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Linguistic Exegesis: Orientation and Variety of Tafsir Lughawi

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the orientation and characteristics of linguistic interpretation (tafsir lughawi) as an important feature in thetradition of interpreting the Qur'an. Through a qualitative approach based on library research using descriptive-analytical methods, this study traces the historyof the emergence, scope, characteristics, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of linguistic interpretationin the context of the development of classical interpretation science. The results of the studyshow that linguistic interpretation is rooted in the need to understand the Qur'an through the rules of Arabic, which gave birth to a tradition of linguistic-based interpretationsince the time of the Prophet and his companions until it developed systematically in the classical century through works such as Ma'ani al-Qur'an, Majaz al-Qur'an, and al-Kashshāf. This approach excels in its meticulous etymological, morphological, and rhetorical analysis, which reveals the beauty and depth of the language ofthe Qur'an, but it has limitations because it tends to be elitist and lacksattention to the socio-historical context and maqāṣidī dimensions. This studyemphasizes that the integration of linguistic and contextual approachesis necessary in order for lughawi interpretation to remain relevant.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Quran functions as a روحا (spirit) and هدى (guidance) to deepen the understanding and practice of Islam. Its beauty and wonder will never end, in terms of language; its messages are so deep that they can melt the hearts of many people who listen and read it. Based on the narration of Shafiyyurahman al-Mubarakfury, in the early days of Islam, some people who were Muslims at that time felt amazed at the miracles in terms of language experienced by the friend of Umar bin al-Khattab when listening to the recitation of the Quran in the letters of al-Haqqah and Thoha (Shaffiyurahman, 1994). Therefore, scholars of the Quran have an obligation to introduce the Quran and present the pearls of language in every word, keeping pace with societal developments, so that the Quran remains complete and serves as a guide for humanity. To convey the beauty of these messages, Quranic scholars employ various approaches, methods, and styles of presentation in interpreting the Quran, in accordance with their scientific capacities.

The emergence of various styles of interpretation of the Qur'an, later known as the School of Tafsir (Mazhab at-Tafsir), demonstrates that interpreters continually strive to delve into the depths of meaning contained in the holy book. The term "mazhab" itself means a particular school of thought, viewpoint, or theory, while tafsir is the result of human understanding of the text of the Qur'an. Thus, a school of interpretation can be defined as a tendency or approach chosen by an interpreter in interpreting revelation. Scholars of tafsir

explain that the emergence of these schools of interpretation or manhaj began to appear in the middle period of the history of interpretation, which simultaneously emphasizes the multidimensional nature of the Qur'an as a divine text. The term manhaj tafsir refers to a distinctive style, style, or characteristic that gives each work of interpretation its own identity. This is in line with the fact that interpretation is a form of intellectual expression of an interpreter in revealing divine messages according to their scientific background, orientation of thought, and the surrounding socio-cultural context.

Linguistic Exegesis (Tafsir Lughawi) consists of two words, namely tafsir and lughawi. The word "tafsir", at its root means explanation. Ar Raghib Al-Ashfahani in his book, Mu'jam al-Mufaradat al-Fadz al-Quran, that the word consisting of the three letters fa-sin-ra' contains the meaning of revealing the hidden meaning to be clearly visible. Then lughawi comes from the word لغى which means to like or enjoy following something (Ahmad, 1994). This means that the human instinct that likes to pursue the word by word that he uses is called lughah. Thus, there is an understanding that lughawi interpretation or linguistic interpretation is an interpretation that attempts to explain the meaning of the Quran using the rules of lughah. Interpretation with this style not only highlights the literal meaning of the verses, but also dissects the character of Arabic from the perspective of grammar, rhetoric, and the beauty of its sentence structure. In this context, language is used as a very important medium in understanding the meaning of the Quran. Elements of the science of balaghah, bayan, ma'ani, to badi' are often the main focus to show the majesty of the Quran's unmatched style (Prayudi, 2025). In fact, Ahmad Syurbasyi (1999:31) places linguistics and related sciences of nahwu, sharaf, etymology, balaghah and qiraat as the main requirements for an interpreter.

According to Abu Hayyan (1992:14-17), a mufassir must prepare several things as follows:

a. Knowing the science of language, both regarding nouns, verbs, and letters.
b. Knowing the rules of Arabic, both before they are arranged in a sentence and after they are arranged in the form of a sentence.
c. Knowing that there are words or sentences that are mature or fluent (reviewed from the science of ma'any, bayan, and badi').
d. Knowing the things that are ijmali, tabyin, general, specific, ithlaq, taqyid, dilalah amr and nahi.
e. Knowing the differences between words in Arabic, both when there are additional letters or subtractions, and when there are changes in vowels, etc (al-Gharnathy, 1992).

From this explanation, it can be concluded that an interpreter must possess these knowledges. It is not appropriate for a believer in Allah to discuss the Quran without mastering Arabic and studying it in depth (al-Zahaby, 1946). Thus, a broad knowledge of Arabic is essential for an interpreter, as it serves as a tool for interpreting the Quran.

Several studies that are important references in the study of Tafsir Lughawi. The scientific article entitled "Lughawi Tafsīr ofḤāshiah al-Doāwi: A Critical Analysis of Tafsīr al-Jalālain" by Rosihon Anwar, published in Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir. This work is in the form of a scientific journal article with the aim of exploring the characteristics and uniqueness of lughawi interpretation inḤāshiah al-Doāwi 'Alā Tafsīr al-Jalālain, and emphasized that the work is not merelyḥāshiah (marginal notes), but rather an independent interpretation that integrates classical Arabic language rules such as nahwu,yesaraf, and balāghah with a critical interpretation approach to the interpretation of al-Jalālain. The research method used is qualitative library research with the Seiddel analysis model through the stages of identification, clarification, synthesis, and categorization of data. The novelty of this research lies in the effort to expand the focus of the study from historical and conceptual mapping to the general pattern of lughawi interpretation, including the history of its emergence, main figures, its strengths and weaknesses, and its relevance to the context of classical Islamic intellectuals.

In addition, a scientific article entitled "Historical Study of Lughawi Interpretation" by Muchammad Fariz Maulana Akbar and Muhammad Rijal Maulana, was published in the Journal of Faith and Spirituality. The article aims to examine and explain the history of the emergence of Lughawi interpretation, the definition of the term, and the polemics that arise around the linguistic approach in interpreting the Qur'an. Using a descriptive qualitative method based on literature study, this study traces the development of Lughawi interpretation from the time of the Prophet to the period of renewal pioneered by Amin al-Khuli through the concept of al-Tafsir al-Adabi li al-Qur'an. Meanwhile, this study is situated on a more comprehensive and analytical approach, which not only discusses the historicity and terminological limitations, but also explores the epistemological orientation and intellectual dynamics of Lughawi interpretation, including the characteristics of its books and a critical analysis of its strengths and weaknesses in the context of the development of classical Islamic interpretation. Thus, my research broadens the

scope of discourse from the historical dimension to a more reflective methodological and conceptual study of the position of lughawi interpretation in contemporary interpretation studies.

Furthermore, a scientific article entitled "Tafsir Lughawi: Historicity and Debate" written by Edi and Maolidya Asri Siwi Fangesty, was published in the Journal of Faith and Spirituality. This article aims to examine the development of lughawi interpretation from a historical perspective while highlighting the debate among scholars regarding the legitimacy and limitations of using a linguistic approach in interpreting the Qur'an. Using a descriptive qualitative method based on literature study, the study traces four phases of the development of lughawi interpretation from the period of the Prophet and his companions to the contemporary era and presents the views of classical and modern scholars on the position of language in interpretation. Unlike those studies, this study not only examines the historical and polemic aspects, but also comprehensively reviews the epistemological orientation, the characteristics of lughawi-style interpretation books, and their advantages and disadvantages, while also demonstrating the methodological relevance of lughawi interpretation in the context of classical and modern Islamic scholarship. Thus, the novelty of my research lies in the integrative approach that combines historical, conceptual, and critical analysis in mapping the role of lughawi interpretation as a dynamic and sustainable style of interpretation in the Islamic scientific tradition.

Then, a scientific article entitled "The Dynamics of the Lughawi Manhaj (Linguistics) in Interpretation" by Umiarti Karimah and Muh. Fathoni Hasyim, was published in Al-Maraji: Jurnal Studi Keislaman. This article aims to explain the dynamics of linguistic methods in interpreting the Qur'an, including its origins, development, linguistic schools, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of lughawi interpretation as a linguistic approach. This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach through a literature study of various classical and contemporary literature. The results confirm that lughawi interpretation plays an important role in maintaining the purity of the meaning of the Qur'anic text through grammatical and semantic analysis, despite its limitations in contextual and historical aspects. In contrast to the aforementioned studies, this study has a more comprehensive discussion by not only exploring the dynamics and characteristics of its methodology, but also critically reviewing the epistemological orientation, the characteristics of lughawi-style tafsir books, as well as their advantages and disadvantages, while placing lughawi tafsir in the context of classical Islamic intellectual development and its relevance to modern tafsir studies. In addition, there is a study by Abd Aziz and Made Saihu. Historicity and sources of linguistic interpretation in understanding the language of the Quran, which examines the sources of linguistic interpretation among salaf scholars, tafsir books, methods, varieties of interpretation and their application (Aziz & Saihu, 2022).

Based on a review of various previous studies, it can be concluded that the study of lughawi interpretation has developed extensively, both from a historical, methodological, and epistemological perspective. Each study makes a specific contribution to mapping and strengthening the linguistic patterns in Qur'anic interpretation. Rosihon Anwar highlights the linguistic dimension inḤāshiah al-Doāwi as a form of independent interpretation that emphasizes the importance of the rules of nahwu,yesaraf, and balāghah; Muchammad Fariz Maulana Akbar and Muhammad Rijal Maulana emphasize the historical and terminological aspects of lughawi interpretation from the time of the Prophet to modern renewal; Edi and Maolidya Asri Siwi Fangesty highlight the dynamics of the ulama debate regarding the legitimacy and limitations of the linguistic approach; while Umiarti Karimah and Muh. Fathoni Hasyim trace the development of lughawi methodology and its role in maintaining the purity of the meaning of the Qur'an. Meanwhile, Abd Aziz and Made Saihu's research reviews the sources of linguistic interpretation in the tradition of salaf ulama as its epistemological foundation.

From the overall research, this article presents a novelty in the form of an integrative approach that not only discusses the historicity, methods, and polemics of lughawi interpretation, but also constructs an epistemological analysis, characteristics of the book, and a critical evaluation of the advantages and limitations of lughawi interpretation in the context of the development of classical and contemporary interpretation science, thus broadening the horizon of lughawi interpretation studies from mere description to a reflective and comprehensive scientific synthesis. This research also attempts to examine several core factors related to Lughawi Interpretation including how the historical side that underlies the emergence of this style of interpretation, the extent of urgency in answering challenges in today's society, who are the scholars who play an important role in the development of the lughawi style of interpretation, and what are its shortcomings and advantages. In addition, this research also seeks the reasons why the lughawi style of interpretation is increasingly popular in interpretation studies in the classical century.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the historical factors behind the emergence of the lughawi style of interpretation, explain the scope and limitations of lughawi interpretation, describe the scholars and their works that played an important role in the development of lughawi interpretation, analyze its strengths and weaknesses

and several main reasons why this lughawi style became the most popular style in the classical era. After going through a deeper understanding of the Lughawi interpretation method, it is hoped that this research can deepen the scientific treasures and analysis of this interpretation style in understanding the meanings of the Quran, provide scientific contributions to the development of interpretation studies, and facilitate students of the Quran and interpretation in particular and Muslims in understanding the meanings of sentences in each verse of the Quran through the characteristics of the Lughawi interpretation style which is then practiced in social life.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. History of the Emergence of Tafsir Lughawi

Prophet Muhammad SAW was the first person to understand and interpret the Quran. This is reflected when he interpreted Qs. al-Baqarah verse 143,

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَاۤءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيْدًاۗ....

Meaning: "Thus We have made you (Muslims) a middle nation that you may be witnesses over mankind and that the Messenger (Prophet Muhammad) may be a witness over you..." (Qs.al-Baqarah: 143)

In this verse, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) interpreted the phrase "wasathonu" as "al-'Adl," meaning "middle" or "moderate." (Mustaqim, 2016). The Prophet's interpretation, of course, did not cover all the verses, but only related matters that his companions did not understand or that needed to be explained.

After the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) passed away, the companions of the Prophet were the ones who paid the most attention to, studied and understood the Quran. The relay of interpretation continued, one of whom was a companion who was famous as an expert in Tafsir; the one who was most asked about the meaning of the Quran was the companion Abdullah bin Abbas who was nicknamed abi al-Tafsir (al-Juwaini, 1971). One of Ibn Abbas's interpretations became a new chapter in the lughowi style which was used as one of the approaches in interpretation. When he interpreted Qs. Al-Baqarah verse 187,

اُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ اِلٰى نِسَاۤىِٕكُمْۗ....

Meaning: "It is lawful for you to be intimate with your wives on the night of the fast. They are a garment for you and you are a garment for them."

He interpreted the sentence "al-Rafats" as "al-mubasyarah," meaning sexual intercourse between husband and wife (Akbar & Maulana, 2022). Abdullah bin Abbas's interpretation became the forerunner to the madrasah lughah (Islamic boarding school). In the first century AH, he became a mentor at the madrasah, and this interpretation was continued by his students, such as Said bin Jabir and Mujahid bin Jabbar (al-'Aridhi, 1994). Three madrasas were formed during the third era; first, the al-Lughah madrasa initiated by Abu Zakaria al-Farra' (d. 207 H), with his interpretation using linguistic patterns with a work entitled; Ma'ani al-Quran, in addition there is a work entitled Majaz al-Quran by a scholar named Abu Ubaidah (d. 110 H), then Ma'ani al-Quran written by Abu Ishaq al-Zajjaj (d. 311 H). Second, the al-Aqiyah madrasa pioneered by al-Jahizh and third, the al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur madrasa by Ibn Jarir al-Thabary (d. 224-310 H) with a phenomenal work called Tafsir al-Thabary known as an interpretation that combines elements of history and language (Aziz & Saihu, 2022).

2.2. Scope of Lughawi Interpretation

According to Retno Prayudi, a lughawi interpretation for beginners is usually presented in simple language and focuses on explaining the basics of the language of Quranic verses, such as words, sentence structure, and literal meaning, in an easy-to-understand way. Then at the intermediate level, he explained that at this level, it begins to present a broader analysis by presenting discussions on language style, majaz, and aspects of balaghah that enrich the understanding of the meaning of the verses (Prayudi, 2025). What Retno said is in line with the limitations explained by Dewi Murni, that lughawi interpretation with its various presentations and discussions does not deviate from two large groups:

a. Pure Lughawi Tafsir which mostly discusses linguistic aspects only. Such as Tafsir Ma'an al Qur'an by al Farra, Tafsir al-Jalalain by al Suyuti and al Mahalli, Tafsir al-Kasyaf by al Zamakhsyari, and others.
b. Tafsir Lughawi whose discussion is mixed with other discussions such as law, theology, and the like. Such as Tafsir al-Tabari, Mafatih al Ghaib by Fakhruddin al Razi, and other interpretations that have appeared until now including Tafsir al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab.

Lughawi's interpretation includes several things, including:

a. Nahwu or I'rab of the Qur'an and tafsir which only focuses on discussing the i'rab or position of each word of the Qur'an.
b. Sharaf (semiotics and semantics) which focuses on discussing aspects of word meaning, isytiqaq, and correlation between words.
c. Balaghah, which covers three aspects:
    1) Ma'an al-Quran which specifically studies the meaning of the vocabulary of the Quran.
    2) Bayan al-Qur'an which prioritizes the explanation of the word from the root, then linking one meaning to another.
    3) Badi' al-Qur'an tends towards the beauty of its arrangement and style of language

From the above description, it can be understood that lughawi interpretation has two main orientations in its presentation. First, pure lughawi interpretation which focuses entirely on linguistic analysis without involving legal or theological discussions, as seen in works such as Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān by al-Farrā', Al-Kashshāf by al-Zamakhsharī, and Tafsir al-Jalālayn. Second, lughawi interpretation is integrative, namely combining the study of language with other disciplines such as law (fiqh), theology ('aqīdah), and philosophy, as seen in Jāmi' al-Bayān by al-Ṭabarī and Mafātīḥal-Ghayb by Fakhruddin al-Rāzī. From this it is clear that lughawi interpretation is not monolithic, but rather open to development according to the scholarly background of the interpreter.

The scope of lughawi interpretation encompasses three main areas of Arabic language: grammar, sharaf, and balaghah. The study of grammar focuses on the analysis of the i'rāb or syntactic structure of the Qur'an, while sharaf explores the origins of words (isytiqāq), morphological forms, and semantic relationships between words. Meanwhile, balaghah encompasses the three main branches of ma'ānī, bayān, and badī', which together examine aspects of meaning, rhetorical explanation, and the beauty of the Qur'an's style. Thus, it can be concluded that lughawi interpretation is an approach that positions language as the primary instrument for revealing divine meaning, where grammatical precision, semantic depth, and rhetorical beauty form its epistemological foundation. This approach demonstrates that understanding the Qur'an cannot be separated from a comprehensive and methodological mastery of Arabic language.

2.3. The Popularity of Lughawi Interpretation in the Classical Age

Lughawi-style exegesis achieved significant popularity throughout classical Islamic history due to the scholarly need to understand the Qur'an as a rhetorically rich Arabic text. Since the early days of the exegetes, with the contributions of the successors and successors in explaining the meaning of vocabulary and grammatical constructions, the need for linguistic studies has continued to grow alongside the expansion of studies in grammar, grammar, and rhetoric. In the context of madrasah education and the scholarly tradition of the Abbasid era and beyond, linguistic studies became a crucial tool for interpreting texts beyond merely citing narratives and also explaining the interrelationships between words, stylistic choices, and rhetorical sequences that emphasize the meaning of the text. This makes the lughawi style relevant and often a key component of exegesis books studied in classical centers of knowledge (madrasahs) (Akbar & Maulana, 2022).

The textual dominance of lughawi exegesis in the classical period is also evident in the emergence of monumental works that place linguistic analysis as the primary axis of interpretation. One particularly prominent example is al-Kashshāf by az-Zamakhsharī (d. 538 AH / 1144 CE), known for its sharp linguistic and rhetorical analysis; this work demonstrates how the lughawi approach can reveal dimensions of meaning (semantics, syntax, and stylistics) that are not apparent when relying solely on narration. The power of language and rhetoric displayed in such works makes lughawi exegesis an important reference, although some traditional commentators or scholars have criticized the tendency of textual structures that are considered to touch on theological issues or certain schools of thought (Ullah, 2013).

This popularity was further strengthened by the editing, abridgment, and adaptation of Lughawi works by subsequent generations, thereby widely disseminating Lughawi content within the canon of tafsir. For example, works that adopted or responded to al-Kashshāf, whether through abridgment, purging of controversial elements, or supercommentary, made Lughawi ideas available to a wider scholarly audience. A historical example is al-Bayy's Anwār al-Tanzīl.ḍāwī (7th century AH) emerged as a concise commentary that combined clarity of language with orthodoxy, so that works like this became standard texts in many institutions of tafsir teaching for centuries; the spread of such forms of summary and commentary was common in classical tafsir curricula, and expanded the reach of the lughawi approach (Al-Baydhawi, 1999).

In addition to the influence of major works and formal education, sociocultural aspects also contributed to the popularity of lughawi interpretations. The classical period saw a surge in Arabic studies (both due to the scholarly interests of the language itself and the needs of non-Arabs studying Islam), making linguistic proficiency a mark of the interpreter's credibility. Furthermore, the interconnected disciplines of nahwu, balāghah, ushul-fiqh (theology) encouraged interpreters to produce interpretations that served both exegetical and linguistic needs; scholarly corporations in the cities of knowledge and manuscript networks ensured that lughawi approaches enjoyed widespread circulation. However, this popularity came with debate: while lughawi interpretations placed a strong emphasis on their own aspects, criticism arose regarding both theoretical tendencies and the potential for the influence of particular schools of thought on interpretation, so that acceptance of lughawi interpretations was often selective, depending on the context of the schools and institutions that employed them.

The popularity of lughawi exegesis during the classical period cannot be separated from the intellectual structure of the Islamic world during the Abbasid period, when science experienced rapid progress and Arabic served as the universal language of knowledge. It was during this period that various disciplines such as philosophy, logic, ushul fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and theology used Arabic as a medium for argumentation. Therefore, language proficiency was considered an epistemological prerequisite for understanding scientific and religious texts, including the Quran. This linguistic tradition gave birth to a generation of interpreters who were not only skilled in religious knowledge but also mastered advanced linguistic tools. In this context, lughawi exegesis served as a bridge between pure linguistics and exegetical religious studies.

Furthermore, the Lughawi approach served to strengthen Islam's scientific identity amid the influence of Greek philosophy and the widespread foreign translations of the period. By asserting that Arabic possesses its own system of logic and rhetoric, no less powerful than those of other classical languages, Lughawi exegetes helped strengthen the Quran's position as a unique, rational, and aesthetically stunning text.

Furthermore, the popularity of lughawi exegesis was also supported by the strong tradition of scientific transmission (isnād al-'ilm) in the classical Islamic world. Students of exegesis studied key works directly from teachers in the halaqah system, madrasas, and large mosques such as those in Kufa, Basrah, and Baghdad. This teaching process enabled the reproduction of linguistic and methodological ideas from one generation to the next. In fact, works such as al-Bayyī's Anwār al-Tanzīlḍāwī, which combined a lughawi approach with a moderate theological tone, became a standard text in exegesis curricula across Islamic lands until the Ottoman period. The popularity of lughawi exegesis was thus due not only to its intellectual quality but also to the educational system and dissemination of manuscripts that supported the preservation of linguistic discourse in exegesis.

From an epistemological perspective, the Lughawi approach demonstrates that classical commentators were highly aware of the importance of scientific methods in understanding revelation. They considered language not merely a means of communication but also a medium for revealing divine meaning, demanding rational precision and mastery of linguistic theory. This makes Lughawi interpretation part of the Tafsir bi al-dirāyah (critical understanding-based interpretation) movement, complementing the Tafsir bi al-ma'thūr (narrative-based interpretation). By prioritizing semantic, syntactic, and stylistic analysis, Lughawi commentators reinforced the Islamic scientific tradition, grounded in rigorous textual observation and rational argumentation. This approach demonstrates that Qur'anic interpretation in classical Islam has moved beyond mere reproduction of meaning to an analytical reading of the structure of revealed language.

However, despite its popularity, lughawi interpretation also faces methodological challenges in the context of pluralistic understandings. Because of its emphasis on linguistic aspects, this interpretation often sparks debate among scholars who place greater emphasis on theological or Sufi aspects. Some scholars believe that lughawi interpretation's focus on the form and structure of language can create a "distance" from the spiritual value of the text. Nevertheless, this debate actually enriches the treasury of Islamic exegesis, as it fosters dialogue between the linguistic, rational, and spiritual dimensions in understanding revelation. In other words, lughawi interpretation's popularity stems not only from its achievements in interpreting language, but also from its role as an intellectual arena that brings together various modes of interpretation under one broad umbrella: understanding the meaning of the Quran.

Thus, the popularity of lughawi interpretation in the classical era was not merely an aesthetic phenomenon, but rather the result of a confluence of hermeneutical needs (understanding the Qur'an in Arabic), the production and circulation of major books that prioritized linguistic analysis, and the institutionalization of tafsir learning within the network of classical scholarship. This popularity continued to transform: although subsequent eras brought critical reactions and methodological renewal, the lughawi legacy remains one of the pillars influencing how people understand the linguistic aspects of the Qur'an well into the modern era (Akbar & Maulana, 2022).

2.4. Special Features of Tafsir Books in the Lughawi Style

The lughawi style of exegesis is a form of interpretation that places Arabic at the heart of the Quranic interpretation process. Exegetes using this style proceed from the view that the Quran is a text containing linguistic wonders (i'jaz lughawi), so that to understand its contents, one must trace its word order, lexical meaning, and sentence structure with great precision. The lughawi style of exegesis is characterized by a number of distinctive characteristics that distinguish it from other tafsir approaches.

First, lughawi-style exegesis consistently employs linguistic analysis such as etymology, morphology, syntax, and Arabic rhetoric as the primary tools for uncovering the meaning of sacred verses. As emphasized in the study, lughawi exegesis "explains the holy book of the Qur'an through semiotic and semantic interpretations that encompass etymology, morphology, lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical." For example, the introduction to one study states that lughawi exegetes must "have a certain capacity" to understand the Qur'an's sophisticated style of language so that lughawi analysis techniques can be implemented appropriately.

Second, lughawi commentaries often present word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase discussions, with particular attention to the wording of the Quran and the relationships between words within the context of the verses. For example, in a study of Al-Zamakhsharī's Al-Kashshāf, it is stated that its strength lies in its "comprehensive use of linguistic sources in its exegesis" and that this exegete "places significant emphasis on the principles of rationality" along with grammar and rhetoric. Thus, lughawi commentaries tend to delve into the micro-textual realm (words, morphemes, sentence structures) rather than solely discussing larger meanings or social contexts (Dzulhijati & Amelia, 2022).

Third, the lughawi approach to exegesis also deeply integrates Arabic grammar (nahwu, sharaf) and balaghah (rhetoric and stylistics) as interpretive instruments. An article examining Zamakhsharī's contribution states that his exegesis "utilizes a rich analysis of rhetoric and balaghah" resulting in a deeper understanding of the beauty and depth of the language of the Qur'an (Malik et al., 2025). Thus, lughawi exegesis books generally not only explain 'what' a word means, but also 'why' the choice of word is used in the context of the verse, how the sentence is structured, and how stylistic aspects such as i'jaz and naẓm (word order) plays a role.

Fourth, lughawi-style commentaries often display critical analytical characteristics of the wording and language structure of the Qur'an, sometimes more prominent than the citation of narrations or Isra'iliyyat stories. In research on the concept of lughawi interpretation, it is stated that this approach often faces criticism because it is "too wordy" and "the references used use Arabic language rules rather than Qur'anic verses and hadith" so that it is sometimes considered to ignore the main purpose of the meaning of the Qur'an (Edi & Fangesty, 2024). In other words, the intensive focus on language in lughawi interpretation produces interpretations that are very technical linguistically and sometimes appear 'elitist' to lay readers.

Fifth, in terms of book structure, lughawi tafsir books often provide systematic explanations (although variations differ between authors) that include: a discussion of lafaz or grammatical forms, an explanation of alternative meanings based on structure, a discussion of rhetoric or style of language, and cross-references to other verses or linguistic rules. For example, in a study of lughawi tafsir, it is stated that one of the books presents a complete discussion of nahwu, sarf, and the application of linguistic rules and even quotes Shi'aʿr from books such as Ibn Mālik's Alfiyyah to strengthen his interpretation (Anwar, 2020). In summary, the distinctive characteristics of lughawi tafsir books include: intense analysis of classical Arabic; detailed analysis of the wording and structure of verses; integration of grammar and rhetoric; a critical approach to wording and structure without relying too heavily on narrative; and a systematic explanatory structure with a focus on linguistic aspects. These characteristics make them highly suitable for readers and scholarly studies requiring in-depth linguistic understanding, but they also pose unique challenges in terms of readability and engagement with socio-contextual contexts. Some Tafsir books that are in a lughawi style are as follows (Karimah & Hasyim, 2023):

a. Al-Kashshāf (Abū al-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī). A monumental work often referred to for examining how rhetorical elements and linguistic beauty (balāghah) reveal layers of meaning in verses. Al-Zamakhsharī places attention on grammar and style, analyzing word functions, sentence structures, and the aesthetic reasons behind word choices; his approach is rich in linguistic analysis and tends to employ linguistic ijtihād, sometimes emphasizing the raʾy compared to riwāyāt references.
b. The Maʻānī al-Qur'ān (al-Farrā') is a classic example of exegesis deeply rooted in the Kufan school of Nahwu: al-Farrā' selects specific verses that are problematic from an iʿrāb perspective and examines them in detail. His work is not a complete mushāfī exegesis in the modern sense, but rather a collection of linguistic explanations that highlight morphological forms, variations in qirā'āt, and grammatical issues that influence the reading and understanding of the verses.

c. Despite its similar name, al-Akhfash's approach leans more towards the Basrah school. He wrote with a practical aim: to demonstrate that the language of the Qur'an can be clearly explained through linguistic rules (phonology, morphology, syntax) and literary examples (including Jahiliyah poetry). Al-Akhfash's method often involves comparing qira'at and poetry quotations as evidence of word usage outside the Qur'anic context, making it suitable for those seeking historical-philological proof of a meaning.

The existence of lughawi-style interpretations cannot be separated from the dynamic development of Arabic linguistics that emerged in the early days of Islam. As Islam began to expand into non-Arab regions, concerns arose that the purity of the Quranic language would be distorted by the influence of local dialects and languages. This prompted systematic efforts to research and document Arabic language rules, as carried out by figures such as Sibawaih, al-Farrā', and al-Akhfash. They were not only experts in grammar but also laid the foundations for the lughawi tradition of interpretation. Therefore, it can be said that lughawi interpretation emerged as a scientific response to the need to maintain the authenticity of the meaning of revelation, by making language a valid epistemological instrument for understanding divine messages.

In addition, lughawi interpretation also has strong philosophical and epistemological dimensions. Lughawi exegetes start from the premise that language is a bridge between God and humanity; in other words, understanding the structure of language means approaching God's will as expressed in linguistic form. This understanding gives lughawi interpretation a philosophical awareness that language is not merely a medium, but also a vehicle for meaning and truth. By analyzing sentence patterns, word order, and semantic relationships between words, lughawi interpretation not only interprets the text but also constructs an ontological understanding of the relationship between God's words and human understanding.

Another characteristic that needs to be emphasized is the critical approach of the Lughawi exegetes to differences in qira'at and Arabic dialects. Exegetes such as al-Farrā' and al-Zajjāj often explore how differences in readings within a particular verse affect grammatical and semantic meaning. This demonstrates the breadth of the Lughawi exegetical perspective, which does not become trapped in a single linguistic form but instead utilizes Arabic linguistic diversity as a rich source of revelation. For example, in interpreting the words maliki and maliki in Surah al-FātiḥAh, lughawi interpretation explains the grammatical and semantic differences between ownership and power, both of which are linguistically and theologically valid. This approach demonstrates how lughawi interpretation contributes to a pluralistic semantic understanding while remaining coherent with the meaning of the Qur'an.

From a methodological perspective, lughawi exegesis also demonstrates the continuity between Arabic linguistics and Qur'anic hermeneutics. This approach is not merely descriptive but also interpretive—it seeks to decipher the rationale behind the choice of a particular structure or word form. For example, when the Qur'an uses the plural in one context and the singular in another, lughawi exegetes will explore the semantic value, rhetorical aspects, and the intended meaning. Therefore, lughawi interpretation not only explains what the text means, but also how and why that meaning is constructed within its linguistic structure. Thus, lughawi exegesis occupies a crucial position in broadening the linguistic horizon of interpretation, connecting the formalistic aspects of the text with its spiritual and theological meaning. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that lughawi-style tafsir books not only possess linguistic value but also play a role in building a cross-disciplinary scholarly tradition. In works such as Al-Kashshāf, Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān, and Al-Baḥr al-Muḥiṭ, the exegetes not only discuss grammar and rhetoric, but also touch on theology, logic, and philosophy of language. This makes lughawi interpretation a multidimensional form of interpretation, encompassing linguistic, rational, and aesthetic aspects simultaneously. Therefore, understanding lughawi interpretation requires a broad perspective, not only in linguistics but also in Islamic intellectual history in general.

In a modern context, lughawi interpretation offers significant potential for revitalization. This approach can be combined with contemporary linguistic theories such as pragmatics, cognitive semantics, and critical discourse analysis to produce a more contextual reading of the Quran that is relevant to the development of linguistics. For example, theories of field, tenor, and mode in systemic linguistics can be used to strengthen the analysis of situational context in lughawi interpretation. This effort aligns with the original spirit of classical commentators, who were always open to new approaches as long as they did not deviate from the basic principles of Arabic language and Islamic faith. Thus, lughawi interpretation can serve as a bridge between traditional interpretation and modern linguistic studies.

Finally, from an academic perspective, lughawi interpretation is not only a methodological legacy but also a representation of Islamic intellectual intelligence that balances text, reason, and the beauty of language. In the context of exegesis education in higher education, lughawi style can be used to train students to think analytically,

critically, and systematically in understanding religious texts. It fosters the ability to think across dimensions, from language to meaning, from structure to substance, and from aesthetics to ethics. Therefore, the continuation of lughawi interpretation studies is crucial so that the Islamic scientific tradition remains unshaken from its linguistic roots and can grow to adapt to new times and intellectual challenges.

2.5. Advantages and Disadvantages of Tafsir Books in the Lughawi Style

The lughawi style of Qur'anic interpretation is an approach born from the profound awareness of classical scholars that Arabic is the primary medium of revelation. Because the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, which is rich in meaning, symbolism, and rhetorical style, interpreting its text cannot be separated from linguistic studies. Therefore, lughawi-style interpretation places linguistic analysis as the primary axis in explaining the content of the Qur'an. This approach has fundamental advantages that make it an important reference in the study of exegesis, but it also has a number of methodological and practical limitations that must be considered to avoid reducing the text's meaning.

One of the most fundamental advantages of lughawi exegesis is the depth of its linguistic analysis. These commentaries examine the meanings (mufradāt), root words (isytiqāq), morphological forms, and syntactic structures (nahwu) of each word of the Qur'an. In doing so, exegetes can uncover subtle meanings (daqāiq al-ma'ānī) that cannot be captured through mere literal translation or narrative approaches. For example, Al-Zamakhsharī in Al-Kashshāf explores sentence structure (tarkīb) and the relationships between words to demonstrate the rhetorical beauty of the Qur'an. This approach makes lughawi exegesis crucial in preserving the purity of the revealed language and helping readers understand the aesthetic dimensions (balāghah) and majesty (i'jaz) of the Qur'an. (Ullah, 2013)

Another prominent advantage is the scientific and rational nature of the lughawi approach. Because it is rooted in linguistics, this interpretation encourages the use of logic and systematic textual analysis, not just the citation of narrations. In the classical tradition, this tendency is called tafsir bi al-dirāyah (interpretation by reasoning). This approach broadens the interpretive horizon because each verse is not only read from the perspective of its physical meaning but also explores the interrelationships between its sentence structures to discover a deeper message. Uliyah and Kholid note that lughawi interpretation "enables readers to discover linguistic depth that serves as a bridge between the revealed text and its contextual understanding," thus strengthening the intellectual function of interpretation (Uliyah & Kholid, 2025).

In addition to its methodological contributions, the superiority of lughawi tafsir is also evident in its ability to integrate classical Arabic linguistics (nahwu, sharaf, balāghah, and isytiqāq) into its interpretation. This integration results in a precise and measured reading of the meaning of verses. In some cases, lughawi tafsir also opens up space for modern semantic analysis, as its focus on shifting word meanings and grammatical patterns can be contextualized within contemporary linguistic theory.

However, these advantages also give rise to a number of serious limitations. First, the linguistic approach is often considered to be too focused on language form and ignoring the socio-historical context of the revelation of the verses (asbāb al-nuzūl). In-depth linguistic analysis does reveal the beauty of the text, but if removed from the historical context, it has the potential to obscure the moral message and the objectives of the sharia (maqāyesid al-sharī'ah). Uliyah and Kholid's research notes that "the lughawi approach has limitations in the social, historical, and maqā dimensions of the contextyesidī," because it places too much emphasis on language over the substance of the teachings. Therefore, this approach must be balanced with a contextual approach so that understanding the Qur'an remains relevant to the times.

Second, lughawi interpretations are often considered elitist and difficult to access by the general public. Because they contain dense linguistic terminology and complex morphological analysis, lughawi interpretations are easier to understand for academics or advanced Arabic language students. Lughawi interpretations are often considered too wordy and uncommunicative for non-specialist readers (Edi & Fangesty, 2024). This makes lughawi interpretations less effective as a medium for da'wah or community development, because they tend to emphasize the textual dimension rather than the spiritual or ethical dimensions of the verses.

The next weakness is the methodological tendency of lughawi interpretation which sometimes minimizes the role of narration (tafsir bi al-ma'tsūr)). Because their orientation is rational-linguistic analysis, many lughawi exegetes rely on linguistic rules rather than authentic narrations. As a result, as Edi and Fangesty note, lughawi exegesis "often uses Arabic rules as the primary source, rather than the Qur'an and hadith," so that "the primary purpose of interpretation is sometimes forgotten." This approach carries the risk of fragmentation of meaning, as the exegesis can lose its normative orientation derived from narrations.

In terms of its benefits, lughawi exegesis remains indispensable in modern Islamic studies. It plays a significant role in revitalizing the linguistic study of the Qur'an and helping modern readers understand the depth of the revealed language scientifically. However, from a methodological perspective, this approach needs to be synergized with social, historical, and maqāṣidī hermeneutics approaches, so that the resulting interpretations do not stop at the level of analysis of form but also address function, message, and relevance to human life. Thus, it can be concluded that lughawi exegesis is a superior form of interpretation in terms of linguistic analysis, rationality, and integration of linguistics, but it suffers from weaknesses in context, accessibility, and methodological balance. A modern exegete is required to be able to combine these strengths with a contextual approach so that Qur'anic interpretation remains holistic and alive to the realities of humanity.

The lughawi approach to interpretation actually grew out of an Islamic intellectual tradition that deeply respects language as a vessel for the meaning of revelation. In the early days of Islam, attention to language arose from the need to preserve the purity of the Quranic text from distortions caused by dialectal differences and the loss of linguistic sensitivity among generations after the Companions. Scholars such as al-Farrā', al-Akhfash, and al-Zajjāj recognized that understanding the Quran was not merely a theological issue, but also a scientific one. They viewed language as manṭiq al-wahy (the logic of revelation), making lughawi interpretation not only a tool for understanding the text but also a form of respect for the majesty of Arabic, the medium of God's word. Therefore, lughawi interpretation holds a dual position: as a linguistic approach and a spiritual expression of the perfection of divine speech.

In its methodological dimension, lughawi interpretation also reflects the spirit of classical Islamic rationalism. This tendency is evident in exegetes such as al-Zamakhsharī and Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, who placed reasoning (dirāyah) on an equal footing with narration (riwāyah). They sought to balance text and reason, language and meaning. Even in a modern context, this rational spirit of lughawi exegesis can be considered the forerunner of a scientific approach to the Qur'an. Through analysis of syntactic structures, semantic patterns, and balāghah argumentation, lughawi exegetes sought to demonstrate that the Qur'an is not merely a religious text, but an unparalleled linguistic masterpiece. This approach helped to substantiate claims of the Qur'an's miraculous nature (i'jaz al-Qur'ān) with scientifically verifiable linguistic evidence (Aziz & Saihu, 2022).

However, on the other hand, a strong attachment to linguistic aspects sometimes makes lughawi interpretation seem less responsive to the social and spiritual issues of the community. This criticism, for example, was raised by scholars such as al-Ghazali and Ibn 'Ashur, who argued that interpretation should not stop at the level of lafẓ (text), but should instead focus on maqsad (purpose). They reminded us that the Qur'an was revealed not merely to be studied for its linguistic beauty, but rather to serve as a guide for life. In this context, lughawi interpretation needs to be combined with a contextual approach that highlights social and historical realities, as well as maqāṣid al-sharīʿah (objectives of Islamic law). Without such integration, interpretation can lose the ethical and transformational dimensions that are at the core of the Qur'an's message. Furthermore, lughawi interpretation plays a strategic role in bridging the dialogue between classical Islamic tradition and modern linguistic studies. Concepts such as taṭawwur al-maʿnā (evolution of meaning) and siyāq al-lafẓ (linguistic context) used by classical commentators are in line with modern semantic theory and discourse analysis. This demonstrates that the lughawi approach is not static, but rather adaptive to developments in linguistics. In the modern era, lughawi interpretation can be revitalized by utilizing contemporary linguistic theories such as structural semantics, pragmatics, or critical discourse analysis to examine the meaning of the Qur'an in a way that is more relevant to the realities of today's communication.

Furthermore, the excellence of lughawi interpretation also lies in its ability to support efforts to preserve classical Arabic. In the context of modern Islamic education, lughawi interpretation serves as a means to deepen students' understanding of the grammar and semantics of the Quran. It serves as a bridge between Arabic language learning and tafsir studies, fostering awareness that understanding language is not merely a matter of grammar, but also of grasping the theological and moral meanings contained within. In other words, lughawi interpretation plays a crucial role in cultivating careful thinking and linguistic sensitivity, two fundamental elements for understanding religious texts critically and meaningfully. Finally, it can be emphasized that lughawi interpretation remains relevant amidst the dynamics of contemporary interpretation. In an era marked by pluralistic interpretations and rapid social change, this approach reminds people that every interpretation of revelation must be rooted in the integrity of the Quranic language. Language is not merely a medium for conveying a message, but rather part of the message itself. Therefore, the novelty of today's lughawi interpretation lies in its ability to synergize with hermeneutic, maqāṣidī and social approaches so that the understanding of the Qur'an is not only linguistically beautiful, but also alive and meaningful in human reality.

3. CONCLUSION

The emergence of lughawi exegesis stems from the early need of Muslims to understand the Quran in depth through Arabic as the medium of revelation. This tradition began with the Prophet Muhammad, who provided linguistic explanations of certain verses, and was then continued by his companions, such as Abdullah ibn Abbas, known as the founder of linguistic exegesis. Its development gave rise to schools of exegesis with a systematic lughawi approach, marking the beginning of the scientific method for understanding the Quranic text through linguistic aspects such as grammar, grammar, and rhetoric as the primary instruments of interpretation. During the classical period, lughawi exegesis reached its peak of popularity due to the scientific need to interpret the Quran rationally and rhetorically. Monumental works such as Ma'ani al-Qur'an, Majaz al-Qur'an, and al-Kashshāf demonstrate the importance of language in explaining the Quran's deepest meanings. This approach also became part of the madrasah education system and scholarly debate in the cities of classical Islamic learning, extending the influence of lughawi exegesis to various levels of intellectual society. Its popularity stems not only from the beauty of its language, but also from its ability to present semantic, stylistic, and grammatical dimensions that enrich the community's understanding of revelation. The distinctive characteristic of lughawi exegesis is evident in the intensity of its linguistic analysis, both at the word level and at the sentence structure. This style places language at the center of interpretation, systematically integrating the sciences of grammar, grammar, and rhetoric. The detailed, critical, and rule-based discussion of language makes lughawi exegesis scientific and rational, although it is often considered elitist due to its inaccessibility to lay readers. The focus on micro-textual aspects distinguishes it from tafsir bi al-ma'tsur or contextual tafsir, as it emphasizes the form and structure of language rather than the narrative or historical context of the verse. Despite its advantages in analytical depth and linguistic precision, lughawi exegesis also has limitations, primarily due to its lack of attention to the socio-historical context and moral purpose of the Qur'an. This approach needs to be balanced with a maqāṣidī and contextual perspective so that the meaning of the verses remains alive and relevant to the modern era. Therefore, lughawi exegesis remains an important foundation in the study of tafsir, but its use in the current era demands a synergy between linguistic accuracy and contextual understanding so that Qur'anic interpretation does not stop at the beauty of the text, but also leads to a substantive and applicable understanding of the Qur'an.

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