly balāghah—to a highly sophisticated level and established it as a primary reference for understanding the aesthetic dimensions of Qur'anic language. On the other hand, the use of linguistic approaches to support specific theological agendas indicates that tafsīr lughawī in

this period was not entirely free from ideological bias. This underscores that, despite its significant advancements, tafsīr lughawī still requires a critical stance in its application to avoid falling into interpretive subjectivity.

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f. Renewal Period (*Marḥalah al-Tajdid*)

This period marked both the peak and the turning point in the history of *lughawī* exegesis, pioneered by Amin al-Khuli (d. 1966), a professor from Cairo. Al-Khuli did not write a complete exegesis, but he succeeded in developing an interpretive methodology called *al-Tafsīr al-Adābī li al-Qur'ān* (Literary Interpretation of the Qur'an) (Akbar & Maulana, 2022). The main idea is to treat the Qur'an as "the greatest book of Arabic literature" and interpret it by studying the historicity of the verses and the socio-cultural conditions of the Arab nation when the Qur'an was revealed (Firdaus & Surur, 2025b). The goal is to avoid interpretations that have been mixed with individual interests, ideology, or politics.

Al-Khuli's methodology was then consistently applied by his student and wife, Aishah Abdurrahman, better known by her pen name *Bintu al-Shati'*. In her work, *al-Tafsīr al-Bayāni li al-Qur'an al-Karīm*, she successfully broke through the weaknesses of previous *lughawī* interpretations. She combined linguistic analysis with the thematic method *(mauḍu'i)*, paid attention to aspects of social reality such as *asbābun nuzūl* and *nāsikh-mansūkh,* and rejected the *isrā'īliyyāt* narrations, thus producing a more comprehensive and relevant interpretation for the modern era (Nurhayat & Komarudin, 2024).

This period can be understood as a peak and renewal phase in the development of *Lughawī* exegesis, marked by a methodological reorientation toward a more contextual and integrative approach. Amin al-Khuli's ideas successfully transformed *Lughawī* exegesis from mere linguistic analysis to a literary approach that considers the historical and socio-cultural dimensions of the Qur'an. This renewal was then perfected by *Bintu al-Shāṭi'* through the integration of linguistic analysis and thematic methods, as well as attention to the social context and criticism of non-authentic elements in exegesis. Thus, *Lughawī* exegesis in this phase not only achieved methodological maturity but was also able to address the need for more relevant, objective, and contextual interpretation in the modern era.

g. Limits of *Lughawī* Interpretation

Quranic interpretation essentially has many forms, depending on the expertise or inclination of the interpreter. This is evident in the numerous and diverse styles of interpretation that have emerged, each with its own distinct characteristics. Because of the diversity of interpretations, boundaries are necessary to ensure that each style's discussion does not stray beyond its specific scope and scope. One such style of interpretation that has limitations is the *lughawī* interpretation.

The interpretation of the *lughawī* style is essentially an attempt to explain the meaning of the Qur'an by using linguistic rules as its main analytical tool. The scope of this style focuses on text analysis through semiotic and semantic interpretation, which includes etymological (word origin), morphological (word form changes), lexical (word meaning), grammatical (grammar), and rhetorical (language style) aspects (Syafrijal, 2013). The operational framework of this interpretation is based on three main pillars of Arabic language science, namely *Naḥw* Science which studies the function of words in sentences and the rules of their endings *(i'rāb)*, Sharaf Science which discusses changes in word form *(taṣrīf)* to produce different meanings, and Balaghah Science which studies the beauty of the structure and style of language, which includes ma'ani science which specifically studies the meaning of the vocabulary of the Qur'an, bayan science which prioritizes the explanation of the lafaz from the root of the word, then links one meaning with another meaning and *bādi'* science tends to the aspect of the beauty of the structure and style of language (Syafrijal, 2013).

In essence, *lughawī* interpretation is a tendency to understand the Qur'an that is produced by dissecting or analyzing its linguistic aspects in depth. The main focus is to explore the meaning of the text by examining everything related to its linguistics, from sentence structure, word forms, basic meanings, to its literary beauty. In practice, exegetes use various analytical tools. They examine grammar *(naḥw)* to understand the relationships between words

in sentences, changes in word form *(ṣarf)* to see how meaning changes when the root of a word is changed, lexical meaning *(ma'nā al-lafz)* to understand the original meaning of a word, and style (balaghah) to capture the beauty and depth of Qur'anic literature (Nurhayat & Komarudin, 2024). Not only that, this method also specifically examines the unique phenomena of the language of the Qur'an, such as the miracle of its literature *(i'jāz)*, the variety of reading methods (qirā'āt), the use of words that are considered difficult (gharīb al-Qur'an), and the phenomenon of one word having many meanings *(wujūh)* or many words for one meaning *(nazā'ir)* (Yunus, 2025).

Thus, it can be concluded that the *lughawī* style of interpretation is the result of in-depth research into the language of the Qur'an that focuses on the internal aspects of the text. This interpretation attempts to reveal the meaning and beauty of the message of the Qur'an through linguistic tools such as *naḥw, ṣarf*, and *balāghah*. However, because the focus is on linguistic analysis, this style has limitations on the contextual side, so that the resulting interpretation is often textual and does not touch on the social reality surrounding the revelation of the verses (Firdaus & Surur, 2025). Nevertheless, *lughawī* interpretation still has a major contribution in enriching the treasure trove of tafsir science, especially in revealing the majesty of language and the depth of meaning contained in the Qur'an.

h. Reasons Why *Lughawī* Interpretation Was Popular in the Classical Age

The popularity of the *lughawī* interpretation during the classical era of Islam resulted from the convergence of ideological impulses, socio-historical needs, and intellectual developments in the Islamic world. This approach was a historical response to various challenges related to understanding and preserving the text of the Quran.

i. Theological Encouragement

The first factor that makes *lughawī* interpretation popular is the theological impetus that comes directly from the nature of the Qur'an itself, namely Arabic (Andriani, 2015). because the Qur'an is not only seen as a text of revelation, but also as a linguistic miracle or *I'jāz*, which places Arabic in a central position in understanding the Divine message (Inaku & Hula, 2023). The linguistic fluency of the Qur'an that surpasses pre-Islamic literature raises the awareness that to understand revelation correctly, one must understand the structure of language as its medium (N. D. Afifah & Sofa, 2025). *I'jāz* al-Qur'an turns linguistic analysis into a theological obligation, interpretation that uses the rules of *naḥw*, balaghah and rhetoric becomes a means of scientifically proving the miracles of the Qur'an (Taufik et al., 2020). Thus, the involvement of *lughawī* interpretation is not only scientific but also spiritual, by analyzing language means confirming the divinity of revelation (Cahya, 2024).

The emergence and popularity of *tafsīr lughawī* can be understood as a logical consequence of the central position of the Arabic language in the Qur'an as both divine revelation and a linguistic miracle. This theological impetus elevates linguistic analysis from a mere scholarly approach to a necessary means of understanding and demonstrating the miraculous nature of the Qur'an. Through disciplines such as *naḥw*, *ṣarf, balaghah* and *tafsīr lughawī* functions as a bridge between the linguistic and theological dimensions, such that the act of interpretation is not only aimed at uncovering meaning but also at affirming the divine nature of the revelation itself

j. Socio-historical impulses

The second factor that explains the popularity of *lughawī* interpretation is the socio-historical context. The massive spread of Islam by the Muslim caliphs caused Arabic to spread to non-Arab regions, and Islamic culture also increased rapidly, including the science of interpretation (Zulfikar, 2019). The integration of the *'ajam* or non-Arab community gave rise to the phenomenon of lahn, namely language errors that threaten the purity of the pronunciation of the Qur'an (Taufik, 2020). The linguistic crisis is seen as a serious threat to the integrity of revelation, errors in I'rāb, or phonetics can change the meaning of a word, which can impact law and faith. Ali bin Abi Thalib initiated the systematic codification of Arabic through Abu Aswad Ad-Du'ali, this step will produce the discipline of Nahw (Sugirma, n.d). Similarly, Islam's success as a universal religion also contributed to the popularity of linguistic interpretation. Islam's rapid expansion necessitated solutions to preserve the authenticity of the revealed language. Linguistic interpretation became a key instrument in establishing a true and uniform understanding throughout the Islamic world. It served as a means of preservation and linguistic education for new generations of Muslims who did not speak Arabic as their mother tongue (Munir, 2021). The popularity of *tafsīr lughawī* within a socio-historical context can be understood as a response to the challenges posed by the expansion of Islam into non-Arab regions. The emergence of linguistic errors (*laḥn*) and the threat to the purity of the meaning of revelation prompted systematic efforts to codify and strengthen the sciences of the Arabic language, particularly *naḥw*. In this context, *tafsīr lughawī* played a crucial role as an instrument for preserving the authenticity of the Qur'anic text while ensuring a uniform understanding among linguistically diverse Muslim

communities. Therefore, this approach functions not only as a method of interpretation but also as a means of linguistic preservation and Islamic education on a global scale.

k. Intellectual Drive

The third factor in the increasing popularity of *lughawī* interpretation is the improvement of Arabic language sciences to become more established. The codification and development of *naḥw* and *ṣārf* sciences in Basrah and Kufa made the Qur'an the main corpus and data source in the development of several linguistic theories. The science of balaghah also showed rapid progress in studying and revealing the aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions of the Qur'anic revelation, as done by Abu Zakariya al-Farra' by establishing the al-Lughah madrasah which then used a language approach in his work, Ma'an Alquran (Tanjung, 2014, p. 335). From these works, the language of the Qur'an can be captured in its meaning, not only in the structural dimension, but also in its aesthetic and semantic dimensions. *Lughawī* exegesis reached its peak with Az-Zamakhshari's monumental work, his commentary Al-Kasysyaf, in which he intricately combined *naḥw* (syntax), balaghah (rhetoric), and semantics. Although Zamakhshari was associated with Mu'tazilite theology, the excellence of his linguistic methodological approach was universally appreciated by scholars of various sects. This work firmly established *Lughawī* exegesis as a rational, systematic, and reliable scientific method (Firdaus & Surur, 2025).

l. Interdisciplinary Function

Tafsir *lughawī* serves not only as a method for interpreting the Qur'an but also as a foundation stone for other Islamic sciences. In the method of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thur*, it serves as a means to validate the meaning of a narrative. In the discipline of *fiqh*, it is the basis for *istinbaṭ* law, as many legal codifications rely on nuanced grammatical analysis. In the science of kalam, it is a means to interpret verses. Metaphysical properties and concepts are sensitive to the distinction between literal and figurative (Munir, 2021). This interdisciplinary function ensures that *lughawī* interpretation never loses its relevance. It serves as an epistemological check, ensuring that every form of legal interpretation or derivation remains rooted in valid linguistic meaning. Thus, *tafsīr lughawī* occupies a highly strategic position within the structure of Islamic scholarship as an epistemological foundation that underpins various disciplines. Its interdisciplinary role demonstrates that linguistic analysis functions not merely as a supporting tool, but as a primary prerequisite for maintaining the validity of understanding the revealed text. Its connection with *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*, *fiqh*, and *kalām* underscores that every form of interpretation—whether normative or theological—must be grounded in accurate linguistic meaning. Therefore, the presence of *tafsīr lughawī* not only enriches interpretive methodologies but also ensures the consistency and validity of Islamic knowledge as a whole.

m. Special Features of Tafsir Books in the Lughawī Style

Lughawī (linguistic) exegesis refers to a style of Qur'anic interpretation that uses linguistic analysis as its primary foundation. This style, also often referred to *as tafsīr bi al-ra'yi al-lughawī*, focuses its study on aspects of Arabic linguistics to uncover the meaning and secrets contained in the verses of the Qur'an. Exegetes in this school believe that the Qur'an was revealed in fluent Arabic and has the highest literary level, so the best approach to understanding it is through the disciplines of Arabic language itself, such as *naḥw* (grammar), *ṣarf* (morphology), and *balāghah* (rhetoric). More specifically, the characteristics of *lughawī* exegesis can be identified through its specific focus of study:

First, Semiotic and Semantic Analysis. This approach explains the Qur'an through semiotic (sign) and semantic (meaning) interpretation) (Firdaus & Surur, 2025). This includes etymological (word origin), morphological (word formation or *isytiqāq*), and lexical (word meaning) analysis. *Mufassir lughawī* does not only provide one equivalent word, but often outlines the spectrum of meanings of a root word, explains the subtle differences *(furuq al-ma'āni)* between synonyms, and traces the evolution of the word's meaning. *Second,* Focus on Grammar *(Naḥw)*. A very prominent feature of *lughawī* tafsir books is their emphasis on *I'rāb* (the grammatical position or function of words in a sentence). The interpreter will pay close attention to the position of each word in the sentence, such as its status whether *rafa'* (nominative), *naṣb* (accusative), or *khafd* (genitive). Changes in *i'rāb* are considered very fundamental because they can significantly change the meaning of the entire verse. *Lughawī* commentators often explain nahw issues in detail and even discuss differences of opinion among nahw experts (for example, between the Kufa and Basra schools) regarding the position of a word in a verse (Karimah & Hasyim, 2023).

Third, the focus of rhetorical studies (balaghah). This type of interpretation views the Quran as a linguistic miracle *(I'jāz lughawī).* Therefore, this interpretation explores the beauty of the Quran's language. This includes *faṣāhah* (eloquence), *bayān* (clarity of expression), tamthīl (parables), *majāz* (figurative or figurative language), and uṣlub (stylistics). *Fourth,* Analysis of Qirā'at (Reading Variants). Another important characteristic of lughawī interpretation is

the use of *qirā'at*, or various reading variants of the Quran. The use of these different readings is intended to analyze the linguistic variations that emerge in more depth and to examine their implications or significant impact on the interpretation of meaning (Taufik, 2020). *Fifth,* Explanation of Difficult Words *(Gharīb)*. This interpretation specifically discusses the meaning of words or vocabulary considered *gharīb* (foreign, rare, or difficult to understand) in the Qur'an. Its scope is the *gharīb* of the Qur'an which includes the words *mubhām, mubādalah, hadhf, iḍmār, taqdīm, and ta'khīr*. It is not permissible to interpret the Qur'an with the meaning of zhahir or the understanding of the Arabs alone. If that happens, then the Qur'an will be interpreted solely with ra'yi (Akbar & Maulana, 2022).

Sixth, the Use of Classical Arabic Literature, *Mufassir* in their tafsir books use classical Arabic literature to legitimize or strengthen their linguistic interpretations, the mufassir often refer to external sources, especially classical Arabic poetry (especially *sya'īr al-jāhili* or pre-Islamic) and prose. When there is a debate about the meaning of a vocabulary *(mufradāt)* that is considered odd *(gharīb*), the *mufassir* will look for evidence of its use in ancient Arabic poetry. The logic is that these poems represent the purest use of Arabic and are contemporary with the revelation of the Qur'an, so they can be used as a standard for validating a lexical meaning (Zarchen & Umami, 2022).

Based on the explanation above, it is known that the characteristic or distinctive feature of lughawī interpretation lies in its goal to prove the *i'jāz* al-Qur'an (the miracle of the Qur'an). For adherents of this style, linguistic analysis is not the final goal, but rather a tool to demonstrate that the sentence structure, choice of diction, and rhetorical style of the Qur'an are at a level of perfection that is impossible for humans to imitate. By analyzing the beauty of its linguistic structure, the exegete seeks to prove the truth of the Qur'an as divine revelation. In his book Category of Tafsir Science, Badruzzaman M. Yunus cites the opinion of Muhammad bin Luthfi al-Syiba'i, stating that interpretation with linguistic tendencies can be divided into three types of approaches that focus on various aspects of Arabic. The following is an explanation of each approach (Yunus, 2025):

First, the *mufradāt* Approach. This approach emphasizes the analysis of certain words in the Qur'an (*mufradāt*), especially to understand their meaning in depth. That is, it focuses on the words or sentences contained in the Qur'an. The *gharīb* of a word or sentence can only be determined through in-depth research and discussion, because a word or sentence may be considered *gharīb* by one group but not by another. In other words, the main focus of this approach is: a. Explaining the literal meaning of Qur'anic words. b. Distinguishing the meaning of similar (synonymous) or different words depending on the context. c. Revealing the beauty of vocabulary and word choice in the Qur'an. Examples of works of interpretation with this approach are *mufradāt* Alfazh al-Qur'an by Al-Raghib al-Asfahani and Tafsir that explains the vocabulary of the Qur'an such as Al-Kashshaf by Zamakhsyari.

Second, the Nahw and Irah Approach. This approach focuses on analyzing Arabic grammar (nahw) and word order within sentences (i'råb). The main focus of this approach is: a. Revealing the grammatical structure and function of words in the Qur'an. b. Explaining the syntactic position of words within sentences to understand their meaning in depth. c. Resolving differences in interpretation that arise due to grammatical variations. The *Naḥw* and *I'rāb* approach will only be achieved if the interpreter has, 1) knowledge of the meaning of the verse, whether it is in the form of *mufrad* or *murakkab*, 2) must understand the rules of *naḥw* properly, 3) must distance himself from the rules that are *shadh* and *ḍa'īf*, 4) must pay attention to rasm, 5) pay attention to verses that are considered *mutashābih*, and 6) pay attention to the original and *zāidah* words. Examples of his works are: Ma'ani al-Qur'an by Al-Farra and I'rāb al-Qur'an by Abi Hayyan al-Andalusi.

Third, the Approach from the Aspects of *Balāghah* and *Uṣlub Bayān*. This approach studies the style (balaghah) and the manner of delivery (*uṣlub*) in the Al-Qur'an. The main focus of this approach is: a. the stylistic power of the Al-Qur'an, such as *majāz* (metaphor), *tashbīh* (simile), and *isti'ārah* (allegory). b. Explaining the *uṣlub* (language style) used in conveying the message, whether it is a command, a prohibition, or an invitation. e. Highlighting the aesthetic dimension and logical argumentation of the Al-Qur'an that cannot be imitated ('jaz). Examples of works of this approach are: *Dalā'il al-I'jāz* by Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani and *Asrâr al-Balāghah* by the same author. These three approaches are integral to linguistic interpretation, helping to elucidate the depth of the Quran's meaning from various linguistic perspectives. They are also essential tools for preserving the purity of the Quran's language and demonstrating its rhetorical excellence as a miracle.

n. Advantages and Disadvantages of Tafsir *Lughawī*

One of the most fundamental strengths of *lughawī* interpretation is its ability to be the only gateway to access, appreciate, and analytically prove the miracle of the language of the Qur'an *(i'jāz al-lughawī)*. The Qur'an was revealed at the peak of Arabic literature and poetry, and one of the main factors that amazed many people in the early days of Islam to accept the message of Islam was the unparalleled beauty and superiority of its language. *Lughawī* interpretation allows us to scientifically "re-engineer" this admiration by dissecting the elements that make

it so extraordinary (Syafrijal, 2013). Through the tools of balaghah (rhetoric) which are divided into *'ilm al-ma'āni, 'ilm al-bayān,* and *'ilm al-badī'*, an interpreter can uncover the secrets behind the choice of words, sentence structure, and style of the Qur'an, the issue of language becomes important because the first recipients of revelation were Arab society, and language is the actualization of history and tradition (Ulya, 2017). This power is not only aesthetic, but also has theological implications. The ability to demonstrate *i'jāz lughawī* empirically through systematic language analysis becomes a strong apologetic argument regarding the divine origins of the Qur'an. It becomes a bridge for the modern generation to re-experience the miraculous dimension of the Qur'an that was first recognized by its original audience, which makes faith not only based on abstract belief, but also on a rational appreciation of the uniqueness of its text (Chasuna, n.d).

The shortcomings of *lughawī* interpretation can be seen from how sharp the criticism that is often directed at lughawī interpretation. The criticism is that *lughawī* interpretation tends to get caught up in long-winded linguistic details, thus forgetting the essence and main purpose of the Qur'an as a book of guidance *(hidāyah)* for mankind (Mustaqim, 2019). When an interpreter is too engrossed in *i'rāb* analysis (grammatical analysis), word derivation, or rhetorical beauty, there is a great risk that the moral, ethical, and spiritual messages of the verse will be ignored or drowned in the complexity of linguistic techniques (Karimah & Hasyim, 2023).

3. CONCLUSION

Lughawī interpretation is a style of Qur'anic interpretation that emphasizes linguistic analysis through the tools of grammar, grammar, and rhetoric. This style stems from the theological and scientific needs of early Muslims to correctly understand the meaning of the Qur'anic language amidst the decline of classical Arabic language skills. Since the time of the Prophet and his companions, the seeds of linguistic interpretation emerged and were then systematized during the period of the successors, reaching their peak in the classical era. Its primary focus lies on internal analysis of the text, encompassing etymological, morphological, lexical, and rhetorical aspects, without much attention to the historical and social context of the verses. The poprity of *lughawī* interpretation during the classical period was inseparable from the theological foundation that positioned Arabic as a divine miracle *(i'jāz al-lughawī)* and a medium for conveying revelation. Historical and intellectual forces strengthened this position through the development of linguistics in Basra and Kufa, making the Qur'an the primary source of Arabic linguistic theory. Furthermore, this approach played an interdisciplinary role in supporting other Islamic disciplines such as *fiqh*, *kalām*, and thematic tafsir, making it a fundamental method in classical Islamic studies. The tafsir books in the lughawī style display a distinctive character, especially in the dominance of grammatical analysis (i'rāb), word morphology, and the rhetorical beauty of the Quran. The commentators employ a meticulous linguistic approach by tracing word roots, comparing synonymous meanings, and utilizing pre-Islamic Arabic poetry to interpret the revealed text. This characteristic demonstrates that language in *lughawī* interpretation is not merely a means of communication, but also a means of proving the miracle of the Quran, demonstrating the perfection of its structure and word choice. Methodologically, *lughawī* exegesis excels in scientifically revealing the beauty and power of Quranic language, while simultaneously strengthening the theological basis for understanding revelation. However, its limitation lies in its tendency to focus too much on linguistic aspects, neglecting the moral and contextual messages of the verses. Nevertheless, this approach remains relevant throughout the history of Islamic thought, serving as a methodological foundation for subsequent interpretations. By integrating a linguistic approach with theological and historical dimensions, *lughawī* exegesis maintains a balance between the beauty of the language of revelation and the depth of its meaning for human life.

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