



Redefining Medieval Balaghah Epistemology: Theoretical Transformations In The Syarah and Hasyiyah Traditions

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Abstract:

This study reconstructs the epistemology of medieval Balaghah. Its aim is to deconstruct the Western-centric narrative that labels the era of commentary (*commentary tradition*) as a phase of intellectual decline (*'ashr al-inhithath*). Specifically, this study maps the theoretical transformations in three branches of Balaghah resulting from the integration of formal logic (*manthiq*). The method used is qualitative with a historical-philosophical approach. The researcher applies Michel Foucault's theory of the archaeology of knowledge to analyze the corpus of primary texts (*turats*), ranging from the works of Al-Sakkaki (d. 626 AH), Al-Qazwini (d. 739 AH), to the authoritative commentaries by Al-Taftazani (d. 793 AH) and Al-Jurjani al-Syarif (d. 816 AH). Analysis of six cross-cluster cases reveals a robust conceptual refinement. The *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* traditions are shown to operate as independent internal critical ecosystems through the "*wa fihhi nazhar*" method. The integration of syllogism successfully transformed the concept of rhetoric originally subjective and based on linguistic taste (*al-dzauq*) into deterministic-universal linguistic rules. This is evident in the formalization of the cognitive conditions of *Kalam Insyah*' and the tightening of the criteria for *Qarinah* at the level of rational-certain clarity (*al-zhuhur al-'aqli*). The theoretical implications of this research call for a historiographical repositioning to dismantle the dichotomy between the literary (*adabi*) and logical (*'ilmi*) approaches. Practically, this research recommends reforming the global Arabic rhetoric curriculum to appreciate traditional commentarial texts as the pinnacle of logical-linguistic intelligence.

Keywords: Epistemology of Balaghah, Commentary Tradition, Hasyiyah Tradition, Formal Logic, Theoretical Transformation, Historiography of Arabic Rhetoric.

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini merekonstruksi epistemologi ilmu Balaghah abad pertengahan. Tujuannya adalah mendekonstruksi narasi barat-sentris yang melabeli era komentar (*commentary tradition*) sebagai fase kemunduran intelektual (*'ashr al-inhithath*). Secara khusus, studi ini memetakan transformasi teoretis pada tiga cabang Balaghah akibat integrasi nalar logika formal (*manthiq*). Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan historis-filosofis. Peneliti menerapkan teori arkeologi pengetahuan Michel Foucault untuk membedah korpus teks primer (*turats*), mulai dari karya Al-Sakkaki (w. 626 H), Al-Qazwini (w. 739 H), hingga teks komentari otoritatif karya Al-Taftazani (w. 793 H) and Al-Jurjani al-Syarif (w. 816 H). Hasil analisis terhadap enam kasus lintas klaster menunjukkan adanya pemurnian konseptual yang kokoh. Tradisi *Syarah* dan *Hasyiyah* terbukti beroperasi sebagai ekosistem kritik internal yang independen melalui metode "*wa fihhi nazhar*". Integrasi silogisme berhasil mengubah konsep retorika yang awalnya subjektif berbasis rasa bahasa (*al-dzauq*) menjadi aturan hukum bahasa yang deterministik-universal. Hal ini terlihat pada formalisasi kondisi kognitif *Kalam Insyah*' dan penetapan kriteria *Qarinah* pada level kejelasan rasional-pasti (*al-zhuhur al-'aqli*). Implikasi teoretis penelitian ini mendesak adanya reposisi historiografis untuk meruntuhkan dikotomi antara pendekatan sastra (*adabi*) dan logis (*'ilmi*). Secara praktis, penelitian ini merekomendasikan reformasi kurikulum pengajaran retorika Arab global agar mengapresiasi teks komentari tradisional sebagai puncak kecerdasan logis-linguistik.

Kata Kunci: Epistemologi Balaghah, Tradisi Komentar, Tradisi Hasyiyah, Logika Formal, Transformasi Teoretis, Historiografi Retorika Arab.

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INTRODUCTION / المقدمة

The science of Balaghah holds a very important place in the world of Arabic literature and language. This science was originally developed to help Muslims appreciate the beauty of the language and the miraculous nature of the Qur'an. (Atiq, 2025) In its development, modern linguists have come to realize that the division of Balaghah into three main branches—namely *Ma'ani* (contextual meaning), *Bayan* (style/figurative language), and *Badi'* (textual beauty)—aligns with current modern Western linguistic theories. (Hafidz, 2018) The importance of this discipline lies in its ability to examine not only grammatically correct word order but also how those words are adapted to the situation and the circumstances of the listener (Milah, 2019).

Unfortunately, a proper understanding of the history of this discipline is often distorted by the erroneous views of many earlier researchers. Many Western historians of the past—whose views were later uncritically adopted by modern professors and researchers—assumed that the science of Balaghah stagnated and died out after the 7th century Hijri. (Rashwan, 2020) This era is often referred to as a period of decline because the scholars of that time no longer wrote new books from scratch, but were instead busy producing *Syarah* (commentaries on thick books) and *Hasyiyah* (footnotes/comments). (Alfaisal, 2019) This tradition of writing commentaries and footnotes is often accused of making Balaghah rigid, boring, and overly filled with logical formulas, causing its literary beauty to be lost.

Research over the past decade has actually attempted to counter the accusation that this era was a time of decline, but the results have not been satisfactory. Most current journal articles focus only on discussing the profiles of specific figures (Dimiyathi, 2020) or directly applying Balaghah theories to analyze Quranic verses and modern poetry. (ROZY, 2011) The methods they employ remain limited to describing what is contained in the books without delving deeply into their historical context. Consequently, these medieval commentaries (*Syarah*) and marginal notes (*Hasyiyah*) continue to be regarded as second-rate works of little importance and are often overlooked in academic circles. The shortcomings of previous research have become increasingly clear because they treated the *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* texts as uniform and tedious books. Past researchers failed to recognize that within the pages of those footnotes, there were actually intense debates among scholars. The footnote format was the scientific method of that era for testing, correcting, and expanding upon the theories of earlier scholars. The inability of past researchers to recognize this aspect has left a significant gap in the history of the development of Balaghah.

This study identifies a fundamental theoretical and contextual *research gap* based on the literature review above. This theoretical gap lies in the absence of studies that specifically map the “theoretical transformation” and “epistemological paradigm shift” of the medieval *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* traditions. Current academic discourse is trapped in a binary dichotomy between Balaghah Adabi (literary-appreciative) and Balaghah Manthiqi

(logical-scholastic), without ever deeply investigating the integration of formal logic into Balaghah during the medieval period, which actually formed a new, more robust epistemic structure.(Fatimah & Ridlo, 2025) This gap is highly significant because it perpetuates an unfair historical bias against the intellectual contributions of medieval Muslims.

Efforts to bridge this theoretical gap are crucial because without a redefinition of the epistemology of medieval Balaghah, our understanding of the evolutionary history of Arabic rhetoric will remain lopsided and inaccurate.(Awadin, Zuhdi, Ni, Sutardi, & Komarudin, 2025) A perspective that continues to dismiss the traditions of *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* as products of decline will exclude the developments in linguistic logic, formal semantic theory, and textual deconstruction of that era from the narrative of world intellectual history.(Purnama, 2025) An in-depth investigation of this phase is necessary to demonstrate that the strict formalization and systematization by medieval commentators was not a form of stifling creativity, but rather a methodological leap toward theoretical universality.

The novelty offered by this research is a firm new perspective that the era of *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* was not an age of decline, but rather the New Era of Balaghah(Mushodiq, 2018). This era is characterized by the unification of three important disciplines: the science of linguistic rhetoric, the science of logic, and the science of theology(Purnama, 2025). The theoretical novelty of this article lies in a new perspective on traditional commentaries these works are no longer viewed merely as copies or summaries, but rather as highly intelligent and modern forms of linguistic criticism(Julianto & Hidayat, 2025). The focus on the material object, the approach, and the analytical tools employed constitute the primary distinction between this study and previous research. Previous studies generally relied on early foundational texts and classical rhetoric frameworks, whereas this study boldly shifts the focus to a corpus of medieval texts that are often misunderstood. A comparative-critical analysis is specifically conducted on Al-Sakkaki's *Miftah al-'Ulum*, Al-Qazwini's *Talkhis al-Miftah*, and the major *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* works that followed them, such as those by Al-Taftazani and Al-Jurjani al-Syarif, to examine how key terms in Balaghah were refined and reformulated(A. H. Hamzah, 2020).

The main argument presented in this article is that *these commentaries* and *marginal notes* should not be evaluated solely based on emotional or literary aesthetic standards, but rather on their contribution to establishing precise linguistic rules. Writing footnotes and explanations during that era was the best scientific method for clarifying the intent of a theory, eliminating misunderstandings, and creating a coherent linguistic system(Purnama, 2025). What has long been accused of being a “decline” is actually the highest phase of scientific crystallization in which Balaghah transformed from merely a tool for appreciating poetry into a deterministic linguistic science.

The primary objective of this study is formulated in alignment with these research questions, namely to deconstruct the Western-centric narrative regarding the decline of Balaghah, while simultaneously reconstructing and redefining the epistemological character of medieval Balaghah objectively based on primary textual data(Mushodiq, 2018). This study highlights the progressive nature and inherent internal dynamics within the commentary tradition, and chronologically and epistemologically maps how rhetorical concepts underwent theoretical refinement and strengthening at the hands of commentators after the 7th century Hijri.

The expected theoretical contribution of this research is to make a significant contribution to the repositioning of the historiography of Balaghah at the international level,

to provide an alternative methodology for reading commentarial texts (*commentary tradition*) in Islam, and to dismantle the historical stigma of decline (*ashr al-inhithath*)(Mushodiq, 2018). The practical contribution of this article is expected to reform the Balaghah teaching curriculum at global universities, shifting from an approach that previously distanced students from *Syarah* texts due to their perceived rigidity, to one that appreciates these texts as the pinnacle of logical-linguistic intelligence, thereby opening up a more fertile space for dialogue between classical Islamic rhetoric and modern linguistic theory.

RESEARCH METHOD / المنهجية

This study employs a qualitative research design with a historical-philosophical approach, specifically applying the framework of critical historiography and Michel Foucault's theory of the archaeology of knowledge (Discourse & Language, n.d.). This methodological framework was chosen to unpack the epistemic shifts, transformations, and conceptual refinements hidden within the textual tradition, rather than merely describing historical events chronologically (Discourse & Language, n.d.). Through the lens of the archaeology of knowledge, medieval commentarial texts are not treated as stagnant repetitions, but rather as active discursive spaces where linguistic rules are tested, modified, and formalized (Kamila, 2025). The analysis focuses on how key terms and postulates of *Balaghah* are systematically deconstructed and reconstructed through the integration of formal logic (*manthiq*) (Ainul, Mahmudi, & Bakar, 2025).

The data sources for this study consist entirely of a primary textual corpus (*classical texts*) and contemporary secondary literature. This study does not involve human participants, thus it does not require population sampling techniques or approval from an institutional ethics committee. The primary data corpus was selected purposively based on historical chronology, textual lineage, and its epistemic significance in the development of *Balaghah*. The selected primary texts are divided into three chronological layers representing the era of formalization, the era of concise codification, and the era of commentary. The first layer is represented by *Miftah al-'Ulum* by Abu Ya'qub Yusuf al-Sakkaki (d. 626 AH) as the foundational text for the formalization of logic. The second layer consists of *Talkhis al-Miftah* and *Al-Idhah fi 'Ulum al-Balaghah* by Jalaluddin al-Qazwini (d. 739 AH) as standard references for the crystallization of textbooks. "Perkembangan Sejarah Stilistika Di Barat Dan Arab: Eksplorasi Komparatif Corak Stilistika," n.d. The third layer is represented by *Al-Mutawwal* and *Al-Mukhtashar* by Sa'duddin al-Taftazani (d. 793 AH), as well as *Hasyiyah al-Sayyid al-Syarif 'ala al-Mutawwal* by Al-Jurjani al-Syarif (d. 816 AH) as the main representatives of the *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* traditions.

Secondary data sources include contemporary peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in international databases, as well as accredited national journals published within the last ten years (2016–2026) that discuss the historiography and epistemology of Arabic rhetoric.

Data collection was conducted through extensive digital and physical archival documentation over a six-month period, from September 2025 to February 2026. Primary texts were sourced from authoritative printed editions as well as verified digital repositories of classical Islamic texts, such as *Al-Maktaba al-Shamela* and *the King Saud University Digital Library*. The data collection process was guided by a strict text extraction protocol. Specific text fragments, definitions, annotations, and marginal notes (*hasyiyah*) addressing core concepts from the three main branches *Ma'ani*, *Bayan*, and *Badi'* were systematically

recorded, cataloged, and cross-referenced according to a predetermined historical timeline.

The primary research instrument in this qualitative textual study is the researchers themselves, who are equipped with a conceptual analysis matrix. To ensure high internal validity and objectivity, a structured Text Analysis Matrix (MAT) has been developed. This MAT operationalizes three main indicators: (1) Conceptual Mutability (how a definition changes from Al-Sakkaki to Al-Taftazani), (2) Methodological Integration (the frequency and operational use of syllogistic-logical terms such as *al-hadd*, *al-jins*, *al-fasl*, and *al-qiyas*), and (3) Epistemic Rationality (Discourse & Language, n.d.). (the fundamental arguments presented by commentators to legitimize theoretical changes). This framework guides a systematic reading of the text and prevents subjective misinterpretations of classical texts.

The collected qualitative text data was analyzed using *qualitative* content analysis and thematic expansion (Syaifullah, Yusuf, & Fahraini, 2026). The data analysis process followed four sequential technical stages: First, Data Coding: Textual quotations from the primary corpus were coded based on linguistic categories and logical structures (Genealógico, 2012). Second, Contextual Categorization: The coded statements were grouped into specific themes, such as "formalization of *kalam insya'*", syllogistic redefinition for *majaz*, and metalinguistic critique of textual finality (Ainul et al., 2025). Third, Comparative Textual Mapping: Conceptual differences between foundational texts and commentaries (*Syarah/Hasyiyah*) are systematically compared to trace the direction of theoretical transformation (Jul-dic, 2023). Fourth, Epistemic Interpretation: The identified patterns are analyzed within the broader context of medieval Islamic intellectual history to formulate a redefinition of that era.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION / نتائج البحث و المناقشة

FINDINGS

Changes in the Theory of the Limits of *Insya'* Speech

The formalization of *Insya'* Thalabi in the medieval commentary tradition marks a significant epistemological shift from a purely semantic-rhetorical understanding to a rigorous logical-definition model. In earlier periods, rhetorical texts tended to define *Insya'* merely by contrasting it with *Khabar* (informative statements) (Parhan & Maksum, 2022). However, Al-Taftazani reconstructed this definition by introducing a strict logical framework of "demand" (*al-thalab*). Instead of relying on loose textual boundaries, the commentary tradition establishes that the essence of *Insya'* Thalabi lies in the psychological and ontological request for something that is non-existent at the moment of utterance (*istid'a'u hashilin aw ghayra hashilin*). In this context, Al-Taftazani dissects the mechanism of demand through two integrated dimensions. First, the ontological premise, which views the request as an act directed toward something not yet realized in external reality. Second, the epistemological goal, which aims to bring an unacquired meaning into conceptual reality through the power of discourse. By formulating *Insya'* Thalabi as a goal-oriented linguistic demand, Al-Taftazani transforms a stylistic category into a strict logical operation. Consequently, the analysis shifts toward evaluating the fulfillment of semantic conditions necessary for a demand to be philosophically valid (TAÇ, 2019b).

Epistemic Reconstruction of the Concept of *Ghayah al-Ijaz* (Abbreviation of Meaning)

The commentary tradition's intervention in redefining *Ijaz Qashr* reveals how scholastic tools were utilized to resolve semantic ambiguities left by earlier rhetoricians.

In classical Balaghah, Ijaz Qashr was often described using vague aesthetic metrics, such as short phrases carrying vast meanings (Sa'adah, Ghazi, & Azizah, 2021). The Syarah tradition rejected this subjective approach, seeking instead an exact mathematical-logical proportion between linguistic signifiers (al-lafzh) and signified concepts (al-ma'na). Al-Taftazani reframes Ijaz Qashr not as a mere rhetorical ornament, but as a systematic linguistic economy where the wording is intentionally minimized while the conceptual yield is maximized. The core of this transformation lies in the formulation that the linguistic signifier must be significantly more concise than the vastness of the signified concept, under a strict condition that there is absolutely no structural omission (hadzf) within the sentence. Through this formalization, the Syarah tradition shifts the epistemological foundation of Ijaz. It is no longer viewed as a mystical talent inherent to ancient Arab eloquence, but as a deliberate, calculable cognitive strategy that can be objectively verified through logical inquiry (Al-Mubassyir & Naf'an, 2024).

Application of Textual Criticism Methods in the Theory of Majaz 'Aqli

The debate surrounding Majaz 'Aqli in the Syarah and Hasyiyah traditions represents one of the most sophisticated intersections between Arabic rhetoric, formal logic, and Islamic theology (Kalam). While early rhetoricians viewed Majaz 'Aqli simply as an imaginative attribution of an action to a non-agent, the medieval commentary tradition turned this phenomenon into a complex problem of cognitive judgment (al-isnad al-aqli) (Noy, 2016). Al-Taftazani scrutinizes the strict boundaries of this cognitive attribution, questioning whether the metaphorical shift happens in the linguistic mind or within the external reality itself. He challenges previous classifications by demonstrating that the restriction (al-hashr) of metaphor proposed by earlier authors requires a deeper epistemic justification (TAÇ, 2019b).

To bridge this gap, the tradition of commentary employs a gradual cognitive validation framework. This process begins at the level of external reality by identifying the actual agent of an action. It then shifts to the realm of mental evaluation as consciousness intentionally attributes that action to another context, ultimately culminating in a linguistic form as a metaphorical utterance (Eldin, 2015). By establishing this systematic layers, the commentary tradition elevates Majaz 'Aqli from a simple literary device to a problem of epistemology. Al-Taftazani's rigorous philosophical doubts force the researcher to examine the speaker's underlying intent and theological worldview. This transformation proves that medieval Balaghah had evolved into a philosophical inquiry into how the human mind processes truth, reality, and linguistic representation (Pemikiran & Asyri, n.d.).

The Narrowing of the Meaning of Cognitive Context in Majaz Mursal by Al-Jurjani al-Syarif

The fourth finding indicates a conceptual shift regarding qarinah (contextual indicators) in the third textual layer, particularly in the 9th-century Hijri Hasyiyah tradition. In the classical period of Balaghah, qarinah was loosely understood as a contextual clue captured through literary sensitivity or aesthetic intuition (Syakhrani & Rahli, 2023). However, in the book Hasyiyah al-Sayyid al-Syarif 'ala al-Mutawwal, Al-Jurjani al-Syarif conducted a conceptual reconstruction of Al-Taftazani's explanation of figurative text indicators. He asserts that the contextual indicators in question are not merely textual clarity, but rather rational clarity capable of revealing the speaker's original intent or will.

The fundamental difference introduced in this Hasyiyah tradition lies in the qualification of the nature of these indicators. Al-Jurjani al-Syarif provides a new operational definition stating that a valid qarinah for shifting a word's meaning from literal

to figurative must operate at the level of rational logic, not merely the superficial clarity of the text. This case serves as strong evidence that the integration of formal logic into the science of balaghah during the medieval era had reached its peak (Suleiman, 2014). The analysis of metaphorical constructions no longer relied on subjective aesthetic intuition but was measured using the objective certainty of rational laws.

The Transition of the Status of Ornamental Beauty from an Accessory to an Essential Aspect (*Al-Muhassinat*)

In the early stages of Balaghah's development, the science of al-Badi' was often viewed as a supplementary discipline that focused solely on the ornamental beauty of words without affecting the essential meaning of the text (Syakhrani & Rahli, 2023). Nevertheless, findings within the Syarah tradition indicate a systematic effort to elevate the epistemological status of al-Badi'. Al-Taftazani, in his book *Al-Mukhtashar*, rigorously formulates this conceptual repositioning by asserting that rhetorical beauty is not merely an artificial ornament detached from the substance of meaning, but rather an instrument intrinsically linked to the purpose of sentence construction. Conversely, this beauty serves to support the sentence structure so that it aligns with the demands of the situation and conditions of the utterance (*muthaqabat muqtadha al-hal*) (TAÇ, 2019b).

This shift in perspective is radical, as the Syarah era explicitly rejected the view that Badi' is an external element separate from the primary linguistic structure. Al-Taftazani established that the use of stylistic devices such as *Jinas* or *Thibaq* must be subject to the fulfillment of situational context. In other words, a new aesthetic feature is considered theoretically valid if it serves to strengthen the semantic clarity of the text, rather than merely being a verbal articulation devoid of meaning (Obeidat, 2025).

Formalization of the Logic of Contradiction in the Concept of *Al-Thibaq* (Textual Antithesis)

The latter case illustrates the reorganization of the *Thibaq* category (the opposition of two words within a single sentence) by adopting the theory of opposition in formal logic (*al-mutaqabilat*). The earlier *Talkhis* tradition classified *Thibaq* superficially, based solely on the similarity of word families, such as the opposition of nouns with nouns, or verbs with verbs (Putri, 2021). Al-Jurjani al-Syarif, through his marginal notes (*hasiyah*), deconstructs this superficial classification and elevates it to the level of essential opposition within the mind. According to him, the essence of *Thibaq* lies in the unification of two opposing or contradictory things at the conceptual level within the mind, not in the physical form of the text (Rammuny, 1985).

The conceptual shift in this case focuses on the replacement of formal-textual categories with conceptual oppositions in the mind (*taqabul al-mafhum fi al-'aql*). Within this framework, two lexical items that do not exhibit a binary opposition at the surface level can still be validly classified as *Thibaq*. This applies if the logical structure of the mind perceives an essential contradiction between the two concepts. This reconstructive step marks the total metamorphosis of the science of Badi', which was originally considered merely poetic aesthetics, into a method of semantic analysis grounded in formal logic (H. Hamzah, Fattah, & Khaira, 2022).

Typology of Conceptual Shifts in Medieval Balaghah

To clarify the direction of theoretical transformation in the six qualitative analysis cases above, Table 1 systematically summarizes the conceptual differences and epistemic characteristics within each Balaghah academic cluster throughout the shifting eras of textual tradition.

Table 1. Summary Matrix of Theoretical Transformations in Medieval Balaghah

Scholarly Cluster	Analysis Case	Classical Formulation/Summary (Talkhis)	Era Reconstruction of the Commentary (Syarah & Hasyiyah)	Characteristics of the New Paradigm
Science of Meaning	Insya' Speech	Defined based on the mere structural absence of truth or falsehood in the physical text	Incorporates logical clauses regarding the speakers cognitive and psychological conditions (mathluban ghairi hashilin).	Pragmatic-Deterministic: Shifts the analytical focus from the physical text to the mental state of the speaker.
	Ghayah al-Ijaz	Defined loosely based on the reader's aesthetic intuition or subjective feelings.	Rigorized through propositional logic testing, emphasizing the absolute impossibility of further textual expansion.	Structural Precision: Eliminates interpretation subjectivity by establishing exact signifier-signified proportions.
Ilmu al-Bayan	Majaz 'Aqli	General and simple boundaries regarding the semantic conditions of figurative text.	Challenged using an internal text-critical method (<i>wa fihhi nazr</i>) based on formal logic.	Scientific Criticism: Rejects blind imitation (taqlid), establishing formal logic as the standard for theoretical validity.
	Contextual Metaphor	Understood as fluid contextual clues (qarinah) based on literary taste (<i>dzauq</i>).	Criteria tightened to require indicators to rich the level of rational-certain clarity (al-zuhur al-'aqli).	Objective-Universal: Literary figuration is decoded and measured through objective, predictable laws of reason.
The Science of Al-Badi'	Status of Ornament	Considered a secondary external accessory (tahsinat) separate from the essential meaning.	Elevated status: the aesthetic device must strictly conform to the structural demands of the semantic context.	Aesthetic Integration: Textual beauty serves as a functional reinforcement of the message, not merely a cosmetic element.
	Thibaq Theory	Classified superficially based on the morphological form of the phrase and its external parts of speech.	Reclassified based on the essential conceptual opposition of meanings within the mind (<i>taqabul al-mafhum fi al-'aql</i>).	Semantic-Cognitive: Evaluation of textual antithesis shifts from surface textual forms to deep cognitive structures.

DISCUSSION

This study successfully demonstrates that the traditions of *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* in the Middle Ages were not a sign of the collapse of Muslim intellectual creativity, but rather a crucial phase in the emergence of a highly scientific new perspective within the field of Balaghah. For centuries, many Western researchers and modern scholars have been trapped in the belief that when scholars stopped writing new books and chose to write footnotes instead, that was the moment when the beauty of Arabic literature died (El-Rouayheb, 2015). This view is mistaken because they evaluate medieval works using the standards of pure poetic aesthetics (*al-balaghah al-adabiyah*). In reality, the primary focus of medieval scholars was to establish precise and scientific linguistic rules (*al-balaghah al-ilmiyah*) (Aziz, 2014).

If we look back, the science of Balaghah in its early stages, as exemplified by Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani, was indeed very beautiful and full of literary appreciation. Al-Jurjani succeeded in laying a strong foundation regarding how word arrangement influences meaning through his theory of *Nazhm*. However, the weakness of this early approach was

its excessive reliance on the reader's intuition and linguistic sensibility (*al-dzauq*). In the academic world, which demands certainty, the measure of feeling is certainly difficult to establish as a universal standard. This is where medieval scholars such as Al-Sakkaki, Al-Qazwini, and Al-Taftazani stepped in to transform these fluid standards into solid and logical rules (Alqurashi, 2017).

This paradigm shift is particularly evident in the first case regarding *the Kalam Insyah* within the field of *Ilmu al-Ma'ani*. Al-Qazwini initially defined *Insyah* solely as a sentence that cannot be judged as true or false. This definition focuses purely on the physical form of the sentence (Muthmainnah, Rohanda, & Kodir, 2025). When Al-Taftazani added the logical condition that an imperative sentence (*Insyah Thalabi*) is valid only if what is requested has not yet occurred at the time of utterance, he was effectively bringing Balaghah into the realm of modern pragmatics (TAÇ, 2019a). This concept demonstrates that the medieval commentary tradition had successfully formulated a precursor to modern pragmatic analysis, establishing that human speech can only be fully comprehended when it is methodologically aligned with the speaker's mental state and specific situational context (Mabaquiao, 2018).

This tightening of the rules continued in a second case concerning the concept of *Ghayah al-Ijaz* (the limit of word abbreviation). In classical times, people considered all short sentences with broad meanings to be *Ijaz* (Sains, 2022). Al-Taftazani viewed this leniency as dangerous for the legal interpretation of religious texts. He then employed propositional logic to refine the definition: a short sentence can only be called *Ijaz* if its meaning cannot be further expanded without distorting its original intent. From the perspective of modern information theory, what Al-Taftazani did was an effort to achieve maximum communicative efficiency without data loss—a core principle in modern linguistic structure analysis.

Turning to the field of *Ilm al-Bayan*, the debate in the third case regarding *Majaz 'Aqli* reveals that the medieval tradition of *Syarah* was a vibrant space for textual criticism. When Al-Taftazani used the phrase *wa fihi nazhar* to challenge the rules established by Al-Qazwini, he was practicing the methods of deconstruction and internal criticism. He rejected a theory not out of hatred, but because the theory's limitations were deemed flawed when measured against the principles of formal logic (*manthiq*) (TAÇ, 2019b). This refutes the claim of classical Orientalists who asserted that medieval scholars merely copied old books without daring to correct them.

The intelligence of medieval scholars is further evident in the fourth case, where Al-Jurjani al-Syarif clarifies the meaning of *Qarinah* (contextual clues) in figurative texts. In the past, *qarinah* was considered to be any clue that could alter the meaning of a word. Al-Jurjani al-Syarif, in his *Hasyiyah*, specifies that such a clue must be a definite rational clarity (*al-zhuhur al-'aqli*). From a cognitive perspective, this formulation indicates that the human intellect decodes figurative expressions not by guessing at loose literary sentiments, but through a rigorous logical process that filters and validates the most plausible contextual cues embedded within the discourse (Candria, 2011).

In the field of *Ilm al-Badi'*, the *Syarah* tradition succeeded in elevating the status of this aesthetic science from what was originally considered merely cosmetic embellishment to an essential element (H. Hamzah et al., 2022). In the fifth case, Al-Taftazani strongly rejected the notion that the beauty of words, such as alliteration (*jinas*), is merely empty wordplay. He established the rule that such ornamental beauty is only valid if it supports the main message of the sentence in accordance with the demands of the

context (*muqtadha al-hal*)(Noy, 2016). This view is highly relevant to modern stylistic theory, which holds that linguistic style and textual beauty never stand alone but are always strongly tied to the ideological purpose and semantic meaning of a discourse(Salsabila, 2025).

The final case regarding the formalization of the *Thibaq* (antithesis) category by Al-Jurjani al-Syarif further solidifies this transformation. Earlier scholars classified word oppositions solely based on their outward form, such as nouns being contrasted with nouns. Al-Jurjani al-Syarif completely overhauled this approach by asserting that the true opposition lies in the conceptual contrast within the mind (*taqabul al-mafhum fi al-'aql*), not in the physical form of the words on paper. In modern cognitive linguistics, this approach corresponds to the theory of *Conceptual Antonymy*, which posits that words are antonymous because the human brain possesses a cognitive map that separates two concepts in an extreme manner, rather than merely a matter of the language dictionary(Kostić, 2015).

Overall, the integration of pure logic (*manthiq*) into Balaghah during the era of the *Syarah* and *Hasyisyah* was actually a scientific process that saved the science of the Arabic language from extinction. Without the formalization and tightening of definitions carried out by medieval scholars, Balaghah theories would have remained localized and understandable only to native Arabs possessing an innate literary sensibility from birth(Aziz, 2007). By transforming it into a logical system with definite rules the medieval scholars succeeded in making the science of Balaghah a universal, objective linguistic discipline that can be studied by anyone worldwide(Jannah & Raswan, 2026).

The presence of formal logic within these traditional commentaries also reflects the needs of the medieval era. As the Islamic world expanded and many non-Arab peoples began to study Islam, the interpretation of the sacred text of the Qur'an could no longer be left to subjective *literary sensibilities*, as every people has different standards of taste. This is where the traditions of *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* act as a scientific bulwark. They provide precise linguistic formulas to ensure that no one interprets religious texts haphazardly. These logical formulations represent the highest form of scientific responsibility on the part of the scholars to preserve the originality and certainty of the text's meaning(Zekkour & Imamuddin, 2024).

Through an in-depth analysis of the six cases above, we can clearly see that the accusation of decline (*ashr al-inhithath*) is merely the result of the flawed reading methods employed by modern historians. They read the thick *Syarah* texts, filled with footnotes, hoping to discover new beautiful poems. When what they found were debates on linguistic logic, they were immediately disappointed and labeled the era as a dead one. This is an academic injustice because they are evaluating a scholarly work through the lens of fine art. Medieval commentaries must be evaluated as works of high-level philosophy of language(El-Rouayheb, 2015).

If we compare it to the development of science in the West, what occurred in the Islamic world during the era of *the Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* is similar to the movement toward linguistic formalization that took place in Europe in the 20th century(El-Rouayheb, 2015). Modern linguistic movements frequently attempt to construct precise mathematical or logical formulas for grammar to ensure structural objectivity. Remarkably, Islamic scholars in the Middle Ages had already pioneered a similar formalization process hundreds of years earlier with the science of Arabic rhetoric. They succeeded in transforming the fluid art of word arrangement into a highly organized and deterministic linguistic structure(Jannah &

Raswan, 2026).

The critical spirit alive within the pages of these commentaries also debunks the myth that the door to *ijtihad* or critical thinking among Muslims has been closed since the Middle Ages. The fact that Al-Taftazani dared to correct Al-Qazwini, and that Al-Jurjani al-Syarif later further clarified Al-Taftazani's arguments, proves that the wheel of knowledge continues to turn dynamically. Each generation of scholars made original scientific contributions in response to the intellectual challenges of their time (El-Rouayheb, 2015). The footnote format (*hasyiyah*) was, in fact, the most sophisticated scientific writing technique of that era for conducting a critical evaluation of a linguistic theory.

The integration of Balaghah, pure logic, and dialectical theology (*kalam*) during the medieval era gave rise to what this study terms the *New Epistemic Era*. It was during this era that Balaghah ceased to stand as an isolated, supplementary discipline. It became intertwined with the broader framework of Islamic philosophical thought. Through this interdisciplinary integration, the science of Balaghah gained a very strong theoretical foundation, enabling it to endure for hundreds of years without losing any of its scientific relevance (Arif, 2006).

The implications of this research also offer an evaluation of modern Arabic language curricula, which often shun classical *exegetical* texts. Many instructors today advise students to avoid works like *Al-Mutawwal* or *Hasyiyah al-Sayyid al-Syarif*, deeming them too complex and rigid. Consequently, modern students lose the ability to think critically and logically when analyzing texts. These research findings serve as a reminder that the complexity found in these commentaries is not a flaw, but rather the pinnacle of linguistic intelligence that must be appreciated and studied properly (Ummah, 2021).

This discussion also opens a very fertile space for dialogue between the classical Islamic intellectual heritage (*turats*) and the development of modern linguistic theory at the international level. While researchers today are busy discussing how context influences word meaning through pragmatic studies or discourse analysis, they are actually revisiting what was debated in detail by Al-Taftazani and Al-Jurjani al-Syarif in the Middle Ages. Bridging these two temporal poles will make global linguistic studies increasingly rich and diverse. (Jannah & Raswan, 2026)

This re-examination of the historical development of Balaghah is also crucial for restoring academic confidence in Islamic studies. By scientifically demonstrating that the medieval era was a golden age of linguistic logic, we can recognize the theoretical richness inherent in the Islamic intellectual tradition. This tradition possesses a theoretical foundation that is exceptionally rich and no less sophisticated, provided we are willing to revisit the pages of these classical texts with an objective, fresh perspective, free from the biases of the past (Naufala & Sudjatnika, 2025).

Viewing medieval Balaghah as a logical linguistic science does not mean we must completely discard the fluid beauty of literary sensibility. These two approaches—the beautiful literary (*adabi*) approach and the precise logical (*ilmi*) approach—should be viewed as two sides of the same coin. The former approach imbues language with soul and beauty, while the medieval *Syarah* tradition provides the body, structure, and legal safeguards to ensure that the meaning of the language is not misused. Both complement each other to form a comprehensive understanding of language (Aziz, 2007).

Ultimately, this study affirms that the redefinition of the history of medieval Balaghah is not merely a matter of changing labels on paper from the “era of decline” to the “new era.” It is a fundamental movement to dismantle academic consciousness. We

are called upon to appreciate the hard work of the classical commentators who struggled to refine Arabic linguistic concepts to preserve the authenticity of the sacred texts. The *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* texts are a magnificent intellectual legacy, a monument to logical intelligence that serves as proof that Islamic civilization is a civilization built upon a very solid foundation of knowledge (El-Rouayheb, 2015).

Moving forward, the results of this qualitative research based on original texts are expected to spark a new wave of more daring research into unpacking other medieval manuscripts that remain carefully preserved in libraries around the world. There are still many hidden gems of knowledge within the marginal notes of scholars of the past, waiting to be discovered and connected to modern theories. Only in this way can the intellectual history of the world be rewritten in a manner that is fairer, more honest, and more balanced for all human civilizations (Abidin, 2023).

CONCLUSION / الخلاصة

This study successfully concludes that the traditions of *Syarah* and *Hasyiyah* in medieval Balaghah were not a form of intellectual stagnation or an era of decline (*'ashr al-inhithath*), but rather a *New Epistemic Era* that transformed Arabic rhetoric into a deterministic, systematic, and objective linguistic science. Through an in-depth analysis of six conceptual cases within the *Ma'ani*, *Bayan*, and *Badi'* clusters, this study concretely demonstrates a theoretical metamorphosis driven by the integration of formal logic (*manthiq*) methodology. The core contribution of this article is its success in dismantling old historiographical biases by presenting textual evidence that the commentary format constitutes an independent, critical, and progressive space for internal critique through the use of scientific instruments such as the *"wa fihi nazhar"* method. All these findings indicate that: *First*, theoretical transformation occurs through the tightening of conceptual boundaries (*al-hadd*) from what was initially based on pure literary intuition to boundaries based on definite cognitive conditions and linguistic structures. *Second*, the integration of formal logic reconstructs the structure of Balaghah by making universal laws of reason the benchmark for the truth of linguistic theory. *Third*, a historiographical repositioning of this era is urgently needed to reconstruct the intellectual history in its entirety, while simultaneously dismantling the binary dichotomy between the literary (*adabi*) and logical (*'ilmi*) approaches in contemporary Arabic rhetorical studies. Research recommendations for future researchers include the need to expand research variables by incorporating approaches such as the sociology of knowledge or historical genealogy to map the external factors underlying the formalization of this linguistic discipline

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