



An Analysis of the Origins of Majaz Mursal in Quran Surah Al-Mulk : A Rhetorical Study

Zul Fazil^{1*}, Muhammad Ediyani¹, Husaini¹

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyyah Syamsuddhuha, Aceh, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the forms of *Majāz Mursal* in Surah Al-Mulk, identify the types of '*alāqah*' (relationships) that constitute their origins, and uncover the rhetorical secrets (*sirr al-balāghī*) and aesthetic implications behind their usage. This research employs a qualitative method with a library research design. Using a rhetorical approach based on '*Ilm al-Bayān*' (the science of rhetoric and figurative language), the primary data is drawn from the verses of Surah Al-Mulk, supported by authoritative classical texts on Balaghah and Tafsir as secondary data. The data were collected through documentation and analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method via content analysis. The results reveal that the use of *Majāz Mursal* in Surah Al-Mulk is not merely a linguistic ornament but a profound instrument for theological argumentation. The study identified several forms of *Majāz Mursal* rooted in various logical relationships ('*alāqah*'), primarily *Mahalliyyah* (spatial/locative relationship, as in verse 13), *Juz'iyyah* (part-for-whole relationship, as in verse 22), *Sababiyyah* (cause-for-effect relationship, as in verse 10), and *Musabbabiyyah* (effect-for-cause relationship, as in verse 4). Rhetorically, the shift from literal to figurative meanings through these relationships functions to maximize psychological and rational persuasion. This figurative style effectively achieves brevity while expanding meaning (*al-ijāz wa ittisā' al-ma'nā*), creates a dramatic visual representation of spiritual degradation, emphasizes causality in salvation theology, and hyperbolically demonstrates human powerlessness before the absolute power of Allah.

1. Introduction

Al-Qur'an is an eternal miracle revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), one of the most prominent aspects of its miraculous nature lying in the beauty of its language and the depth of its literary expression (*I'jāz Lughawī*) (Kojin et al., 2025). The Arabic language used in the Qur'an possesses an exceptionally high level of literary excellence, surpassing the beauty of Arabic poetry and prose of its time (Bashir et al., 2022). In order to delve into the depth of meaning and the secrets of the Qur'an's linguistic beauty, a set of Islamic sciences is required, one of the principal instruments of which is the science of Balaghah (Aflisia et al., 2021). This discipline serves as a fundamental key in the study of religious texts, enabling an understanding of the actual intent of the words of Allah (SWT), while also preventing literal-textual interpretations that may potentially lead to fatal shifts in meaning (Suryaningsih & Hendrawanto, 2018).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: zulfazilstit@gmail.com

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In the taxonomy of Balaghah studies, there are three main branches of knowledge: 'Ilm al-Ma'ānī, 'Ilm al-Bayān, and 'Ilm al-Badī' (Balaghah et al., 2025). Among these three branches, 'Ilm al-Bayān occupies a crucial position because it specifically discusses various ways of conveying a particular meaning through expressions that differ in their degrees of clarity (aisyah et al., 2025). One of the central subjects in 'Ilm al-Bayān is Majāz, namely, the use of a word or expression in a meaning other than its original meaning due to the presence of an indicator (qarīnah) that prevents the audience from understanding it in its literal (ḥaqīqī) sense (Malik et al., 2025). The use of Majāz in the Qur'an is not merely an empty linguistic ornament, but rather possesses a powerful rhetorical function, serving to provide emphasis, hyperbole, subtlety of expression, and the visualization of abstract meanings into forms that are more vivid and concrete (Khaerunnisa & Firdaus, 2026).

More specifically, the study of Majāz is divided into Majāz Lughawī and Majāz 'Aqlī. Within Majāz Lughawī itself, there are two main categories, namely Isti'ārah and Majāz Mursal (Windariyah et al., 2025). Unlike Isti'ārah, in which the relationship ('alāqah) between the original meaning and the figurative meaning is based solely on the element of similarity (musyābahah), Majāz Mursal is constructed on a relationship beyond similarity (ghairu al-musyābahah) (Lutfi, 2026). The origins and formation of Majāz Mursal are highly dependent on the type of relationship involved, such as juz'iyah (mentioning a part while intending the whole), kulliyyah (mentioning the whole while intending a part), sababiyyah (mentioning the cause while intending the effect), musabbabiyyah (mentioning the effect while intending the cause), and others (Arfan & Harahap, 2026). Understanding the origins and formation of these relationships in Majāz Mursal is essential for examining the logical construction of language employed by the Qur'an (Barmawi et al., 2023).

One of the surahs in the Qur'an that is rich in rhetorical sophistication and captivating linguistic style is Surah Al-Mulk (Fath et al., 2026). The 67th surah, which begins Juz 29, holds a distinctive position because it contains a profound discourse on the magnificence of Allah's creation, His absolute power over the universe, the creation of life and death, as well as a stern warning to humankind (Syafudin & Kasran, 2025). In conveying theological and eschatological messages that are profound and fundamental, Surah Al-Mulk extensively employs figurative language, including Majāz Mursal (Siregar & Harahap, 2025). Through Majāz Mursal, the verses of this surah are able to convey their messages in a more concise manner (ījāz), stimulate the reader's imagination, and produce a profound psychological impact without unnecessary verbosity (Meliani et al., 2025).

Although numerous studies have been conducted on linguistic style in the Qur'an, specific analyses that uncover the origins, construction of relationships ('alāqah), and rhetorical implications (sirr al-balāghī) of the use of Majāz Mursal specifically in Surah Al-Mulk still leave considerable room for academic exploration (Hanilah Mohd Ismath et al., 2025). Studying Majāz Mursal is not merely a matter of labeling a word as figurative, but also of addressing the critical question of why the Qur'an chooses a particular expression and diverts it from its literal meaning within the context of a given verse (Ulumudin et al., 2026). Based on this background of thought, this article is structured to comprehensively analyze the forms of Majāz Mursal found in Surah Al-Mulk. Through an approach based on Arabic literary rhetoric (A Rhetorical Study), this research aims to identify the verses containing Majāz Mursal, analyze the types of 'alāqah underlying their formation, and uncover the rhetorical secrets and aesthetic values behind their use.

2. Methodology

This research is a qualitative study (*qualitative research*) employing a library research design (*library research*) (Mwita, 2022). The selection of this design is based on the textual nature of the object of study, namely the verses of the Qur'an. The approach employed in this research is an Arabic literary rhetorical approach (*A Rhetorical Approach / Al-Muqārabah Al-Balāghiyyah*), specifically utilizing the analytical framework of the discipline of *'Ilm al-Bayān* to examine the origins and structure of the linguistic style of *Majāz Mursal* (Harahap et al., 2025).

The data sources in this research are classified into two categories: primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is the text of the Holy Qur'an, with a specific focus on Surah Al-Mulk (the 67th surah, consisting of 30 verses). Meanwhile, the secondary data sources consist of authoritative supporting literature, including fundamental works on the science of Balaghah (such as *Jawāhir al-Balāghah* by Ahmad Al-Hasyimi, *Al-Balāghah al-Wādhahah* by Ali Al-Jarim and Musthafa Amin, and *'Ilm al-Bayān* by Abdul Aziz 'Atiq), Qur'anic commentaries with a tendency toward linguistic and rhetorical analysis (such as *Tafsīr Al-Kasasyāf* by Az-Zamakhsyari and *Tafsīr Al-Tahrīr wa At-Tanwīr* by Ibn 'Ashur), as well as various journal articles and books relevant to the study of *Majāz*.

The data collection technique applied in this research is documentation, conducted by reading, examining, identifying, and collecting verses in Surah Al-Mulk that indicatively contain forms of *Majāz Mursal*. The collected data are then reduced and classified according to the types of relationships (*'alāqah*) involved. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique employs a descriptive-analytical method (*descriptive-analytical method*) through content analysis (*content analysis*).

3. Results

3.1 Identification and Classification of *Majāz Mursal* in Surah Al-Mulk

Based on lexical and contextual analysis of the 30 verses of Surah Al-Mulk, this study finds that the Qur'an employs a complex variety of figurative linguistic styles to articulate eschatological and theological themes. Among the many rhetorical devices employed, *Majāz Mursal* serves as one of the principal mediums for transmitting abstract meanings into forms that are concrete, concise, and deeply penetrating into the psychological realm of the audience. Analysis of the verses of Surah Al-Mulk reveals several forms of *Majāz Mursal* constructed on the basis of various types of relationships (*'alāqah*), including *Mahalliyyah*, *Juz'iyyah*, *Sababiyyah*, and *Musabbabiyyah*. The following presents the findings and identification of the underlying relationships:

a. *Majāz Mursal* with the Relationship of *Mahalliyyah* (Place)

The use of the *Mahalliyyah* relationship, namely mentioning a place or container to refer to something located within that place, is clearly found in Surah Al-Mulk, verse 13:

وَأَسِرُّوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ

("Whether you conceal your speech or make it public, indeed, He is All-Knowing of what is within the hearts [chests].")

In this verse, the lexical item under examination is *as-shudūr* (الصُّدُورِ), which literally (lexically) means "chests" (the plural of *shadr*). However, this literal meaning cannot stand on its own because Allah's knowledge referred to in the context of the verse (*qarīnah ma'nawiyyah*) does not merely concern knowledge of the biological structure of the human chest, but rather the contents or substance of thoughts, intentions, and hidden feelings. The intended contextual meaning (*ma'nā majāzī*) is *al-qulūb* (hearts). The basis of this figurative expression is the relationship of *Mahalliyyah*,

whereby the Qur'an mentions the "chest" as the place in which the "heart" resides, while what is actually intended is the heart itself together with all the secrets contained within it.

b. Majāz Mursal with the Relationship of Juz'iyah (Part)

The *Juz'iyah* relationship—mentioning a part of an entity while intending the entity as a whole—is found in Surah Al-Mulk, verse 22:

أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَىٰ أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

("Then, is one who walks fallen on his face better guided, or one who walks upright on a straight path?")

The word *wajhihi* (وَجْهِهِ), which literally means "his face," functions as a *Majāz Mursal*. Anatomically and logically, a person does not walk solely using his face. The rational indicator (*qarīnah 'aqliyyah*) prevents the literal interpretation of the term. The intended figurative meaning is the entirety of the person's body or the person as a whole, being dragged, falling face-first, and stumbling in humiliation. The relationship connecting "the face" with "the entire body" is the '*alāqah Juz'iyah*. The face is chosen as a representation (the basis of the relationship) because it is the most honorable part of the human body, the center of dignity, and the primary sensory organ through which a person perceives direction.

c. Majāz Mursal with the Relationship of Sababiyyah (Cause)

The cognitive dynamic of *Majāz Mursal*, in which an instrument or cause is mentioned to indicate its consequence, can be identified in Surah Al-Mulk, verse 10:

وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

("And they will say, 'If only we had listened or reasoned, we would not have been among the companions of the Blaze.'")

The word *nasma'u* (نَسْمَعُ), meaning "we hear," does not merely refer to the functioning of the auditory sense (the ears) in receiving sound waves. The disbelievers in this world physically "heard" the calls of the prophets. Therefore, the literal meaning of the word is precluded by the context of their regret in the Hereafter. The figurative meaning intended is "to accept, obey, and act upon the warning." The underlying relationship is *Sababiyyah*, whereby "hearing" (*istimā'*) constitutes the cause or initial condition for the emergence of "obedience and understanding" (*ittibā'*).

d. Majāz Mursal with the Relationship of Musabbabiyyah (Effect)

This relationship, in which an expression referring to an effect or final result is mentioned to indicate its instrument or cause, can be traced to Surah Al-Mulk, verse 4:

ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ

("Then look again and yet again; your sight will return to you humbled and weary.")

The word *al-baṣar* (الْبَصَرُ) lexically refers to "sight" or the faculty of vision. The attribute *hasīr* (weary/exhausted) is essentially a physical condition experienced by the organ of the eye (*al-'ayn*), rather than by the abstract faculty of "sight" itself. Thus, the Qur'an mentions *al-baṣar* (the effect/result produced by the eye) while intending the eye itself (the cause/instrument). The basis of

this figurative relationship falls under the category of *Musabbabiyyah* or, in some classifications of classical Balaghah, is categorized as *'alāqah Āliyyah* (mentioning the result produced by an instrument).

3.2. Analysis of the Cognitive Origins and Rhetorical Secrets (Sirr al-Balāghī) in Surah Al-Mulk

Based on the findings above, a deeper examination using a rhetorical approach ('Ilm al-Bayān) demonstrates that the use of Majāz Mursal in Surah Al-Mulk is not an arbitrary substitution of words, but rather a highly precise form of divine-linguistic construction. The formation of Majāz Mursal is based on human cognitive and spatial associations. Unlike Isti'ārah, which requires the imagination to establish a similarity between two different things (metaphor), Majāz Mursal utilizes factual relationships that are already embedded within the audience's logical reasoning, thereby producing an impact that places greater emphasis on empirical rationality.

The significance and rhetorical secrets (sirr al-balāghī) underlying the formation of Majāz Mursal in these verses can be elaborated as follows:

First, the Aesthetics of Efficiency and Expansiveness of Meaning (Al-Ījāz wa Ittisā' al-Ma'nā). In verse 13 (the use of the word “chest”/shudūr to refer to the heart), the Qur'an demonstrates the remarkable principle of ījāz (brevity and conciseness of expression). Psychologically and anatomically, the chest can be likened to the first line of defense for the human body. The heart, which contains intentions, beliefs, and hypocrisy, lies within the deepest layer and is protected by the walls of the chest. By mentioning its outermost part (the protective enclosure), the Qur'an seems to convey a logical conclusion: “If even its outer shell (the chest) is completely known and controlled by Allah, then how much more does He know what is hidden in its innermost part (the heart).” Had the Qur'an used the word qulūb (hearts), the profound effect of ihāṭah God's all-encompassing knowledge extending from the outside to the inside would not have been conveyed with the same intensity.

Second, the Visualization of Psychological Degradation (Tashwīr Fannī wa At-Tasykhīṣ). The analysis of the Juz'īyyah relationship in verse 22 demonstrates that the selection of the word wajhihi (face) serves a rhetorical function in amplifying humiliation (tasyni'). For the Arabs—and for humanity in general the face represents identity, honor (murū'ah), and the direction of one's orientation in life. By depicting the face as the part of the body that touches the ground, moves in a crawling position, or falls face-first, the Qur'an portrays a form of spiritual blindness through the most tragic physical imagery. The Juz'īyyah relationship here forces the reader to focus on the dirty and humiliated face rather than merely on the fallen body as a whole. This rhetoric creates a dramatic visual contrast between the disbeliever who crawls blindly and the believer who walks upright upon the straight path (sawīyyan 'alā ṣirāṭin mustaqīm).

Third, the Emphasis on Causality in the Theology of Salvation. In verse 10, the use of the Sababiyyah relationship (nasma'u / “to hear” in the sense of obeying) reveals the epistemological basis of the regret experienced by the inhabitants of Hell. In the rhetorical tradition of the Qur'an, the physical gifts of hearing and reason are considered to have no ontological value (wujūd) if they are not accompanied by their proper functions, namely obedience and understanding. Mentioning the cause (“hearing”) while intending its effect (“obedience”) conveys a forceful rhetorical message: Having ears but failing to obey is, in essence, equivalent to not hearing at all. The basis of this majāz transforms a physical verb into a verb of obedience. This reinforces the central thesis of Surah Al-Mulk that the punishment of Hell is not an act of divine injustice, but rather the logical consequence of the disruption of the causal chain (Sababiyyah) of obedience, consciously brought about by human beings themselves during their worldly lives.

Fourth, Hyperbole and the Demonstration of Human Powerlessness (Al-Mubālaghah wa Izhār al-'Ajzi). The selection of the Musabbabiyyah relationship in verse 4 (al-baṣar for the eye) serves a

rhetorical function in challenging human arrogance. Allah commands humankind to repeatedly examine the heavens in search of any defect. The words *khāsi'an* (humiliated) and *hasīr* (weary/exhausted) are, in their literal sense, attributed to the physical object (the eye and the human being). However, by attributing this state of exhaustion directly to “sight” (*al-baṣar*), the Qur'an employs hyperbole (*mubālaghah*). The rhetorical message is: “It is not merely your physical eyes that will become exhausted from searching for defects in Allah's creation; even the abstract faculty of vision itself will be exhausted and return to you bearing an acknowledgment of your own weakness.” The use of *Majāz Mursal* here decisively undermines the arguments of skeptics by confronting them with the limits of their own cognitive and physical capacities.

Thus, it can be concluded that the discourse surrounding the formation of *Majāz Mursal* in Surah Al-Mulk does not merely function as a linguistic ornament intended to beautify the arrangement of words, but rather constitutes a foundation for theological argumentation. The origins of the selection of each type of '*alāqah*—whether referring to a container, a part, an instrument, or a cause—are consistently correlated with the broader themes of Surah Al-Mulk, namely the affirmation of *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* (God's absolute sovereignty over the universe) and the manifestation of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt* (His infinite and all-encompassing knowledge). *Majāz Mursal* demonstrates that the language of the Qur'an possesses an economy of expression—few words yet densely packed with meaning that surpasses the linguistic capacity of ordinary human expression. From this rhetorical study, it becomes evident that the shift in meaning from the literal (*ḥaqīqī*) to the figurative (*majāzī*) in the Qur'an constitutes a deliberate linguistic deviation designed to achieve the highest degree of psychological persuasion

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings and rhetorical analysis of Surah Al-Mulk, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The use of *Majāz Mursal* in this surah is not merely an expression of linguistic beauty, but rather a highly precise and powerful instrument of theological argumentation. This study identifies various forms of *Majāz Mursal* that are rooted in diverse logical relationships ('*alāqah*). The predominant underlying relationships found in this surah include *Mahalliyyah* (mentioning the container while intending its contents, as in verse 13), *Juz'iyyah* (mentioning a part while intending the whole, as in verse 22), *Sababiyyah* (mentioning the cause while intending the effect, as in verse 10), and *Musabbabiyyah* (mentioning the effect while intending the instrument or cause, as in verse 4).
2. In terms of its rhetorical implications (*sirr al-balāghī*), the shift in meaning from the literal-lexical sense to the contextual-figurative sense through these various '*alāqah* functions holistically to maximize both psychological and rational persuasion for the audience. The use of *Majāz Mursal* in Surah Al-Mulk proves effective in achieving both economy of expression and expansion of meaning (*al-ījāz wa ittisā' al-ma'nā*). Moreover, this rhetorical device successfully creates vivid dramatic imagery (*tashwīr fannī*) of humanity's spiritual degradation, reinforces the principle of causality within the theology of salvation, and hyperbolically demonstrates human powerlessness before the absolute sovereignty of Allah. Ultimately, this study further affirms the dimension of the Qur'an's linguistic miraculousness (*l'jāz Lughawī*), demonstrating that every linguistic shift from literal to figurative meaning in the Qur'an is deliberate and purposeful, serving to convey the profound message of *Tawḥīd* in a manner unattainable through conventional linguistic structures.

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