



Poetry, Power, and Language: Rereading Arabic Metaphors and Their Implications for Arabic Language Education in Indonesia

Maman Dzul'iman

Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, Indonesia

mamandz@uinssc.ac.id

Irfan Hania

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, Indonesia

irfanhania@uinbanten.ac.id

ENGLISH ABSTRACT

This study investigates the historical evolution of metaphor in Arabic poetry, from the classical to the modern era, and explores its implications for Arabic language instruction in Indonesia. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the research analyzes a purposive selection of ten major poems from the classical and modern eras, chosen for their thematic representativeness of power dynamics and social change. The analysis integrates semantic-rhetorical, intertextual, and critical discourse frameworks to uncover shifting metaphorical functions. The findings reveal that classical metaphors were rooted in natural and spiritual imagery, reinforcing social values, divine order, and political legitimacy. In contrast, modern metaphors reflect sociopolitical critique, existential anxiety, and resistance to colonial and authoritarian regimes. This transformation mirrors broader cultural and ideological shifts within Arab societies. By tracing this evolution, the study demonstrates that metaphors are not merely decorative but function as cognitive and ideological tools that encode historical consciousness. The research further argues that incorporating metaphor-rich poetry into Arabic language education in Indonesia enhances learners' interpretive and expressive skills. A context-based, thematic pedagogical model is proposed, integrating classical and modern texts to foster critical reading (*qirā'ah*) and creative writing (*kitābah*) skills. While limited by its theoretical scope and lack of empirical classroom testing, this research offers a novel framework that bridges the gap between literary evolution and curriculum development, transforming metaphors from linguistic ornaments into instruments of cultural and critical literacy.

Keywords: Arabic Poetry, Metaphor Evolution, Arabic-Language Learning

INDONESIAN ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengkaji evolusi historis metafora dalam puisi Arab, mulai dari era klasik hingga modern, serta mengeksplorasi implikasinya terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Arab di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis sepuluh puisi utama yang dipilih secara purposif dari era klasik dan modern, berdasarkan keterwakilan tematiknya mengenai dinamika kekuasaan dan perubahan sosial. Analisis ini mengintegrasikan kerangka kerja semantik-retoris, intertekstual, dan analisis wacana kritis untuk mengungkap pergeseran fungsi metaforis. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metafora klasik berakar pada citraan alam dan spiritual, yang berfungsi memperkuat nilai-nilai sosial, tatanan ilahiah, dan legitimasi politik. Sebaliknya, metafora modern mencerminkan kritik sosiopolitik, kecemasan eksistensial, serta resistensi terhadap rezim kolonial dan otoriter. Transformasi ini mencerminkan pergeseran budaya dan ideologis yang lebih luas dalam masyarakat Arab. Melalui penelusuran evolusi tersebut, studi ini menunjukkan bahwa metafora tidak sekadar bersifat dekoratif, melainkan berfungsi sebagai instrumen kognitif dan ideologis yang merekam kesadaran historis. Penelitian ini lebih lanjut berargumen bahwa pengintegrasian puisi yang kaya akan metafora ke dalam pendidikan bahasa Arab di Indonesia dapat meningkatkan keterampilan interpretatif dan ekspresif peserta didik. Sebuah model pedagogis tematik berbasis konteks diusulkan, dengan mengintegrasikan teks klasik dan modern untuk membina keterampilan membaca kritis (qirā'ah) dan menulis kreatif (kitābah). Meskipun memiliki keterbatasan dalam cakupan teoretis dan belum adanya pengujian empiris di kelas, penelitian ini menawarkan kerangka kerja kebaruan (novel framework) yang menjembatani kesenjangan antara evolusi sastra dan pengembangan kurikulum, serta mentransformasi metafora dari sekadar ornamen linguistik menjadi instrumen literasi budaya dan kritis.

Kata Kunci: Puisi Arab, Evolusi Metafora, Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab

Introduction

The study of metaphors in poetry offers significant insights into how language shapes human understanding, cultural identity, and collective imagination. In the tradition of Arabic literature, metaphors serve not merely as stylistic devices but also as cognitive and cultural tools that reflect shifts in social values and intellectual paradigms (Ahadovich & Isakovna, 2023). The evolution of metaphorical usage in Arabic poetry—from the classical to the modern era—mirrors broader transformations in language, politics, and philosophy (Iskakuly et al., 2021). Understanding this evolution is essential to grasping the dynamic interplay between poetic language and historical consciousness (Hafsoh et al., 2024). Moreover, such studies hold particular relevance in the field of language education, especially in Indonesia, where Arabic is taught not only as a communicative language but also as a medium for religious and literary instruction.

Previous research has highlighted various aspects of metaphors in Arabic literary and linguistic discourse. Haif has revealed that conceptual metaphors in English-Arabic diplomatic discourse display patterns of translation that either preserve or alter conceptual mappings (Haif & Touati, 2022). Almulla (2024) emphasizes that Arabic proverbs contain diverse types of cognitive metaphors, enriching the study of modern rhetoric. Shuqair (2021) notes that metaphor theory in classical Arabic literary studies evolved into an ornamental approach that prioritizes form over meaning. Burmakova and Marugina (2014) found that translators tend to preserve original metaphors, with translation patterns exhibiting a conservative approach to conceptual mapping. These studies show that while there is a tendency to retain original meanings, variations in interpretation and usage persist.

In the context of translation, several studies reveal the challenges of preserving the implicit meanings of metaphors in Arabic poetry. Khalifah and Zibin (2022) show that conceptual mappings in the translation of Naguib Mahfouz's novels are more often preserved than altered. Al-Garrallah (2016) proposes a new model for translating implicit metaphors in Arabic poetry to retain their embedded meanings. Schoeler points out that classical Arabic literary criticism categorized poetry more by theme than genre, diverging from modern approaches (Schoeler, 2010). Al-Nadwi (2022) observes that Neo-Classicism in modern Arabic poetry emerged as a result of a revival in classical learning influenced by technological advancements. These studies underscore the importance of historical and contextual approaches in understanding metaphorical development in Arabic poetry.

Further, research has explored the relationship between Arabic poetry and its socio-political dimensions. Rashwan critiques the limitations of Euro-American approaches in examining ancient Egyptian literature and offers Arabic *balāghah* as an alternative framework (Rashwan, 2021). Dahami (2021) identifies how modern Arabic poetic drama utilizes history and social issues to present new visions for contemporary Arabic literature. Alyafeai et al. (2023) developed the Ashaar 1 model, an AI-based framework for analyzing and generating Arabic poetry, including classifications by meter, theme, and era. Silalahi et al. (2022) demonstrate that both classical and contemporary Indonesian poetry reflect continuity and innovation in expressing identity and socio-cultural dynamics. These studies affirm that the development of Arabic poetry

involves not only linguistic aspects but also the socio-political dynamics underlying them.

Moreover, several studies highlight how modern Arabic poetry represents nationalism and national identity. Dahami (2024) argues that modern Saudi poetry portrays nationalism through symbolic approaches that intertwine divine and physical aspects. He also emphasizes how the concept of the homeland in contemporary Saudi poetry reflects the poets' intellectual development and patriotic sentiments (Dahami, 2022). Creswell (2021) shows that modern Arabic novels use poetry as a medium for reflecting on modernity and colonialism, affirming the complex relationship between the two genres. In addition, national poetic traditions are linked to the formation of emotional and political subjectivity (Hasanov Shavkat Ahadovich & Ernazarova Gulbahor Isakovna, 2023). Abusaada and Elshater (2024) identify how metaphor and analogy in urban history stimulate mental imagery and innovation in architecture. These studies reveal that modern Arabic poetry is evolving in multiple directions, adapting traditional elements with new and contextualized perspectives.

However, while these studies acknowledge the linguistic shifts, few explicitly examine how metaphors operate as instruments of power within these poetic traditions. The intersection of political authority and rhetorical form, how metaphors serve to legitimize or resist power structures, remains under-discussed. Furthermore, the link between these theoretical shifts in metaphor and their practical application in language pedagogy is often overlooked, leaving a gap between literary analysis and educational practice.

Despite the breadth of existing literature, several gaps remain in the study of metaphors in Arabic poetry. One key limitation is the lack of longitudinal analyses that trace the development of metaphors from classical to modern periods. Moreover, Euro-American approaches often overlook the richness of Arabic *balāghah*, which offers its own conceptual tools for understanding metaphors (Alwaqaa, 2024). Controversy also arises in translation efforts that seek to preserve metaphorical nuances without erasing their cultural undertones (Haleem, 2020). Therefore, a more comprehensive study is needed to bridge these gaps and provide deeper insights into the evolution of metaphors in Arabic poetry. Additionally, in the context of Arabic language education in Indonesia, the pedagogical implications of metaphor use remain underexplored. This limitation

highlights the urgency of conducting metaphor analysis that is historical, contextual, and educationally relevant.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the evolution of metaphors in Arabic poetry from the classical to the modern era and to formulate a pedagogical framework for its integration into the Indonesian Arabic curriculum. Unlike prior longitudinal studies that focus primarily on linguistic forms, this research highlights the ideological function of metaphors as vehicles of power and resistance. By bridging literary history with language pedagogy, this study offers a novel contribution to both Arabic literary theory and the development of critical literacy in second-language education.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design that integrates historical analysis with discourse-analytic methods. The combination of these approaches enables an in-depth exploration of metaphorical structures in Arabic poetry and how these structures interact with shifting social and cultural contexts. The historical dimension of the study serves to trace the evolution of metaphors across major literary epochs, while discourse analysis—particularly Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)—is employed to examine how metaphors participate in shaping, challenging, or reinforcing socio-political realities.

The data for this research consist of both primary and secondary sources. The primary corpus is composed of ten purposively selected poems representing two significant literary periods: the Classical era, spanning from the *Jahiliyyah* to the Abbasid period, and the Modern era, ranging from the post-colonial period to the contemporary age. The poems were chosen based on the prominence of their authors within their respective periods, the density and complexity of their metaphorical expressions, and the thematic relevance of the poems to issues of power and socio-political life. Complementing these primary texts, the secondary sources include scholarly literature, critical essays, and previous studies that discuss metaphor, Arabic literary history, and the socio-cultural functions of poetic discourse.

Data collection proceeded through several interrelated stages. The study began by compiling a representative set of poems from anthologies and other reputable collections that span the designated periods. These poems were then classified according to thematic domains—such as love, power, or spirituality—and according to

their rhetorical functions, including legitimization, resistance, and aesthetic innovation. Each poem was subsequently examined within its socio-cultural and historical context to illuminate the background against which its metaphors were produced and interpreted. Finally, the study undertook a comparative reading of Classical and Modern texts to identify transformations in metaphorical meaning, conceptual frameworks, and rhetorical purpose.

The analysis itself was conducted through a descriptive-analytical process, organized into several methodologically interlinked phases. The first phase employed semantic-rhetorical analysis to uncover the literal and figurative dimensions of metaphorical expressions and to delineate their structural and rhetorical characteristics. The second phase applied intertextual analysis to trace the historical continuities, allusions, and textual echoes that connect the selected poems to earlier or contemporaneous works. The third phase used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to interpret how metaphors operate ideologically within the texts, revealing how poetic language signifies, negotiates, or contests power relations. This analytical sequence ensures a systematic movement from linguistic structure to socio-cultural meaning, thereby supporting the pedagogical aim of fostering critical cultural literacy among students of Arabic language and literature.

To ensure the validity of the findings, the study employed source and method triangulation, comparing its analytical results with established research and scholarly interpretations. Ethical considerations were observed by adhering to proper citation practices and respecting intellectual property in the use of both primary and secondary materials. The study acknowledges several limitations, including restricted access to untranslated or rare manuscripts, the interpretive challenges posed by cultural variations in metaphor, and the limited size and geographic scope of the selected corpus. These constraints were mitigated through the use of credible secondary literature and by grounding the analysis in a robust contextual framework.

Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to the broader field of Arabic literary studies by providing a historically informed and discourse-oriented examination of metaphor. At the same time, it seeks to enrich Arabic language education in Indonesia by offering analytical insights and materials that can enhance students' critical engagement with literary texts across different cultural and historical contexts.

Result and Discussion

The Evolution of Metaphor in Classical Arabic Poetry

Classical Arabic poetry, particularly during the Jahiliyyah and Abbasid periods, developed within a cultural context shaped by desert life, tribal values, and systems of patronage. A key characteristic of this poetry is the use of nature-based, conventional metaphors. Poets frequently expressed human experiences through symbols drawn from their environment, such as camels, wind, stars, and deserts (Larcher, 1998).

Mu'allaqat by Imru' al-Qais

ولَيْلَةٌ كَمَوْجٍ الْبَحْرِ أَرْهَقْتُهَا

"And a night like the waves of the sea burdened me".

This line from Imru' al-Qais's *Mu'allaqat* reflects the poet's inner turmoil by likening the night to the overwhelming waves of the sea. Here, night is not portrayed as a neutral time but as a metaphor for emotional suffering and psychological pressure. It becomes a powerful symbol of distress, threatening the poet's peace of mind—illustrating how natural elements in pre-Islamic poetry were used to articulate emotional turbulence.

The metaphor amplifies the emotional intensity of the poem. The sea often symbolizes uncertainty, fear, and uncontrollable power (Harb, 2020). while in classical Arabic poetry, night frequently signifies loneliness, loss, and anguish (Von Grunebaum, 1963). The verb *arhaqtuhā* ("burdened me") underscores the existential weight of the experience, positioning night not just as a setting but as a manifestation of inner torment.

According to Pennebaker's theory of emotional expression, figurative language such as this serves as a conduit for processing trauma and inner conflict—especially relevant in the harsh and uncertain lives of Bedouin societies (Pennebaker, 2011).

Imru' al-Qais is known for depicting grief and loss through vivid visual metaphors. The sea, as a vast and unpredictable force, reflects the poet's soul, making it not merely a backdrop but an emotional extension of the self. This aligns with Beeston et al.'s view that natural elements in pre-Islamic poetry often mirror human emotions. Thus, this verse not only conveys personal emotion but

also embodies a poetic tradition that captures the inner life of a nomadic society (Beeston, Johnstone, Serjeant, & Smith, 1983).

Al-Buhturi's Praise of the Abbasid Caliphate

كَأَنَّهُ شَمْسٌ تَشْيَعُ الْحَوَّارَهَا

"As if he were the sun illuminating the morning."

Al-Buhturi's poem from the Abbasid Caliphate era employs a powerful metaphor to exalt the leader, notably through the line "*Ka'annahu syamsun tasyi'u nuhūruha*"—likening the caliph to the sun that brightens the morning. This metaphor positions the ruler as a source of light, life, and warmth—a classical symbol in Arabic poetry denoting grandeur, dominance, and centrality in society. This aligns with Al-Jurjani's view that the strength of metaphor lies in its capacity to convey meaning beyond literal interpretation.

In classical Arabic poetry, the sun often symbolizes truth, greatness, and leadership. Within the Abbasid political context, this imagery reflects the ruler as a figure who brings enlightenment and prosperity to the people (Shaker, 2005). As a court poet, Al-Buhturi used natural metaphors like the sun to legitimize power and depict the caliph as a noble and transcendent leader. His use of hyperbole and symbolism underscores the sovereign's role as both an inspiring and protective figure. This perspective is supported by Ali Ahmad Said, who noted that panegyric poetry frequently links leaders to natural elements to reinforce their symbolic authority (Serrano, 1997).

The metaphor of leadership as light also holds deep semantic and philosophical significance. Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors shape human thought, and in Arab culture, light is closely associated with knowledge, wisdom, and justice (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Thus, comparing the ruler to the sun suggests a just, wise, and enlightening figure (Al-Haumadeh & Al-Hrout, 2022). Al-Buhturi's poem, therefore, exemplifies how poetic language functions not only as aesthetic expression but also as a rhetorical and ideological tool in constructing political discourse.

Al-Mutanabbi

وَمَا دَرَاكَ كَمَا الْمَوْتُ بَحْرِي الدِّمَاءُ

"Do you not know that death flows like blood?"

This line from Al-Mutanabbi conveys a powerful metaphor of death as an inseparable part of human struggle. By evoking the image of flowing blood, the poet not only portrays death in tragic terms but also frames it as an act of heroism and bravery. This metaphor resonates with the Islamic concept of *shahāda*, where death in struggle is seen not as futile, but as a noble sacrifice that leads to immortality (Kirtay, 2020; Sanni, 2011).

From Paul Ricoeur's perspective, metaphor functions as a tool to expand our understanding of reality by juxtaposing seemingly unrelated concepts. In this poem, the fusion of death and blood generates a new meaning—suffering that gives rise to the continuity of struggle. Ricoeur (2012) emphasizes that metaphor bridges existential human experience with broader dimensions of reality, making death not merely an end, but a link in a historical and spiritual continuum.

Al-Mutanabbi's views on facing death also parallel Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch*—one who rejects fear and finds meaning through courage and struggle (Pippin & Caro, 2012). In classical Arabic literature, heroic figures are defined by their courage in the face of death. Al-Mutanabbi affirms that legacy is not shaped by the length of life, but by the bravery one shows in confronting life and mortality. The metaphor of flowing blood thus becomes a symbol of a life philosophy that honors struggle as the path to immortality.

Abu Tammam

الْمَطَرُ يَسْقِي الرُّضِيَّ وَيَسْقِي الْخَلْوَدَ

"The rain waters the pasture and waters eternity"

Abu Tammam's poem, which states "Al-matar yusqi ar-rudhā wa yusqi al-khulūd," presents rain as a meaningful symbol embodying renewal and endurance. The first phrase, "al-matar yusqi ar-rudhā," literally describes rain nourishing the pasture, but symbolically it reflects regeneration and hope. In a Sufi context, as explained by Ibn 'Arabi, rain represents a divine gift that irrigates the human heart with wisdom and spiritual mercy (Arabi, 2018).

Meanwhile, the phrase “*yusqi al-khulūd*” expands the meaning of rain from the material to the metaphysical. *Khulūd* (eternity) suggests that rain also nourishes invisible elements such as values, knowledge, and civilization. From an Islamic philosophical perspective, this serves as a metaphor for knowledge that sustains human intellectual vitality and supports the continuity of civilization (Nasr, 2013). Thus, the poem implies that rain transcends its biological role and enters spiritual and epistemological realms.

Furthermore, the rain’s symbolism in this poem aligns with Ibn Khaldun’s theory of civilization cycles, which states that civilizations undergo phases of growth, glory, and decline. Like rain that continuously revives nature, civilizations can be rebuilt through resilience and innovation (Khaldūn, 2015). Therefore, this poem is not merely a description of nature but a profound reflection on the revival of humanity and culture through the rhythms of history and knowledge.

Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma

الصبر عند البلاء كالنار في الجوف

“Patience in hardship is like a fire in the chest”

Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma’s metaphor, “*Ash-shabru ‘inda al-bala’i ka-nārin fī al-jawf*”, powerfully captures the existential suffering humans endure during trials. The “fire in the chest” symbolizes intense internal pain that remains hidden from the outside world. This aligns with the Islamic concept of *ṣabr* (patience), which goes beyond mere endurance to include restraint from complaint and maintaining steadfastness (Al-Jauziyah, n.d.-b).

From a modern psychological perspective, this notion of patience intersects with resilience and emotional regulation. Resilience refers to an individual’s ability to withstand adversity, while emotional regulation is the capacity to control emotional expression amid inner turmoil (Masten, 2014). Thus, the metaphor illustrates a person who endures profound suffering but conceals their pain to preserve emotional stability and inner strength.

In the Sufi view, patience is integral to *tazkiyat al-nafs*—the purification of the soul. Al-Ghazali, as cited in *Islam and Evolution: Al-Ghazali and the Modern*

Evolutionary Paradigm, describes suffering as a means to burn away sins and elevate spiritual closeness to God (Malik, 2021). Therefore, the “fire in the chest” metaphor not only represents suffering but also symbolizes spiritual transformation, where patience becomes a purifying force that raises one’s spiritual rank before the Divine.

Classical Era In summary, classical metaphors functioned primarily as stabilizing forces, using nature and cosmic order to naturalize political authority and spiritual values. The recurring images of rain, sun, and fire served to reinforce social hierarchy and divine legitimacy. In a pedagogical context, teaching these metaphors helps students understand the historical worldview of early Arab society. Educators can use these texts to demonstrate how language preserves cultural continuity and how classical rhetoric was used to construct social harmony, thereby enhancing students' ability to interpret high-context cultural texts.

The Evolution of Metaphor in Modern Arabic Poetry

With the rise of modernism in the Arab world, poets began to abandon conventional forms and develop more personal and experimental styles. Metaphors in modern poetry became more dynamic, subjective, and oriented toward complex symbolism. Poets such as Ahmad Matar and Mahmoud Darwish use metaphor not only to express individual emotions but also as tools for social and political critique (Jayyusi, 1987). Below is an excerpt from modern Arabic poetry selected for this study, along with its analysis:

Ahmad Matar

بِلَادُ تَجْلِسُ فِي عَقْلِي كَاصْفُورٌ مَكْسُوفٌ الْجَنَاحُ

“A country sits in my mind like a bird with a broken wing.”

Ahmad Matar’s poem uses powerful symbolism to reflect the suffering of society under authoritarian regimes. The phrase *usfurin makhsūf al-janāh* (bird with a broken wing) serves as a metaphor for the loss of physical and intellectual freedom. Traditionally, birds symbolize hope and freedom in political literature; however, here the meaning is reversed to represent confinement. This symbolism

illustrates how oppressive political pressure has crushed the people's aspirations for freedom.

This analysis can be deepened through Gramsci's theory of hegemony, which argues that domination is maintained not only through coercion but also via ideological and cultural control. The grounded bird symbolizes a populace unaware of their bondage (Gramsci, 1971). Meanwhile, Foucault's concept of the panopticon highlights how constant surveillance shapes a society that psychologically feels perpetually watched, thus restricting freedom of thought. The phrase "a country sits in my mind" reflects the internalization of state control within individual consciousness (Foucault, 1977).

As a poet of resistance, Ahmad Matar portrays the collective experience of Arab societies living under fear and repression. Through this poem, he not only voices his own feelings but also represents the oppressed people's voice. The sharp symbolism combined with socio-political reflection turns this work into an act of defiance against power structures that limit freedom of thought and action.

Mahmoud Darwish

أنا من هذه الأرض... مثل زيتون مات على كتف الزمان

"I am from this land... like an olive tree that died on the shoulder of time."

In Mahmoud Darwish's poem, the metaphor of "an olive tree that died on the shoulder of time" conveys a profound connection between identity, history, and the Palestinian homeland, while simultaneously expressing endless suffering. The olive tree, symbolizing steadfastness and peaceful resistance, is portrayed as wounded by a long history of occupation and diaspora. From Edward Said's postcolonial perspective, the dying olive tree represents a fragile hybrid identity caught between birthplace and exile (Said, 1994).

Through Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, this metaphor reflects the Palestinian community's memory threatened by colonial trauma and systematic cultural erasure (Russell, 2006). The death of the olive tree signifies the erosion of shared spaces of memory. Politically, using Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the dead olive tree symbolizes a resistance weakened by hegemonic power. Its death is not only biological but also cultural and political—

a form of ideological domination that suppresses local narratives and the identity of resistance.

Through his poetry, Darwish voices not only suffering but also symbolic resistance. He redefines the semantic map of identity and homeland with metaphors rich in layered meaning. The dying olive tree becomes a collective elegy for a people uprooted from their historical roots—a narrative of colonial trauma and an existential longing for a homeland that endures under the shadows of power and time.

Nizar Qabbani

المرأة هي العالم وأنا سائرون فيها

"Woman is the world, and I am a traveler within it."

Nizar Qabbani's poem "*Ana min dunīyākum, wa lā adrī ilā ayna yantahi al-tariq*" presents profound symbolism related to the search for national identity. The word *tariq* (path) goes beyond its literal meaning, symbolizing the intellectual, spiritual, and social journey of a nation seeking its true self. The poet's expression of belonging to the same world yet being unsure where the path leads reflects the anxiety and uncertainty commonly experienced during the formation of national identity.

Theoretically, this can be explained through Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, which highlights that identity is shaped through social interaction (Islam, 2014). It further suggests that national identity does not rely on biological factors such as race or language but on a collective will to live as a unified community (Renan, 1990). In Qabbani's poem, the awareness of a shared origin paired with unclear direction illustrates an identity in the process of construction, aligning with the idea that national identity is actively formed by its people.

The uncertainty expressed in the poem also resonates with Benedict Anderson's concept of *Imagined Communities*, where national identity is understood as a dynamic social construct (Anderson, 2006). In the postcolonial Arab context, the poem can be read as a reflection of the tension between preserving traditional heritage and confronting the demands of modernity—a

theme also explored by Edward Said in postcolonial identity discourse (Said, 1994). Thus, the poem offers not only a personal meditation but also captures the collective anxiety of a nation still striving to establish a stable national identity.

Adonis

الشمسُ لا تخلُّ عن السماء

"The sun never leaves the sky"

Adonis's brief poem, "*Asy-syamsu lā tatakhallā 'an as-sama'*" (The sun never leaves the sky), is rich with symbolism reflecting themes of eternity, continuity, and spiritual illumination. Here, the sun is not merely a celestial object but a symbol of eternal inspiration and an intellect that never fades. In Islamic philosophy, light often represents knowledge, as explained by Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, who viewed the *al-'aql al-fa'āl* (active intellect) as the source of enlightenment, enabling humans to comprehend reality (Gutas, 1988).

As a modern Arab poet, Adonis frequently uses cosmic metaphors to express existential ideas and reflect on the dynamics of civilization. The statement that the sun never leaves the sky can be interpreted as the steadfastness of creativity, persisting despite changing times. This aligns with Gaston Bachelard's perspective in *The Poetics of Space*, where natural elements like light and sky form the basis of human imagination in creating boundless expressive spaces (Bachelard, 2014).

Historically and socioculturally, the poem embodies the spirit of renewal in Arab literature introduced by Adonis through his symbolic and philosophical approach that challenges classical forms (Stetkevych, 2016). Thus, the sun in his poem symbolizes not only individual enlightenment but also the collective spirit of the Arab people in their ongoing quest for identity and civilization-building. Consequently, this poem serves as a philosophical reflection on the continuity of inspiration, both personally and culturally.

Badr Shakir al-Sayyab

الموت يركض في الطريق

"Death lurks on the road"

The phrase "Al-mawtu yarkudu fī al-ṭarīq" (death lurks on the road) in Badr Shakir al-Sayyab's poetry depicts death as an ever-present force shadowing human life's journey, symbolizing the inevitability of mortality. Within Islamic philosophy, this life journey aligns with the concept of *safar*—the transition from the transient world to the hereafter. As Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyah explains in *al-Fawā'id*, every step taken brings humans closer to death and eternal life (Al-Jauziyah, n.d.-a).

From an Islamic existentialist perspective, Ali Shariati emphasizes that life is a test and a search for meaning before death (Rahnema, 1999). Similarly, Martin Heidegger's concept of *Being-towards-death* highlights that constant awareness of mortality motivates individuals to find purpose in life (Crépon, 2013).

Moreover, Sufi teachings, especially those of Jalaluddin Rumi, view death not as something to fear but as a gateway to union with God (*liqa' Allah*). Thus, this poem not only expresses human helplessness in the face of death but also invites reflection on life as a conscious spiritual journey toward soul perfection.

Modern Era Conversely, modern metaphors reveal a drastic ideological shift, moving from stabilization to disruption. Poets utilize broken symbols—such as the wounded bird or the dying olive tree—to challenge hegemonic power and articulate collective trauma. For Arabic language education, these texts are vital for developing critical thinking. By analyzing how modern poets subvert traditional images to voice resistance, students learn to view language as a dynamic tool for social engagement. This contrast between classical stability and modern anxiety provides a rich comparative framework for classroom discussion, fostering deep critical literacy.

Arabic Literature as a Mirror of Socio-Cultural and Political Realities

Arabic literature—both classical and modern—serves as a reflection of the collective consciousness of society, capturing surrounding social, political, and cultural realities. Poetry, as its primary expressive form, employs metaphor not merely for aesthetic purposes but as a symbolic tool to convey historically and existentially resonant ideas and emotions (Stetkevych, 2019). As social and political landscapes shift in the Arab world, the role of metaphor in poetry has undergone significant

transformation. In the classical era, metaphors reinforced traditional values and social structures. In contrast, in the modern era, they became a medium for expressing anxiety, protest, and resistance against colonialism, identity crises, and authoritarian regimes. This shift reflects a broader transformation in the historical and ideological consciousness of Arab poets.

Table 1. The Evolution of Metaphor: From Natural Symbols to Social Critique

Era	Function of Metaphor	Socio-Cultural Realities
Classical	Aesthetic, Power Legitimization, Spirituality	Harsh Bedouin life, Islamic imperial grandeur, collective spirituality
Modern	Socio-political Critique, Existentialism, Cultural Resistance	State repression, colonialism, diaspora, identity crisis, modernity

These findings affirm that metaphors in Arabic poetry have shifted from rhetorical ornaments to reflections of collective awareness. In the classical period, metaphors upheld traditional and spiritual-political values through symbols such as the sun, camels, and rain—representing courage or divine grace. In contrast, modern poetry uses metaphor as an instrument of political and social critique. Poets like Mahmoud Darwish and Ahmad Matar employ symbols such as wounds, prisons, and olive trees to express alienation and collective trauma, marking poetry's transition from celebration of the old order to an exposure of crisis and emptiness in the modern world.

Classical Context: Existence, Endurance, and Legitimacy

In classical Arabic poetry, metaphor played a central role in expressing existential anxiety, spirituality, and social values. One early example appears in the poetry of Imru' al-Qais, who likens the night to ocean waves—symbolizing the Bedouin community's fear of the harsh desert life. From a literary psychology perspective, such poetry acts as a sublimation of collective trauma that is difficult to express directly. Rokhim notes that the harmony between meter and theme in Imru' al-Qais's verses enhances emotional intensity and symbolically reflects the inner condition of classical Arab society (Rokhim, 2009).

Over time, poetry evolved into a tool of political legitimation. In al-Buhturi's work, metaphors such as the ruler as the sun "*Ka'annahu syamsun tasyi'u nuhūruha*"

serve as ideological propaganda reinforcing Abbasid authority. Metaphor thus became a strategic device for constructing a sacred image of leadership. Al-Tikriti and Al-Rabie argue that panegyric poetry during this period carried strategic functions in stabilizing society and portraying power as an irreplaceable force in the political and cultural order (Jassim Al-Tikriti & Abdul Amir Al-Rabie, 2021).

Furthermore, in al-Mutanabbi's poetry, verse becomes an existential medium celebrating courage and the struggle for life. Lines like "*Wa mā darāka kamā al-mūtu tajrī ad-dimā*" reflect a life philosophy that affirms death as a peak of existential meaning—analyzed through the lens of Ricoeur and Nietzsche. Nurain emphasizes that al-Mutanabbi's poems embody self-worth and bravery as forms of resistance to fate (Nurain, 2014). Similar themes appear in the works of Abu Tammam and Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, where metaphors of rain and inner fire symbolize moral resilience and transcendent awareness. Al-Tikriti and Al-Rabie observe that these metaphors reflect the poets' psychospiritual states and the Sufi values embedded in classical Arab culture (Jassim Al-Tikriti & Abdul Amir Al-Rabie, 2021).

Modern Context: Identity, Resistance, and Crisis

In the modern context, postcolonial Arabic poetry serves as a medium of resistance against political repression and identity crises. Ahmad Matar, for instance, employs the metaphor of a "bird with broken wings" to depict the stagnation of freedom in Arab nations. This symbolism echoes Gramsci's concept of ideological hegemony and Foucault's panoptic surveillance. Matar's poetry becomes a symbolic weapon against authoritarianism, vividly portraying political oppression.

Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian national poet, uses the symbol of the "olive tree" to represent cultural dislocation caused by colonialism and exile. This aligns with Halbwachs's theory of collective memory and Edward Said's views on exile and hybrid identity. Darwish's poetry is not only a personal lament but also a collective elegy preserving national memory, emphasizing the deep connection between Palestinian identity and the natural landscape (Khalil, 2017).

Nizar Qabbani addresses the Arab identity crisis through metaphors like the "endless road," reflecting the tension between tradition and modernity. His works resonate with Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory and the idea of nationalism as an

imagined construct by Renan and Anderson. Meanwhile, Adonis, a pioneer of Arab modernism, uses cosmic metaphors such as “a sun that never leaves the sky” to assert the eternity of creativity and the continuity of Arab civilization, drawing on the philosophies of Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Bachelard. Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, through the metaphor “death lurking in the street,” expresses awareness of mortality and the importance of spiritual journeying—echoing Heidegger’s *being-towards-death* and Sufi teachings on *fana* (annihilation of the self).

Integrating Arabic Poetry Metaphors into Arabic Language Learning in Indonesia

The integration of metaphors from Arabic poetry into Arabic language learning in Indonesia offers an innovative strategy to enhance students' reading (*qirā'ah*) and writing (*kitābah*) skills. Classical and modern Arabic poetry is rich in metaphors that reflect the cultural and social evolution of Arab societies. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, metaphors are not mere linguistic ornaments but fundamental to human cognition and worldview. A context-based approach enables students to grasp how metaphors in poetry reflect varying cultural perspectives and historical conditions (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). This aligns with Steen's emphasis on metaphor identification and analysis to understand language structure and meaning (Steen, 2006).

A thematic approach in *qirā'ah* learning can be applied by categorizing poems based on historical periods and metaphor types. Classical poetry, such as that of Imru' al-Qais, introduces students to formal Arabic structures and traditional vocabulary, featuring metaphors drawn from nature and Bedouin life. In contrast, modern poetry—like the works of Mahmoud Darwish—employs more dynamic language and explores social and political themes relevant to contemporary learners. Comparing classical and modern poetry helps students understand linguistic development and cultural transformation. Badawi (1973) highlights how modern Arabic poetry reflects the political and social shifts in the Arab world.

Beyond reading and analysis, students are encouraged to write poetry inspired by both classical and modern styles. Composing poems that adapt metaphors from different eras fosters creativity and sensitivity to Arabic literary expression. According to Carter and Nash (1990), metaphor-based creative writing enhances syntactic and

semantic understanding in second language acquisition. An interdisciplinary approach that connects Arabic poetry with historical and social contexts can further enrich learning. Content-Based Instruction (CBI) enables students to see language not only as a tool for communication but also as a medium for cultural and social reflection. Therefore, integrating the evolution of metaphors in Arabic poetry into language learning provides a more meaningful and contextual way to develop students' reading and writing competencies.

Against this background, the present study focuses on the evolution of metaphor in Arabic poetry across different historical periods. This study explores the development of metaphor from the classical to the modern era, highlighting its reflection of Arab society's social, cultural, and political dynamics, as well as its relevance to Arabic language instruction in Indonesia. Employing a qualitative approach that integrates discourse analysis and historical interpretation, the research reveals that metaphors function not only as rhetorical devices but also as expressions of shifting collective consciousness. In classical Arabic poetry, metaphors reinforced spiritual values and legitimized political authority. Natural symbols such as *rain*, *fire*, and *sun* conveyed aesthetic beauty while also representing cosmic order and sacred social structures, as seen in the works of Imru' al-Qais, Al-Mutanabbi, and Al-Buhturi (Al-Khattab, Al-Mawajdeh, Talhouni, & Al-Marayeah, 2023).

In contrast, modern Arabic poetry repositions metaphor as a vehicle for articulating collective trauma, resistance, and identity crises. Poets like Mahmoud Darwish and Ahmad Matar employ symbols such as *a bird with broken wings* or *a dead olive on the shoulder of time* to express exile, historical wounds, and existential anxiety (Al-Sheikh, 2020). This transformation signals a broader epistemological shift: while classical poets emphasized spiritual harmony and Sufi transcendence, modern poets engage in critical reflection on political and social realities. In this sense, metaphors operate as ideological and epistemological tools, aligning with Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Edward Said's concept of exile (Qasim & Shakkour, 2021).

These findings challenge the binary between aesthetics and ideology in Arabic poetry analysis, proposing an interdisciplinary framework that incorporates hermeneutics, cultural semiotics, and historical awareness. In translation, metaphors

must be contextualized within their original socio-political milieu to avoid semantic reduction—a point supported by hermeneutic translation theories (Obeidat, 1997).

Pedagogically, the study offers significant implications for Arabic language education in Indonesia. Integrating classical and modern Arabic poetry into the curriculum can enhance not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural awareness and critical thinking. By treating metaphor as a core subject of study, Arabic learning can move beyond grammar drills toward deeper symbolic and historical understanding.

Conclusion

This research examined the evolution of metaphor in Arabic poetry and its implications for Arabic language instruction in Indonesia. Metaphors serve as conceptual tools reflecting the psychological, philosophical, political, and spiritual dimensions of Arab society. In classical poetry, they express spiritual regeneration, heroism, and power legitimacy; in modern poetry, they convey social critique, existential unease, and resistance to political oppression, as illustrated by the works of Ahmad Matar and Mahmoud Darwish. These insights enrich Arabic pedagogy by fostering cultural and contextual understanding. However, the study is limited to textual analysis and does not empirically assess student responses. Theoretically, this study contributes to Arabic metaphor studies by redefining metaphors not as static ornaments but as evolving cognitive tools that encode the history of power relations—from the "politics of praise" in the classical era to the "politics of resistance" in modern times. Practically, for Arabic language instruction, it provides a structured thematic model that moves beyond grammar drills. It advocates for "Teaching Language through Literature," where metaphors serve as gateways to cultural competence. Future research should move beyond textual analysis to empirical application. We recommend classroom-based studies to test the effectiveness of this metaphor-based pedagogy on student proficiency and cultural empathy. Additionally, curriculum developers should consider creating specific modules that pair classical and modern poems thematically (e.g., "The Leader as Sun" vs. "The Broken Wing") to make the evolution of Arab thought tangible for learners.

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