



Rhetorical Imagery in the Qur'an: A Comparative Isti'ārah Study of Al-Zamakhshari and Al-Zuhaili

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the use of *isti'arah* (metaphor) in *Surah Al-Taubah* through a comparative analysis of *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf* by Al-Zamakhshari and *Tafsir Al-Munir* by Wahbah Al-Zuhaili. The study focuses on identifying the types of *isti'arah*, examining their semantic implications, and comparing the interpretive approaches employed by both *mufasssir*. This research adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytic design using library research. Data were collected from the two tafsir works as primary sources and supported by classical and contemporary literature on Arabic rhetoric *balaghah*. Data were analyzed through content analysis and comparative analysis. The findings reveal 19 verses containing *isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah*, classified into three types: *tasrihiyyah*, *taba'iyyah*, and *lathaiful isti'arah*. The analysis of QS. Al-Taubah: 5 and 32 indicates that *Al-Zamakhshari* emphasizes historical-linguistic interpretation and lexical comparison, whereas *Al-Zuhaili* provides a more systematic explanation with greater attention to contemporary relevance. The findings imply that integrating both approaches strengthens comparative Qur'anic interpretation and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the Qur'an's linguistic and rhetorical dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is not only a sacred source of guidance but also a linguistic masterpiece whose rhetorical richness shapes how Muslims understand divine messages. Studying its linguistic miracle is therefore important for wider society because accurate interpretation can strengthen religious literacy and reduce misunderstanding of Qur'anic meanings. The Qur'an demonstrates three major dimensions of *i'jaz*: *i'jaz lughawi*, *i'jaz 'ilmi*, and *i'jaz tashri'i* (Ranty & Nur'Aini, 2025). Its distinctive linguistic style includes metaphor, metonymy, simile, hyperbole, and other rhetorical devices that distinguish it from Arabic literary expression (Al-Jarf, 2024). Fattah et al. (2023) further note that the linguistic miracle of the Qur'an has attracted Arab and Western linguists, particularly through the study of *majaz* as an important element of *balaghah*. These facts indicate that linguistic analysis is essential for understanding Qur'anic communication. Therefore, examining *isti'arah* provides both academic and practical value by revealing how metaphorical expression conveys meanings, intensifies messages, and supports more responsible interpretation among contemporary readers.

Despite the richness of Qur'anic language, many readers encounter difficulties when interpreting verses that employ figurative expressions. Metaphorical language can

create semantic complexity when readers approach the text only through literal meanings, especially when cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts are not sufficiently considered. The study of *i'jaz lughawi* can be approached through syntax, morphology, and *balaghah* (Pangaji & Al Munawar, 2026). while *balaghah* is important because it connects linguistic structure with aesthetic expression and communicative effectiveness. Abdullah et al. (2023) emphasize that the science of *balaghah* developed under the influence of the Qur'an and became an effective instrument for examining its linguistic majesty. Ulum et al. (2023) similarly argue that mastery of *balaghah* is essential for understanding Qur'anic texts. This situation reveals a broader interpretive problem: insufficient awareness of rhetorical mechanisms may cause readers to overlook implied meanings, stylistic purposes, and contextual messages. Consequently, study of *isti'arah* is needed to make Qur'anic interpretation more precise and accessible for readers.

The phenomenon becomes particularly visible in *Surah Al-Taubah*, whose verses address jihad, warfare, social relations, repentance, and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Such themes are frequently discussed in contemporary religious discourse today, where decontextualized readings may produce narrow or literal understandings of Qur'anic statements. Within this context, figurative expressions require more careful linguistic and exegetical examination because *isti'arah* can communicate meanings that extend beyond wording. *Balaghah* itself is concerned with conveying intended meanings accurately, clearly, and effectively according to circumstances (Kamil, 2009). It consists of al-ma'ani, al-bayan, and al-badi', with al-bayan receiving considerable scholarly attention because of its role in explaining figurative meaning (Qalyubi, 2013). *Isti'arah*, as a central topic in al-bayan, is defined that *tashbih* in which one of its elements is omitted and the corresponding concept as metaphor (Putri et al., 2025). Thus, *Surah Al-Taubah* provides a relevant textual setting for analysis.

Previous studies have established the importance of *isti'arah* and *balaghah* in Qur'anic interpretation, but their emphases remain fragmented and limited. Al-Turki (2011) examines al-*isti'arah* al-tamthiliyyah in the Qur'an generally without connecting the analysis to particular tafsir works. The *i'jaz* al-Qur'an through *isti'arah* across four surahs, yet does not compare different *mufasssir* perspectives (Oktafiani & Halimah Basri, 2025). Classify *isti'arah* according to compatibility between *musyabbah* and *musyabbah bih*, identifying *murasysyah*, *mujarroadah*, and *muthlaqah*, highlights its importance for Islamic education and accurate understanding of divine messages. Meanwhile, research on Tafsir Al-Munir has examined its interpretive structure, Focus on *takwil* rather than *isti'arah*. These studies demonstrate considerable scholarly attention to Qur'anic rhetoric, yet they do not systematically and carefully trace *isti'arah* verse by verse within one surah while directly comparing classical and contemporary tafsir. This limitation constitutes a significant research gap because exegetical approaches may produce complementary insights for interpretation.

The two tafsir works selected for this study offer particularly valuable interpretive perspectives for addressing this gap. *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf* by Al-Zamakhsyari is recognized for strength in bayan, *balaghah*, and Qur'anic linguistic inimitability. Al-Kasyaf reveals dimensions of Qur'anic beauty through Al-Zamakhsyari's linguistic knowledge, while The influential position in literary interpretation and his ability to uncover implicit Qur'anic messages through linguistic analysis. The importance of Al-Zamakhsyari's interpretive contribution. In contrast, Tafsir Al-Munir was developed by Wahbah Al-Zuhaili partly in response to concerns that classical interpretations were insufficient for contemporary issues (Umah & Hartono, 2024). Its approach combines literary, social, and fiqh dimensions, linking verses to human realities through fiqh al-hayat (Permana & Zulaiha,

2024). Ismatullah et al. (2022) describe Al-Munir as dynamic, moderate, tolerant, and humanist. Their differences create a basis for comparison and clearly establish the study's state of the art.

The research problem concerns how *isti'arah* is constructed and interpreted in *Surah Al-Taubah* and how Al-Zamakhshari and Al-Zuhaili differ in explaining its semantic and rhetorical functions. This study argues that neither a purely classical linguistic reading nor a solely contemporary contextual reading is sufficient to capture the full interpretive potential of Qur'anic metaphor. Their integration can therefore provide a comprehensive understanding of linguistic meaning, rhetorical beauty, and contextual relevance. The study therefore examines 19 verses containing *isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah* and compares their interpretation in *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf* and Tafsir Al-Munir through qualitative library research, content analysis, and comparative analysis. Its novelty lies in systematically identifying *isti'arah* across one surah while placing two historically different exegetical approaches in direct dialogue. The expected contribution is a muqaran tafsir framework connecting classical *balaghah* with contemporary interpretation. Such integration is important for strengthening Qur'anic literacy, enriching Arabic rhetorical studies, and supporting careful interpretation of metaphorical Qur'anic expressions today.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. A scientific method is essential to ensure that research findings are developed systematically, logically, and accurately (Takona, 2024). The qualitative approach was selected because the data consist of textual, conceptual, and interpretive materials rather than numerical data. Library research is appropriate because the study focuses on analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information obtained from relevant scholarly sources to examine the use and meaning of *isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah*. The study specifically applies a linguistic approach, particularly Arabic *balaghah*, because *balaghah* examines the aesthetic dimensions, rhetorical structures, and stylistic functions of language, making it relevant to analyzing *isti'arah* in Qur'anic discourse. Through this approach, the research systematically investigates textual evidence and exegetical interpretations to answer the research questions and develop a comparative understanding of *isti'arah* in the selected tafsir works.

The data sources consist of primary and secondary literature. Primary data were obtained from *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf 'an Haqa'iq al-Tanzil wa 'Uyun al-Aqawil fi Wujuh al-Ta'wil* by Al-Zamakhshari and *Tafsir Al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Shari'ah wa al-Manhaj* by Wahbah Al-Zuhaili. Secondary sources include books and scholarly literature on *balaghah*, *isti'arah*, Qur'anic interpretation, and Arabic linguistics, including works associated with Al-Shabuni, Al-Jarimi and Amin, Shofwan, Qalyubi, Nasir, and Al-Zahabi. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the research topic, scholarly credibility, conceptual contribution, and availability of authoritative textual evidence. Data collection employed a documentation study involving four stages: identification of relevant literature, selection of sources according to predetermined criteria, classification of textual materials, and systematic recording of information related to *isti'arah*, its linguistic structure, interpretation, and semantic implications (Pregoner, 2024). The verses of *Surah Al-Taubah* containing *isti'arah* were subsequently documented and organized according to their occurrence and interpretive characteristics.

Data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis and comparative analysis, supported by the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing textual information concerning *isti'arah* from *Surah Al-Taubah* and its interpretation in the two primary tafsir works. Data display was conducted by arranging the findings in systematic categories based on the type and structure of *isti'arah*, the interpretation provided by each *mufassir*, and the semantic implications generated from the expressions. The final stage involved conclusion drawing and verification by identifying patterns, examining similarities and differences between Al-Kasyaf and Al-Munir, and developing a conceptual synthesis of their interpretive approaches. Content analysis was applied to derive valid conclusions from textual documents objectively and systematically (Okoko et al., 2023). Comparative analysis followed the framework of Hudson (2007) by examining similarities and differences between the two tafsir works within the framework of *isti'arah*. This process produced a comparative interpretation (*muqaran*) of the rhetorical and semantic dimensions of the selected Qur'anic verses.

The trustworthiness of the data was maintained through source triangulation and theoretical triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing interpretations and arguments across the primary tafsir works with relevant secondary literature on *balaghah*, *isti'arah*, Qur'anic linguistics, and exegetical methodology. Theoretical triangulation was applied by examining the textual findings through different conceptual perspectives, particularly theories of *balaghah*, *isti'arah*, and Qur'anic interpretation. In addition, each source was evaluated according to its credibility, relevance, consistency, scholarly authority, and contribution to the research objectives. Interpretations were not established from a single textual source but were cross-checked against other authoritative references to identify consistency and minimize interpretive bias. These procedures were intended to ensure that the interpretation of *isti'arah* and the comparison between Al-Kasyaf and Al-Munir were supported by reliable evidence. Thus, the triangulation and source-evaluation processes strengthened the validity, credibility, and reliability of the resulting literature synthesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of *Isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah*

The analysis of *Surah Al-Taubah* identified 19 verses containing *isti'arah* expressions. These verses are distributed across different thematic contexts, including warfare, religious struggle, divine guidance, social relations, and the relationship between believers and non-believers. The presence of *isti'arah* in these contexts demonstrates that metaphorical language in the Qur'an is not merely an ornamental element of expression but functions as an important semantic instrument for conveying abstract, theological, ethical, and social meanings. The identification of 19 verses therefore indicates that *isti'arah* constitutes a significant rhetorical feature in *Surah Al-Taubah* and deserves systematic examination through both linguistic and exegetical perspectives.

In Arabic *balaghah*, *isti'arah* can be classified according to several criteria. Based on the element retained in the sentence structure, *isti'arah* is generally divided into *isti'arah* *tasrihiyyah*, in which the *mushabbah* is omitted and the *mushabbah* *bihi* is explicitly mentioned, and *isti'arah* *makniyyah*, in which the *mushabbah* *bihi* is omitted while an attribute associated with it remains. Based on the grammatical position of the *musta'ar*, *isti'arah* can also be classified into *asliyyah*, when the metaphorical expression occurs in a noun, and *taba'iyah*, when it occurs in a verb, adjective, or other derivative

form (Mohd Ali & Romli, 2021). Atoh and Atoh (2021) further explain that the tradition of bayan recognizes more than fourteen variants of *isti'arah*, including murasysyah, mujarradah, muthlaqah, and tamthiliyyah. This classification demonstrates that identifying *isti'arah* requires attention not only to lexical meaning but also to grammatical structure and the relationship between literal and transferred meanings.

Based on the analysis of the 19 verses, three dominant forms were identified in this study: *isti'arah tasrihiyyah*, *isti'arah taba'iyyah*, and lathaiful *isti'arah*. These categories were determined by examining the lexical form, grammatical position, omitted and retained elements, and semantic relationship between the original and transferred meanings. *Isti'arah tasrihiyyah* occurs when the *mushabbah bih* is explicitly expressed, while *isti'arah taba'iyyah* is attached to a verb or adjective rather than a noun. Meanwhile, lathaiful *isti'arah* represents a subtle rhetorical construction in which the relationship between the literal source domain and the intended metaphorical meaning is not immediately apparent and therefore requires contextual interpretation.

The predominance of these three forms suggests that the rhetorical function of *isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah* is closely connected with the construction of dynamic meanings. Verbal *isti'arah*, for example, allows abstract events and processes to be represented through concrete actions, while *tasrihiyyah* provides a more explicit metaphorical representation. Lathaiful *isti'arah*, on the other hand, creates a deeper semantic relationship between the lexical expression and the intended meaning. This finding is consistent with Chukhanov and Kairbekov (2024), who argue that metaphorical constructions in Qur'anic texts cannot be adequately understood without contextual semantic analysis because each metaphor contains layers of meaning that emerge through linguistic and textual context.

The distribution of *isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah* also demonstrates that metaphorical expressions are closely associated with the thematic structure of the surah. Verses concerning conflict, religious identity, divine guidance, and the struggle between truth and falsehood frequently employ expressions that transform abstract realities into concrete images. Such transformations enable readers to conceptualize complex theological and social ideas through familiar sensory experiences. Consequently, *isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah* should not be treated merely as a stylistic embellishment, but as a mechanism through which the Qur'an constructs meaning and strengthens the communicative force of its message.

Analysis of the Meaning of *Isti'arah* in QS. Al-Taubah: 5

One of the significant examples of *isti'arah* occurs in QS. Al-Taubah: 5:

فَإِذَا انسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ

"When the unlawful months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them." (QS. Al-Taubah: 5)

The *isti'arah* in this verse is found in the expression. Lexically, the verb *insalakha* refers to the process of removing or separating something from its covering, particularly the separation of an animal's skin from its flesh. In the context of the verse, however, the expression is applied to the sacred months. The metaphorical transfer occurs because the passing of the sacred months is conceptualized as something being stripped away from its temporal covering. Thus, the Qur'anic expression transforms an abstract temporal transition into a concrete physical process that can be visualized by the reader.

Al-Zuhaili (1991) explains the expression within the context of the completion of the sacred months. The use of *insalakha* indicates that the period has completely passed,

after which the legal situation described in the subsequent part of the verse becomes applicable. Syahida (2020), in examining the semantic characteristics of Tafsir Al-Munir, explains that Al-Zuhaili consistently pays attention to *isti'arah taba'iyah* occurring in verbs, including metaphorical expressions associated with warfare and the legal dimensions of jihad in *Surah Al-Taubah*. This demonstrates that Al-Zuhaili's analysis does not isolate the metaphor from the broader legal and contextual meaning of the verse.

The semantic interpretation of *insalakha* is strengthened by the contextual principle that Qur'anic words cannot always be understood through their isolated lexical meanings. Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2024) emphasize that semantic analysis of Qur'anic vocabulary requires attention to both micro-context and macro-context because the meaning of a lexical item can change according to the structure of the verse and the thematic context of the surah. In the case of *insalakha*, its literal meaning provides the source domain, while the temporal context of the sacred months provides the target domain. The metaphor consequently establishes a conceptual bridge between physical separation and the completion of a temporal period.

From the perspective of the elements of *tashbih*, Al-Zuhaili (1991) categorizes this expression as *isti'arah tasrihiyyah* because the *mushabbah bih* is explicitly represented through the lexical expression *insalakha*, while the intended temporal process is not explicitly expressed in the same lexical form. At the same time, when classified according to the position of the *musta'ar*, the expression belongs to *isti'arah taba'iyah* because the metaphor occurs in the form of a verb. Therefore, the classification of *insalakha* demonstrates that one metaphorical expression can be analyzed from more than one taxonomic dimension.

Insalakha through the lexical relationship with *injaradha*, meaning liberation, removal, or separation (Timalsina, 2026). His interpretation emphasizes the lexical-semantic dimension of the expression rather than merely identifying its rhetorical category. The explanation demonstrates *Al-Zamakhsyari*'s tendency to uncover meaning through lexical comparison and linguistic reasoning. Primadana et al. (2023) similarly explain that conceptual metaphors in Qur'anic discourse frequently involve the transfer of meaning from a concrete domain to an abstract domain. Such transfer strengthens rhetorical effects while enabling readers to comprehend abstract concepts through concrete experiential representations.

The difference between the two interpretations can therefore be understood as a difference in analytical emphasis rather than a contradiction. *Al-Zamakhsyari*'s explanation highlights the semantic root and lexical association of the metaphor, whereas Al-Zuhaili makes the rhetorical classification and contextual implications more explicit. The former provides depth at the level of lexical analysis, while the latter provides greater systematicity in connecting the metaphor with the broader interpretive context. This difference becomes important when *isti'arah* is examined through a comparative tafsir framework because the same lexical expression can reveal multiple layers of meaning depending on the interpretive method employed.

Analysis of the Meaning of *Isti'arah* in QS. Al-Taubah: 32

Another important example appears in QS. Al-Taubah: 32:

يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يُنِيمَ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ

"They wanted to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah rejected it and wanted to perfect His light, even though the disbelievers did not like it." (QS. Al-Taubah: 32)

The metaphorical construction in this verse is represented by the expression, literally meaning "to extinguish the light of Allah." The expression combines the physical action of extinguishing light with the abstract concept of opposing or attempting to eliminate divine guidance. The metaphor therefore creates a conceptual relationship between light as a concrete phenomenon and divine religion or guidance as an abstract reality. The act of extinguishing becomes a representation of attempts to suppress, reject, or undermine the truth.

Al-Zuhaili classifies this expression as *lathaiful isti'arah* because the relationship between the original and transferred meanings is subtle and requires contextual understanding (Al-Tarawneh, 2025). The expression *nurullah* is not merely interpreted as physical light but as a representation of divine guidance and Islam. Al-Shabuni explains the expression as referring to the light of Islam that illuminates human morality. Accordingly, the metaphor does not merely produce aesthetic beauty; it constructs a theological representation in which divine guidance is conceptualized as light and opposition to that guidance as an attempt to extinguish it.

The metaphor becomes rhetorically stronger through the juxtaposition of two opposing actions: *yuthfi'u* (to extinguish) and *yutimmu* (to perfect or complete). The first expresses human attempts to suppress divine guidance, whereas the second emphasizes God's determination to complete His light. This structural contrast creates a rhetorical opposition between human limitation and divine permanence. The metaphor consequently conveys not only a visual image but also an ideological argument: attempts to suppress divine guidance are ultimately incapable of defeating its continuation.

Atoh and Atoh (2021) explain that this type of metaphorical construction has functional similarities with personification in Malay literary discourse because physical properties or actions are attributed to abstract entities to produce a stronger rhetorical effect. In this verse, light becomes the conceptual representation of an abstract religious reality, while the action of extinguishing is applied to something that cannot literally be extinguished through physical means. This rhetorical construction enables an abstract theological idea to become more concrete and emotionally intelligible to the reader.

Syahida (2020) emphasizes that Al-Zuhaili's interpretation of *isti'arah* in contexts involving warfare and ideological conflict in *Surah Al-Taubah* incorporates contemporary social dimensions through the concept of *fiqh al-hayat*. This feature distinguishes Al-Munir from an interpretation that remains exclusively focused on lexical or grammatical explanation. Al-Zuhaili's reading enables the metaphor to be understood as relevant not only to the historical conflict represented in the verse but also to broader human experiences concerning the preservation of religious values and resistance to attempts to suppress truth.

Al-Zamakhsyari contrast, interprets *nurullah* through the expression *nur 'adhim*, namely "great light," and connects it with the true religion of Allah. His interpretation preserves the metaphorical relationship between light and divine religion while emphasizing lexical and semantic clarification. The difference in diction is significant because *Al-Zamakhsyari* expands the expression through a synonym that emphasizes greatness, whereas Al-Zuhaili identifies the referential meaning more directly as *nur al-Islam*. Supena (2024) notes that such differences reflect different methodological orientations: *Al-Zamakhsyari* tends to prioritize historical and lexical exploration, while Al-Zuhaili places greater emphasis on contextual accuracy and contemporary relevance.

The comparison demonstrates that the metaphor of divine light contains several interconnected semantic dimensions. At the lexical level, *nur* denotes light; at the rhetorical level, it represents divine religion and guidance; and at the contextual level, it describes the continuity and strength of Islamic truth despite opposition. The metaphor therefore operates simultaneously as a linguistic, theological, and communicative device. This multilayered meaning supports the argument of Chukhanov and Kairbekov (2024) that Qur'anic metaphor must be examined through contextual semantic analysis rather than through literal lexical interpretation alone.

Comparative Interpretation of *Isti'arah* in *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf* and *Tafsir Al-Munir*

The comparison between *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf* and *Tafsir Al-Munir* was conducted through three principal dimensions: diction, sentence structure, and semantic implications. These dimensions were selected because metaphorical meaning is not determined solely by the classification of *isti'arah* but also by how each *mufassir* explains lexical relationships, grammatical structures, and contextual meanings. Supena (2024) explains that *muqaran* interpretation essentially compares the epistemological approaches of different *mufassir* to uncover layers of meaning that may not be obtained from a single interpretive perspective. Rosa and Shoheh (2024) similarly state that comparative interpretation can examine similarities and differences in editorial formulation, interpretive context, and the implications generated by different interpretations. The comparative findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of the Meaning of *Isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah*

Aspect	<i>Tafsir Al-Kasyaf</i> (Al-Zamakhsyari, 1995)	<i>Tafsir Al-Munir</i> (Al-Zuhaili, 1991)
QS. Al-Taubah: 5		
Diction	<i>Injarada al-syahr</i>	<i>Ingidlaa al-syahr</i>
Structure	Verbal sentence (<i>f'i'il</i>)	Nominal expression (<i>isim</i>)
Type of <i>Isti'arah</i>	—	<i>Tasrihiyyah</i> & <i>Taba'iyyah</i>
Meaning	Liberated from the sacred months (<i>insalakha = injaradha</i>); the meaning refers to the completion or passing of the month or year	Something separated from the skin and flesh of an animal; metaphorically, the completion or passing of the sacred months
QS. Al-Taubah: 32		
Diction	<i>Nur 'adhim</i>	<i>Nur al-Islam</i>
Structure	Implicit meaning of <i>nurullah</i>	Synonymic explanation of <i>nurullah</i>
Type of <i>Isti'arah</i>	Lathaiful <i>isti'arah</i>	Lathaiful <i>isti'arah</i>
Meaning	The true religion of God	Islam; the light of Islam that illuminates human morality

Source: Al-Zamakhsyari (1995), Al-Kasyaf 'an Haqaiq al-Tanzil; Al-Zuhaili (1991), Al-Tafsir al-Munir.

Table 1 demonstrates that the differences between the two tafsir works occur primarily at the level of explanatory emphasis rather than in their recognition of the metaphorical nature of the expressions. In QS. Al-Taubah: 5, both interpretations recognize that *insalakha* involves a transfer from its literal lexical meaning to a temporal meaning. Al-Zamakhsyari's use of *injarada* emphasizes the idea of release or separation, whereas Al-Zuhaili explains the expression in relation to the completion of the sacred months. Thus, Al-Zamakhsyari's explanation is more strongly anchored in lexical semantics, while Al-Zuhaili's explanation makes the contextual meaning more accessible.

The difference becomes clearer in the structural analysis. Al-Zamakhsyari approaches the expression through its verbal form and lexical relationship, whereas Al-

Zuhaili explicitly identifies the rhetorical classification as *tasrihiyyah* and *taba'iiyyah*. This demonstrates that Al-Zuhaili provides a more systematized *balaghah*-oriented explanation, while *Al-Zamakhsyari*'s explanation relies more heavily on linguistic reasoning embedded within the interpretation. The distinction is important because both approaches illuminate different dimensions of the same metaphorical expression.

In QS. Al-Taubah: 32, the two *mufasssir* similarly converge on the metaphorical significance of *nurullah*, but differ in their choice of explanatory diction. *Al-Zamakhsyari* uses *nur 'adhim*, emphasizing the greatness of divine light and identifying it with the true religion of Allah. Al-Zuhaili uses *nur al-Islam*, making the referential meaning more explicit for readers. The difference demonstrates how lexical expansion can function as an interpretive strategy: *Al-Zamakhsyari* preserves a degree of semantic openness, while Al-Zuhaili narrows the interpretive reference toward a directly identifiable contemporary religious concept.

The two interpretations also differ in their treatment of contextual relevance. *Al-Zamakhsyari*'s interpretation is closely connected to the linguistic environment of the Qur'anic expression, reflecting his characteristic attention to Arabic language, lexical relations, and rhetorical structure. Al-Zuhaili, while retaining the linguistic foundation, extends the meaning toward social and contemporary relevance. Supena (2024) characterizes this difference as a distinction between an approach emphasizing linguistic reasoning and one emphasizing contextual applicability. Consequently, the two interpretations should not be viewed as mutually exclusive because they operate at different analytical levels.

From an epistemological perspective, the findings indicate that Al-Kasyaf demonstrates a strong orientation toward *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* through linguistic reasoning and lexical analysis (Supena, 2024; Wara et al., 2024). This does not mean that *Al-Zamakhsyari* ignores context, but rather that linguistic analysis becomes a central mechanism through which contextual meaning is reconstructed. His interpretation of *isti'arah* demonstrates how lexical relations, synonyms, grammatical forms, and rhetorical structures can be used to reveal the semantic potential of a verse.

Al-Munir, meanwhile, demonstrates an interpretive orientation that combines transmitted sources and rational analysis, which can be associated with *tafsir bi al-iqtirani* (Rosa & Shoheh, 2024; Syahida, 2020). Al-Zuhaili systematically integrates linguistic explanation with legal, social, and contemporary considerations. His treatment of *isti'arah* therefore does not stop at identifying the rhetorical form but proceeds toward explaining its significance for human life. This characteristic strengthens the accessibility and applicability of his interpretation for contemporary readers.

The comparison consequently reveals a complementary relationship between the two interpretive approaches. Al-Kasyaf contributes depth in lexical and rhetorical analysis, while Al-Munir contributes contextual and applicative dimensions. Wara et al. (2024) explain that differences between classical and contemporary *tafsir* in comparative interpretation can function complementarily: classical interpretation provides a strong linguistic and textual foundation, while contemporary interpretation extends the application of meaning to present realities. The present findings support this argument by demonstrating that the interpretation of *isti'arah* becomes more comprehensive when both dimensions are considered simultaneously.

This complementarity is particularly important in understanding Qur'anic metaphors because *isti'arah* operates simultaneously at lexical, rhetorical, semantic, and contextual levels. A purely lexical analysis may successfully identify the source meaning

of a metaphor but may not fully explain its contemporary implications. Conversely, an interpretation that prioritizes contemporary relevance without sufficient linguistic grounding risks weakening the connection between the metaphor and its original textual structure. Integrating the two approaches therefore provides a methodological balance between textual fidelity and contextual relevance.

The findings also strengthen the position that *isti'arah* is an essential component of the Qur'an's linguistic miracle. In QS. Al-Taubah: 5, the transformation of a physical action into a temporal representation illustrates how the Qur'an makes abstract temporal processes cognitively accessible. In QS. Al-Taubah: 32, the conceptualization of divine guidance as light transforms an abstract theological reality into a vivid and communicative image. These metaphorical constructions demonstrate that the rhetorical beauty of the Qur'an is inseparable from its semantic effectiveness.

Accordingly, the contribution of this study lies not only in identifying *isti'arah* but also in demonstrating how different exegetical traditions construct meaning from the same rhetorical expression. The comparison between Al-Kasyaf and Al-Munir shows that classical and contemporary tafsir should not be positioned within a hierarchy in which one replaces the other. Instead, their interpretive strengths can be integrated into a more comprehensive muqaran framework. Al-Kasyaf provides the linguistic and rhetorical foundation, while Al-Munir extends this foundation toward contemporary contextual interpretation.

The synthesis of these findings indicates that the study of *isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah* can contribute to a broader understanding of Qur'anic interpretation by connecting *balaghah*, semantics, and contextual exegesis. Mohd Ali and Romli (2021) emphasize the importance of structural classification in understanding *isti'arah*, while Primadana et al. (2023) demonstrate the importance of conceptual metaphor in transferring meaning from concrete to abstract domains. When these linguistic insights are combined with the comparative perspectives of *Al-Zamakhsyari* and Al-Zuhaili, *isti'arah* can be understood not merely as a rhetorical ornament but as a mechanism for constructing theological and social meaning.

Therefore, the comparison between *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf* and *Tafsir Al-Munir* demonstrates that the richness of Qur'anic metaphor emerges precisely through the interaction between textual form and interpretive context. *Al-Zamakhsyari*'s lexical-linguistic depth and Al-Zuhaili's systematic contextualization provide complementary analytical resources. The integration of these approaches produces a more comprehensive muqaran interpretation and strengthens the understanding of the Qur'an's linguistic miracle through the dimension of *isti'arah* (Mohd Ali & Romli, 2021; Primadana et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *isti'arah* in *Surah Al-Taubah* is not merely an aesthetic linguistic device but a meaningful mechanism for conveying theological, ethical, and contextual messages. The central lesson is that combining linguistic analysis with comparative exegesis enables deeper understanding of metaphorical Qur'anic meanings beyond literal interpretation. The study contributes academically by demonstrating the complementary strengths of *Al-Zamakhsyari*'s lexical-linguistic approach in *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf* and Al-Zuhaili's systematic and contextual approach in *Tafsir Al-Munir*, thereby enriching the application of muqaran interpretation in Qur'anic rhetoric. However, the study is limited to 19 identified verses and focuses primarily on two representative verses in detailed analysis. Future research should examine all identified verses comprehensively

and extend comparative studies of *isti'arah* to other Qur'anic surahs and exegetical works to strengthen broader theoretical and methodological understanding.

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