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Reassessing Uslūb Istifhām in Mukhtār al-Aḥādīs an-Nabawiyyah: Implications for Artificial Intelligence Interpretation

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between syntactic structure and rhetorical meaning in *uslūb istifhām* within *Mukhtār al-Aḥādīs an-Nabawiyyah* by integrating *nahw* and '*ilm al-ma'ānī*'. Previous studies have primarily focused on identifying interrogative particles or classifying rhetorical meanings, while the interaction between syntactic structure and contextual meaning remains underexplored. Employing a qualitative library research design, this study analyzes 45 interrogative expressions identified from 183 hadiths in *Khātimātun fī Taḍhīb an-Nufūs*. Data were collected through documentation and analyzed using syntactic and rhetorical approaches. The findings reveal that interrogative constructions function predominantly as *istifhām ghair ḥaqīqī*, expressing rhetorical meanings such as *at-tashwīq*, *at-taqrīr*, *al-amr*, *al-inkār*, *at-ta'ajjub*, *at-ta'ẓīm*, and *at-tanbīh 'alā ḍalāl*. These meanings are determined not solely by grammatical structure or interrogative particles but through the interaction between syntax, *siyāq al-kalām*, *qarīnah*, and communicative purpose. This study proposes an integrated analytical framework that enriches Arabic linguistic studies and provides a conceptual foundation for context-sensitive AI-assisted hadith interpretation.

Keywords: *uslūb istifhām; nahw; 'ilm al-ma'ānī; rhetorical meaning; hadith interpretation; Arabic linguistics; artificial intelligence*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan antara struktur sintaktis dan makna retorik *uslub istijhām* dalam *Mukhtār al-Aḥādīṣ an-Nabawīyyah* melalui integrasi analisis nahwu dan 'ilm al-ma'ānī. Penelitian terdahulu umumnya berfokus pada identifikasi *adāt al-istijhām* atau klasifikasi makna retorik, sedangkan hubungan antara struktur sintaktis dan pembentukan makna kontekstual masih belum banyak dikaji. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan. Data berupa 45 tuturan *uslub istijhām* yang ditemukan dari 183 hadis pada *Khatimatun fi Taḍīb an-Nufūs*, dikumpulkan melalui teknik dokumentasi dan dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan sintaktis dan retorik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konstruksi interogatif didominasi oleh *istijhām ghair ḥaqiqī* yang merealisasikan makna *at-tashwīq*, *at-taqrīr*, *al-amr*, *al-inkār*, *at-ta'ajjub*, *at-ta'zīm*, dan *at-tanbīh 'alā ḍalāl*. Makna tersebut tidak ditentukan semata-mata oleh struktur gramatikal atau jenis *adāt al-istijhām*, melainkan oleh interaksi antara sintaksis, *siyāq al-kalām*, *qarīnah*, dan tujuan komunikatif. Penelitian ini menawarkan kerangka analisis integratif yang memperkaya kajian linguistik Arab sekaligus menjadi landasan konseptual bagi pengembangan interpretasi hadis berbantuan kecerdasan artifisial yang lebih peka terhadap konteks.

Kata Kunci: *uslub istijhām; nahwu; 'ilm al-ma'ānī; makna retorik; interpretasi hadis; linguistik Arab; kecerdasan buatan*

Introduction

One of the fundamental issues in Arabic linguistics concerns the relationship between linguistic structure (*al-binā' al-lughawī*) and meaning construction (*takwīn al-ma'nā*). In Arabic discourse, grammatical forms do not always correspond directly to the communicative intentions of the speaker.¹ The same syntactic structure may convey different meanings depending on the discourse context, communicative purpose, and the interaction among its linguistic constituents.² This phenomenon is particularly evident in religious texts, especially the Prophetic hadith, which extensively employ rhetorical devices (*al-asālīb al-balāghīyyah*) to communicate religious and ethical messages. Consequently, interpreting hadith requires more than lexical

¹ Mohi, Kousar, Imtiaz Ahmad, and Sa'ed Abed. "Evaluating Large Language Models' Arabic Grammar Error Corrections and Explanations." *PeerJ Computer Science* 12 (January 2026): e3486. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj-cs.3486>.

² Alnufaie, Mohammad R., and Ibrahim H. Alzahrani. "EFL Grammar Learning Strategy Use: Utilizing Grammar Learning Strategy Inventory in an Arabic Context." *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language--TESL-EJ* 27, no. 4 (February 2024). <https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27108a6>.

identification or syntactic analysis; it also demands an understanding of the mechanisms through which meaning is constructed beyond the linguistic form itself.³

One linguistic phenomenon that clearly illustrates the interaction between structure and meaning is *uslūb al-istifhām* (interrogative style). In Arabic, interrogative constructions are formed through various interrogative particles (*hurūf al-istifhām*) and interrogative nouns (*asmā' al-istifhām*), which function in both nominal (*jumlah ismiyyah*) and verbal (*jumlah fi'liyyah*) sentences. However, particularly in the Qur'an and the Prophetic hadith, interrogative forms do not always perform an interrogative function. Instead, syntactically interrogative expressions frequently convey rhetorical meanings such as *al-amr* (command), *al-taqrīr* (affirmation), *al-inkār* (denial), *al-ta'ajjub* (amazement), *al-tashwīq* (encouragement), *al-ta'zīm* (glorification), and other communicative purposes. This demonstrates that the relationship between syntactic form and semantic function in *uslūb al-istifhām* is dynamic and cannot be adequately explained through grammatical analysis alone.⁴

From the perspective of *nahwu* (Arabic syntax), the analysis of *uslūb al-istifhām* focuses on sentence structure, the syntactic position of *adāt al-istifhām*, and the relationships among syntactic constituents. While such analysis explains how an utterance is structurally organized, it does not fully account for why identical structures may express different meanings. Consequently, interpreting rhetorical meaning requires an approach that extends beyond grammatical analysis.⁵ This issue falls within the domain of *'ilm al-ma'ānī*, which emphasizes the correspondence between linguistic expression and its contextual appropriateness (*muqtaḍā al-ḥāl*). Through concepts such as *siyāq al-kalām* (discourse context), *qarīnah* (contextual clues), and *maqām al-*

³ Kamran, Amna Binte, Bushra Abro, and Amna Basharat. "SemanticHadith: An Ontology-Driven Knowledge Graph for the Hadith Corpus." *Journal of Web Semantics* 78 (October 2023): 100797. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.websem.2023.100797>.

⁴ Abd-Elmoneim, Dina Mohammed, Hassan Hosney Ghandour, Dina Ahmed Elrefaie, and Mona Sameeh Khodeir. "Development of an Arabic Test for Assessment of Semantics for the Arabic-Speaking Children: The Arabic Semantic Test." *The Egyptian Journal of Otolaryngology* 39, no. 1 (March 2023): 49. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43163-023-00405-3>.

⁵ Dahy, Badrya, Mamdouh Farouk, and Khaled Fathy. "Arabic Sentences Semantic Similarity Based on Word Embedding." *2022 20th International Conference on Language Engineering (ESOLEC)*, October 12, 2022, 35–40. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ESOLEC54569.2022.10009099>.

khiṭāb (communicative situation), this discipline explains that meaning is determined not only by linguistic structure but also by communicative context and speaker intention. Accordingly, distinguishing between *istifhām ḥaqīqī* (literal interrogation) and *istifhām ḡhayr ḥaqīqī* (rhetorical interrogation) requires the integration of syntactic and rhetorical analysis.⁶

This principle is particularly evident in the Prophetic hadith, where interrogative expressions are often employed not to obtain information but as rhetorical strategies for education, legal instruction, strengthening faith, and moral guidance. Therefore, understanding *uṣlūb al-istifhām* requires an integrated analysis of syntactic structure, discourse context, and rhetorical function.⁷ One text that exemplifies these characteristics is *Mukhtār al-Aḥādīth al-Nabawiyyah* by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hāshimī. In particular, the chapter *Khātimātun fī Taḍhīb al-Nufūs* contains diverse interrogative constructions and rhetorical functions, providing an appropriate corpus for examining the relationship between syntactic structure and meaning construction from the perspectives of *nahwu* and *‘ilm al-ma‘ānī*.

Recent scholarship on Arabic rhetoric has shifted from predominantly normative perspectives toward more contextual and communicative approaches. Al-Mubarak and Hill conceptualize *balāghah* as an integrated discipline comprising *‘ilm al-ma‘ānī*, *al-bayān*, and *al-badī‘*, while demonstrating its relevance to contemporary linguistic inquiry.⁸ Likewise, Styszyński traces the evolution of Arabic rhetorical theory from classical *balāghah* to modern theories of persuasion and pragmatics, expanding its role beyond aesthetic

⁶ Abubkr, Lutfi Omar, Mozah H. al Kaabi, Hayam Almaamari, and Nabeeha bin Haidara. “Stylistic Transformation Signals in Arabic Grammatical Discourse: A Grammatical- Rhetorical Approach.” *Journal of Ecohumanism* 3, no. 8 (December 2024). <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.5236>.

⁷ Maizuddin, Maizuddin, Sri Chalida, Sarmida Hanum, Zulihafnani Zulihafnani, and Ikhsan Nur. “The Typology of Hadith as the Bayān of the Qur’an and Its Implications for the Reform of Islamic Inheritance Law.” *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 2 (May 2023): 760. <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i2.17467>.

⁸ Al-Mubarak, Rabeea, and Ian E. J. Hill. “A Descriptive Study of Arabic Rhetorics.” In *Routledge Handbook of Descriptive Rhetorical Studies and World Languages*, 148–62. London: Routledge, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003195276-13>.

appreciation to the analysis of communication.⁹ This perspective is further reinforced by Abdel Ati et al., who demonstrate that rhetorical devices such as *kināyah* and *tawriyah* construct meaning through the interaction between explicit and implicit meanings, thereby producing both aesthetic and communicative effects.¹⁰

Studies focusing specifically on hadith have likewise begun integrating linguistic and rhetorical perspectives to explain Prophetic discourse. Al-Sayyid emphasizes the importance of rhetorical analysis in explaining the construction of meaning through the interaction of linguistic, semantic, and contextual elements.¹¹ Similarly, Al-Rifa'i Al-Juhani demonstrates that the persuasive power of hadith derives from its linguistic structure and rhetorical strategies, which effectively influence the audience.¹² Nevertheless, these studies remain concerned primarily with general rhetorical theory, specific rhetorical devices, or partial analyses of hadith rhetoric. To date, no study has systematically integrated *nahwu* and *'ilm al-ma'ānī* to explain the relationship between syntactic structure, discourse context, and the rhetorical functions of *uslūb al-istifhām* within a hadith corpus. This gap constitutes the primary focus and contribution of the present study.

Accordingly, this study integrates *nahwu* and *'ilm al-ma'ānī* to explain the mechanisms underlying the construction of meaning in *uslūb al-istifhām* in the chapter *Khātimātun fī Taḥīb al-Nufūs* of *Mukhtār al-Aḥādīth al-Nabawiyyah*. This integrated framework is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between syntactic structure, discourse context, and rhetorical function in the Prophetic hadith. Furthermore, the rapid development of Artificial

⁹ Styszyński, Marcin. "Evolution of Arabic Rhetoric From Classical Balāgha to Modern Concepts of Persuasion." In *Routledge Handbook of Descriptive Rhetorical Studies and World Languages*, 69–86. London: Routledge, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003195276-7>.

¹⁰ Abdel Ati, Ahmed Ali Mohamed, Koussoube Issa, Musa'ed Amer Ebrahim Saidoon, and Tamer Ismail Mohamed Mohamed Hamidi. "Aesthetic Dualities In Arabic Rhetoric Metaphor And Double Entendre As Examples/ الثنائيات الجمالية في البلاغة." *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 8, no. 1 (February 2025). <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v8i1.28520>.

¹¹ السيد، إبراهيم سعيد. "مفاهيم البلاغة وأثرها في شروح الحديث النبوي: دراسة في التصور الإبراهيمي." *مجلة جامعة جازان للعلوم الإنسانية* 12, no. 3 (May 2024): 115–41. <https://doi.org/10.63908/16gvz591>.

¹² Al-Rifa'i Al-Juhani, Sami Bin Musa'id Bin Mas'id. "The Hadith Indeed, Some Speech Is Enchantment: A Hadith, Linguistic, Rhetorical, and Da'wah Study/ حديث إن من البيان سحرا: دراسة حديثة لغوية بلاغية دعوية." *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 9, no. 1 (December 2025). <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v9i1.37526>.

Intelligence (AI) for Arabic language processing has significantly improved computational systems' ability to recognize syntactic patterns and semantic relations. However, the interpretation of rhetorical discourse still requires a robust linguistic framework capable of explaining the interaction between linguistic form, communicative context, and intended meaning. Therefore, beyond contributing to the study of *nahwu* and hadith rhetoric, this research is expected to provide linguistic insights that support the development of AI-assisted Hadith Interpretation, particularly by informing computational systems that move beyond grammatical recognition toward context-sensitive interpretation grounded in the principles of the Arabic linguistic tradition.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design. This approach was selected because all research data consisted of written texts analyzed through linguistic interpretation without involving experimental procedures or statistical analysis. The study focused on identifying the syntactic structures and interpreting the meanings of *uslūb al-istifhām* in the Prophetic hadith. Accordingly, a qualitative approach was considered the most appropriate for examining the relationship between linguistic form and semantic function in depth.¹³

The analytical framework integrated two principal disciplines of Arabic linguistics, namely *nahwu* (Arabic syntax) and *'ilm al-ma'ānī* (the science of meaning). The *nahwu* analysis was employed to identify the syntactic construction of each interrogative utterance, including sentence type (nominal or verbal), the distribution of *adāt al-istifhām* (interrogative particles), grammatical functions (*i'rāb*), and the relationships among syntactic constituents. The resulting syntactic analysis was subsequently interpreted through the perspective of *'ilm al-ma'ānī* to explain the rhetorical function of each utterance based on *siyāq al-kalām* (discourse context), *qarīnah* (contextual clues), *maqām al-khiṭāb* (communicative situation), and the speaker's communicative intention. The integration of these two approaches enabled a comprehensive explanation of the mechanisms underlying meaning construction in *uslūb al-istifhām*.

¹³ George, Mary W. *The Elements of Library Research*. Princeton University Press, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400830411>.

The data sources comprised both primary and secondary materials. The primary source was *Mukhtār al-Aḥādīth al-Nabawīyyah* by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hāshimī, with particular emphasis on the chapter *Khātimātun fī Taḍhīb al-Nufūs*, which contains 183 hadith. All interrogative utterances (*uslūb al-istifhām*) identified within this chapter constituted the units of analysis. Secondary sources included classical works on *nahwu* and *balāghah*, particularly *ʿilm al-maʿānī*, Arabic linguistic dictionaries, and scholarly publications on Arabic syntax, rhetoric, and textual interpretation that provided the conceptual foundation for the analysis.

Data were collected through documentation using the observation (*simak*) and note-taking (*catat*) techniques. All utterances containing *adāt al-istifhām* were first identified and subsequently classified according to their syntactic forms. Each datum was then documented in an analytical worksheet containing the type of interrogative particle, sentence construction, syntactic function of each constituent, discourse context, and its potential rhetorical meaning.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.¹⁴ During the data condensation stage, all hadith were examined to identify utterances containing *uslūb al-istifhām*. The identified data were then classified according to the type of *adāt al-istifhām*, syntactic pattern, and contextual occurrence. The organized data were subsequently presented in analytical tables to facilitate the identification of relationships between syntactic structures and semantic functions before the final interpretation was conducted.

The linguistic analysis employed the distributional method (*metode agih*) using the Immediate Constituent Analysis (ICA), locally known as the *Bagi Unsur Langsung* (BUL) technique. This method was applied to decompose the internal structure of each utterance, thereby systematically revealing the relationships among its constituents. The resulting syntactic analysis served as the basis for determining the rhetorical functions of *uslūb al-istifhām* through the framework of *ʿilm al-maʿānī*. Meaning was not determined solely by the form of the interrogative particle but through the interaction between syntactic structure, *siyāq al-kalām*, *qarīnah*, and *maqām al-khiṭāb*, enabling each

¹⁴ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014.

utterance to be interpreted according to its communicative function within the hadith.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, theoretical triangulation was employed by comparing the results of the syntactic analysis with explanations provided by classical and contemporary scholars of *balāghah*, particularly within the framework of *'ilm al-ma'ānī*. In addition, each interpretation was verified by examining the consistency between syntactic structure, hadith context, and rhetorical indicators identified in both classical literature and recent studies. This procedure was intended to enhance analytical consistency while minimizing subjectivity in meaning interpretation.

Although this study neither develops nor evaluates an Artificial Intelligence (AI) system, the resulting linguistic framework has conceptual relevance for AI-assisted Arabic text interpretation. Therefore, the implications for AI-assisted Hadith Interpretation are discussed only in the concluding section as a theoretical extension of the linguistic findings rather than as part of the research design or methodology.

Results and Discussion

An examination of the 183 hadith contained in the chapter *Khātimātun fī Taḍhīb al-Nufūs* of *Mukhtār al-Aḥādīth al-Nabawīyyah* identified 45 utterances containing *uslūb al-istifhām*. All identified utterances were analyzed through an integrated framework combining *nahwu* and *'ilm al-ma'ānī* to examine the relationship between syntactic structure, the use of *adāt al-istifhām*, and the rhetorical functions constructed through discourse context. The findings indicate that interrogative constructions within the corpus function not merely as genuine interrogatives (*istifhām ḥaqīqī*) intended to seek information but, more predominantly, as rhetorical interrogatives (*istifhām ḡhayr ḥaqīqī*) employed to convey various communicative intentions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

From a syntactic perspective, 28 utterances are realized as verbal sentences (*jumlah fi'liyyah*), whereas the remaining 17 are nominal sentences (*jumlah ismiyyah*). The predominance of verbal constructions suggests that Prophetic discourse primarily conveys its messages through action-oriented expressions emphasizing processes, behavior, and transformation. This characteristic reflects the educational function of hadith, which extends beyond transmitting information to guiding attitudes and conduct. Regarding interrogative markers, the corpus

contains interrogative particles (*ḥurūf al-istifhām*), namely *hamzah* and *hal*, as well as interrogative nouns (*asmā' al-istifhām*), including *mā*, *mādhā*, *man*, *ayyu*, *kayfā*, *limā*, and *mimmā*. This diversity demonstrates that the formation of *uslūb al-istifhām* in the hadith exhibits considerable syntactic variation. Consequently, its communicative function cannot be determined solely by the type of interrogative marker but must be interpreted through the interaction among sentence constituents and their discourse context.

Further analysis reveals that the rhetorical meaning of each utterance is not linearly associated with its syntactic form. Identical syntactic constructions may perform different communicative functions when situated in different contexts, whereas different syntactic forms may realize similar rhetorical meanings when supported by the same *siyāq al-kalām* and *qarīnah*. Accordingly, syntactic analysis serves as the initial stage of interpretation, while meaning is established through an examination of the entire speech event as conceptualized in *'ilm al-ma'ānī*. Based on this analytical process, seven principal rhetorical functions were identified: *al-tashwīq* (arousing interest), *al-taqrīr* (affirmation), *al-amr* (command), *al-inkār* (denial), *al-ta'ajjub* (amazement), *al-ta'zīm* (glorification), and *al-tanbīh 'alā al-dalāl* (warning against misguidance). These functions represent the dominant rhetorical uses of *uslūb al-istifhām* throughout the corpus.

One of the most prominent rhetorical functions identified is *al-tashwīq*, in which an interrogative expression is employed to attract the audience's attention and stimulate curiosity before conveying important information. This pattern is illustrated in Hadith No. 1432 in *al-Dars al-'Ashir fī Faḍl al-Wuḍū'*, where the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

أَلَا أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَمْحُو اللَّهُ بِهِ الْخَطَايَا وَيَرْفَعُ بِهِ الدَّرَجَاتِ؟

Syntactically, the utterance is a verbal sentence (*jumlaḥ fi 'liyyah*) initiated by the verb *adullukum* following the interrogative construction *alā*. The combination of *hamzah al-istifhām* with the particle *lā* produces a construction that is grammatically interrogative. However, the utterance is not intended to elicit information from the Companions regarding their knowledge of a particular deed. Rather, it serves to establish collective attention before the Prophet introduces actions that erase sins and elevate one's spiritual rank. The interrogative form therefore shifts from its literal function to a rhetorical strategy designed to arouse the audience's interest in the forthcoming message.

The rhetorical function of *al-tashwīq* in this hadith does not arise solely from the presence of *hamzah al-istifhām*. In many other contexts,

the same interrogative particle conveys entirely different rhetorical meanings. What establishes *al-tashwīq* is the interaction between syntactic structure and the communicative context in which the Prophet prepares his audience to receive teachings of exceptional religious significance. The interrogative construction thus functions as a pedagogical strategy that activates the audience's attention before the central message is delivered. This finding demonstrates that interpreting *uslūb al-istifhām* cannot be separated from an analysis of *siyāq al-kalām*, since rhetorical meaning emerges through the interaction between linguistic form and communicative intention.

A different pattern appears in utterances expressing the rhetorical function of *al-taqrīr*. One example is found in Hadith No. 1464 in *al-Dars al- 'Ishrūn fī Istiḥbāb Qiyām al-Layl*, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) responded to 'Ā'ishah's question regarding why he continued to perform the night prayer with such devotion despite having received Allah's forgiveness:

أَفَلَا أَكُونُ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

This utterance is likewise structured as a verbal sentence (*jumlah fi 'liyyah*) employing *hamzah al-istifhām*, preceded by the conjunction *fa* linking it to the preceding discourse. Grammatically, the construction appears interrogative. Nevertheless, the conversational context makes clear that the Prophet was not seeking an answer from 'Ā'ishah. Instead, he affirmed that Allah's abundant blessings and forgiveness provided even greater reason to express gratitude through worship. Accordingly, the interrogative no longer functions to request information but rather serves as *al-taqrīr*, an affirmation of a truth already recognized and accepted by the interlocutor.

A comparison of these two examples demonstrates that similar syntactic structures do not necessarily produce identical rhetorical functions. Both hadith employ verbal sentence constructions together with *hamzah al-istifhām*, yet they convey different meanings because each is shaped by a distinct communicative context. In the first hadith, the interrogative is used to attract attention before presenting important information, thereby producing the rhetorical function of *al-tashwīq*. In the second, the interrogative reinforces a principle already shared between speaker and listener, resulting in the rhetorical function of *al-taqrīr*. These findings confirm that the rhetorical interpretation of *uslūb al-istifhām* depends not merely on syntactic form but on the interaction between grammatical structure, discourse context, and communicative purpose.

The diversity of rhetorical functions exhibited by *uslūb al-istifhām* becomes even more evident when interrogative constructions are employed to direct the audience's behavior. Within the corpus, this function is represented by *al-amr*, in which an interrogative utterance pragmatically conveys a command or encouragement to perform a particular action. One example is found in the hadith concerning the arrangement of prayer rows, where the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

أَلَا تَصُفُّونَ كَمَا تَصُفُّ الْمَلَائِكَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهَا؟

Syntactically, the utterance is constructed as a verbal sentence (*jumlah fi 'liyyah*) beginning with the interrogative construction formed by *hamzah al-istifhām* combined with the particle *lā*, followed by the verb *taṣaffūna*. Interpreted literally, the utterance appears to request information regarding whether the Companions were willing to arrange their prayer rows in the manner of the angels. However, the communicative context indicates that the Prophet was instructing them on the proper formation of congregational prayer rows. Consequently, the interrogative is not intended to elicit an answer but rather to encourage immediate compliance with the prescribed practice. The shift in function demonstrates that while the syntactic structure retains its interrogative form, its communicative purpose becomes directive. Thus, the meaning of *al-amr* arises not from any alteration of grammatical structure but from the communicative context that transforms the interrogative into an instrument of behavioral guidance.

This finding illustrates that, in the Prophetic hadith, interrogative constructions often possess greater rhetorical effectiveness than direct commands. By presenting an instruction in the form of a question, the Prophet first engaged the audience's attention and psychological involvement before conveying the intended normative message. Such a strategy demonstrates that *uslūb al-istifhām* functions as a persuasive communicative device that not only instructs but also prepares the audience mentally to receive guidance. Accordingly, the rhetorical function of *al-amr* emerges from the interaction among syntactic structure, discourse situation, and the pedagogical objective underlying the hadith.

In addition to expressing command, several utterances in the corpus realize the rhetorical function of *al-inkār* (denial or refutation), in which interrogative forms are employed to reject or invalidate a particular assumption. Here, the question is not intended to obtain new information but to demonstrate that a certain belief or behavior is unacceptable. From the perspective of *'ilm al-ma'ānī*, this function arises

when the speaker already knows the answer and implicitly guides the audience toward the same conclusion through the interrogative form. As a result, the question serves as a more effective argumentative device than a direct statement of rejection because it encourages the audience to reflect on the assumption being challenged.

The analysis further indicates that *al-inkār* is not determined by a particular type of *adāt al-istifhām*. Several utterances employ the same interrogative markers found in *al-taqrīr* and *al-amr* while producing entirely different rhetorical functions. These differences are determined by the accompanying *qarīnah*, whether linguistic or situational. Therefore, syntactic form does not determine rhetorical meaning in a deterministic manner; rather, it provides the linguistic framework within which communicative context constructs meaning. This finding once again confirms that *nahwu* explains how sentences are formed, whereas *ilm al-ma'ānī* explains why a particular construction is selected to accomplish a specific communicative purpose.

Another rhetorical function identified in the corpus is *al-ta'ajjub* (amazement), in which *uslūb al-istifhām* expresses astonishment toward something beyond ordinary human experience or comprehension. One example appears in a *ḥadīth qudsī*, where a servant supplicates to Allah:

يَا رَبِّ كَيْفَ أَعُوذُ بِكَ وَأَنْتَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ؟

The utterance is structured as a verbal sentence employing the interrogative noun *kayfa*, which literally asks about manner or condition. However, the relationship between the principal clause and the broader context of the hadith demonstrates that the question is not intended to inquire about the proper manner of seeking Allah's protection. Rather, the interrogative expresses amazement at Allah's infinite power and the limitations of human understanding regarding His protection. The clause affirming Allah as the Lord of all worlds functions as a *qarīnah* directing the interrogative toward an expressive rather than an informative function. Accordingly, the utterance constitutes a case of *istifhām ghayr ḥaqīqī* expressing *al-ta'ajjub*.

Unlike *al-tashwīq* or *al-amr*, the function of *al-ta'ajjub* primarily emphasizes the emotional dimension of communication. The interrogative construction evokes awareness of Allah's greatness through the expression of astonishment, allowing the audience not only to comprehend the message intellectually but also to experience an affective response that strengthens the internalization of the hadith. This demonstrates that *uslūb al-istifhām* functions not merely as a logical device for conveying information or instruction but also as a rhetorical

instrument capable of eliciting emotional responses consistent with the speaker's communicative intention.

Together, the categories of *al-amr*, *al-inkār*, and *al-ta'ajjub* further demonstrate the remarkable pragmatic flexibility of interrogative constructions in the Prophetic hadith. Although all these utterances are syntactically formed through interrogative devices recognized in *nahwu*, their communicative functions vary considerably according to *siyāq al-kalām*, *qarīnah*, and the relationship between speaker and audience. Consequently, syntactic analysis accounts only for the formal dimension of the utterance, whereas rhetorical interpretation requires a comprehensive reading of the entire communicative context.

The corpus also reveals the rhetorical function of *al-ta'zīm* (glorification), in which interrogative constructions serve to instill awareness of Allah's majesty or the nobility of the values under discussion. In this category, the interrogative neither seeks information nor expresses uncertainty; instead, it cultivates reverence through a rhetorical strategy that is more powerful than a direct declarative statement. Consequently, emotional and spiritual dimensions become integral to the construction of meaning.

The analysis demonstrates that *al-ta'zīm* does not derive from the lexical characteristics of the interrogative marker itself but from the overall communicative context framing the utterance. The interaction between syntactic structure and *qarīnah* transforms the interrogative into a rhetorical device that directs the audience's attention toward Allah's greatness and the significance of the values being conveyed. Thus, the interrogative ceases to function as a request for information and instead becomes a communicative strategy that reinforces contemplation and reverence. This finding further illustrates that a single syntactic construction may realize different rhetorical functions when situated in different communicative contexts.

The final rhetorical category identified in this study is *al-tanbīh 'alā al-ḍalāl* (warning against misguidance), in which *uslūb al-istifhām* is employed to alert the audience to a misconception or error. One example appears in Hadith No. 1488 in *al-Dars al-Sādis wa al-Ishrūn fī al-Du'ā' li al-Mayyit*, where the Prophet used an interrogative construction to make the Companions aware of an inaccurate understanding. Rather than requesting a factual answer, the question encouraged the audience to recognize their own misunderstanding through reflection stimulated by the interrogative form.

From a syntactic perspective, the construction retains the interrogative pattern observed in the preceding categories. Pragmatically, however, its function shifts because the communicative context makes clear that the Prophet already knew the correct answer. The interrogative therefore serves as an educational strategy that encourages the audience to evaluate their own understanding before receiving the intended explanation. Such a communicative strategy demonstrates the strong pedagogical value of *uslūb al-istifhām*, as it actively engages the audience's intellectual participation in the process of understanding the message.

The function of *al-tanbīh* 'alā al-ḍalāl also reflects a distinctive characteristic of the Prophet's communication, namely, emphasizing awareness rather than directly presenting conclusions. The interrogative enables listeners to discover the correct answer through reflection, thereby strengthening the internalization of the intended message. Consequently, the rhetorical effectiveness of this category lies not merely in its linguistic form but in its capacity to establish dialogic interaction that simultaneously engages cognitive, affective, and pedagogical dimensions.

Overall, the forty-five instances of *uslūb al-istifhām* identified in the chapter *Khātimātun fī Taḍhīb al-Nufūs* exhibit a consistent linguistic pattern. Syntactically, interrogative constructions are realized through two principal sentence types, verbal (*jumlah fi'liyyah*) and nominal (*jumlah ismiyyah*), with verbal constructions occurring more frequently. These patterns are formed through both *ḥurūf al-istifhām* and *asmā' al-istifhām*, each possessing distinct grammatical characteristics. Nevertheless, analysis of the entire corpus demonstrates that such structural variation does not directly determine rhetorical meaning. Rather, rhetorical functions emerge only when syntactic structure is interpreted in relation to *siyāq al-kalām*, *qarīnah*, and the communicative purpose underlying each utterance.

These findings demonstrate that the relationship between form and meaning in *uslūb al-istifhām* is fundamentally integrative. *Nahwu* explains how interrogative constructions are formed through syntactic relationships among sentence constituents, whereas *'ilm al-ma'ānī* explains why identical constructions may realize different rhetorical functions. The two disciplines therefore operate complementarily rather than independently in the interpretation of hadith. Without syntactic analysis, the formal organization of the utterance cannot be adequately

explained; without *'ilm al-ma'ānī*, the rhetorical purposes underlying the use of *uslūb al-istifhām* remain incompletely understood.

More broadly, the findings indicate that interrogative constructions in the Prophetic hadith constitute a deliberate communicative strategy designed to foster active audience engagement. Questions are employed not merely to obtain information but to arouse interest (*al-tashwīq*), affirm established truths (*al-taqrīr*), direct action (*al-amr*), refute false assumptions (*al-inkār*), express amazement (*al-ta'ajjub*), cultivate reverence (*al-ta'ẓīm*), and warn against misunderstanding (*al-tanbīh 'alā al-ḍalāl*). The diversity of these functions demonstrates that *uslūb al-istifhām* constitutes one of the most productive rhetorical devices for constructing persuasive and educational discourse within the Prophetic hadith.

Based on the overall analysis, it can be concluded that the interpretation of *uslūb al-istifhām* cannot rely solely on the identification of grammatical forms or the types of *adāt al-istifhām*. Although syntactic structure provides the formal framework for constructing interrogative utterances, rhetorical meaning emerges only through the interaction between linguistic form, linguistic context, situational context, and the speaker's communicative intention.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the relationship between syntactic structure and meaning in *uslūb al-istifhām* is not mechanical but is constructed through the interaction between linguistic form, discourse context, and the speaker's communicative intention. Although all utterances were analyzed from the perspective of *nahwu*, the results indicate that identifying sentence type, the function of *adāt al-istifhām*, or the grammatical role of individual constituents is insufficient to explain the intended meaning of an utterance. Syntactic structure merely provides the formal framework for sentence construction, whereas rhetorical meaning emerges from the interaction between that structure and *siyāq al-kalām*, *qarīnah*, and *maqām al-khiṭāb*. These findings reinforce the central premise of *'ilm al-ma'ānī* that meaning arises from the interaction between the linguistic system and communicative context rather than from grammatical form alone.¹⁵

¹⁵ Azis, Moch Cecep Abdul. "Balaghah Analysis of the Tashbih Sentences in the Book of Al-Lubab Al-Hadith." *Takwil: Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies* 3, no. 1 (June 2024): 87–103. <https://doi.org/10.32939/twl.v3i1.3491>.

The findings further indicate that *nahwu* and *'ilm al-ma'ānī* perform complementary roles in the interpretation of hadith. *Nahwu* explains how an utterance is constructed through the relationships among its syntactic constituents,¹⁶ whereas *'ilm al-ma'ānī* accounts for why a particular structure is selected in response to a specific communicative situation.¹⁷ Consequently, the two disciplines cannot be separated when the objective is to understand the intended message of the Prophetic hadith. An analysis confined to grammatical structure is likely to produce a purely literal interpretation, whereas an analysis that emphasizes meaning while neglecting linguistic structure risks overlooking the linguistic evidence upon which meaning is constructed. This study demonstrates that interpreting *uslūb al-istifhām* requires the integration of both approaches so that interpretation remains firmly grounded in linguistic structure while remaining sensitive to communicative context.¹⁸

The predominance of verbal sentences (*jumlah fi'liyyah*) in the corpus also carries important linguistic implications. The preference for verbal constructions indicates that Prophetic communication is primarily oriented toward action, behavioral transformation, and education rather than the mere transmission of descriptive information. This preference reflects a dynamic and dialogic mode of communication in which interrogative constructions function not simply as instruments for obtaining answers but as devices for actively engaging the audience in the process of reflection.¹⁹ Accordingly, interrogative forms in the hadith possess a strong pedagogical function by capturing attention, stimulating

¹⁶ Mubarak, Hamdy, Majd Hawasly, and Abubakr Mohamed. "Nahw: A Comprehensive Benchmark of Arabic Grammar Understanding, Error Detection, Correction, and Explanation." *Proceedings of the 19th Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics (Volume 1: Long Papers)* (Stroudsburg, PA, USA), 2026, 6310–28. <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2026.eacl-long.296>.

¹⁷ Hakimi, Pandi, and Misnawati Misnawati. "Fungsi Retoris Istifham Dalam Surah Al-Mulk: Analisis Balaghah Pada Ayat-Ayat Terpilih." *Lathaif: Literasi Tafsir, Hadis Dan Filologi* 5, no. 1 (June 2026): 116–27. <https://doi.org/10.31958/lathaif.v5i1.17115>.

¹⁸ Daulay, Irmasani. "Rhetoric Balaghah in Arabic Literary Works During the Abbasid Period." *Lingua Franca* 5, no. 1 (March 2026): 85–99. https://doi.org/10.37680/lingua_franca.v5i1.9233.

¹⁹ Binbeshr, Farid, Amirrudin Kamsin, and Manal Mohammed. "A Systematic Review on Hadith Authentication and Classification Methods." *ACM Transactions on Asian and Low-Resource Language Information Processing* 20, no. 2 (March 2021): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3434236>.

reflection, and facilitating the internalization of religious values through persuasive dialogue.

The diversity of rhetorical meanings identified in this study further confirms that a single syntactic structure does not correspond to a single communicative function.²⁰ The same interrogative construction may express *al-tashwīq*, *al-taqrīr*, *al-amr*, *al-inkār*, *al-ta'ajjub*, *al-ta'zīm*, or *al-tanbīh 'alā al-ḍalāl*, depending on its communicative context. Conversely, the same rhetorical function may be realized through different syntactic structures when supported by comparable discourse contexts. This phenomenon demonstrates that the relationship between form and meaning in Arabic is inherently contextual and dynamic. Therefore, the interpretation of *uslūb al-istifhām* cannot rely exclusively on structural analysis but must also incorporate the pragmatic and rhetorical dimensions underlying each utterance.²¹

These findings also extend previous scholarship on *uslūb al-istifhām*. Earlier studies have primarily focused on identifying *adāt al-istifhām* or classifying the rhetorical meanings associated with interrogative constructions. Such research has demonstrated that most interrogative forms in the Qur'an and the Prophetic hadith no longer function as literal questions but instead convey rhetorical meanings. However, the relationship between syntactic structure and meaning construction has received comparatively little integrated analysis.²² The present study demonstrates that these shifts in function cannot be explained solely through the identification of interrogative particles. Rather, rhetorical meaning becomes intelligible only when grammatical analysis is integrated with *siyāq al-kalām*, *qarīnah*, and the speaker's communicative intention. Accordingly, the principal contribution of this study lies not in proposing new categories of rhetorical meaning but in developing an interpretive framework that integrates *nahwu* and *'ilm al-ma'ānī* as a unified methodological approach.

²⁰ Al-Qayyam, Ismael Mahmoud, and Yousuf Abdulraheem Rabab'ah. "The Flexibility of Placing the Subject in Arabic Sentences: A Study of Syntactic Word Order Restrictions and Their Application to Arabic Grammar." *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies* 24, no. 2 (June 2024): 319–34. <https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes.v24i2.791>.

²¹ Mechti, Seifeddine, Nabil Khoufi, and Lamia Hadrich Belguith. *Improving Native Language Identification Model with Syntactic Features: Case of Arabic*. 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16660-1_20.

²² Akyüz, Yusuf. "Arap Dilinde İncelik [Nezakat] Kuramı: Kur'an'da İstifham Üslubu Bağlamında Diyalogların Tahlili." *Hitit İlahiyat Dergisi* 23, no. 2 (December 2024): 610–32. <https://doi.org/10.14395/hid.1534187>.

From the perspective of Arabic linguistics, these findings suggest that the relationship between syntax and semantics is not hierarchical but integrative. Syntactic structure constrains the range of possible meanings, whereas context determines which meaning is ultimately realized in communication. This relationship is consistent with the fundamental principle of *ilm al-ma'ānī*, which regards the correspondence between linguistic expression and communicative context as the primary criterion for effective communication.²³ Consequently, this study demonstrates that linguistic analysis of the Prophetic hadith cannot rely exclusively on either grammatical or pragmatic analysis; rather, both must be integrated to produce interpretations that remain faithful to the linguistic characteristics of Classical Arabic employed in the hadith.

The findings also have broader implications for the development of AI-assisted Hadith Interpretation. Contemporary artificial intelligence systems for natural language processing generally depend on explicit syntactic and semantic representations.²⁴ The present study demonstrates that interpreting *uslūb al-istifhām* cannot be achieved merely by identifying interrogative sentence forms or the types of *adāt al-istifhām*. Rhetorical meaning can only be determined through consideration of linguistic context, situational context, and the communicative purpose accompanying each utterance. In other words, an AI system's success in interpreting hadith depends not only on its ability to recognize linguistic structures but also on its capacity to model the interaction among syntactic structure, *siyāq al-kalām*, *qarīnah*, and rhetorical function. These findings therefore provide a conceptual foundation for developing AI-assisted hadith interpretation models that are more sensitive to the linguistic characteristics of Classical Arabic, enabling computational systems not merely to identify grammatical structures but also to infer the communicative intentions embedded within Prophetic discourse.

Overall, this study demonstrates that *uslūb al-istifhām* in the Prophetic hadith constitutes a complex rhetorical device characterized by

²³ Mansour-Adwan, Jasmeen, Asaid Khateb, Yasmin Shalhoub-Awwad, and Ravit Cohen-Mimran. "The Different Linguistic Profiles in Arabic Speaking Kindergarteners and Relation to Emergent Literacy." *Reading and Writing* 36, no. 10 (December 2023): 2577–603. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-022-10400-4>.

²⁴ Hanandeh, Anas, Samer Ayasrah, Ibrahim Kofahi, and Shorouq Qudah. "Artificial Intelligence in Arabic Linguistic Landscape: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions." *TEM Journal*, November 27, 2024, 3137–45. <https://doi.org/10.18421/TEM134-48>.

a close relationship between syntactic structure and meaning construction. This complexity underscores the need for a multidimensional linguistic approach that integrates *nahwu* as an analytical framework for syntactic structure with *'ilm al-ma'ānī* as a framework for rhetorical interpretation. Through this integrated approach, the study not only advances the understanding of *uslūb al-istifhām* in the Prophetic hadith but also proposes an interpretive framework that may be applied in future research on Arabic linguistics and computational approaches to Islamic texts.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between syntactic structure and the rhetorical meanings of *uslūb al-istifhām* in *Mukhtār al-Aḥādīth al-Nabawīyyah* through an integrated framework combining *nahwu* and *'ilm al-ma'ānī*. The findings demonstrate that interrogative constructions in the Prophetic hadith cannot be adequately interpreted solely on the basis of grammatical structure or the type of *adāt al-istifhām* employed. Although *nahwu* effectively explains the syntactic organization of each utterance, rhetorical meaning can only be established by considering the interaction between linguistic structure, *siyāq al-kalām*, *qarīnah*, and the speaker's communicative intention. Accordingly, the relationship between syntax and meaning in *uslūb al-istifhām* is both integrative and context-dependent, requiring the combination of structural and rhetorical analysis to achieve accurate interpretation.

The study further demonstrates that *uslūb al-istifhām* functions as a highly productive communicative device in the Prophetic hadith, serving a wide range of rhetorical purposes, including arousing attention (*al-tashwīq*), affirming established truths (*al-taqrīr*), directing action (*al-amr*), refuting erroneous assumptions (*al-inkār*), expressing amazement (*al-ta'ajjub*), cultivating reverence (*al-ta'zīm*), and warning against misunderstanding (*al-tanbīh 'alā al-ḍalāl*). These findings indicate that interrogative constructions extend far beyond their literal information-seeking function, operating instead as effective communicative strategies for education, persuasion, and the internalization of Islamic values.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, it is confined to a single chapter of *Mukhtār al-Aḥādīth al-Nabawīyyah*, and therefore the identified patterns of *uslūb al-istifhām* may not fully represent the broader characteristics of the Prophetic hadith corpus. Second, the study remains at the level of conceptual linguistic analysis and does not

evaluate the proposed interpretive framework within AI-based computational systems. Future research may address these limitations by expanding the corpus to include a wider range of hadith collections, comparing the rhetorical patterns of *uslūb al-istifhām* across the Qur'an and Classical Arabic literary texts, and developing computational models that integrate syntactic analysis, discourse context, and rhetorical function to support more accurate and context-sensitive AI-assisted Hadith Interpretation.

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