

THE ARABIC LANGUAGE AND ITS URGENCY IN UNDERSTANDING THE QUR'AN

<https://uia.e-journal.id/alrisalah/article/5433>

DOI: 10.34005/alrisalah.v17i1.5433

Ifham Choli

ifhamcholi.fai@uia.ac.id

Universitas Islam As-Syafiiyah, Indonesia

Ahmad Mujib

mujibahmad830@gmail.com

Universitas Indraprasta PGRI

ABSTRACT :

Arabic plays a crucial role in understanding and interpreting the Qur'an. Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, and there is a correlation between it and Qur'anic interpretation. This literature review aims to examine Arabic and its importance in understanding the Qur'an, a subject of increasing public interest. The study's findings demonstrate that Arabic plays a fundamental role in understanding the full meaning of the Qur'an. The root-based structure of Arabic (*jidzr al-kalimah*) allows a single word to contain multiple, interrelated meanings. Differences in word form, pattern (*wazan*), and pronunciation can produce significant differences in meaning. Therefore, understanding Arabic is a key prerequisite for accurately interpreting Qur'anic verses. In the science of exegesis, Arabic plays a crucial role, including understanding the semantic meaning of Qur'anic verses and understanding their intended meaning. Translations of the Qur'an cannot replace the Arabic text as the primary source of Islamic law and teachings. Thus, mastery of Arabic is an urgent need, especially for students who want to understand the Qur'an in depth and contextually.

Keywords : Arabic, Urgency, Understanding the Qur'an



Introduction

The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, a language characterized by its richness of structure, depth of meaning, and rhetorical excellence. Long before the revelation of the Qur'an, Arab society had already developed strong linguistic competence, particularly in poetry, eloquence, and oral expression. This linguistic environment became an essential medium for conveying divine revelation, enabling the Qur'an to communicate universal messages through precise and expressive language forms.¹

The Qur'an explicitly affirms the significance of Arabic as the language of revelation, as stated in QS. Yusuf [12]:2, which emphasizes that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic to facilitate understanding. This indicates that linguistic mastery is not merely instrumental but epistemological, serving as a foundation for comprehending divine guidance. Scholars of Qur'anic studies have consistently emphasized that Arabic functions as the primary key for accessing the authentic meaning of revelation.²

Arabic possesses a sophisticated linguistic system consisting of morphology (*ṣarf*), syntax (*naḥw*), and semantics (*dalālah*), which interact dynamically in shaping meaning. Minor variations in vowelization, word patterns, and sentence structure may produce significant differences in interpretation. Al-Ghalayaini (n.d.) highlights that Arabic grammatical accuracy is fundamental for preserving semantic precision, particularly in religious texts. Similarly, Al-Suyuthi (n.d.) and Al-Zarkasyi (n.d.) argue that linguistic analysis constitutes a core methodological component in Qur'anic interpretation.

In the field of Qur'anic exegesis, classical scholars such as Al-Ṭabari, Al-Zamakhshari, and Ibn Kathir placed linguistic examination at the center of their interpretative frameworks. They systematically analyzed grammatical structures, rhetorical devices, and pre-Islamic poetry to uncover the original meanings of Qur'anic expressions.³ This approach reflects the understanding that the Qur'an cannot be interpreted adequately without comprehensive mastery of Arabic linguistic sciences.

From the perspective of Islamic education, Arabic also plays a strategic role in shaping religious understanding and intellectual tradition. Azra emphasizes that the modernization of Islamic education must be grounded in classical scholarship, including Arabic language competence.⁴ Izzan further argues that Arabic learning methodology should aim not only at technical proficiency but also at developing interpretative skills for religious texts. Moreover, Nasution demonstrates that Arabic learning can be effectively integrated into various educational settings, including homeschooling, to strengthen students' religious literacy.⁵

In contemporary da'wah contexts, insufficient mastery of Arabic often contributes to fragmented, literalistic, and decontextualized interpretations of Qur'anic verses. The rapid

¹ Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din. 2008. *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth. And Al-Zamakhshari, Mahmud. 2009. *Al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

² Ibn Kathir, Ismail ibn Umar. 2003. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*. Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah. And Al-Ṭabari, Muhammad ibn Jarir. 2000. *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah.

³ Al-Ṭabari, Muhammad ibn Jarir. 2000. *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah. And Al-Zamakhshari, and Al-Zarkashi, Badr al-Din. 2001. *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Vol. 1. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

⁴ Azra, Azyumardi. 1999. *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi*. Jakarta: Logos.

⁵ Nasution, Sri Mulyani. 2022. "Homeschooling and Islamic Education in Indonesia." *Ar-Risalah* 13 (2).

spread of religious content through digital media has intensified this challenge, as verses are frequently quoted without adequate linguistic and contextual analysis. Such practices may lead to theological misunderstanding and social polarization. Quraish Shihab stresses that comprehensive engagement with the Qur'an requires deep linguistic awareness in order to preserve its ethical and humanitarian orientation.⁶

Furthermore, the reliance on Qur'anic translations, although helpful for non-Arabic speakers, remains limited in conveying the full semantic and rhetorical dimensions of the original text. Translations inevitably involve subjective interpretation and cannot fully represent the multilayered meanings embedded in Arabic expressions.⁷ Therefore, classical scholars have consistently maintained that Arabic remains the ultimate reference for deriving Islamic legal, theological, and ethical principles.

Several studies have addressed the importance of Arabic in understanding the Qur'an.⁸ However, most of these works focus primarily on linguistic or pedagogical aspects, with limited attention to the integration of Arabic competence within contemporary da'wah practices. This indicates a research gap concerning the strategic role of Arabic as both a hermeneutical tool and a medium for transformative religious communication.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the urgency of Arabic in understanding the Qur'an from an integrative perspective that combines linguistic analysis, Qur'anic interpretation, and da'wah orientation. Through a literature-based approach, this research seeks to demonstrate that mastery of Arabic is not only essential for academic interpretation but also fundamental for developing responsible, contextual, and socially constructive Islamic preaching in the modern era.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design based on library research to examine the urgency of the Arabic language in understanding the Qur'an from linguistic, exegetical, and da'wah perspectives. This approach is considered appropriate for exploring conceptual frameworks, theoretical arguments, and interpretative traditions embedded in classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship. Through systematic literature analysis, this research seeks to identify patterns and relationships between Arabic language competence and Qur'anic understanding.

The data sources consist of primary and secondary references. Primary sources include authoritative classical works in Qur'anic exegesis and Qur'anic sciences, such as *Al-Itqān* by Al-Suyuthi, *Al-Burhān* by Al-Zarkasyi, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* by Ibn Kathir, *Jāmi' al-Bayān* by Al-Ṭabari, and *Al-Kasasyāf* by Al-Zamakhsyari. Secondary sources comprise academic books and peer-reviewed journal articles related to Arabic education, Islamic studies, and da'wah, including works by Azra, Izzan, Shihab, Choli, Sari Dewi, and Nasution.

⁶ Shihab, M. Quraish. 1992. *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*. Bandung: Mizan.

⁷ Ibid and Zein, Mahmud Ahmad. 2009. *Ahammiyah al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah fī Fahm al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah*. Dubai: Dairah al-Syu'un al-Islamiyah.

⁸ Dewi, Intan Sari. 2026. "Bahasa Arab dan Urgensinya dalam Memahami Al-Qur'an." *Jurnal Kontemplasi* 4 (1). And Choli, Ifham. 2022. "Perkembangan Studi Islam di Indonesia." *Tahdzib Al-Akhlaq* 5 (2).

Data collection was conducted through systematic document analysis. Relevant literature was selected based on thematic relevance, academic credibility, and contribution to the research focus. The selected materials were carefully examined, annotated, and categorized according to major themes, such as Arabic linguistic structure, Qur'anic interpretation methodology, da'wah orientation, and educational implications. This process enabled the organization of data into coherent analytical units.

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and comparative interpretation. First, key concepts and arguments were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns and scholarly perspectives. Second, classical and contemporary sources were compared to examine continuity and transformation in views on Arabic language competence. Finally, an interpretative synthesis was developed to integrate linguistic, exegetical, and da'wah dimensions into a unified analytical framework.

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, this study applies source triangulation by cross-referencing multiple authoritative works. Analytical procedures are documented transparently to minimize subjective bias and enhance reproducibility. Ethical standards are maintained through proper citation, respect for intellectual property, and faithful representation of original scholarly views.

Results and Discussion

1. The Role of Arabic as the Key to Qur'anic Meaning

The findings of this study indicate that Arabic plays a fundamental role in accessing the comprehensive meaning of the Qur'an. Classical and contemporary sources consistently emphasize that the Qur'anic message is inseparable from its linguistic structure, including morphology, syntax, semantics, and rhetoric (Al-Suyuthi, n.d.; Al-Zarkasyi, n.d.; Al-Ṭabari, n.d.). The root-based system (*jidzr al-kalimah*) enables a single word to generate multiple interrelated meanings, which are contextually activated through specific patterns and vowelization.

Variations in word form (*ṣīghah*), pattern (*wazan*), and grammatical position (*i'rāb*) often lead to significant differences in interpretation. For example, changes in verb forms may indicate continuity, command, or emphasis, while syntactic shifts may imply restriction, prioritization, or rhetorical stress. Without adequate linguistic competence, readers tend to grasp only surface meanings, which may result in partial or inaccurate understanding of Qur'anic messages.

This finding confirms the views of Al-Ghalayaini (n.d.) and Ibn Kathir (n.d.), who argue that linguistic precision is a prerequisite for reliable interpretation. From a da'wah perspective, such precision is crucial to prevent misinterpretation that may distort theological, legal, or ethical teachings in public religious discourse.

2. Contribution of Arabic Linguistic Sciences to Qur'anic Interpretation

The analysis demonstrates that the classical sciences of Arabic—*nahwu*, *ṣarf*, *balāghah*, and *dalālah*—function as integrated tools in Qur'anic interpretation. Each discipline contributes to different dimensions of meaning construction.

Ilm al-nahwu determines grammatical relationships between words and clauses, shaping subject–object relations and semantic emphasis. Errors in grammatical analysis may alter theological or legal implications. Ilm al-ṣarf, meanwhile, enables interpreters to understand temporal, causal, and modal nuances embedded in word forms. Ilm al-dalālah clarifies lexical and contextual meanings, particularly in cases of polysemy (*musytarak lafzī*), while *balāghah* reveals rhetorical strategies that strengthen persuasive and moral messages.

Classical mufassirun such as Al-Zamakhshari and Al-Ṭabari systematically employed these sciences to analyze Qur’anic expressions and support their interpretations. Their methodological consistency illustrates that linguistic mastery is not optional but constitutive of Qur’anic scholarship (Al-Zamakhshari, n.d.; Al-Ṭabari, n.d.).

In contemporary da‘wah, this integrative linguistic competence enables preachers to convey Qur’anic teachings with clarity, depth, and ethical responsibility. It also helps counter oversimplified interpretations frequently circulated through digital platforms.

3. Arabic Competence and Da‘wah Effectiveness

The results further show that Arabic language mastery significantly influences the quality and effectiveness of Islamic preaching. Da‘i with strong linguistic competence tend to demonstrate higher interpretative accuracy, argumentative coherence, and rhetorical sensitivity. They are better equipped to contextualize Qur’anic messages in addressing social, ethical, and spiritual challenges.

Shihab (1992) emphasizes that comprehensive Qur’anic understanding requires linguistic awareness to maintain its humanitarian and universal orientation. Similarly, Azra (1999) highlights that intellectual depth in Islamic education depends on engagement with classical Arabic sources. These perspectives indicate that Arabic competence contributes directly to developing moderate, inclusive, and socially constructive da‘wah.

In contrast, limited linguistic proficiency often leads to literalistic and fragmented interpretations. In digital environments, this tendency may amplify polarization, doctrinal rigidity, and misinformation. Therefore, strengthening Arabic education is not merely academic but strategic for safeguarding the quality of contemporary Islamic communication.

4. Limitations of Qur’anic Translation and the Necessity of Arabic

This study confirms that Qur’anic translations, although useful for introductory understanding, remain insufficient for capturing the full semantic and rhetorical complexity of the original text. Translation inevitably involves interpretative choices that reflect the translator’s linguistic, theological, and cultural background (Zein, 2009; Shihab, 1992).

Many Qur’anic terms possess layered meanings that cannot be fully represented in a single equivalent word. For example, ethical and theological concepts often combine legal, spiritual, and social dimensions. When translated, these dimensions may be reduced or fragmented. Consequently, exclusive reliance on translation risks producing reductive religious understanding.

Classical scholars therefore maintained that Arabic remains the primary reference for deriving Islamic norms and values (Al-Suyuthi, n.d.; Al-Zarkasyi, n.d.). In da‘wah contexts,

this principle ensures that religious messages remain rooted in authentic textual foundations rather than subjective interpretation.

5. Arabic Language Education and the Sustainability of Qur’anic Da’wah

The findings also reveal that Arabic education plays a decisive role in sustaining high-quality Qur’anic engagement. Izzan (2011) and Nasution (2022) demonstrate that Arabic learning can be effectively integrated into diverse educational models, including formal institutions and homeschooling. Such integration enhances religious literacy and interpretative competence.

Choli (2022) and Sari Dewi (2026) further emphasize that Arabic education strengthens students’ capacity to engage critically with Islamic sources. When embedded within da’wah-oriented curricula, Arabic learning fosters intellectual humility, ethical sensitivity, and social responsibility.

Thus, Arabic education should be positioned not as a supplementary subject but as a core component of Islamic intellectual formation. This positioning is essential for producing future scholars and preachers capable of addressing contemporary challenges through Qur’anic guidance.

6. Synthesis of Findings

Based on the analysis, the main findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

Dimension	Key Findings	Implications for Da’wah
Linguistic Structure	Arabic morphology and syntax shape Qur’anic meaning	Prevents misinterpretation
Tafsir Methodology	Classical tafsir relies on linguistic analysis	Strengthens interpretative legitimacy
Translation	Limited in conveying full meaning	Requires reference to original Arabic
Education	Arabic competence enhances religious literacy	Improves da’wah quality
Digital Context	Weak language skills lead to simplification	Increases risk of polarization

This synthesis indicates that Arabic functions simultaneously as a hermeneutical tool, educational foundation, and communicative instrument in Islamic preaching.

7. Discussion: Integrating Linguistics, Tafsir, and Da’wah

The overall findings demonstrate that Arabic language mastery constitutes the epistemological backbone of Qur’anic understanding and da’wah practice. Linguistic

competence enables interpreters to access textual depth, tafsir methodology provides interpretative discipline, and da‘wah orientation ensures social relevance.

This integrative framework fills the research gap identified earlier by connecting Arabic studies with contemporary religious communication. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on pedagogical or linguistic aspects, this research highlights the transformative function of Arabic in shaping ethical and socially responsible Islamic discourse.

In the context of globalization and digitalization, such integration becomes increasingly urgent. The Qur’an is frequently cited in fragmented and decontextualized forms, creating risks of ideological manipulation. Arabic-based interpretation offers a methodological safeguard against these tendencies by grounding da‘wah in rigorous textual engagement. Therefore, strengthening Arabic competence among students, scholars, and preachers should be viewed as a strategic investment in the sustainability of Qur’anic values in modern society.

Conclusion and Implications

This study demonstrates that Arabic language mastery constitutes the epistemological and methodological foundation for understanding the Qur’an and developing responsible Islamic da‘wah. The findings confirm that Qur’anic meaning is inseparable from its linguistic structure, including morphology, syntax, semantics, and rhetoric. Without adequate competence in these dimensions, Qur’anic interpretation tends to remain partial, reductive, and vulnerable to misrepresentation.

The integration of Arabic linguistic sciences with classical tafsir methodologies enables interpreters and preachers to access the depth, coherence, and ethical orientation of Qur’anic messages. This integration not only enhances interpretative accuracy but also strengthens the legitimacy and credibility of religious discourse in contemporary society. In the context of digital communication and rapid dissemination of religious content, such competence functions as a safeguard against literalism, polarization, and ideological distortion.

Furthermore, this research highlights that Qur’anic translations, although beneficial as introductory tools, cannot substitute for direct engagement with the Arabic text. The multilayered meanings embedded in Qur’anic expressions require linguistic awareness that only Arabic mastery can provide. Consequently, reliance on translation alone risks producing fragmented religious understanding and weakening the transformative potential of da‘wah.

From an educational perspective, this study affirms that Arabic learning should be positioned as a core component of Islamic intellectual formation rather than as a supplementary subject. The integration of Arabic competence within da‘wah-oriented curricula contributes to the development of preachers and scholars who are intellectually rigorous, ethically grounded, and socially responsive. Such integration is essential for sustaining high-quality Qur’anic engagement in diverse educational contexts.

This study contributes to existing scholarship by bridging Arabic linguistics, Qur’anic exegesis, and contemporary da‘wah practice within a unified analytical framework. By emphasizing the strategic function of Arabic in shaping moderate, inclusive, and transformative Islamic discourse, this research addresses a gap in previous studies that focused mainly on linguistic or pedagogical dimensions.

Future research is recommended to explore empirical dimensions of Arabic-based da‘wah practices, particularly in digital and multicultural environments. Such studies may further strengthen the role of Arabic as a dynamic instrument for preserving the authenticity, universality, and social relevance of Qur’anic teachings in the modern world.

References

- Ahmad, Izzan. 2011. *Metodologi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab*. Bandung: Humaniora.
- Al-Ghalayaini, Mustafa. 2005. *Jāmi‘ al-Durūs al-‘Arabiyyah*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
- Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din. 2008. *Al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth.
- Al-Tabari, Muhammad ibn Jarir. 2000. *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’ān*. Beirut: Mu’assasah al-Risālah.
- Al-Zamakhshari, Mahmud. 2009. *Al-Kashshāf ‘an Ḥaqā’iq al-Tanzīl*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Zarkashi, Badr al-Din. 2001. *Al-Burhān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*. Vol. 1. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
- Azra, Azyumardi. 1999. *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi*. Jakarta: Logos.
- Choli, Ifham. 2022. “Perkembangan Studi Islam di Indonesia.” *Tahdzib Al-Akhlaq* 5 (2)
- Dewi, Intan Sari. 2026. “Bahasa Arab dan Urgensinya dalam Memahami Al-Qur’an.” *Jurnal Kontemplasi* 4 (1).
- Esack, Farid. 2005. *The Qur’an: A User’s Guide*. Oxford: Oneworld.
- Hamid, A., and Badrah Uyuni. 2023. “Human Needs for Dakwah (The Existence of KODI as the Capital’s Da’wah Organization).” *TSAQAFAH* 19 (1): 1–26.
- Haleem, Abdel. M. A. S. 2010. *Understanding the Qur’an: Themes and Style*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Haleem, M. A. S. Abdel. 2016. “Translating the Qur’an: Challenges and Solutions.” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 18 (3): 1–20.
- Ibn Kathir, Ismail ibn Umar. 2003. *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*. Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah.
- Muharrom, Ali. n.d. *Konsep Keterjagaan Al-Qur’an Menurut Al-Sya’rawi*. Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, ed. 2015. *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*. New York: HarperOne.
- Nasution, Sri Mulyani. 2022. “Homeschooling and Islamic Education in Indonesia.” *Ar-Risalah* 13 (2)

- Rahman, Fazlur. 1982. *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rippin, Andrew. 2001. *The Qur'an and Its Interpretative Tradition*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Saeed, Abdullah. 2006. *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Shihab, M. Quraish. 1992. *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Uyuni, Badrah, and Muhibudin Muhibudin. 2020. "Community Development: The Medina Community as the Ideal Prototype of Community Development." *Spektra: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 2 (1): 10–31.
- Zein, Mahmud Ahmad. 2009. *Ahammiyah al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah fī Fahm al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah*. Dubai: Dairah al-Syu'un al-Islamiyah.