

Madura Academics on Qur'anic Createdness and Foundations of Islamic Language Philosophy

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Abstract

The debate over the creation of the Qur'an (*khalq al-Qur'an*) is one of the most influential controversies in the history of Islamic theology. Traditionally understood as a doctrinal dispute over divine attributes, this debate also raises deeper questions about the relationship between divine meaning and human language. However, the linguistic dimension of this debate is rarely systematically examined in contemporary science. Therefore, this study aims to reinterpret the *khalq al-Qur'an* debate as a discourse that reflects the conceptual understanding of different languages in the Islamic theological tradition. This study uses a qualitative theoretical design using conceptual analysis and rational reconstruction. The classical theological texts of Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Hanabilah are analyzed to identify key concepts related to divine utterance. In addition, empirical data was collected through interviews with contemporary Islamic scholars to provide a contextual perspective on the debate. The findings suggest that these theological schools represent three different conceptual models of language. Mu'tazilah views divine utterance as a temporal communicative act, Ash'ariyyah distinguishes between eternal meaning (*kalam nafsi*) and temporal linguistic expression (*kalam lafzi*), and Hanabilah emphasizes the authority of the revealed text. This study concludes that the debate on the *khalq al-Qur'an* contains conceptual insights that can be reconstructed as a discourse on the ontology of language in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Keywords: Khalq al-Qur'an; Divine Speech; Islamic Kalam; Philosophy of Language; Qur'anic Discourse; Rational Reconstruction

Abstrak

Perdebatan tentang penciptaan Al-Qur'an (khalq al-Qur'an) adalah salah satu kontroversi paling berpengaruh dalam sejarah teologi Islam. Secara tradisional dipahami sebagai perselisihan doktrin mengenai atribut ilahi, perdebatan ini juga menimbulkan pertanyaan yang lebih dalam tentang hubungan antara makna ilahi dan bahasa manusia. Namun, dimensi linguistik dari perdebatan ini jarang diperiksa secara sistematis dalam keilmuan kontemporer. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menafsirkan perdebatan khalq al-Qur'an sebagai wacana yang mencerminkan pemahaman konseptual bahasa yang berbeda dalam tradisi teologis Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain teoritis kualitatif dengan menggunakan analisis konseptual dan rekonstruksi rasional. Teks-teks teologis klasik dari Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, dan Hanabilah dianalisis untuk mengidentifikasi konsep-konsep kunci yang berkaitan dengan ucapan ilahi. Selain itu, data empiris dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan cendekiawan Islam kontemporer untuk memberikan perspektif kontekstual tentang debat. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa sekolah-sekolah teologis ini mewakili tiga model konseptual bahasa yang berbeda. Mu'tazilah memandang ucapan ilahi sebagai tindakan komunikatif temporal, Ash'ariyyah membedakan antara makna kekal (kalam nafsi) dan ekspresi linguistik temporal (kalam lafzi), dan Hanabilah menekankan otoritas teks yang diwahyukan. Penelitian ini

menyimpulkan bahwa perdebatan khalq al-Qur'an mengandung wawasan konseptual yang dapat direkonstruksi sebagai wacana tentang ontologi bahasa dalam tradisi intelektual Islam.

Kata kunci: *Khalq al-Qur'an; Pidato Ilahi; Kalam Islam; Filsafat Bahasa; Wacana Al-Qur'an; Rekonstruksi Rasional*

A. Introduction

The debate on the creation of the Qur'an (khalq al-Qur'an) represents one of the most influential intellectual controversies in the history of Islamic theology¹. Emerging during the formative period of Islamic thought, the debate concerns a fundamental question regarding the nature of divine speech (kalam Allah)²: whether the Qur'an should be understood as eternal (qadim) as an attribute of God or as created (*makhluq*) within temporal reality. Classical theological schools such as the Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Hanabilah articulated different positions on this issue, which later became central to the development of Islamic theological discourse (kalam)³. These debates not only addressed theological doctrines but also reflected broader intellectual concerns regarding revelation, language, and the relationship between divine meaning and human expression.

Historically, studies of the khalq al-Qur'an controversy have largely focused on its political and doctrinal aspects. Scholars frequently highlight the Abbasid-era Miḥnah (inquisition), which institutionalized the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the created Qur'an as a state ideology⁴. Other studies examine the theological arguments concerning divine attributes and the nature of revelation developed by different schools of kalam⁵. While these historical approaches provide valuable insight into the development of Islamic theology, they often treat the debate primarily as a doctrinal dispute rather than as a conceptual discourse involving deeper philosophical questions.

Recent scholarship, however, has increasingly emphasized the importance of examining Islamic intellectual traditions through broader philosophical frameworks. For example, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd argues that the Qur'an⁶ should be understood as a communicative discourse embedded within human linguistic structures, thereby highlighting the interaction between revelation and language⁷. Similarly, Mohammed Arkoun calls for a critical re-examination of classical Islamic thought through modern philosophical and linguistic perspectives in order to uncover new dimensions of Islamic intellectual history⁸. In addition, Josef van Ess demonstrates that classical kalam debates contain complex conceptual frameworks that intersect with broader philosophical issues related to language, knowledge, and meaning⁹.

¹ Frank Griffel, 'Theology and Philosophy in Islamic Intellectual History', *The Muslim World*, 101.1 (2011), pp. 1–25, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2010.01335.x>.

² El-Omari Racha, "The Theology of Divine Speech in Classical Islam," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 29.1 (2018), pp. 1–23.

³ William Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*. (Edinburgh University Press, 1973).

⁴ John Abdallah Nawas, 'A Reexamination of the Miḥnah.', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26.4 (1994), pp. 615–29, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800061121>.

⁵ Griffel, 'Theology and Philosophy in Islamic Intellectual History'.

⁶ Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, "The Concept of Text in Islamic Hermeneutics," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 17.1 (2015), pp. 1–15.

⁷ Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*. (Humanistics University Press, 2006).

⁸ Mohammed. Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (Saqi Books, 2002).

⁹ Josef. van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*. (Harvard University Press., 2006).

More recent studies in Islamic intellectual history and philosophy have also suggested that classical Islamic debates may contain implicit theoretical reflections on language and meaning.¹⁰ Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that philosophical discussions within the Islamic tradition whether in theology, philosophy, or linguistics often intersect with broader questions concerning the nature of language and its role in articulating knowledge and meaning¹¹. Studies on Islamic philosophy of language also highlight that classical Muslim thinkers treated language not merely as a communicative instrument but as an epistemic structure that mediates between thought, meaning, and reality. For instance, recent analyses of linguistic philosophy within the Islamic intellectual tradition show that language functions as a conceptual system that organizes reasoning and symbolic representation in religious discourse.

Despite these developments, the relationship between the debate on the creation of the Qur'an and the philosophy of language has not been systematically examined. Existing studies often address the issue of divine speech from historical, theological, or hermeneutical perspectives, but they rarely reconstruct the classical debate as a coherent framework for understanding language itself. Consequently, the philosophical implications of classical kalam discussions remain underexplored within contemporary scholarship. This study seeks to address this gap by reinterpreting the debate on the creation of the Qur'an as a discourse that reflects competing ontologies of language. Rather than treating the positions of the Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Hanabilah solely as doctrinal disagreements, this research examines how each theological school conceptualizes the relationship between meaning (*ma'na*), expression (*lafz*), and divine speech (*kalam*). By analyzing these conceptual distinctions, the study aims to demonstrate that the classical debate implicitly articulates different theoretical models of language within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Methodologically, this research employs conceptual analysis and rational reconstruction to clarify the philosophical implications of classical theological arguments. Conceptual analysis is used to examine the structure of key theological and linguistic concepts, while rational reconstruction allows classical debates to be interpreted as coherent conceptual models within contemporary philosophical discourse. Through this approach, the study aims to move beyond descriptive accounts and provide a systematic interpretation of the conceptual foundations underlying the *khalq al-Qur'an* debate. The central argument of this study is that the theological positions of the Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Hanabilah represent different ontological perspectives on divine speech. The Mu'tazilah conceptualize divine speech as a temporal act occurring within history, emphasizing the performative dimension of language. In contrast, the Ash'ariyyah distinguish between eternal meaning (*kalam nafsi*) and temporal linguistic expression (*kalam lafzi*), thereby proposing a dual-layered model of language. Meanwhile, the Hanabilah emphasize the authority and immediacy of the revealed text, reflecting a form of textual realism that resists speculative philosophical interpretation.

By comparing these theological perspectives, this study demonstrates that the classical debate on the creation of the Qur'an contains conceptual insights that can contribute to contemporary discussions in philosophy of language. Nevertheless, this study does not claim that classical theologians explicitly developed a formal philosophy of language in the modern sense. Rather, it proposes that their debates provide implicit conceptual resources that can be reconstructed within contemporary philosophical

¹⁰ Husni Mubarrak and Badrul Munir, 'Mafhum Al Naskh Min Mandhur Al Fiqh Al Maqashidiy: Dirasat Wa Niqasy', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu Ashirah*, 20.1 (2023), p. 93, doi:10.22373/jim.v20i1.16501.

¹¹ Griffel, 'Theology and Philosophy in Islamic Intellectual History'.

frameworks. This study employs a qualitative theoretical research design grounded in philosophical analysis. The primary methodological framework combines conceptual analysis and rational reconstruction¹², which are commonly used in philosophical research to examine the structure of theoretical arguments and clarify conceptual relationships.¹³ Conceptual analysis is used to identify and clarify key theological and linguistic concepts that appear in classical kalam discussions on the nature of divine speech. In particular, the study focuses on concepts such as *kalam*, *kalam nafsi*, *lafz*, and *ma'na*. By examining how these concepts are used within different theological traditions, the study seeks to uncover the underlying assumptions regarding language, meaning, and temporality in Islamic theological thought. Rational reconstruction is employed to reinterpret classical theological arguments in a systematic analytical framework. This method does not aim to impose modern philosophical categories onto historical texts; rather, it attempts to reconstruct the logical structure of classical debates in a way that reveals their implicit philosophical implications. Through rational reconstruction, the positions of the Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Hanabilah are interpreted as different conceptual models of divine speech within the broader discourse of language philosophy.¹⁴

The primary sources of this study consist of classical theological texts associated with major *kalam* traditions, including works by Mu'tazilite, Ash'arite, and Hanbalite scholars. For instance, Ash'arite perspectives on divine speech are often articulated in works such as Al-Ibanah 'an Uşul al-Diyanah, attributed to Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari. These classical sources are analyzed alongside contemporary academic studies in Islamic theology and philosophy of language in order to situate the classical debate within modern scholarly discussions. The analytical procedure follows three main stages.¹⁵ First, key concepts related to divine speech and language are identified in classical theological literature. Second, these concepts are compared across different theological traditions in order to identify conceptual similarities and differences. Third, the resulting conceptual structures are reconstructed as philosophical models of language that reflect different ontological assumptions regarding divine speech. Through this methodological approach, the study seeks to provide a systematic interpretation of the khalq al-Qur'an debate as a conceptual discourse that extends beyond theological doctrine and contributes to broader philosophical discussions concerning language and meaning.

B. Result and Discussion

The debate on the creation of the Qur'an (*khalq al-Qur'an*) emerged during the formative period of Islamic theology as scholars attempted to reconcile divine transcendence with the linguistic form of revelation. Classical Muslim theologians sought to explain how the Qur'an, understood as the speech of God (*kalam Allah*), could exist in the form of human language while maintaining the transcendence and unity of God.¹⁶ Within this intellectual context, different theological schools developed distinct doctrinal

¹² Davia Gozalo A, "Rational Reconstruction as Philosophical Methodology," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 44.3 (2018), pp. 315–27.

¹³ and Johnny Saldaña. Miles, Matthew Brooks, A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*. (Sage Publications, 2014).

¹⁴ John Ward. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage Publications, 2014).

¹⁵ Andri Nirwana AN, Dedy Mustofa, and Sayed Akhyar, 'Contextualization Review of the Interpretation of the Verses of the Fathul Qulub Book at the IMM Sukoharjo Regeneration Program', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu Ashirah*, 20.1 (2023), p. 146, doi:10.22373/jim.v20i1.16939.

¹⁶ Aiyub Aiyub and Isna Mutia, 'Muhammad Quraish Shihab's Methodology in Interpretation of The Qur'an', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu Ashirah*, 20.1 (2023), p. 1, doi:10.22373/jim.v20i1.16891.

frameworks concerning the nature of divine speech. Historical studies show that the controversy intensified during the Abbasid period, particularly during the Miḥnah when the doctrine of the created Qur'an was officially endorsed by the state¹⁷. However, beyond the political dimension, the debate also reflects deeper conceptual questions regarding the ontology of language and revelation. Scholars such as van Ess argue that early kalam debates frequently involved sophisticated conceptual distinctions concerning knowledge, meaning, and linguistic expression¹⁸. From this perspective, the debate on the creation of the Qur'an can be interpreted not only as a theological controversy but also as an intellectual discourse concerning the relationship between divine meaning and linguistic expression.

Field data obtained from interviews with Islamic scholars also support this interpretation. According to Muhamad Zahid, the debate on khalq al-Qur'an cannot be understood merely as a dispute over theological doctrine, but rather as a reflection of deeper intellectual concerns about the nature of divine communication: *"The debate about the khalq of the Qur'an is basically about how divine revelation is understood through human language. This is not just a theological debate, but also a question of epistemology and language."*¹⁹ This statement indicates that contemporary scholars recognize the linguistic dimension of the debate, which aligns with modern interpretations that emphasize the communicative nature of revelation²⁰.

Mu'tazilite Conception of Divine Speech and the Temporality of Language

The Mu'tazilah are widely known for their doctrine that the Qur'an is created. Their argument is rooted in the principle of divine unity (*tawḥid*), which requires that nothing other than God can possess eternal existence.²¹ From this perspective, the Qur'an cannot be considered eternal because that would imply the existence of an entity alongside God. However, beyond its theological implications, the Mu'tazilite position also reflects a particular conception of language. By asserting that the Qur'an is created²², Mu'tazilite theologians implicitly conceptualize divine speech as a temporal act that occurs within history. In other words, revelation is understood as a communicative event that takes place when God addresses humanity through language. Modern scholars have noted that this conception resembles performative theories of language in contemporary philosophy. According to speech act theory, language is not merely a system of symbols but a form of action that produces meaning within specific contexts²³.

The field data from interviews also highlight the importance of this temporal understanding of language. Abdul Mukti Thabrani explains that the Mu'tazilite position reflects a rational approach to understanding revelation: *"In Mu'tazilah's view, revelation is understood as a divine act that occurred in history. Therefore, the language of the Qur'an must be understood as a form of communication that occurs at a certain time."*²⁴

¹⁷ Nawas, 'A Reexamination of the Mihna.'

¹⁸ van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*.

¹⁹ Interview with Muhamad Zahid, Professor of Qur'anic Studies, IAIN Madura, February 2026

²⁰ Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*.

²¹ Luthviah Romziana and Lutfi Lutfi, 'History and Relationship of Qur'an Verses to Rebo Wekasan Tradition at the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Banyuwangi, Pamekasan', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu Ashirah*, 20.1 (2023), p. 191, doi:10.22373/jim.v20i1.17500.

²² Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamadani, *Al-Mughni Fi Abwab Al-Tawhid Wa Al-'Adl*. (Dar Al-Fikr, 1965).

²³ John Rogers Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. (Cambridge University Press, 1969).

²⁴ Interview with Abdul Mukti Thabrani, STAI Al Mujtama Pamekasan, 13 February 2026

This interpretation reinforces the idea that Mu'tazilite theology implicitly conceptualizes language as a temporal phenomenon. By emphasizing the created nature of the Qur'an, Mu'tazilite scholars sought to preserve divine transcendence while explaining how divine speech could be communicated through human language.

Ash'arite Theory of Kalam Nafsi and Linguistic Expression

In contrast to the Mu'tazilite position, the Ash'ariyyah developed a more complex theory of divine speech in order to affirm the eternity of the Qur'an while still accounting for its linguistic form. This theory is based on the distinction between *kalam nafsi* (internal divine speech) and *kalam lafzi* (expressed speech).²⁵ According to Ash'arite theology, divine speech exists eternally as an attribute of God. However, the linguistic expressions of the Qur'an its words, sounds, and written forms are created manifestations that communicate the eternal divine meaning to human beings. In this framework, meaning is eternal while linguistic expression is temporal.

From a philosophical perspective, this model represents a dual-layer ontology of language in which meaning and expression exist at different levels. Meaning exists eternally within the divine essence, while language functions as a medium through which that meaning is communicated to humans.²⁶ This interpretation is also reflected in contemporary scholarly perspectives. Abd. Kahar notes that the Ash'arite theory provides a conceptual bridge between divine transcendence and human language: "*The concept of kalam nafsi in Ash'ari theology is actually an attempt to explain how the eternal divine meaning can be conveyed through the temporal language of man.*"²⁷ Such interpretations demonstrate that classical theological debates contain implicit reflections on the relationship between meaning and language.

Hanbalite Textual Realism

In modern The Hanbalite approach differs from both Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite models by emphasizing strict adherence to the textual authority of revelation²⁸. Rather than developing complex philosophical distinctions, Hanbalite scholars affirm that the Qur'an is the speech of God and reject speculative theological interpretations concerning its nature. This position reflects what may be described as textual realism. According to this perspective, the Qur'an should be accepted as the speech of God without engaging in philosophical speculation about its ontological status. From the perspective of language philosophy, this approach emphasizes the authority of the text itself rather than the conceptual analysis of linguistic structures.²⁹

When analyzed comparatively, the theological positions of the Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Hanabilah reveal three distinct conceptual models of language. The Mu'tazilite model conceptualizes language as a temporal communicative act. The Ash'arite model conceptualizes language as a dual structure consisting of eternal meaning and temporal expression. Meanwhile, the Hanbalite model conceptualizes language primarily as textual authority. These models demonstrate that classical Islamic theology contains diverse conceptual frameworks for understanding language and meaning.

²⁵ Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqafiyyah., *Maqalat Al-Islamiyyin Wa Ikhtilaf Al-Musallin*. (Maktabat al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah, 1950).

²⁶ John Rogers Searle, "Speech Acts and the Philosophy of Language," *Mind & Language*, 30.1 (2015), pp. 1–10.

²⁷ Interview with Abd. Kahar, STAI Al Mujtama Pamekasan, 13 February 2026

²⁸ Abdullah Saeed, "Contemporary Approaches to Qur'anic Interpretation," *Religion Compass*, 12.7 (2018), pp. 1–10.

²⁹ Searle, "Speech Acts and the Philosophy of Language,".

Reconstruction of the Debate within Philosophy of Language

Using The reinterpretation of the khalq al-Qur'an debate through the framework of philosophy of language requires a methodological reconstruction of classical theological arguments. Using the method of rational reconstruction, the positions of the Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Hanabilah can be understood not merely as doctrinal disagreements but as distinct conceptual responses to the problem of how divine meaning can be articulated through linguistic form. This reconstruction does not attempt to impose modern philosophical categories onto classical texts. Rather, it aims to clarify the implicit conceptual structures that underlie theological arguments concerning divine speech.

Within the Mu'tazilite framework, language is conceptualized primarily as a temporal act of communication. The doctrine that the Qur'an is created reflects the assumption that linguistic expression necessarily occurs within time.³⁰ Revelation, therefore, is understood as an event in which divine meaning becomes accessible through historical linguistic articulation. From the perspective of philosophy of language, this view corresponds to theories that emphasize the performative and contextual nature of speech.³¹ As Austin (1962) argues, language functions not merely as a representation of meaning but as an action that produces meaning within specific communicative contexts³². Similarly,³³ emphasizes that speech acts involve intentional actions that connect linguistic expressions with communicative purposes. When interpreted through this framework, the Mu'tazilite doctrine can be seen as an early attempt to conceptualize revelation as a form of communicative action.

In contrast, the Ash'arite distinction between *kalam nafsi* and *kalam lafzi* represents a more complex ontological model of language. By separating eternal meaning from temporal linguistic expression, Ash'arite theologians introduced a conceptual distinction between semantic content and its linguistic manifestation.³⁴ This theoretical move allows them to maintain the eternity of divine speech while acknowledging the temporal character of language. From a contemporary perspective, this distinction resembles modern semantic theories that differentiate between underlying meaning structures and their linguistic realization (Lyons, 1995). In this sense, the Ash'arite model can be interpreted as an early formulation of a dual-layer ontology of language in which meaning exists independently of linguistic expression.

The Hanbalite perspective, meanwhile, reflects a different orientation toward language and revelation. Rather than engaging in speculative conceptual distinctions, Hanbalite scholars emphasize the authority and immediacy of the revealed text. Their approach prioritizes fidelity to the linguistic form of the Qur'an and rejects philosophical speculation concerning its ontological status. Although this position may appear less theoretically elaborate, it nonetheless reflects a distinctive conception of language in which textual authority takes precedence over conceptual analysis. In philosophical terms, this perspective highlights the normative dimension of language, emphasizing its role as a source of guidance and authority within religious practice.

³⁰ Abdul Wahid and Mazlan Ibrahim, 'The Characteristics of Tafsir Al-Mizan by Thabathaba'iy', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu Ashirah*, 20.1 (2023), p. 27, doi:10.22373/jim.v20i1.16432.

³¹ and Zaid Khaled Al-Zuriqat. Alsamhori, Mohammed A. O., Seine, Mohammed I., 'Speech Acts as a Means of Influence and Social Interaction: Perspectives from Austin and Searle.', *Journal of Posthumanism*, 5.3 (2025), pp. 627–37, doi:https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i3.771.

³² John Langshaw. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford University Press., 1962).

³³ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*.

³⁴ Asy Syifa Dhea Salsabila, Azzahra Tsabithania Arifiy, and Chyntia Nursyifa Fitri, 'Study of Maudhu'i's Interpretation of Secularism Verses', *Bulletin of Islamic Research*, 1.4 (2024), pp. 143–60, doi:10.69526/bir.v1i4.43.

The reconstruction of these theological positions within the framework of philosophy of language reveals that the classical debate on the creation of the Qur'an can be understood as a discourse that implicitly addresses questions concerning linguistic ontology. While classical theologians did not explicitly formulate a systematic philosophy of language, their discussions nevertheless provide conceptual resources that illuminate the relationship between meaning, language, and revelation.

This interpretation is also supported by field data. According to Muhamad Zahid, classical debates on divine speech demonstrate that early Muslim scholars were deeply concerned with the conceptual relationship between meaning and language: “*Classical scholars have actually discussed the relationship between meaning and language in the context of revelation, although they do not call it a philosophy of language.*”³⁵ Such insights indicate that rational reconstruction allows contemporary scholars to identify philosophical dimensions within classical theological discourse while still respecting the historical context in which those debates originally occurred.³⁶

Implications for Qur'anic Hermeneutics

The The reinterpretation of the *khalq al-Qur'an* debate also has important implications for Qur'anic hermeneutics. If revelation involves the interaction between divine meaning and human language, then interpretation becomes an unavoidable component of understanding the Qur'an. Language is never a neutral medium; it always operates within historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts that shape how meaning is conveyed and understood.³⁷ Within the Mu'tazilite perspective, the temporal nature of language implies that Qur'anic interpretation must consider the historical circumstances in which revelation occurred. Because language functions as a communicative act embedded within historical reality, understanding the meaning of revelation requires attention to the context of its articulation. This approach resonates with modern hermeneutical theories that emphasize the importance of historical context in interpreting texts.³⁸

In contrast, the Ash'arite distinction between *kalam nafsi* and *kalam lafzi* provides a conceptual framework that allows interpreters to distinguish between the eternal meaning of revelation and its temporal linguistic expression. From this perspective, interpretation involves uncovering the underlying semantic content that lies behind the linguistic form of the Qur'an. Such a view reflects a semantic approach to hermeneutics in which the task of interpretation is to move from linguistic expression to deeper meaning.³⁹ The Hanbalite emphasis on textual authority, meanwhile, highlights the importance of preserving the linguistic integrity of the Qur'anic text. By prioritizing the authority of the revealed text, Hanbalite scholars stress that interpretation must remain faithful to the linguistic structure of revelation and avoid speculative reinterpretation.⁴⁰

³⁵ Interview with Muhamad Zahid, Professor of Qur'anic Studies, IAIN Madura, February 2026.

³⁶ Interview with Muhamad Zahid, Professor of Qur'anic Studies, IAIN Madura, February 2026.

³⁷ Nur Zen Hasanah and others, 'Contemporary Traditions and Challenges: Tafsir Maudhu'I's Study of Islam and Fundamentalism', *Bulletin of Islamic Research*, 2.2 (2024), pp. 181–98, doi:10.69526/bir.v2i2.7.

³⁸ Aqil Mujtaba and Abu Bakar, 'ELABORATION OF TASLIYAH VERSES: A HERMENEUTIC STUDY ON 'HASHIYAH AS-SĀWI 'ALĀ TAFSĪR AL-JALĀLAIN', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah*, 21.1 (2024), p. 80, doi:10.22373/jim.v21i1.22380.

³⁹ Abd Wahid, 'Corak Implementasi Hermeneutik Yusuf Al-Qaradhawiy Dalam Pemahaman Hadist', *ICAIOS VII ARICIS II*, 2018 <https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=bjx4s7QAAAAJ&ccstart=100&pagesize=100&citation_for_view=bjx4s7QAAAAJ:_Re3VWB3Y0AC>.

⁴⁰ Suhaimi Suhaimi, 'Uslub: Questions and Answers in the Qur'an', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu Ashirah*, 20.1 (2023), p. 18, doi:10.22373/jim.v20i1.14644.

These different theological perspectives illustrate that classical Islamic thought already contains multiple hermeneutical orientations toward the Qur'an. Contemporary Qur'anic studies have similarly emphasized the linguistic nature of revelation. Scholars such as Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd argue that the Qur'an should be understood as a discourse that operates within human linguistic systems and therefore requires interpretive engagement⁴¹. Field data from this study also support the hermeneutical relevance of the debate. According to Abdul Mukti Thabrani, the discussion of divine speech has direct implications for how Muslims interpret the Qur'an today:

*"The debate about the kalam of Allah actually affects the way we understand the Qur'an. If revelation is conveyed through language, then interpretation becomes an essential part of understanding the divine message."*⁴² This perspective reinforces the idea that the theological debate on divine speech provides an important conceptual foundation for contemporary discussions on Qur'anic interpretation.

Theoretical Contribution to Islamic Philosophy of Language

Ultimately The findings of this study demonstrate that the debate on the creation of the Qur'an contains significant conceptual implications for the development of an Islamic philosophy of language. Although classical theologians did not explicitly formulate a systematic theory of language comparable to modern linguistic philosophy, their discussions nevertheless address fundamental questions concerning the relationship between meaning, language, and communication.⁴³ The Mu'tazilite conception of divine speech highlights the temporal and performative dimensions of language. The Ash'arite distinction between meaning and expression introduces a sophisticated semantic framework that separates linguistic form from underlying meaning. Meanwhile, the Hanbalite emphasis on textual authority underscores the normative and performative functions of language within religious practice.

Taken together, these perspectives demonstrate that classical Islamic theology contains diverse conceptual resources that can contribute to contemporary discussions on language philosophy.⁴⁴ Rather than representing a purely doctrinal dispute, the debate on khalq al-Qur'an reveals an intellectual effort to articulate how divine meaning becomes accessible through linguistic expression. This conclusion is also reflected in the views of contemporary scholars. According to Abd. Kahar, the classical debate provides valuable insights for modern discussions concerning language and revelation:

*"The debate over the kalam of Allah shows that the Islamic intellectual tradition actually has a profound reflection on language and meaning"*⁴⁵ However, it is important to emphasize that the present study does not claim that classical theologians consciously developed a formal philosophy of language⁴⁶. Instead, the study proposes that their debates contain implicit conceptual insights that can be reconstructed within contemporary philosophical frameworks. Through such reconstruction, classical Islamic thought can contribute to broader interdisciplinary discussions involving theology, linguistics, and philosophy.

⁴¹ Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*.

⁴² Interview with Abdul Mukti Thabrani, STAI Al Mujtama Pamekasan, 13 February 2026.

⁴³ Johari Ab Latiff, Zalina Zakaria, and Saadan Man, 'The Islamic Principles of Legal Status Criteria According to the Qur'an and Hadith in Fostering Halal Vaccine Certification in Malaysia', *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 22.1 (2024), pp. 1–18, doi:10.1163/22321969-20240143.

⁴⁴ Juwaini Juwaini, 'THE PROCESS OF HUMAN CREATION IN THE QUR'AN (AN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY STUDY)', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah*, 21.1 (2024), p. 16, doi:10.22373/jim.v21i1.20912.

⁴⁵ Interview with Abd. Kahar, STAI Al Mujtama Pamekasan, 13 February 2026

⁴⁶ Searle, "Speech Acts and the Philosophy of Language,".

C. Conclusion

This The debate on the creation of the Qur'an (khalq al-Qur'an) represents one of the most influential intellectual controversies in the history of Islamic theology. Traditionally understood as a theological dispute concerning divine attributes, this study has demonstrated that the debate also contains significant conceptual implications for the philosophy of language within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Through conceptual analysis and rational reconstruction, the theological positions of the Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Hanabilah can be interpreted as reflecting different ontological perspectives on divine speech. The Mu'tazilah conceptualize divine speech as a temporal act that emerges within historical reality, emphasizing the communicative and performative nature of language. In contrast, the Ash'ariyyah distinguish between eternal meaning (kalam nafsi) and temporal linguistic expression (kalam lafzi), thereby proposing a dual-layered structure of language that separates meaning from its articulation. Meanwhile, the Hanabilah emphasize the authority of the revealed text and reject speculative interpretations concerning the ontological structure of divine speech, reflecting a form of textual realism within Islamic theology. The analysis also demonstrates that classical theological debates contain conceptual frameworks that implicitly address questions related to language, meaning, and communication. Although early Muslim theologians did not explicitly formulate a systematic philosophy of language in the modern sense, their discussions concerning divine speech reveal sophisticated reflections on how divine meaning can be communicated through human linguistic structures.

Furthermore, the integration of field data obtained from interviews with contemporary scholars confirms that the debate on *khalq al-Qur'an* continues to hold relevance for modern intellectual discourse. Contemporary scholars interpret the controversy not only as a theological issue but also as a reflection of deeper epistemological and linguistic questions concerning the nature of revelation and human understanding of divine communication. From this perspective, the debate on the creation of the Qur'an can be reconstructed as a conceptual discourse that offers valuable insights into the ontology of language within the Islamic intellectual tradition⁴⁷. By comparing the theological frameworks of different schools, this study demonstrates that classical Islamic theology provides multiple models for understanding the relationship between meaning, language, and revelation. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that this study does not claim that classical theologians consciously developed a formal philosophy of language. Rather, the findings suggest that their theological debates contain implicit conceptual resources that can be reconstructed within contemporary philosophical frameworks. Such reconstruction allows classical Islamic thought to be engaged within broader philosophical discussions concerning language, meaning, and communication.

Finally, this study contributes to contemporary scholarship by proposing a reinterpretation of the khalq al-Qur'an debate as a discourse that intersects with philosophy of language. This perspective opens new possibilities for interdisciplinary dialogue between Islamic theology, linguistics, and philosophy. Future research may further explore how classical kalam concepts can inform modern discussions on linguistic theory, hermeneutics, and the philosophy of revelation.

⁴⁷ Kees. Versteegh, "Arabic Linguistic Theory and the Qur'an," *Journal of Arabic Linguistics*, 10.2 (2018), pp. 45–60.

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