



TEACHING *BALAGHAH* AESTHETICS: PEDAGOGICAL NEGOTIATION OF MEANING IN *TASYBIH* AND *MAJAZ* AT ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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Abstract: This study aimed to examine how educators teach the aesthetic concepts of *Majaz* (figurative language) and *Tasybih* (simile) through a process of negotiation of meaning. This qualitative research using a case study approach aims to analyze the pedagogical dynamics and learning trajectories of *Balaghah* at the Attaqwa Putra Islamic Boarding School. Data were collected through participatory classroom observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of teaching materials and *Pegon* annotations. The results of the study had shown three main findings that are integrated into the Arabic rhetoric learning process. First, the selection and curation of teaching materials are carried out strategically through socio-cultural reconceptualization to bridge the gap between classical texts and the context of the lives of modern students. Second, the implementation of a layered learning strategy that combines inductive, deductive, analytical, and applicative approaches successfully facilitates the negotiation of meaning through scaffolding techniques and dialogic pauses. Third, the use of Socratic questioning techniques has been proven to accelerate the trajectory of students' cognitive maturity while fostering aesthetic sensitivity (*dzaug*) and intellectual satisfaction. The implications of this research confirm that the modernization of Arabic language learning in Islamic boarding schools does not have to eliminate local traditions such as *sorogan* and *bandongan*, but can be optimized as a pedagogical innovation based on Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) that fortifies students from textual literalism and supports the formation of a moderate religious character (*Wasathiyah*).

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INTRODUCTION

The study of Arabic in Islamic educational institutions holds a strategic position because it is a key prerequisite for mastering the body of Islamic scholarship (R. K. Anam, 2025 and Husnarati, 2025). Among the branches of Arabic linguistics, *Balaghah* (Arabic rhetoric) is the most complex and pedagogically challenging subject. Unlike *Nahwu* (syntax) and *Shorf* (morphology), which are relatively rule-based, *Balaghah* requires students to understand meaning at a higher level encompassing contextual accuracy, linguistic nuance, and the aesthetic beauty of expression (Adhinugraha et al., 2024; Qodriyah & Asfiah, 2025). The main challenge in teaching *Balaghah*, therefore, is not merely a matter of transferring rules, but rather a matter of how to cultivate higher-order thinking skills and aesthetic sensitivity in students (Amalia et al., 2025 and Annabil et al., 2026).

From the perspective of contemporary educational theory, this difficulty can be understood through the concepts of cognitive load and meaningful learning. *Balaghah* material is characterized by a high degree of interactivity among its elements: to understand a single *Tasybih*, students must simultaneously process vocabulary, syntactic structure, the cultural context of the source text, and the figurative relationships among its elements (Khaerunnisa & Firdaus, 2026 and Hafidz et al., 2025). In this educational setting, senior high school-level santri face significant cognitive and linguistic challenges, as they are required to master these complex rhetorical skills not only for text comprehension but also within formal writing rules a demanding feat for teenage learners (Alrashoudi et al., 2025; Machmudah et al., 2026). Despite these hurdles, studying *Balaghah* remains indispensable; it serves as a critical analytical key to unlocking classical Islamic texts and the Qur'an while transforming students into active decoders of figurative meaning and sophisticated Arabic communication (Al Waely, 2023; Fikri et al., 2023). Without automatic basic reading skills, students' working memory becomes overwhelmed by surface-level analysis, leaving no capacity for deeper comprehension. Consequently, teaching *Balaghah* becomes a challenge of instructional design requiring strategic sequencing, simplification, and scaffolding to manage cognitive load and facilitate meaningful learning (El-Mneizel et al., 2023; Sanusi et al., 2024).

In practice, *Balaghah* instruction at Attaqwa Putra Islamic Boarding School faces distinct pedagogical challenges in the classroom. Learning activities frequently lean toward the mechanical memorization of rules rather than fostering literary appreciation, which reduces the dynamic art of rhetoric to mere formula memorization. Consequently, students struggle to process *Tasybih* and *Majaz*, viewing them as abstract, difficult concepts detached from daily life rather than as functional tools for interpreting texts. Furthermore, classroom interactions show that learning outcomes often remain limited to lower-order cognitive processes like basic recall and simple comprehension, rarely progressing toward deeper analysis or critical evaluation during text discussion. This gap ultimately leaves santri unable to independently decipher figurative nuances when encountering unannotated classical Arabic texts.

Learning *Ilm al-Bayan* (such as *Tasybih*, *Majaz*, and *Kinayah*) for Indonesian students faces cognitive and cultural obstacles due to the habit of having a literal mindset and the absence of classical Arabic cultural schemes. To overcome this gap, educators apply pedagogical strategies by building a scheme of understanding first through analogies, stories and local cultural references before introducing Arabic rhetorical structures. To address these empirical obstacles, the teaching framework must be re-examined through the lens of effective instructional design where learning is mediated and collaborative. Grounded in Lev Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (Culver et al., 2024; Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2023), the acquisition of complex rhetorical skills like *Tasybih* and *Majaz* relies heavily on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and social interactions within the learning environment (Aira & Doom, 2025; Syaharuddin et al., 2025). In a pesantren ecosystem like Attaqwa Putra where traditional *Salaf* methodologies merge with modern curricula. Teachers act as essential cultural mediators who provide instructional scaffolding. Through guided dialogue and collaborative negotiation of meaning, educators gradually bridge the gap between students' current reading fluency and higher-order cognitive processing. As a result, this structured social interaction enables teenage learners to internalize advanced Arabic rhetoric and master formal writing rules more effectively.

Previous studies have broadly documented various pedagogical interventions aimed at improving Arabic rhetoric comprehension through innovative instructional strategies (Setiani, 2026; Marlius et al., 2025; and Sa'diah et al., 2024).. Several scholars highlight that shifting from passive grammar memorization to active, student-centered learning environments significantly enhances students' engagement and conceptual grasp of complex linguistic structures (Abdalla, 2025; Alfayez, 2023). In addition, research exploring cognitive support mechanisms confirmed that implementing structured scaffolding and accelerated reading methods helps reduce learners' cognitive load during text analysis (Elayyan & Talafha, 2023; Khatib-Abbas & Lipka, 2025; Wahyuni et al., 2026). These findings collectively demonstrate that managing processing demands through guided instructional design serves as an effective solution for teaching abstract language concepts. Consequently, integrating mediation strategies within traditional language frameworks provides a proven pathway toward fostering deeper literary appreciation among learners.

While existing literature focuses largely on basic grammar acquisition or purely textual literary analyses of rhetorical devices, this study occupies a distinct position by focusing directly on the live classroom interactions within a traditional pesantren ecosystem. Its unique strength lies in examining how classical pedagogical practices, such as *sorogan* and *bandongan*, are combined with modern acceleration techniques like the 33 Method to address real-time learning hurdles. Furthermore, this research bridges the gap between traditional Islamic scholarly heritage and contemporary educational demands for higher-order thinking skills. Unlike prior works that treat language mastery merely as a technical skill, this study positions the classroom as a dynamic space for cultural

and cognitive negotiation. By grounding the inquiry in the specific context of Attaqwa Putra, the study offers an integrative perspective that connects pedagogical mediation directly to character development and religious moderation.

The main novelty of this study lies in shifting the analytical focus from the static structure of rhetorical texts to the actual pedagogical process moving from asking *what* figurative devices are to investigating *how* they are negotiated and internalized. Theoretically, it introduces an integrative framework by unifying classical Arabic rhetoric, sociocultural learning theory, and cognitive load theory to analyze the classroom as a simultaneous linguistic, social, and cognitive event. Practically, this research addresses a critical educational gap by documenting how a hybrid pedagogy can preserve classical textual traditions while fostering modern critical thinking. Aligning directly with the study's core focus, this study aimed to examine how educators teach the aesthetic concepts of *Majaz* (figurative language) and *Tasybih* (simile) through a process of negotiation of meaning. Ultimately, the insights gained from this investigation aim to furnish a transferable pedagogical model that educators across Islamic institutions can adapt to teach complex, abstract subjects effectively.

(Umam et al., 2025; (Nasir, 2024). (Huda & Fitriana, 2024; Prasetya, 2025). (Suresman et al., 2025; K. Anam & Jasminto, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative design utilizing an instrumental case study approach to examine the pedagogical processes of teaching aesthetic language in an authentic educational environment. The research was conducted at Attaqwa Putra Islamic Boarding School in Bekasi, West Java, chosen for its historical reputation and unique integration of classical *kitab kuning* curricula with modern standards. Data were gathered through prolonged fieldwork utilizing participant observations in formal classrooms and traditional *halaqah* (*sorogan* and *bandongan*), semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and artifact analysis of textbooks such as *Al-Balaghah Al-Wadhihah*. Primary data were derived from 8 key informants selected via purposive sampling: 2 senior *Balaghah* educators, 2 religious curriculum administrators, and 4 advanced senior high school-level santri. Secondary sources included institutional archives, KH. Noer Ali's educational philosophy documents, and curricular modules like the "Method 33".

Data analysis followed the interactive qualitative model of Miles and Huberman, involving iterative data reduction, systematic presentation through pedagogical matrices, and conclusion drawing. The reduction phase organized interview transcripts and field notes into relational coding schemes categorizing teacher scaffolding, student cognitive responses, and specific rhetorical concepts like *Tasybih* and *Majaz*. To ensure data trustworthiness and rigorous validation, the study employed prolonged field engagement, triangulation across multiple sources and methods, member-checking with key informants, and an audit trail of analytical decisions. Furthermore, ethical standards were strictly maintained

through written informed consent, participant anonymization, and reflexive partner interpretation throughout the research process (Bingham, 2023; Tracy, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

An empirical investigation at the Attaqwa Putra Islamic Boarding School revealed a structured yet flexible learning ecosystem, specifically designed to convey the complexity of *Balaghah* knowledge. The institutional curriculum operates within a dual-pillar framework that integrates national educational standards for the Madrasah Aliyah level with the traditional *Salaf* methodology inherited from KH. Noer Ali. At the core of this advanced language learning is a commitment to mastering the “kitab kuning” (classical Islamic texts), which demands not only grammatical skills in *Nahwu* and *Shorf* but, fundamentally, a mastery of the aesthetics of meaning (*Balaghah*). The administrators consistently frame this commitment within the framework of educational goals: the ability to read classical texts aesthetically and not merely grammatically is viewed as a key learning outcome that distinguishes Attaqwa graduates.

What is pedagogically interesting is that the integration of these two curriculum pillars namely the National Curriculum standards set by the government and the traditional *Salaf* curriculum rooted in classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*). It does not take the form of a rigid juxtaposition, but rather of mutual enrichment. National standards provide a framework of measurable and structured learning outcomes, while the *Salaf* tradition contributes depth of textual mastery and an intensive learning culture. Educators report that the two are not viewed as contradictory: the core competencies outlined in the national curriculum are treated as a stepping stone toward mastery of the more demanding classical Islamic texts. In this way, Attaqwa Putra manages what is referred to in educational studies as “curriculum alignment” alignment between objectives, content, methods, and assessment even though it draws from two educational traditions with different origins. This finding provides a concrete example of how Islamic educational institutions can integrate modern demands and classical heritage without sacrificing either.

Selection of Instructional Materials as a Strategic Pedagogical Decision

The first finding concerns the selection of instructional materials as a pedagogical decision. The primary textbook for rhetoric instruction at Attaqwa Putra is *Al-Balaghah Al-Wadhihah* by Ali Jarim and Musthafa Amin. This selection is no coincidence. Unlike classical rhetoric manuscripts, which are based on theoretical deduction and dense *nadhom* (verses of rules), *Al-Balaghah Al-Wadhihah* is structured using an inductive method (*tariqah istiqlaliyyah*). This book systematically presents concrete examples from the Qur'an, the Hadith, and classical Arabic poetry including the *Mu'allaqat*, a collection of pre-Islamic long poems considered masterpieces of high literature before deriving its rhetorical principles. From a learning perspective, this inductive approach aligns

with the principle of meaningful learning: students are guided from empirical observations of beautiful linguistic constructions toward a theoretical understanding of the linguistic architecture that underpins them.

Supporting empirical data confirm that the inductive approach implemented in *Al-Balaghah Al-Wadhihah* directly influences classroom learning dynamics. Based on interview findings with rhetoric educators, selecting this text was primarily driven by the need to minimize students' cognitive load, as learners often feel overwhelmed when confronted with abstract theoretical rules (*nadhom*) at the beginning of instruction. Classroom observations in Madrasah Aliyah sessions revealed that teachers consistently initiate lessons by guiding students to analyze and decode the aesthetic nuances of *Mu'allaqat* poetry or Quranic verses written on the whiteboard before formulating the definitions of *Tasybih* or *Majaz*. This empirical approach effectively enhances students' active participation during interactive discussions on textual meaning structures. Furthermore, this practice aligns with Attaqwa Putra's *Balaghah* Syllabus and Instructional Modules, which explicitly specify that learning success indicators are measured by students' ability to identify aesthetic linguistic examples prior to mastering formal grammatical rules.

A Layered Learning Strategy

The third finding concerns a layered learning strategy. To navigate these cognitive barriers, Attaqwa Putra does not rely on a single linear method but rather applies a matrix of mutually reinforcing learning methodologies, as presented in Table 1. This matrix illustrates a learning ecosystem in which cognition, communication, and cultural transfer support one another, rather than operating as separate stages.

Table 1. Matrix of *Balaghah* Teaching Methods at the Attaqwa Putra Islamic Boarding School

Teaching Method	Pedagogical Characteristics	Role of the Educator (Ustadz/Kiai)	Student's Learning Activities	Learning Outcomes (Cognitive Domain)
Bandongan	Classical learning; one-way transmission of knowledge that collectively builds a conceptual foundation.	Facilitator and epistemic mediator; reads aloud, translates, and provides cultural context as a starting point	Active listening and annotating meaning using the <i>Pegon</i> script as a meaningful note-taking strategy.	Comprehension (C2); familiarity with the structure of classical texts and mastery of basic rhetorical vocabulary.
Sorogan	Individualized learning based on formative assessment; intensive personalized guidance and feedback.	Diagnostic and instructional; direct correction of pronunciation, syntax, and translation (scaffolding).	Demonstrating reading aloud to the teacher to receive corrections and reinforcement	Application (C3); mastery of microstructures of language and initial identification of stylistic features.
Muhawarah	Active communicative learning; dialogic interaction among students to produce authentic language.	Conversation partners and models; stimulating the use of linguistic aesthetics in real-life situations.	Practicing rhetorical vocabulary in authentic conversations and social contexts.	Analysis (C4); a shift from passive reception to active language production.

Method 33	A structured acceleration framework for reading classical texts without vowel marks (<i>kitab gundul</i>).	Methodological instruction; instilling systematic and measurable analytical-grammatical steps.	Applying a logical sequence for reading texts before conducting aesthetic analysis.	Application & Analysis (C3-C4); reducing the cognitive burden of syntax as a prerequisite for semantic analysis.
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Each of these learning strategies addresses a distinct dimension of rhetoric, moving students from foundational comprehension to sophisticated literary critique and creative expression. The inductive strategy builds analytical thinking by encouraging learners to observe patterns across classical texts before synthesizing formal rules, whereas the deductive strategy offers a structured framework that benefits beginners who require explicit definitions before analyzing complex poetry or prose. The analytical strategy deepens this engagement by examining how stylistic choices function cohesively within broader literary contexts, while the comparative strategy sharpens critical judgment by contrasting subtle variations in word order, emphasis, and imagery. Ultimately, the applied strategy converts theoretical understanding into practical mastery, tasking students with crafting their own rhetorical devices and evaluating real-world discourse to internalize the beauty and utility of Arabic rhetoric.

First, Contextual *Bandongan* & *Sorogan* Method (Islamic Boarding School Treasures). The teacher reads the book (*bandongan*), but when interpreting examples (*syawahid*) which are usually in the form of *jahiliyah* poetry, the teacher does not only translate word for word, but also describes the psychological situation of the poet at that time so that the students understand why the language style is used. Second, Comparative Method (Language Comparison). Bridging the rules of *Balaghoh* with the literature of the language understood by students everyday (Indonesian or regional languages). Or by mentioning familiar figures in the lesson. For example, when explaining *Tasybih*, the teacher mentions figures known for their strong character, breadth of knowledge, generosity, etc.

The observational data explicitly highlights the phenomenon of meaning negotiation as the core of the learning process. When educators encounter complex *Tasybih* in *Al-Balaghah Al-Wadhihah* or accompanying texts, the learning process often deviates from its linear flow to enter a dialogic phase. For example, when analyzing a verse or classical poem containing *Majaz Mursal* where a part represents the whole, or a cause represents an effect the teacher does not merely provide a dogmatic literal translation. Instead of brushing past a difficult metaphorical phrase or just giving students the definition to save time, the teacher **deliberately freezes the lesson** when students hit a wall. The teacher then guides a group discussion to help students break down and rebuild the cultural and metaphorical meaning of the phrase together.

This process involves mapping the cognitive structure of Arabic metaphors to the sociolinguistic reality of *santri* (students). The strategies employed include the use of regional languages, local cultural analogies such as comparing desert

traditions in the source imagery to the agrarian or coastal ecosystems of the Indonesian archipelago and the integration of Javanese, Sundanese, or Malay written in Arabic script, known as *Pegon*. As a learning medium, the *Pegon* script has proven to serve as a vital intertextual bridge: this medium allows the hierarchical syntactic structure of Arabic texts to remain intact through the tarkib system (*utawi-iku* conventions), while infusing grounded local semantic nuances. Through guided questions and repeated feedback, students gradually negotiate their understanding of the *Tasybih* structure, identifying the *musyabbah* (the thing being likened), the *musyabbah bih* (the thing to which it is likened), *wajh al-syabah* (the point of resemblance), and adat *Tasybih* (the particle of likening) until abstract aesthetic concepts are successfully anchored within their existing cognitive frameworks.

A typical classroom episode succinctly illustrates this process. During a group study session on a verse containing a *Tasybih* that likens the steadfastness of believers to a tree with deep roots, the ustadz first read and translated the verse, then paused just before the metaphor. Instead of unilaterally defining its meaning, he asked the students about trees capable of withstanding storms, drawing answers from their hometowns' agricultural experiences. Only after this local imagery was activated did he map it back to the Arabic structure, naming the *musyabbah*, *musyabbah bih*, and *wajh al-syabah* one by one, and annotating them in *Pegon* so that the Arabic syntax and local glosses appeared side by side. The students' subsequent ability to paraphrase the verse in their own words and propose their own versions of the tree metaphor indicates that figurative logic not merely lexical content has been internalized.

The role of learning technology in reducing cognitive load. The implementation of Method 33 serves as a crucial pedagogical catalyst. In-depth interviews revealed that students have historically hit a wall in understanding *Balaghah* because their cognitive load was completely drained by basic syntactic reading namely, the arduous task of determining *i'rab*, or the grammatical function of words. The 33 Method provides a structured, rapid, and pragmatic algorithm for reading Arabic texts without vowel marks (*kitab gundul*). By automating part of the syntactic reading process, the 33 Method frees up the students' working memory capacity, which is then available for deeper engagement in high-level aesthetic and rhetorical analysis. Several advanced students reported in the FGD that once the mechanics of decoding no longer demanded their attention, they were able for the first time to "feel" the imagery of a verse, rather than merely decoding it.

Applying examples from Quranic verses relevant to hidden meanings, thus exploring students' curiosity in understanding each word of the verse. Teachers usually require students to bring a translated copy of the Quran to each *Balaghah* learning session. For students beginning or first learning *Balaghah* (grade 4): Focus: Cultivating students' *dzauq* adaby (literary taste). Students are introduced to the aesthetic differences of Arabic and are introduced to the multiple meanings of words. They were then introduced to the detailed differentiation of the three main branches: *Ma'ani*, *Bayan*, and *Badi'*. The next stage: Aligning

language rules with general *Ma'ani Lughowiyah* (language of the Arabic language) so that students can understand that the grammatical function of Arabic is not limited to changing the vowels alone. Furthermore, the teaching method focuses on applying the rules of *Balaghoh* to understand the secrets of word choice in the Qur'an (*Tafsir Balaghi*) as well as the insight into meaning in the poems of Arabic poets.

Cognitive, Socratic and Affective Maturity in *Balaghah* Learning

The other finding is the existence of a tiered trajectory of learning maturity. Beginner students generally operate in a mode of reception and imitation, annotating texts and reproducing the teacher's glosses. Intermediate students begin to identify rhetorical devices independently, though often with some difficulty. Advanced students at the Ma'had Aly level demonstrate qualitatively different competencies: they are able to generate their own analogies, defend their interpretive choices, and even critique inappropriate metaphors indicators that rhetorical knowledge has shifted from passive recognition toward active and productive mastery. This trajectory resembles the progression in the cognitive domain from "understanding" to "creating" in the taxonomy of learning, and provides evidence that *Balaghah* instruction at Attaqwa successfully fosters higher-order thinking skills.

Further analysis of classroom interactions reveals that questioning serves as a central pedagogical tool in the negotiation of meaning. The Ustadz rarely provide figurative interpretations directly; instead, they frequently pose a series of questions that guide the students to discover for themselves the relationship between literal and figurative meanings an approach resembling guided discovery learning. Questions such as "Why did the poet choose a camel instead of a horse?" or "What is the similarity between steadfast faith and a tree?" compel students to draw on their prior knowledge and construct their own inferential bridges. Observational data show that the quality of teachers' questions correlates with the depth of students' understanding: open-ended and challenging questions generate richer discussions compared to closed-ended questions that merely require true-or-false answers. These findings confirm that teachers' questioning skills are a key pedagogical competency in effective *Balaghah* instruction.

The next finding concerns the affective dimension of learning, which cuts across all methods. The informants emphasized that the negotiation of meaning is not merely an intellectual transaction but an emotionally charged event: the moment when a metaphor that was initially obscure suddenly becomes clear is often described by the students as joy, relief, or even awe at the eloquence of the source text. The teachers appear to deliberately foster this affective response, treating the cultivation of *dzaug* as an integral part of developing analytical skills. This affective scaffolding pairing cognitive challenges with aesthetic rewards emerges as a subtle yet inherent feature of Attaqwa's pedagogy and represents a dimension that is often overlooked in purely cognitive explanations of language learning. From an educational perspective, this underscores the importance of

integrating the cognitive and affective domains in designing meaningful learning experiences.

Based on these three findings, the effectiveness of *Balaghah* learning at the Attaqwa Islamic Boarding School rests on a holistic synergy between gradual cognitive development, a Socratic dialogical approach, and the internalization of aesthetic sensitivity (*dzaug*). This learning trajectory, which guides students from passive imitation to independent creation, is optimally accelerated through an open-ended, question-based guidance strategy. In this process, the *ustadz* actively guides students to independently restructure figurative meanings without rushing to provide direct answers. This approach to meaning reconstruction not only successfully sharpens students' critical thinking and analytical capacity in understanding the depth of the text but also deeply touches their affective dimensions. Ultimately, this learning experience culminates in a sense of awe and intellectual satisfaction with the beauty of the Quranic language and the majesty of Arabic literature.

Discussion

The finding regarding the selection of instructional materials as a strategic pedagogical decision closely aligns with Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework and differentiated curriculum theory (Chang et al., 2023; Ergogo et al., 2023 and Syakuro et al., 2026). The *ustadz* at Pesantren Attaqwa Putra do not merely transmit classical texts (*turath*) in an unmediated fashion; rather, they actively curate and contextually reconstruct the materials to match the learners' cognitive readiness. This finding reinforces previous studies on Arabic language instruction (Najiyah et al., 2026; Rusli et al., 2025; Soliman & Khalil, 2024; Zaharuddin et al., 2025), which emphasize that the effectiveness of *Balaghah* learning depends heavily on the flexible adaptation of materials rather than rigid adherence to a syllabus. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with modern instructional development research, which positions text differentiation as a primary key to minimizing cognitive barriers in learning advanced language concepts. Thus, the material selection process in this pesantren demonstrates that teaching classical rhetoric can be harmoniously aligned with modern cognitive pedagogical principles.

This strategic decision in selecting instructional materials essentially stems from a significant historical, cultural, and linguistic distance between classical *Balaghah* texts and the reality of modern *santri* life. When students in Bekasi encounter seventh-century Arabic metaphors rooted in the desert ecology such as imagery of camels or warhorses. Their existing cognitive schemas, formed by coastal and agricultural environments, cannot provide an immediate anchor for comprehension. If educators force the use of advanced texts without careful differentiation stages, students will rapidly experience cognitive overload, ultimately leading to purely mechanical task completion. Therefore, the *ustadz* intuitively adapt the materials to bridge the abstract nature of rhetorical concepts with the empirical experiences familiar to the students. This instructional adaptation not only sustains active student engagement in the classroom but also

ensures that the aesthetic structure of the Arabic language can be understood logically and naturally. Ultimately, this selection strategy serves as the foundational pillar that determines the success of implementing subsequent *Balaghah* learning methods.

The implementation of a layered learning strategy combining inductive, deductive, analytical, comparative, and applied approaches alongside scaffolding techniques validates Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Nurohmah et al., 2025; Wei, 2023) and Blumer's symbolic interactionism (Abdullah, 2025; Chan, 2024; Shahbari-Kassem et al., 2024). This finding supports previous research emphasizing that complex rhetorical instruction cannot be accommodated by a single method alone, but instead requires a synthesis between the rule-oriented *Madrasah Qawa'id* and the appreciation-oriented *Madrasah Dzauq*. The practice of the "dialogic pause" through *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods to deconstruct *Tasybih* components (*musyabbah*, *musyabbah bih*, *adat Tasybih*, and *wajh al-syabah*) reinforces applied linguistics literature on the importance of information chunking. The strategic use of *Pegon* annotations and local linguistic varieties functions as a semantic bridge in negotiating figurative meaning (Abdullah, 2025; Nurbayan et al., 2025; Rusli et al., 2025; Shahbari-Kassem et al., 2024; Zaharuddin et al., 2025). Additionally, this finding extends cognitive literature by showing how the acceleration of Method 33 successfully automates syntactic rules, thereby reducing extraneous cognitive load for the learners.

This layered strategy is applied because the aesthetic structure of *Balaghah* possesses a dual complexity encompassing grammar, logical validity, and artistic sensibility simultaneously. If learning relies solely on a pure deductive method focused on memorizing definitions, the classroom becomes monotonous and fails to facilitate students with diverse learning styles. Dialogic pauses naturally emerge during instruction because the *ustadz* realize that deep comprehension of figurative meaning cannot be forced instantly through one-way explanations. Through these collaborative discussion spaces, educators allow students to deconstruct and reconstruct the logic behind the author's word choices together. Consequently, the resulting understanding becomes significantly stronger because it originates from the students' own cognitive reconstruction.

The trajectory of learning maturity moving from an imitative to an analytical-creative level reinforces Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, specifically the shift from understanding to creating. The finding regarding the dominance of Socratic questioning rooted in guided discovery supports earlier research that positions the quality of teacher questioning as the primary catalyst for stimulating Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (Maulana et al., 2024; Mohammed, 2024). Furthermore, integrating the affective dimension (*dzauq*) and intellectual satisfaction (*cognitive joy*) expands holistic language learning theory, which posits that optimal cognitive achievement always operates alongside positive affective experiences. This interpretative maturity directly contributes to building epistemic immunity against textual literalism, reinforcing literature on the relationship between hermeneutical flexibility and religious moderation

(*Wasathiyyah*). The synergy between critical reasoning and aesthetic sensibility confirms that *Balaghah* instruction in the pesantren successfully addresses all learning domains in a balanced manner.

This escalation of maturity is achieved because classroom interaction at Attaqwa is not structured as a one-way transfer of knowledge, but rather as a dynamic process of shared meaning-making between the *ustadz* and the students. The consistent application of Socratic questioning forces students to continually test their assumptions, draw independent inferences, and defend their interpretive arguments before their peers. When students successfully resolve the complexity of figurative meaning through their own reasoning efforts, an internal emotional response naturally arises manifested as relief, awe, and intellectual satisfaction (*dzaug*). This gratifying emotional experience then acts as an internal reinforcer that motivates students to tackle more complex analytical challenges at higher levels. Furthermore, the habit of analyzing texts through multiple figurative perspectives cultivates cognitive maturity, ensuring students do not fall into rigid or extreme text interpretations.

Empirically, this study contributes field evidence on how Islamic boarding school pedagogical traditions such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, and *Pegon* annotation. It can be effectively synergized with modern cognitive theory, scaffolding strategies, and cognitive load efficiency techniques through Method 33. These findings enrich the Islamic education literature by demonstrating that the process of negotiating meaning in *Balaghah* teaching not only hones linguistic intelligence and aesthetic sensitivity (*dzaug*), but also forms a flexibility of thinking that fortifies students from textual literalism and supports religious moderation (*Wasathiyyah*). Meanwhile, practically, this study offers an applicable framework for educators and Arabic language curriculum developers in designing teaching materials based on text differentiation and a Socratic dialogical approach. This practical guide can be adopted by Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs to transform classical rhetorical teaching into an active, contextual learning process oriented towards higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Thus, the results of this study provide a concrete reference for optimizing the internal potential of Islamic boarding school teaching traditions as a source of pedagogical innovation that is adaptive to current developments.

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive investigation of the *Balaghah* learning ecosystem at the Attaqwa Putra Islamic Boarding School demonstrates that acquiring classical Arabic rhetorical skills is fundamentally a socioculturally mediated process rather than merely language transfer. The main finding is that abstract concepts in *Ilm al-Bayan*, particularly *Majaz* and *Tasybih*, cannot be effectively taught through passive grammatical memorization but require dialogic interaction supported by relevant local cultural analogies, *Pegon* as a regional linguistic medium, and the inductive approach (*tariqah istiqlaliyyah*) to connect classical Arabic literary constructions with contemporary Indonesian learners' cognitive schemas. This process transforms cognitive dissonance into deeper literary

appreciation and shows that *Balaghah* mastery extends beyond higher-order thinking (HOTS) to include aesthetic sensitivity (*dzauq*) and intellectual satisfaction (cognitive joy). However, the study is limited to a single institution, which may restrict the transferability of its specific local analogies, although the underlying model has broader applicability. Future research should compare traditional, modern, and hybrid Islamic educational institutions across diverse ethnolinguistic regions and employ longitudinal mixed-methods approaches to examine the long-term effects of *Balaghah* instruction on interpretive flexibility, radicalism prevention, and socio-religious tolerance among pesantren alumni. For curriculum designers, the findings suggest that figurative literacy should be positioned not merely as a supplementary element of language learning but as a core competency shaping how learners interpret and internalize sacred texts.

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