

# A Contextual-Based Learning Approach in Enhancing Mastery of Balaghah

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## ABSTRACT

Twenty-first century learning aims to produce learners who are critical thinkers and capable of solving problems in everyday life. Conventional teaching methods tend to limit students' cognitive development as they are often confined to procedural memorisation. This study was conducted to propose meaningful learning in the teaching and learning of Balaghah through the use of a contextual learning approach. Preliminary observations indicate that conventional teaching practices have resulted in students' low interest in Balaghah, limited understanding of its relevance to real-life contexts, and passive classroom engagement. This article discusses the importance of contextual learning as an approach that should be implemented by lecturers in the teaching of Arabic rhetoric (Balaghah). This approach is expected to stimulate students' interest and foster enjoyment in learning. Accordingly, several aspects and examples from each element of Balaghah are presented to highlight the importance and continuity of contextual-based learning in Balaghah instruction. This is conceptual framework paper.

**Keywords:** contextual approach, meaningful learning, Balaghah

## INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Balaghah has long been introduced to Malay students in religious education streams in Malaysia through religious institutions nationwide, beginning with the traditional *pondok* education system.

The position of Balaghah as a core component of Arabic language studies was further strengthened when Arabic was formally incorporated into the national curriculum for students in religious streams under the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). Balaghah has since been recognised as a core subject within the Arabic language curriculum and has gained increasing importance with its introduction at the university level.

The teaching and learning of Balaghah in Malaysia largely continue to rely on traditional approaches and methods, as the textbooks used are predominantly classical (*turath*) in nature and written for non-native speakers of Arabic. In this regard, Azhar Muhammad et al. (2006) proposed several approaches and methods that may be employed, as suggested by language education experts, including the following:

### Approaches in Teaching Balaghah

#### Deductive Approach (Madkhal Qiyāsiyy)

In the deductive approach, Balaghah learning begins with an explanation of rules related to *Ilmu Ma'ani*, *Ilmu Bayan*, or other branches, followed by examples to further clarify the rules learned. In other words, this approach proceeds from general principles to specific applications. Based on known theories, students are guided to identify various examples, analyse situations, critique sample texts, and so forth. This approach tends to emphasise memorisation of rules through definitions (*ta'rif*) and general principles, followed by relevant textual examples and applications.

However, this deductive approach is considered less effective, as students may struggle to understand theories that are unfamiliar to them, particularly those without prior exposure to Balaghah. Moreover, memorising a

large number of theoretical concepts requires considerable time and may lead to boredom and disengagement in the learning process.

## 2. Inductive Approach (*Madkhal Istinbāṭiyy*)

The inductive approach is conceptually opposite to the deductive approach. In this method, learning begins with appropriate examples that are read, discussed, and analysed, after which conclusions are drawn in the form of rules. Students are then asked to observe examples, relate them to others, and provide additional relevant examples.

### Steps in Teaching Balaghah

According to Muhammad Yunus, as cited in Muh. Hikamuddin Syuyuti, the steps in teaching Balaghah include:

1. The teacher prepares selected texts (*nuṣūṣ*) prior to the lesson.
2. The teacher presents the prepared texts to the students as teaching materials.
3. The texts are read sequentially, beginning with the teacher and followed by students. The teacher then explains difficult vocabulary, clarifies meanings, and analyses the texts.
4. The teacher extracts examples from the texts to illustrate Balaghah rules and engages students in question-and-answer sessions.
5. Once students have understood the concept, the teacher introduces the relevant Balaghah terminology.
6. Additional examples from other texts are provided as exercises related to the previously learned Balaghah concepts.
7. Students are given further exercises using suitable literary texts related to the topic.

Muhammad Abd Qadir Ahmad (1982) further emphasised several key principles in Balaghah instruction, including:

1. Balaghah should not be taught merely as a subject focused on memorising rules, definitions, and terminology without practical understanding.
2. Students should be given opportunities to apply Balaghah principles academically and appreciate their aesthetic and artistic value.
3. Balaghah instruction should be directly linked to Arabic literary texts containing rhetorical elements. Introducing rhetorical principles before students understand the texts is considered a major pedagogical error.
4. Arabic rhetorical examples should be connected to expressions commonly used in students' daily language to facilitate comparison.
5. Relationships among rhetorical elements should be highlighted, such as *jinās* and *saj'* (phonetic harmony), *muqābalah* and *tawriyyah* (semantic beauty), and *amr*, *nahy*, and *istifhām* under the category of *ṭalab*.
6. Exercises, whether oral or written, are essential for assessing comprehension, particularly when supported by Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and Arabic literary texts.
7. The psychological and sociocultural contexts underlying rhetorical expressions should also be examined.

8. Balaghah should be integrated with other Arabic language disciplines.

### Contextual Learning in Balaghah Instruction

Observing existing approaches to Balaghah instruction, which remain largely teacher-centred, students are often not given sufficient opportunities for active participation. Therefore, contextual-based learning may serve as an alternative student-centred approach in line with national aspirations to produce competitive and industry-ready graduates.

The Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) for *al-Lughah al-‘Arabiyyah al-Mu‘āṣirah* (2018) emphasises the use of diverse strategies and approaches, including inquiry-based learning, contextual learning, cooperative learning, brainstorming, simulations, demonstrations, games, projects, and educational visits.

### Contextual Learning

Contextual learning refers to a learning concept in which teachers enable students to relate academic content to their daily lives (Johnson et al., 2007; Romi Afrizal, 2013). Through this approach, students are more inclined to integrate prior knowledge with new learning experiences.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) situates learning within students’ personal, social, and cultural contexts (Pranowo, 2014), encouraging them to apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations.

The objectives of contextual learning include enabling students to:

1. Understand rather than merely memorise content;
2. Relate knowledge to lived experiences;
3. Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
4. Experience more meaningful and productive learning;
5. Apply academic knowledge to everyday life contexts.

### Contextual Approach in Teaching Balaghah

Contextual-based learning is highly relevant in Balaghah instruction at public higher education institutions. This relevance is grounded in three main considerations:

1. The position of Balaghah within Arabic linguistic studies and its relationship with other disciplines;
2. Its connection to Malay culture, which facilitates cultural translation in learning;
3. The ultimate purpose of Balaghah as a medium for understanding the linguistic beauty of the Qur’an.

Balaghah instruction should enable students to apply rhetorical concepts in daily communication, as Balaghah fundamentally reflects everyday linguistic practices. Furthermore, mastery of Balaghah is essential for understanding the rhetorical richness of the Qur’an.

Effective contextual learning in Balaghah requires the integration of seven components: constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning community, modelling, reflection, and authentic assessment.

### Balaghah as a Continuation of Nahw (Syntax)

In modern linguistics, Al-Khuli categorises linguistics into theoretical and applied branches, placing Balaghah within grammatical studies alongside morphology (*ṣarf*) and syntax (*nahw*). Tammam Hassan further argues

that *Ilmu Ma'ani* is an extension of *nahw*, differing primarily in its focus on functional meaning and contextual relationships rather than isolated grammatical structure.

### Balaghah as Literary Art

Balaghah is often regarded as a literary art (*fann adabī*) rather than a purely linguistic discipline. Its primary aim is not to distinguish between correctness and error, but between beauty and aesthetic effectiveness. Consequently, Balaghah instruction should cultivate students' literary taste and cultural sensitivity.

Comparative analysis between Arabic and Malay rhetorical expressions—such as similes, metaphors, and idioms—enables students to better grasp cultural equivalence and meaning. This contextual comparison enhances comprehension and engagement.

### Balaghah and Communication

Balaghah is inherently natural and spontaneous in daily communication. Elements such as simile (*tashbīh*), metaphor (*isti'ārah*), allusion (*kināyah*), command (*amr*), and prohibition (*nahy*) frequently appear in everyday speech across languages and dialects.

Therefore, teachers should raise students' awareness of rhetorical elements present in their daily communication, making Balaghah learning meaningful and relevant to real-life contexts.

## CONCLUSION

The teaching and learning of Balaghah require a student-centred approach. Contextual learning is a suitable and practical method that connects academic content with students' real-life experiences. By emphasising constructivism, inquiry, collaboration, and reflection, contextual learning enhances students' understanding, interest, and performance in Balaghah.

Given students' difficulties and lack of interest in Balaghah, the implementation of contextual learning is highly practical and effective. By linking rhetorical concepts with lived experiences, students are better able to comprehend, apply, and appreciate Balaghah, ultimately improving their learning outcomes.