

Recontextualizing *Tafsīr Lughawī*: Bridging Linguistic Depth and Contemporary Qur'anic Interpretation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines *Tafsīr lughawī* as one of the styles of Qur'anic interpretation that emphasizes a linguistic approach. This interpretive style emerged from an awareness of the importance of understanding the Qur'an through Arabic linguistic tools encompassing grammar, semantics, and rhetoric. The main purpose of this study is to comprehensively describe the definition, historical development, various types, characteristics, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of *Tafsīr lughawī*, along with the authenticity and significance of *Tafsīr* works that adopt the linguistic approach. This research employs a qualitative method using a library research approach, based on various classical and contemporary *Tafsīr* literatures. The findings show that *Tafsīr lughawī* significantly contributes to exploring the meanings of Qur'anic verses in depth through linguistic analysis. However, this approach also has limitations, particularly in the contextualization of social, historical, and *maqāṣidī* dimensions. Therefore, integration between *Tafsīr lughawī* and other approaches is essential to achieve a more complete and relevant understanding of the Qur'an in accordance with contemporary dynamics.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji *Tafsīr lughawī* sebagai salah satu corak penafsiran Al-Qur'an yang menekankan pendekatan kebahasaan. Corak penafsiran ini lahir dari kesadaran akan pentingnya memahami Al-Qur'an melalui perangkat linguistik bahasa Arab yang mencakup aspek gramatikal, semantik, dan retorik. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk menguraikan secara komprehensif definisi, perkembangan historis, berbagai jenis, karakteristik, serta kelebihan dan kekurangan *Tafsīr lughawī*, disertai autentisitas dan signifikansi karya-karya *Tafsīr* yang menggunakan pendekatan linguistik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka, berdasarkan literatur *Tafsīr* klasik maupun kontemporer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Tafsīr lughawī* memberikan kontribusi signifikan dalam menggali makna ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an secara mendalam melalui analisis kebahasaan. Namun demikian, pendekatan ini juga memiliki keterbatasan, khususnya dalam hal kontekstualisasi sosial, historis, dan *maqāṣidī*. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan integrasi antara *Tafsīr lughawī* dengan pendekatan lain agar pemahaman terhadap Al-Qur'an menjadi lebih utuh dan relevan dengan dinamika zaman.

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A. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, as the final divine revelation bestowed upon the Prophet Muhammad¹ (peace be upon him), was revealed in Arabic—a language renowned for its complex grammatical

¹ Muhammad Faiz an ul Mustafa* et al., "Exploring the Necessity, Types, and Conditions of Divine Revelation," *Guman* 6, no. 3 (2023): 263, 3, <https://doi.org/10.63075/guman.v6i3.853>.

structures and profound rhetorical depth. This linguistic richness not only signifies the Qur'an's literary majesty but also played a pivotal role in capturing the attention of Arab society during the early Islamic period,² ultimately becoming one of the principal instruments in disseminating Islamic teachings. However, in the context of contemporary society, there is growing concern regarding the declining level of Qur'anic literacy, particularly among younger generations of Muslims. The rise of digital media, which tends to prioritize visual and instantaneous content, has significantly shifted how Muslims engage with the Qur'an.³ Today, it is more commonly read through translations or quoted in fragments, often without a deep understanding of its linguistic intricacies. This condition reflects a widening gap between the sacred text and a comprehensive grasp of its meaning—especially from the linguistic dimension, which constitutes the core of its divine message.

Within the scholarly tradition, classical exegetes such as al-Zamakhsharī⁴ and al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī,⁵ as well as modern thinkers like Amīn al-Khūlī⁶ and Toshihiko Izutsu,⁷ have emphasized that the meanings of the Qur'an are inseparable from the Arabic linguistic structures that frame them. The exegetical approach that centers on these linguistic aspects is referred to as *tafsīr lughawī*, or linguistic exegesis—an interpretive method that focuses on the lexical, grammatical, morphological, and stylistic analysis of the Qur'anic text. While this approach has historically held an esteemed place in the classical tafsir tradition, recent academic discourse tends to marginalize it, often treating it as a descriptive relic of the past with limited relevance to contemporary concerns. Although studies by scholars such as Walid Saleh⁸ and Mustansir Mir⁹ have addressed the existence and contributions of *tafsīr lughawī*, they are generally informative in nature and fall short of offering epistemological critiques or engaging in its integration with modern interpretive frameworks.

This study seeks to address that lacuna by reconstructing the historical foundations, typological development, and epistemological framework of *tafsīr lughawī*. It situates the linguistic approach within the context of contemporary exegetical challenges—such as the prevalence of literalism, the reduction of semantic complexity, and the declining appreciation for the Qur'an's rhetorical sophistication. By integrating linguistic interpretation with other exegetical models, such as socio-historical, *maqāsidī* (objectives-based), and thematic tafsir, this study aims to demonstrate that *tafsīr lughawī* remains not only relevant but also instrumental in bridging the gap between textual authenticity and the contextual needs of today's Muslim communities.

This study offers a critical synthesis that moves beyond a merely descriptive mapping of *tafsīr lughawī*, constructing an analytical framework that positions the linguistic approach as

² Muhammad Erdy, "The Origins, Theories, and Linguistic Development of the Qur'an," *Jurnal Kajian Islam* 2, no. 1 (2025): 13–22, <https://doi.org/10.56566/jki.v2i1.300>.

³ Mustafa* et al., "Exploring the Necessity, Types, and Conditions of Divine Revelation," 263–84.

⁴ Andrew Lane, *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ān Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d.538/1144)* (BRILL, 2005), 1–9.

⁵ Hany Rashwan, "Editor's Introduction: Beyond Arabic in Premodern Islamic Worlds," *Postmedieval* 15, no. 3 (2024): 605–30, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41280-024-00339-w>.

⁶ Georges Tamer, *Qur'ānic Hermeneutics in the 19th and 20th Century* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2023), 255–66.

⁷ Atif Khalil, *Remembering Toshihiko Izutsu: Linguist, Islamicist, Philosopher* (Brill, 2022), 528–550, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004529038_027.

⁸ Walid A. Saleh, "Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of Tafsīr in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12, nos. 1–2 (2010): 6–40, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2010.0103>.

⁹ Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an* (The Other Press, 2011), 1–123.

a classical legacy with enduring methodological relevance. It also advances a more dynamic reading of the dichotomy between textualism and contextualism by demonstrating that linguistic nuance can, in fact, enhance rather than hinder contemporary interpretive relevance. Accordingly, the study is organized around three main objectives: first, to elaborate the historical and conceptual foundations of *tafsīr lughawī*; second, to identify its typological and methodological patterns; and third, to explore the potential integration of this approach with other interpretive paradigms in order to address the increasingly complex religious needs of the contemporary Muslim ummah.

Ultimately, reaffirming the significance of *tafsīr lughawī* is not merely an academic exercise in preserving exegetical heritage; it is a strategic imperative for reinvigorating Qur'anic engagement in the modern world. In an era marked by ideological polarization, selective textual appropriation, and diminishing Qur'anic literacy, a linguistically grounded approach offers a necessary corrective—reconnecting readers with the semantic depth, rhetorical artistry, and ethical subtleties embedded in the divine discourse. By foregrounding the Qur'an's linguistic architecture as both form and meaning, this study asserts that *tafsīr lughawī* must be re-envisioned not as an isolated discipline of the past, but as a living, integrative methodology that can inform contemporary hermeneutics, education, and spiritual discourse.

B. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a library research method as its primary strategy. The data sources consist of primary texts such as classical and contemporary *tafsīr* books that utilize the linguistic approach (*tafsīr lughawī*), as well as secondary sources including academic journals, articles, and previous studies on Qur'anic interpretation. The criteria for selecting the primary sources include: (1) the author's scholarly credibility, (2) the use of Arabic linguistic tools such as *naḥw*, *ṣarf*, *balāghah*, and *bayān*, and (3) the methodological clarity in applying linguistic analysis. Secondary sources are selected based on their relevance, academic rigor, and recent contribution (within the last 10 years) to *tafsīr* methodology discourse. In analyzing the data, the study uses content analysis and thematic analysis. The content analysis is used to examine the structure, terminology, and argumentative patterns in linguistic *tafsīr* works. The thematic analysis identifies recurring themes such as grammatical emphasis, rhetorical features, semantic interpretation, and how these are integrated or limited in different *tafsīr* styles. The scope of the study is limited to selected *tafsīr* texts produced between the 3rd and 14th century *Hijri* (9th to 20th century CE), representing major linguistic schools. The study focuses specifically on texts that emphasize *tafsīr lughawī* either exclusively or in combination with other interpretive styles. This timeframe allows for a comparative understanding of the evolution and relevance of the linguistic approach in different historical periods.¹⁰

¹⁰ Rifa'i Abubakar, *Pengantar Metodologi Penelitian* (SUKA-Press UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2021), 123.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Definition of *Tafsīr lughawī*

Tafsīr lughawī consists of two words, namely *tafsīr* and *lughawī*. The word “*Tafsīr*” comes from the root word *fasara*, which means information or explanation.¹¹ Then, the memorization is given a *fa’ala* pattern which means to explain or reveal something. *Tafsīr* means revealing and explaining the understanding of the words in the Qur’ān. Meanwhile, “*lughawī*” comes from a word that means to be fond of or to stick to something. Thus, *lughawī* refers to the words used, both orally and in writing.¹²

From this explanation, it can be concluded that *tafsīr lughawī* is a *tafsīr* that seeks to explain the meanings of the Qur’ān by using linguistic rules. In simple terms, *Tafsīr lughawī* means explaining the Qur’ān through semiotic and semantic interpretation, which includes etymological, morphological, lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical aspects.¹³

Meanwhile, Quraish Shihab, in his book *Membumikan Al-Qur’an*, defines *lughawī* interpretation as follows: *lughawī* interpretation is an interpretation that focuses on linguistic aspects, which includes various *uslūb* and Arabic language rules.¹⁴

Therefore, someone who wants to interpret the Qur’ān with a linguistic approach must understand the language used in the Qur’ān, namely Arabic, along with its intricacies, including *naḥw*, *balāghah*, and literature. With this understanding, a *mufasssir* will find it easier to trace and understand the meaning and arrangement of sentences in the Qur’ān, so as to reveal the meaning contained behind these sentences.¹⁵ In fact, Ahmad Shurbasyi places the knowledge of language and its branches (*naḥw*, *ṣaraf*, etymology, *balāghah*, and *qirā’āt*) as the main requirement for a *mufasssir*.¹⁶ This is the importance of understanding language in Qur’anic interpretation.

2. Types of *Tafsīr Lughawī*

Dewi Murni, in her journal entitled *tafsīr from the Side of the Style (Lughawī, Fiqhi, and ‘Ilmiy)*, states that *lughawī tafsīr* in its development has various forms and types. Some specifically discuss aspects of *naḥw*, *munāsabah*, and *lughah* alone, and some also examine linguistic aspects by collaborating with other interpretive styles. To know more clearly about the varieties and types of *Tafsīr lughawī*, it will be explained as follows;¹⁷

First, *Tafsīr naḥw*, or *I’rāb* tafsir, is a form of Qur’anic interpretation that focuses on analyzing the grammatical structure (*I’rāb*) of each *lafaz* in Qur’anic verses. One of the representative works in this field is *al-Tibyān fī I’rāb al-Qur’ān*, compiled by ‘Abd Allāh bin Ḥusayn al-Akbarī (d. 616 AH).

¹¹ Abū al-Ḥusain Aḥmad bin Fāris, *Maqāyīs Al-Lughah* (Dār al-Fikr, tth), 4:504.

¹² Fāris, *Maqāyīs Al-Lughah*, 4:255.

¹³ Rosihon Anwar, “Lughawī Tafsīr Ḥāsiyah Al-Ṣawī: Kajian Kritis Atas Tafsīr al-Jalālayn,” *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur’an Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 2 (2020): 88, <https://doi.org/10.15575/al-bayan.v5i2.10013>.

¹⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Quran: Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Mizan Pustaka, 2007), 107.

¹⁵ Muhammad Ichwan Firdaus and Muhammad Miftah Surur, “Tafsir Lughawi: Sejarah, Batasan, Dan Polemik Penafsiran,” *Jurnal Syntax Imperatif: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan* 5, no. 6 (2025): 1295, 6, <https://doi.org/10.36418/syntaximperatif.v5i6.566>.

¹⁶ Ahmad Syurbasyi, *Sejarah Perkembangan Tafsir Al-Qur’an al-Karim* (Kalam Mulia, 1999), 31.

¹⁷ Dewi Murni, “Tafsir Dari Segi Coraknya Lughawi, Fiqhi Dan Ilmiy,” *Syahadah: Jurnal Ilmu al-Qur’an Dan Keislaman* 8, no. 1 (2020): 63–65, <https://ejournal.fiaunisi.ac.id/index.php/syahadah/article/view/267>.

Second, *Tafsīr ṣaraf*, or morphological interpretation, is a type of *lughawī* interpretation that focuses on analyzing the meaning of words, word roots (*isytiqāq*), and semantic relationships between words in the Qur'an. Examples of *Tafsīr* in this approach include *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by Quraish Shihab, and The Concept of *Kufr* in the Qur'an by Harifuddin Cawidu.

Third, *Tafsīr munāsabah* is included in the category of *lughawī tafsīr* which emphasizes the study of the relationship or relationship between verses and chapters in the Qur'an. Some prominent works in this approach are *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar* by Burhānuddīn al-Biqā'ī (d. 885 AH), *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* by Fakhruddīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH), and *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ* by Quraish Shihab.

Fourth, *Tafsīr al-amthāl* is a type of *Tafsīr* that focuses on revealing the meaning of parables (*amtsāl*) and majaz expressions found in the Qur'an. This approach can be found in works such as *al-Amthāl min al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah* by 'Abdullah Muhammad bin Ali al-Ḥākīm al-Turmudzī (d. 585 AH), *Amthāl al-Qur'ān* by al-Māwardī (d. 450 AH), and *Majāz al-Qur'ān* by 'Izzuddīn 'Abd al-Salām (d. 660 AH).

Fifth, *Tafsīr Balāghah* is an approach to Qur'anic interpretation that emphasizes aspects of language beauty and clarity of meaning in Arabic rhetorical structures. This interpretation includes three main approaches: (1) *Tafsīr Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, which specifically examines the meanings of Qur'anic vocabulary, and is often referred to as a practical encyclopaedia of meaning. An example of a work in this approach is *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* by 'Abd al-Raḥīm Fū'dah. (2) *Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān* which emphasizes the analysis of memorization and word roots, and explains the interrelationship of meanings with one another. A representative work of this approach is *Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān* by 'Aisyah 'Abd Rahman bint al-Syaṭi. (3) *Tafsīr Badī' al-Qur'ān*, which focuses on the beauty of the sentence structure and language style in the Qur'an. One of the works in this approach is *Badī' al-Qur'ān* by Ibn Abī al-Iṣḥā' al-Miṣrī (d. 654 AH).

3. Examples of *Tafsīr Lughawī*

a. Focus on *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, and *Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān*.¹⁸

Linguistic interpretation of the Qur'an often highlights specific elements of the Arabic language, such as meanings (*ma'ānī*), vocabulary (*mufradāt*), and rare or unusual expressions (*gharā'ib*). The following examples illustrate how these aspects are emphasized in *tafsīr lughawī*:

Table 1. The focus of the study of *Ma'ani al-Qur'an*, *Mufradat al-Qur'an* and *Gharā'ib al-Qur'an*

No.	Name of the Book	Author
1.	<i>Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān</i>	Zayd bin 'Alī bin al-Ḥusayn
2.	<i>Tafsīr Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān</i>	Yaḥyā bin Ziyād al-Daylamī, known as al-Farrā' (d. 207 H)
3.	<i>Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān</i>	Abū Muḥammad 'Abdullāh bin Muslim bin Qutaybah (d. 276 H)
4.	<i>Tafsīr Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān (Mufradāt al-Rāghib)</i>	al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī (d. 503 H)
5.	<i>Tafsīr Wujūh al-Qur'ān</i>	Abū al-Faḍl bin Ibrāhīm (d. 600 H)
6.	<i>Tafsīr al-Wujūh wa al-Nazā'ir fī al-Qur'ān</i>	Abū 'Abdillāh al-Ḥusayn bin Muḥammad (8th century H)

¹⁸ Muhammad 'Alī al-Riḍā'ī al-Isfahānī, *Durūs Fī Al-Manāḥij Wa al-Ittijāhāt al-Tafsīriyah Li al-Qur'ān* (Markaz al-Muṣṭafā, tth), 287–88.

7.	<i>Tafsīr Mubhamāt al-Qur'ān</i>	Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad bin 'Alī (d. 782 H)
8.	<i>Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān</i>	Sirāj al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Amr bin Abī al-Ḥasan (d. 804 H)
9.	<i>Tafsīr al-Jalālayn</i>	Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (d. 864 H) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 H)
10.	<i>Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān wa Jawāmi' al-Jāmi'</i>	al-Ṭabarsī (d. 548 H)

b. Focus on *al-Adabī* (literature) which includes *Balāghah* and *Bayān*.¹⁹

The *al-adabī* model of Qur'anic exegesis emphasizes the literary aspects of the Qur'an, particularly its linguistic beauty, rhetorical force, and stylistic features, drawing upon the sciences of *balāghah* and *bayān*. This approach seeks to demonstrate the inimitability of the Qur'an's language and its persuasive power through the analysis of figurative language (*majāz*), similes (*tashbīh*), and sentence structure. These works do not merely interpret meaning but also reveal the aesthetic depth of the text. The key works representing this approach include:

Table 2. Study of *al-Adabī* (literature) that includes *Balāghah* and *Bayān*

No.	Name of the Book	Author
1.	<i>Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān wa Jawāmi' al-Jāmi'</i>	al-Ṭabarsī (w. 548 H)
2.	<i>al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl</i>	al-Zamakhsharī (467–538 H)
3.	<i>Imlā' mā Manna bihī al-Raḥmān min Wujūh al-I'rāb wa al-Qirā'āt fī Jamī' al-Qur'ān</i>	Abū al-Baqā' 'Abd Allāh bin al-Ḥusayn (w. 616 H)
4.	<i>al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ</i>	Abū Ḥayyān Muḥammad bin Yūsuf al-Andalusī (w. 745 H)
5.	<i>al-Taḥṣīl fī Mukhtaṣar al-Taḥṣīl</i>	Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Tamīmī al-Andalusī (w. 440 H)
6.	<i>'Ināyat Allāh al-Qāḍī wa Kifāyat al-Rāḍī 'alā Tafsīr al-Baiḍāwī</i>	Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin 'Umar (w. 1069 H)
7.	<i>Tafsīr al-Qur'ān wa I'rābuhū wa Bayānuh</i>	Shaykh Muḥammad 'Alī Ṭāhā
8.	<i>Tafsīr al-Biqā'ī</i>	Burhān al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm bin 'Umar al-Biqā'ī
9.	<i>Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Qur'ān al-Karīm (Tafsīr Abī al-Su'ūd)</i>	Abū al-Su'ūd Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Muṣṭafā al-'Imādī

4. Characteristics of *Tafsīr Lughawī*

Ahmad Syadali argues that *tafsīr lughawī* is an interpretation of the Qur'an that prioritizes aspects of language, such as *i'rāb* (grammar analysis), reading harakat, and the formation of words and sentences in a literary context.

To understand more about *lughawī* interpretation, there are several main characteristics that distinguish it, among others: First, *Tafsīr lughawī* focuses on explaining the *gharīb* of the Quran, such as *lafaz mubham*, *mubadalah*, *hazf*, *idhmar*, *taqdim*, and *ta'khir*. In this interpretation, it is not allowed to rely solely on the external meaning or understanding of the Arabic language, because it can make the interpretation subjective and only based on personal opinion (*ra'yī*), not a deep understanding of the Qur'anic text.²⁰

Second, This *lughawī* interpretation is understood by *simā'ī* (listening carefully), which will lead one to an inner understanding when pondered deeply. Third, This interpretation is

¹⁹ al-Isfahānī, *Durūs Fī Al-Manāhij Wa al-Ittijāhāt al-Tafsīriyah Li al-Qur'ān*, 288–89.

²⁰ Abī 'Abdillāh Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Dār Kutub al-'Arab, 2003), 1:34.

not only limited to *i'rāb*, because the Qur'an has a kalam structure that contains miracles that cannot be rivaled by other texts.

A clear example of the linguistic approach can be observed in al-Zamakhsharī's interpretation of QS. Al-An'ām [6]: 137:

وَكَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ أَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَاؤُهُمْ

Thus, their partners made it appealing to many of the polytheists to kill their children

According to al-Zamakhsharī, who follows the *Qirā'āt* Ḥafṣ recitation, the verb "*zayyana*" is in the active voice (*mabnī li al-ma'lūm*), indicating that the grammatical subject (*fā'il*) is *shurakā'uhum*, "their partners" (i.e., false gods or leaders). This syntactic choice suggests a rhetorical strategy aimed at emphasizing the role of ideological misguidance by attributing beautification of evil acts to these partners, not directly to Allah or the polytheists themselves.

The grammatical and rhetorical structure here illustrates how linguistic *tafsīr* identifies subtle shifts in subject-object relations to uncover theological nuances. Al-Zamakhsharī's analysis goes beyond surface meaning by examining how Qur'anic syntax constructs moral responsibility. Such *tafsīr* aligns with Mu'tazilite thought, where human agency and rational accountability are central, a stance clearly reflected in his emphasis on the agentive clarity of the verb.

This interpretation exemplifies how *tafsīr lughawī* can serve as both a linguistic and theological lens. It demonstrates the depth of Qur'anic meaning when approached through grammar and rhetorical devices. However, such interpretations also risk ideological bias if the linguistic analysis is not balanced with broader hermeneutical frameworks. Therefore, while al-Zamakhsharī's reading is linguistically precise, it must be situated within a wider discourse of *tafsīr* comparison to understand its implications and limitations fully.²¹

5. History of the Development of *Tafsīr Lughawī*

Since the time of the Prophet until now, Muslims have devoted all their efforts and abilities to understand and interpret the Qur'an. The Prophet was the first to interpret the Qur'an,²² either because of a direct command from Allah SWT to explain the revelation,²³ or because of his position as the recipient and transmitter of the revelation. The interpretation carried out by the Prophet did not cover all verses of the Qur'an, but was limited to verses that were questioned by the companions, which were considered important to explain, or whose

²¹ Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ḍahabī, *Al-Ittijāhāt al-Munḥarifah Fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Dawāfi'uhā Wa Ḍa'fuhā* (Dār al-I'tisām, 1978), 41.

²² Muṣṭafā al-Ṣāwī al-Juwaynī, *Manāhij Fī Al-Tafsīr* (Mansyā'ah al-Ma'ārif, tth), 15.

²³ It is hinted at by Allah in Surah An-Nahl: 44 and 64, as well as in Surah Ibrahim: 4. QS. Al-Nahl: 44 بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

Testimonies (miracles) and books. And We have revealed to you the Quran, that you may explain to mankind what has been revealed to them and that they may think.

QS. Al-Nahl [16] 64: وَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

And We have not revealed to you this Book (Quran), but that you may explain to them what they dispute, and be a guide and a mercy to those who believe.

QS. Ibrahim [14]: 4 وَلَنُصَبِّحَنَّكُمْ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي وَخَافَ وَعِيدٌ

and We will surely place you in those lands after them. That (is for) those who fear My presence and fear My threat.

meaning was poorly understood.²⁴ One of the interpretation methods used by the Prophet is the linguistic approach, namely by explaining the meaning of vocabulary or providing word equivalents (*murādif*/synonyms) that are easier to understand.²⁵

For example, the Prophet's interpretation of the word *wasāṭan* in QS. al-Baqarah (2) 143:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

And thus We have made you a justly balanced community so that you may be witnesses over humankind, and the Messenger may be a witness over you

The Prophet interpreted the word *wasāṭan* in Surah al-Baqarah (2): 143 with the word 'adl (fair). Another example of his linguistic interpretation is when a companion, 'Adī ibn Ḥātim, asked about the meaning of *al-khaiṭ al-abyaḍ* and *al-khaiṭ al-aswad* in Surah al-Baqarah (2): 187. The Prophet explained that it meant *bayāḍ al-nahār wa sawād al-lail* (the light of day and the darkness of night).²⁶ The linguistic approach (*tafsīr lughawī*) did not stop at the time of the Prophet. After his death, the Companions also continued the tradition of interpretation by utilizing Arabic language tools to understand the verses of the Qur'an. One example is the difference of opinion among the Companions regarding the meaning of the word *al-qurū'* in Surah al-Baqarah (2): 228.

وَالْمُطَلَّاتُ يَتَرَضَّنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ

And the divorced women shall wait with regard to themselves for three periods (of purity).

Some Companions, such as 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23 AH), Ubay ibn Ka'ab (d. 30 AH), Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (d. 35 AH), 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40 AH), Abū Mūsā al-Ash'ārī, and Ibn 'Abbās, interpreted the word *al-qurū'* in Surah al-Baqarah (2): 228 with the meaning of menstruation. Meanwhile, other Companions such as Zayd ibn Thabit (d. 55 AH), 'Āishah (d. 58 AH), Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān (d. 60 AH), and Abdullah ibn 'Umar (d. 74 AH) interpreted the word to mean ṭuhur (purity).

One of the methods used by the Companions in interpreting the Qur'an is to return to the original language used in the revelation, namely Arabic. This is in accordance with Allah's words in Surah Yusuf (12): 2

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed, We sent it down in the form of the Qur'an in Arabic so that you may understand it.

Therefore, in order to understand the meaning and achieve the intended purpose, it is necessary to know the phrases, sentences, and language styles used, all of which must refer to the original Arabic.²⁷

After the death of the Prophet, the Companions were the most intense group in paying attention to the Qur'an, both in the aspects of learning, memorizing, understanding, and practicing. However, before applying the teachings of the Qur'an in their lives, the Companions first explored the meaning of each lafaz and diction, especially those that were

²⁴ Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ḥababī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa al-Mufasssīrūn* (Muṣ'ab bin 'Umar al-Islāmiyyah, 2004), 38–43.

²⁵ al-Juwaynī, *Manāḥij Fī Al-Tafsīr*, 16.

²⁶ Musā'id bin Sulaimān, *Al-Tafsīr al-Lughawī Li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, tth), 65.

²⁷ Khālīd 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Ak, *Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr Wa Qawā'iduhū* (Dār al-Nafā'is, 1982), 140.

not commonly used in their language association, which rarely appeared in daily conversation, or which had experienced a shift in meaning from its original form. This became even stronger after the Prophet's death. The Companion who was asked the most about the meaning and synonyms of the Qur'anic verses, and who was most prominent in interpreting the Qur'an through linguistic approaches and references to classical Arabic poetry, was 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās.²⁸ The interpretation given by Ibn 'Abbās can be considered as one of the early foundations of the *tafsīr* method that emphasizes the importance of Arabic literary aspects. Among the forms of interpretation is his explanation of the meaning of kināyah in the Qur'an, such as the word *al-rafath* in QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 187: *Uḥilla lakum laylata al-ṣiyāmi al-rafathu ilā nisā'ikum* in the verse, Ibn 'Abbās interprets *al-rafath* as *al-mubāsharah*, which refers to sexual relations between husband and wife. This interpretation shows a deep linguistic approach, paying attention to the implied meaning in the diction used by the Qur'an.

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās tendency to use classical Arabic poetry as one of the main sources in his interpretation can be seen as the embryo of the birth of a linguistic-based madrasa of interpretation (*madrasah lughawiyyah*). This tradition began to develop when he became a teacher and supervisor in the madrasa of interpretation in Makkah in the first century *Hijri*. This approach was then inherited and further developed by his students, such as Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, Mujāhid ibn Jabr, 'Ikrimah, Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān, and 'Aṭā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ, until the second century *Hijri*.²⁹

The practice of *lughawī* interpretation was further continued by the tābi'īn, as seen in their different interpretations of the word "*as'as*" in QS. al-Takwīr: 17 (*Wa al-layli idhā 'as'asa*) Some of them interpreted the word with the meaning of *adbara* (passing/far away), including Ālī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40 AH), Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68 AH), al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim (w. 105 AH), Qatādah (d. 117 AH), and Ibn Zayd (d. 182 AH). Meanwhile, some others interpreted "*as'as*" with the meaning of *aqbala* (coming/approaching), such as Mujāhid (d. 104 AH), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 AH), 'Aṭīyyah al-'Ufiy (d. 111 AH).³⁰

In the third century *Hijri*, three main madrasas emerged in the tradition of *tafsīr lughawī*. First, the madrasa pioneered by Abū Zakariyyā al-Farrā' (d. 207 AH) who interpreted the Qur'an through a linguistic approach, as reflected in his work *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*. Second, the madrasa initiated by Abū 'Ubaydah (born 110 AH) through his work *Majāz al-Qur'ān* which focuses on the use of *majāz* (figurative meaning) in the Qur'an, Third, the *al-'Aqliyyah* madrasa developed by al-Jāḥiẓ. In addition, there is also a madrasa of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* led by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 224-310 AH), through his monumental work *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*. This work is known as a *tafsīr* that seeks to integrate historical and linguistic approaches in harmony. Since that time, the linguistic approach in the interpretation of the Qur'an has continued to develop and remains an important need in the study of interpretation until now.³¹

6. Scholars' Debate on the History of the Emergence of *Tafsīr Lughawī*

The emergence of the *lughawī* style of interpretation has its own privileges and at the same time is not free from shortcomings. The main advantage of this approach lies in the utilization of linguistic aspects as a bridge to reveal the meanings of the Qur'an, which include

²⁸ al-Ḍahabī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, 52.

²⁹ al-Ḍahabī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, 77–86.

³⁰ Sulaimān, *Al-Tafsīr al-Lughawī Li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 67.

³¹ Murni, "Tafsir Dari Segi Coraknya Lughawi, Fiqhi Dan Ilmiy," 62.

artistic, ethical, and imaginative values contained in the language of the Qur'an. This can be understood considering that the emergence of *tafsīr* styles occurred in the same period as the development of science in general. The period is also characterized by the rapid development of various schools of fiqh and schools of kalam. In this context, the ideological tendency or school affiliation of a *mufasssīr* often influences the results of his interpretation. One striking example is al-Zamakhsharī's *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, which contains a tendency towards Mu'tazilah rational thought in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses.³²

In general, the interpretation of the Qur'an that developed in the medieval era was often influenced by various interests, both in the form of fanaticism towards certain groups or schools, as well as political interests. This condition causes the study of the Qur'an to tend to be not objective, and very ideological. This model of interpretation has been criticized by many scholars in the modern era. One of them is Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, who calls the style of interpretation during this period as *al-talwīniyyah al-mughriḍah* (tendentious ideological coloring). He considers that medieval interpretations were often based on the interests of groups, schools of thought, and political power, thus falling into the category of *al-tafsīr al-munḥarif* (distorted interpretation).³³

In addition to the tendency of interpretation to favor certain interests, medieval interpretation is also considered less creative. This is due to the tendency of repetitive interpretation, where explanations, summaries, and marginal notes often only repeat existing understandings. This situation can reduce the function of Qur'anic interpretation as *hudan* (guidance) for Muslims, which should provide a fresher understanding and be relevant to the context of the times.³⁴

The emergence and development of *tafsīr lughawī* have been subject to scholarly debate, particularly concerning its ideological underpinnings and its evolving function in contemporary contexts. While some scholars critique the selective use of linguistic interpretation to serve certain theological or sectarian interests, others emphasize its dynamic potential. Language itself is a living entity; as the Arabic language continues to evolve, especially in modern usage (*mu'āṣirah*), new vocabularies emerge that do not always align with classical Qur'anic usage. This linguistic dynamism reflects broader intellectual shifts, particularly in response to contemporary socio-religious challenges. emerged

As a result, there has been a renewed interest in *tafsīr lughawī* across academic circles in recent decades. Numerous theses, journal articles, and interpretive works have that claim to employ a linguistic approach. For instance, dissertations such as those by Abdul Mu'in Salim and Harifuddin Cawidu at UIN Alauddin Makassar explore topics of politics, law, and power within the Qur'anic discourse. However, these studies require further clarification regarding the extent to which they employ systematic linguistic analysis, such as syntax, morphology, and rhetoric—as core methodological tools, rather than as secondary references. Therefore, while the popularity of linguistic *tafsīr* is increasing, its methodological foundations remain uneven and call for critical evaluation.³⁵

³² Siti Nur Umdati Putriyani and Ira Nazhifatul Qalbah, "Menyingkap Polemik Historisitas Tafsir Corak Lughawi," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 3, no. 1 (2023): 48–49, 1, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v3i1.21802>.

³³ Widyanto Naufal Mahdy, "Tafsir Lughawi Dalam Perspektif Sejarah," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 3, no. 4 (2023): 705, 4, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v3i4.31327>.

³⁴ Putriyani and Qalbah, "Menyingkap Polemik Historisitas Tafsir Corak Lughawi," 49.

³⁵ Putriyani and Qalbah, "Menyingkap Polemik Historisitas Tafsir Corak Lughawi," 44–45.

7. Validity of the Books of *Tafsīr Lughawī*

This linguistic style of interpretation is one of the various styles of Qur'anic interpretation that emerged in the early period.³⁶ Among the books of interpretation with *lughawī* style, examples of interpretation, advantages and disadvantages are as follows.

a. *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf* by al-Zamakhsharī

The full name of al-Zamakhsharī is Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd bin Muḥammad bin 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, as stated in his *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*. In other references, he is also known by the name Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Khawārizmī al-Zamakhsharī, which refers to his region of origin, Khawārizm. He was born in the small town of Zamakhshar, located in the Khawārizm region, on Wednesday, 27 Rajab 467 AH coinciding with March 18, 1075 AD, to a family that was economically modest, but known to be highly committed to knowledge and religion. His birth occurred during the reign of Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Abī al-Faṭḥ Malikshāh, who was accompanied by the famous vizier Nizām al-Mulk. This vizier was a central figure in the development of science in the Islamic world at that time. He is known as the founder of prominent madrasas, including the Nizāmiyyah Madrasa, and established a scholarly discussion forum that became a gathering place for scientists from various disciplines.³⁷

The opinion expressed in the journal *tafsīr Lughawī: Historicity and Debate* by Edi and Maolidya Asri Siwi Fangesty states that: "al-Zamakhsharī's monumental work entitled al-Kashshāf is organized following the *tartīb muṣḥafī*, which is based on the order of surahs and verses as found in the muṣḥaf 'Uthmānī. The book covers the entire Qur'ān consisting of 30 juz and 114 surahs, starting from surah al-Fātiḥah to surah al-Nās".

In the process of interpretation, al-Zamakhsharī first lists the Qur'ānic verse he wants to explain. He then begins the interpretation by presenting rational thoughts that are reinforced by arguments from history, both in the form of hadith and other relevant Qur'anic verses, especially those related to the cause of the revelation of the verse (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) or the explanation of the content of the verse. However, he is not entirely bound by the narrations. That is, if there is a narration that supports his view, he will include it in the tafsir. However, if there is no suitable narration, he still continues the interpretation with a rational and independent approach.³⁸

In *al-Kashshāf*, al-Zamakhsharī's partiality towards the Mu'tazilah seems quite clear.³⁹ One example can be found when he interpreted the verse about ru'yatullah (seeing Allah) in QS. al-Qiyāmah verse 23, namely, *Ilā rabbihā nāẓirah*. Al-Zamakhsharī, like the Mu'tazilah view, rejects the notion that God can be seen with the sense of sight (*al-maḥsūsāt*), as it equates God with a creature that has a form (*jism*). Within the framework of Mu'tazilah-style *tauḥīd* thinking that emphasizes the purification of Allah from the attributes of deity, the word

³⁶ Ihsan Imadudin and Aini Qurotul Ain, "Kategorisasi Tafsir Dan Problematikanya Dalam Kajian Kontemporer," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 2, no. 3 (2022): 381–388, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v2i3.18692>.

³⁷ al-Zamakhsharī al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr Al-Kasasyāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl Wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl Fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl* (al-Maktabah al-'Abikān, 1998), 6:7.

³⁸ Edi Edi and Maolidya Asri Siwi Fangesty, "Tafsir Lughawī: Historisitas Dan Perdebatannya," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 3, no. 4 (2023): 679–80, 4, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v3i4.31248>.

³⁹ Muchammad Fariz Maulana Akbar and Muhammad Rijal Maulana, "Kajian Historisitas Tafsir Lughawī," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 2, no. 2 (2022): 243, 2, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v2i2.18349>.

nāẓirah in the verse is interpreted as “waiting” or “expecting”, not in the sense of seeing physically.⁴⁰

Tafsīr al-Kashshāf became one of the main references for many later ludic mufassirs, especially because of its excellence in revealing the beauty and *balāghah* of the Qur’ān in great depth. This is due to al-Zamakhsharī's mastery of various sciences such as *balāghah*, *bayān*, literature, *nahwu*, and *ṣaraf*. Therefore, this tafseer is highly regarded, with Ibn Khaldun giving special praise by calling it one of the best tafseers that combines the disciplines of language, *i'rāb*, and *balāghah*. However, al-Zamakhsharī was a Mu'tazilah, which influenced his interpretation. He often presented proofs in accordance with this view, which were considered controversial and not in accordance with the views of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. As a result, this *tafsīr* has shortcomings in the form of subjective tendencies based on the ideology adopted by the *mufassir*, namely Mu'tazilah.⁴¹

b. *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* by Abu Hayyan

Abu Hayyan's real name was Muhammad bin Yusuf bin 'Ali bin Yusuf bin Hayyan Al-Andalusy.⁴² He was known to have extensive knowledge in the fields of Arabic language, *tafsīr*, *hadith*, as well as the knowledge of the biographies of *hadith* narrators (*‘ilm al-rijāl*) and their ranks (*ṭabaqāt*), especially the narrators from the western region. One of his monumental works is *Tafsīr Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, an eight-volume commentary that has been widely distributed. In this commentary, Abu Ḥayyān pays great attention to *i'rāb*, *nahwu* problems, and mentions the differences of opinion among *nahwu* scholars in detail. He also discusses and contrasts various *nahwu* issues, so that this commentary resembles a book of *nahwu* more than a book of commentary in general.⁴³

In compiling this book, he first spoke about verse by verse by interpreting each word or *lafaz* in terms of language and *nahwu* as needed. If a word contains two or more meanings, Abu Hayyan mentions them and then sees which of these meanings fits the words. Then he interprets the verse by mentioning the cause of the *nuzul* if there is one, mentioning the *munasabah* and its relationship with the previous verse, mentioning the *naskh* if there is one, as well as mentioning a number of *qirā'āt* of the verse, both valid and invalid *qirā'āt*, complemented by quoting the sayings of the *salaf* and *khalaf* in understanding the verse.⁴⁴

One example of Abu Ḥayyān's interpretation in *Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* can be found when interpreting QS. ar-Raḥmān [55]: 76, namely: *Muttaki'ina 'alā raḥrafīn khudrin wa 'abqariyyin ḥisān*. According to him, this verse describes a beautiful and spacious place, or it can also be interpreted as the gardens of heaven full of pleasure and goodness.⁴⁵ The strength of the *Tafsīr Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* lies in the use of linguistic approaches, especially *nahwu*, which is very dominant. In addition, Abu Ḥayyān also incorporates a textual approach by using Qur'anic verses that explain each other (*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān*) as well as Prophetic traditions.

⁴⁰ al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr Al-Kasasyāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl Wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl Fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, 6:270.

⁴¹ Edī and Fangesty, “Tafsir Lughawī,” 680.

⁴² Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ* (Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1993), 1:27.

⁴³ Ahmad Kamil Taufiq and Deswanti Nabilah Putri, “Telaah Metodologis Kitab Tafsir Al-Bahr Al-Muhith Karya Abu Hayyan Al-Andalusy,” *Definisi: Jurnal Agama dan Sosial Humaniora* 2, no. 1 (2023): 60, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1557/djash.v2i1.29408>.

⁴⁴ Rizka Nurul Laila et al., “Kontribusi Al-Bahr Al-Muhith Pada Ilmu Tafsir,” *Minaret Journal Of Religious Studies* 2, no. 2 (2025): 82, 2, <https://jim.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/MINARET/article/view/4123>.

⁴⁵ Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ* (Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1993), 8:27.

For example, in interpreting the words of Allah Swt. in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 58: *Wa idh qulnā udkhulū hādhihi al-qaryah*. The word *al-qaryah* in this verse has been interpreted by many scholars with different interpretations. However, the most correct interpretation according to Abu Hayyān is to refer to another related verse, namely QS. al-Māidah [5]: 21: *Udkhulū al-arḍa al-muqaddasah*. Thus, the word *al-qaryah* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 58 is interpreted as Bayt al-Maqdis, as explicitly mentioned in QS. al-Māidah [5]: 21.⁴⁶

In addition, Abu Ḥayyān also uses socio-historical, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, and logical approaches in his interpretation. However, these approaches are not dominant. As mentioned earlier, *Tafsīr Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* discusses more aspects of *naḥwu* (Arabic grammar), so at first glance it looks like a book of *naḥwu* rather than a book of interpretation.

c. *Tafsīr Anwār al-Tanzīl Wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* by Al-Baidhawī

The full name of al-Bayḍāwī is 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Bayḍāwī al-Syāfi'ī al-Syīrāzī. He is better known by the name al-Bayḍāwī, which is attributed to his birthplace, the village of al-Bayḍā'. He is also often called al-Qāḍī, as he served as qāḍī in the city of Shīrāz for several years.⁴⁷

Tafsīr Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl, better known as *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, is a monumental work of al-Bayḍāwī. It is written in a concise yet profound and beautiful style that has received much attention and commentary from scholars. The work consists of four volumes that were published in two volumes in Beirut in 2003; the first volume covers surahs al-Fātiḥah to al-An'ām, while the second volume includes surahs al-A'rāf to al-Nās.

This book became one of the commentaries that attracted the attention of scholars to provide side notes (*ḥāsiyah*). As with scientific works in general, including in the field of Qur'anic interpretation, each author has his own method and tendency in its preparation.⁴⁸

This is also the case with al-Bayḍāwī. In interpreting the Qur'ān, he did not escape from one of the methods established by previous scholars of interpretation. Al-Bayḍāwī uses the *tahliḷī* (analytical) method in his interpretation, which is to interpret the verses of the Qur'an in sequence according to the order of the Mushaf 'Uthmānī, starting from Surah al-Fātiḥah to Surah al-Nās, by examining various aspects contained in each verse. In terms of the source of interpretation, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* uses the approach of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* at the same time. That is, al-Bayḍāwī refers to the Qur'ānic verses themselves, the Prophet's traditions, the opinions of the Companions and Ṭābi'īn, and does not abandon his personal opinions. In some passages, he even interprets Qur'ānic verses based solely on his reasoning and incorporates it directly into his tafsir.⁴⁹

In interpreting the verses of the Qur'an, al-Bayḍāwī does not show an absolute tendency towards one particular style of interpretation, such as exclusively *fiqh*, *lughawī*, *adabī ijtīmā'ī*, *falsafī*, or other styles. In general, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* shows a tendency towards three main styles, namely *fiqh*, scientific (*'ilmī*), and linguistic (*lughawī*). Among the three, the linguistic approach is a very prominent aspect in almost every interpretation. In this approach, al-Bayḍāwī often explains the meaning of unclear words or terms, elaborates on the relationship between one word and another, and occasionally explains the position of a

⁴⁶ al-Andalusī, *Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ*, 1:382.

⁴⁷ Qāḍī Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, *Ḥāsiyah Al-Shihāb 'alā Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī* (Dār al-Kitāb, 1997), 2:ii.

⁴⁸ al-Ḥabībī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, 254.

⁴⁹ al-Ḥabībī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, 254.

word in the sentence structure. All this is done to clarify and elaborate the meaning of the verse in depth. For example, this can be seen when he interprets QS. al-Şāffāt [37] 10:

إِلَّا مَنْ خَطِفَ الْخَطْفَةَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ ثَائِقٌ

but whoever (among them) steals (the conversation); then he is pursued by a bright torch.

This verse refers to those who listen to the conversations in the heavens, but they are unable to catch the entire conversation. In this context, "*khatifa*" means "to steal quickly" or "to take secretly." This refers to the devils who sometimes try to listen in on the angelic conversations taking place in the heavens.

However, when demons try to steal or listen to the words of angels, they are often immediately punished or attacked by objects that look like meteors or fire, referred to as شِهَابٌ (*shihāb*). These *shihāb* are luminous objects that descend from the sky, like the shooting stars usually seen in the night sky, and are sometimes referred to as "meteors."

As for *khatfah*, it is a fleeting moment in which Satan manages to steal a bit of information from the angels' conversation. Sometimes, this is explained in the *tafsīr* with the words that the devils cannot hold these conversations for long as they are often punished with objects that come down from the sky (*shihāb*) that burn or chase them away.

The term *thāqib* used in this verse means something that penetrates or illuminates, such as a meteor that breaks through the atmosphere and gives a bright light. In other words, it implies that the object gives a clear and bright effect when it comes down from the sky, so that it can be seen by people on earth.

There are various opinions among the mufasssirs on how this *shihāb* affects the devils who try to steal information from angels. Some opinions say that the devils will be injured or burnt if they are hit by the *shihāb*. In addition, some argue that this phenomenon occurs periodically, and can be seen as a warning to the devils not to try to infiltrate the heavens to listen to higher conversations.⁵⁰

8. Advantages of *Tafsīr Lughawī*

Tafsīr lughawī, as a linguistic approach to interpreting the Qur'an, offers several strengths as well as notable limitations. These aspects must be critically examined to understand its role in Qur'anic studies. Among them are:⁵¹ (1) *Tafsīr lughawī* not only highlights the literal meaning of words, but also opens the door to the depth of emotional, ethical, and aesthetic meanings of the Qur'ān. This allows the reader to experience the spiritual values and beauty of the language of revelation in a more heartfelt way. (2) Limiting the mufasssir to the textual framework of the Qur'anic verses, thus avoiding excessive subjectivity. (3) Presenting the redaction in accordance with the original text and understanding the meaning of various expressions in the text, so as not to be trapped in fear of expressing opinions. (4) Provide an explanation of the Arabic language, both in terms of sentence construction, letter induction, various nouns, verbs, and everything related to linguistics. (5) Understanding difficult meanings through knowledge of Arabic *uslub* (style). (6) Preserving the preservation, life, and continuity of Arabic in history, as well as maintaining the purity of the language of the Qur'an with clear Arabic and not popular or common language. (7) Revealing various concepts

⁵⁰ al-Baiḍāwī al-Baiḍāwī, *Tafsīr Anwār Al-Tanzīl Wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* (Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyyah al-Kubrā, tth), 4:3.

⁵¹ Mahdy, "Tafsir Lughawi Dalam Perspektif Sejarah," 706.

such as ethics, art, and imagination in the Qur'an, so as to give birth to a psychological dimension and provide significance in the interaction of the soul.

9. Disadvantages of *Tafsīr Lughawī*⁵²

The depth of discussion and study of *tafsīr lughawī* in linguistic aspects often makes *mufasssir* trapped in *tafsīr harfīyah* which is very long explanation, so they often forget to draw conclusions about the meaning and main purpose of the verse being discussed. (1) Ignoring social reality, *asbāb nuzūl*, as well as *nasikh* and *mansukh*, which ultimately leads to a void in time and space, thus ignoring the difference between *Makīyah* and *Madaniyah* verses. (2) Making language the object and goal, while forgetting humans as the subject. (3) The decline of *lafaz* (words), conflicting historical authorities, as well as the diversity of opinions of Arabic linguists can be thought-provoking, thus diverting the focus of *mufasssirs* from their primary goal, which is the understanding of the Qur'an.

However, the depth of linguistic analysis in *tafsīr lughawī* often causes *mufasssir* to become overly focused on grammatical details, leading to interpretative excess without clear theological or contextual grounding. This results in neglecting crucial elements such as social realities, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, and the implications of *naskh*. For instance, distinctions between *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah* verses are often overlooked due to the dominance of language-based analysis.

Moreover, prioritizing the linguistic form over the thematic or ethical substance of a verse can shift attention away from the Qur'an's intended guidance for humanity. The decline of classical Arabic usage, conflicting historical sources, and the wide spectrum of linguistic opinions among Arab grammarians further complicate interpretation. As a result, some *mufasssir* may fail to synthesize these elements, causing their *tafsīr* to lose coherence and relevance in addressing contemporary concerns.

D. CONCLUSION

Tafsīr lughawī is a Qur'anic interpretation method that emphasizes linguistic analysis, focusing on aspects such as *nahwu*, *ṣarf*, *balāghah*, and *uslūb*. This approach has significantly contributed to revealing the rhetorical and grammatical depth of the Qur'anic language. Historically, scholars like al-Zamakhsharī, with his rational-linguistic style, Abū Ḥayyān, with grammar-heavy emphasis, and al-Bayḍawī, with a moderate approach, have exemplified different models of *tafsīr lughawī*. However, the approach is not without its limitations.

Its heavy focus on language can cause *mufasssir* to overlook the social, historical, and *maqāsidī* dimensions of verses. In modern times, where interpretation must respond to complex contemporary realities, *tafsīr lughawī* must be integrated with other approaches, such as thematic or contextual interpretation, to ensure that the Qur'anic message remains relevant, holistic, and transformative. Thus, *tafsīr lughawī* not only helps uncover the eloquence of the Arabic Qur'an, but must also serve to convey its universal guidance to modern readers.

⁵² Mahdy, "Tafsir Lughawi Dalam Perspektif Sejarah," 706.

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