

**HISTORY OF MODERN LINGUISTIC TAFSIR
(QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS) AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS
OF JARULLAHI MAḤMŪD AL-ZAMAKHSHAR IN
HIS TAFSIR, *AL-KASHSHĀF 'ANḤAQĀ'IQ AL-TANZĪL***

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Abstract

The paper discussed the historical evolution of Linguistic Tafsir and a reflection of the role and work of Jarullahi Mahmud al-Zamakhshar in his popular book of Tafsir of the Qur'an, Al-Kashshf An aqiq al-Tanzil. Linguistic Tafsir is a section within the subject-matter of Qur'anic studies, because clarity and understanding of the words of the Qur'an cannot achieve its aims without consideration of the Arabic language in which it was revealed. This study tracks down the historical development of Linguistic Tafsir. In the early period of Islam, Tafsir of the glorious Qur'an was confined to the explanations of the Prophet (SAW) and his companions and continued in the same way until the end of the prophetic era and the time of the orthodox sahabah in particular. With the emergence of the likes of Al-Zamkhashar at a later time in the history of Islam methodological Tafsir involving the use of Arabic grammar syntax, lexicon and rhetoric emerged. Employing qualitative library study method, the research examines the applications of grammar, morphology, syntax, lexicon, and Arabic poetry of Al-Zamakhshar within his Commentary, Al-Kashshf. Al-Zamakhshar is one of most the prominent figure in collecting

and utilizing sciences of language and rhetoric and organizing them into an interpretive method that reflects the meaning and purpose behind the chosen of certain Arabic words, and grammatical structure and the use of particular figures of speech in carrying out the Tafsir of Qur'an. However, it is clear that certain interpretative parts, where grammatical consideration touch theological points, were affected by his Mu'tazilite thoughts. Conclusively, Al-Kashshf is an essential work on the history of Linguistic Tafsir that can serve a good basis for today research in rhetoric and Tafsir. The paper recommended that researchers should undertake further textual analysis of Al-Kashshf using specific Qur'anic verses to demonstrate the practical application of Al-Zamkhashari's linguistic and rhetorical methodology.

Keywords: Linguistic Tafsir; Qur'anic Exegesis; al-Zamkhashari; Al-Kashshf; Qur'anic Rhetoric

Introduction

Tafsir of the Glorious Qur'an is one of the major divine assignment given to the prophet (SAW) from the beginning to the end of the revelation of the book. In confirmation of this statement, Allah (SWT) says:

“We have revealed a reminder to
you so that you will explain to the
people what has been revealed to
them”

(Qur'an 16:44)

This is therefore a confirmation that the first Mufasssir of the Glorious Qur'an is the prophet (SAW) on the commandment of Almighty Allah. The Glorious Qur'an constitutes concepts and issues that requires clearer interpretation because of their deeper connotations that takes them beyond common and immediate understanding of every individuals at the same time. This is one of the areas where sahabah (companions) of

the prophet (SAW) sought for interpretations of certain concepts and were usually explain to them by the prophet (SAW). This is also one of the areas that confirms the existence of linguistic Tafsir since the early period of Islam and that its foundation is rooted in the orthodox knowledge of Islam.

Linguistic Tafsir goes beyond the literal explanation of words even though it goes in retails on language. Tafsir al-Lughawi analyses Qur'anic concepts from the aspect of dependency in grammar, relationship through sentence construction, lexical usages, as well as purposes and intent carried in rhetorical usage of words, according to Arabic adab and balaghah, hence in an attempt to grasp the deeper layers within these concepts, the sciences of grammar, vocabulary, morphology and rhetoric contributed greatly to their development in this type of commentary, and the correlation between these fields of sciences as relating to the exegesis is demonstrated in a study conducted on Al-Kashshaf compiled by Al-Zamakhshari (Hamawiya & Musa, 2018). Abul-Qasim Jarullahi Mahmud Al-Zamakhshari (467 AH/1075 CE-538 AH/1144 CE) is a pillar in linguistic Tafsir. He was a renowned Grammarian, philologist, rhetorician, Lexicographer as well as Qur'anic Exegete. His skill set is demonstrated greatly in his works such as al-Mufasssal fi Ilm al-Arabiyyah, Asas al-Balaghah, and his exegesis text, al-Kashshaf where he systematically laid out the analysis of The Qur'anic texts (Abzalova, 2026).

In al-Kashshaf, grammar, lexicology, syntax, rhetoric together with citations of Arabic literary composition explain the position of linguistic Tafsir. The effect that grammar has on the meaning are taken into account and the sciences of ma'ani and bayan are utilized in showing the force and eloquence of Qur'anic expressions, with later scholars researching his usage

of grammatical relations, shifting and prepositions (Rasulova, 2026; Rasulova & Ahmed, 2026).

Al-Zamakhshari's style, furthermore, is inspired by previous linguistic tradition. Many of his approaches are built on the early scholars' foundation such as the analysis of words in the Glorious Qur'an, Arabic grammar, lexicography, morphology and poetries (Kanca, 2022), with which he builds a linguistic framework derived from early scholarly endeavors such as his study of Abu Ishaq al-Zajjaj, to elucidate his interpretations. In his pursuit for comprehensive elaboration on the text, his approach and interpretations are, however, tinged by his theological views (Mu'tazilite), and for this very reason many of these parts became subject of much criticism in his later works, nevertheless his grammatical and rhetorical discourse cannot be undermined on the same grounds (Forbidding the Reading of the Kashshaf, 2022). Despite his belonging to medieval times, al-Zamakhshari's method has greatly influenced current linguistic and rhetorical discourse on the Glorious Qur'an evidenced by the continuing interest in his grammatical, semantic, and rhetorical and style approaches (Rasulova, 2026; Rasulova & Ahmed, 2026).

The paper presented the history of linguistic Tafsir focusing on the Qur'anic methodology of Mahmud Al-Zamakhshari in Al-Kashshaf: his use of grammar, vocabulary, syntax, rhetoric, classical Arabic poems and sciences such as ma'ani and bayan, along with the relationship between his linguistic method and ideology, by which the writer will prove that Al-Zamakhshari's greatest contribution to linguistic Tafsir is his successful fusion of all grammatical and rhetoric branches of language to form an elaborate comprehensive method which is continuously been employed by Muslim Scholars to explain the Qur'anic text, in order to understand it to its utmost level.

Meaning and Scope of Linguistic Tafsir

The term Tafsir is a derivative of the root of an Arabic word 'fassara', which denotes explanation or clarification. According to Hamza (2016, p. 22), Tafsir is a science through which we come to know the meanings of the Glorious Qur'an and its provisions and the circumstances of revelation'.

This definition shows the dual role of Tafsir which is 'explaining the meanings and provisions found in the Qur'an' and also to understand 'the circumstances under which the Glorious Book was revealed'.

Linguistic Tafsir, hence, relates to the interpretation of the Qur'an from the perspective of the Arabic language in which it was revealed. Thus, 'the arrangement of sentences, sentence structure, and terms and figures of speech used were all considered in understanding its meaning' (Hamza, 2016, p. 22) since the knowledge of Arabic language and grammar are crucial for the interpretation of the word of Allah (Jassim & Muhammad, 2024). The scope of Linguistic Tafsir is so broad that it starts from the meanings of the specific words in the Qur'an, moving to morphemes (arf), grammar (nahw), syntax, semantics, lexicology and also the realm of rhetoric (balghah). Using these sciences, exegetes attempt to explain the shape and sense of a specific Qur'anic diction, thus analyzing 'its word class position (e.g. 'il'), word structure (e.g. Morpheme form), relationship to surrounding words, the meanings it can generate' (al-Jabbarey, 2024).

While explaining the meaning of the particular word(s) and phrasing, particular attention is given to the study of lexical meanings and usage of the Qur'anic word(s) in classical Arabic; it also involves analysis of the grammatical features (such as case endings, word order, ellipsis, connection and omission, fronting and postponement) and structures, morphology and morphology analysis also includes

determining word change in generating a difference in meaning, etc.

In order to explain various kinds of meanings including the emphasis that is implied, figures of speech, structuring, etc. of particular sentence, classical Arabic poems, linguistic usage were also employed (al-Jabbarey, 2024). Hence, in general, the scope of Linguistic Tafsir involves a comprehensive linguistic interpretation, meaning its range extends to 'lexical meaning, grammatical meaning, syntax meaning and rhetoric meaning'. The field of Linguistic Tafsir was considered an area where knowledge was applied, it also was seen to take into consideration a grammatical analysis, theological interpretation, context and use of the verses (Mennad & Dahmani, 2026). According to Ramadan (2025); Rasulova & Ahmed (2026) Al-Zamakhshar's works such as AL-Kashshaf had incorporated lexical analyses as part of meanings explanation along with morphology, grammar, syntax, context and rhetoric; in this interpretation the significance of grammar and rhetoric could affect the meanings of the verses and grammatical evidence could affect how meaning is explained in the word of Almighty Allah (Rasulova, 2026).

Hence, as outlined, Linguistic Tafsir is a comprehensive study where there are both linguistic tools to determine meaning and rhetoric interpretation coupled with theological understanding on its own terms to interpret and analyse the Qur'anic wordings, for it uses its own specialized language (Mennad & Dahmani, 2026).

Historical Development of Linguistic Tafsir

The history of the linguistic approach to Tafsir can be traced back to the early period of Islam. Wsome available historical evidences shows that, the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his companions gave clarifications on some linguistic after his

demise about several Qur'anic expressions, their meaning or part of their meanings. The companions of the Prophet (S.A.W) used to clear up technical words, the shape of grammatical constructions, and the meanings of some verses within their context (al-Jabbarey, 2024).

In the Umayyad period, Arabic grammar started to be elaborated as a science with the works of the grammarians, like Ab al-Aswad al-Du'al (d. 69 AH/688 CE), whose works constituted the ground for the study of Arabic syntax and later a tool for interpretation of the Qur'an. To this, we can add dictionaries and also the collections of Arabic poetry as sources to help the interpretation of linguistic phenomena in the verses (Jassim & Muhammad, 2024).

The Abbasids period showed progress both in the Arab sciences and Qur'anic tafsir. A formalisation and development of Arabic grammar began by founding the Basrah and Kufah grammatical traditions, enabling a sophisticated analysis to be carried out on the grammatical features of Qur'anic expression. Scholars, like Sibawayh (d. 180 AH/796 CE), produced outstanding books on grammar, which is now useful to exegesis of Qur'an (Rasulova & Ahmed, 2026).

The combination of linguistic analysis with Tafsir began to be systematic, the best example is Al-abar (d. 310 AH/923 CE) who used grammatical and lexical references in his Tafsir, although he relied mostly on transmissions and tradition. He demonstrated the importance that linguistic analyses should get in the exegesis of Qur'an. After him, and even during his period some commentators paid special attention to the linguistic aspect (Ramadan, 2025).

Ab Isq al-Zajjj (d. 311 AH/923 CE) played an important role in the study of the grammar of the Qur'an and Tafsir, whose

work paved the way to commentaries like that of al-Zamakhshar; whose style and grammatical interpretation Kanca (2022) described to be heavily under the influence of al-Zajj's work. The study of Arabic rhetoric (balghah) as a science began to play a new role to provide deeper information on the meaning of the verses. This is explained in Rasulova (2026), who highlighted the correlation that rhetoricians had among themselves and that was applied on the Tafsir of Qur'an through analyses of literary devices. In the fifth and sixth centuries AH linguistic Tafsir gained ground to become a branch in its own right in exegesis studies of the Qur'an. Exegetes tried to correlate grammar, lexical studies, rhetoric and literary evidence and this resulted in the compilation of some masterpieces like Al-Kashshf of al-Zamakhshar (Mennad & Dahmani, 2026).

In his tafsir of the Qur'an called Al-Kashshf, al-Zamakhshar benefited from all these previous linguistic researches in the sciences of Arabic. The field was well developed when he started the compilation of his work so he could benefit from all the sources on linguistics (al-Jabbarey, 2024).

Emergence of Modern Linguistic Approaches

The term "modern linguistic Tafsir" encompasses both the continuing development of linguistic approaches to Qur'anic interpretation and the reinterpretation of classical linguistic exegesis in contemporary scholarship. While al-Zamakhshar himself belongs to the medieval period, his linguistic methodology and the broader tradition of linguistic Tafsir have remained relevant to modern academic discussions of Qur'anic language, rhetoric, and exegetical methodology. This section examines the emergence of modern linguistic approaches as a continuation of and engagement with the classical linguistic exegetical tradition.

Modern scholarship on Qur'anic linguistics has developed through several interconnected trajectories. One trajectory involves the application of contemporary linguistic theories and methodologies to the study of Qur'anic language. This includes approaches derived from general linguistics, semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and stylistics. Scholars have used these frameworks to examine aspects of Qur'anic language such as cohesion, coherence, information structure, and discourse strategies, extending the scope of analysis beyond the traditional grammatical and rhetorical frameworks (Hamawiya & Musa, 2018).

Another trajectory involves the critical re-examination of classical linguistic exegesis from a modern academic perspective. This includes studies that evaluate the methodological principles of classical exegetes, assess the validity of particular linguistic interpretations, and situate classical works within their intellectual contexts. Such studies have contributed to a deeper understanding of the contributions of major exegetes such as al-Zamakhsharī and have provided a basis for contemporary engagement with their methodologies (Abzalova, 2026).

A third trajectory involves the continued production of traditional linguistic Tafsir within contemporary Islamic scholarship. Scholars in various parts of the Islamic world continue to produce works of Tafsir that engage with Qur'anic language through the frameworks of Arabic grammar, rhetoric, lexicography, and literary analysis. This tradition demonstrates the enduring relevance of linguistic approaches to Qur'anic interpretation and the continued influence of classical linguistic exegesis on contemporary scholarship (Jassim & Muhammad, 2024).

The emergence of modern linguistic approaches has also been influenced by developments in the study of Arabic linguistics itself. Advances in the description and analysis of Arabic language, including both classical and modern varieties, have provided new frameworks for understanding Qur'anic expressions. Studies of Arabic syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics have contributed to a more nuanced understanding of how Qur'anic language functions and conveys meaning. These developments have enriched contemporary linguistic Tafsir and have opened new avenues for exploring the linguistic dimensions of the Qur'anic text (Ramadan, 2025).

Contemporary research on Al-Zamakhsharī's *Al-Kashshāf* exemplifies the integration of modern academic scholarship with the classical linguistic exegetical tradition. Scholars have examined his grammatical method, rhetorical analysis, and theological assumptions through both traditional and modern analytical frameworks. This body of research has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of Al-Zamakhsharī's contributions and has identified areas in which his methodology continues to offer insights for contemporary Qur'anic scholarship (Rasulova & Ahmed, 2026; Rasulova, 2026).

The relationship between modern linguistic approaches and classical linguistic Tafsir is therefore not simply one of continuity or discontinuity. It involves both the preservation of established methods and the adaptation of new frameworks for understanding Qur'anic language. In this context, the works of classical exegetes such as Al-Zamakhsharī continue to serve as important reference points for modern scholarship, both as objects of study and as sources of methodological insights (Mennad& Dahmani, 2026).

Intellectual Biography of Al-Zamakhsharī

His name is AbūAl-QāsimMaḥmūd ibn ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad, famously known as Jarullahi (meaning "Neighbour of Allah"). He was born in the month of Rajab in the year 467 AH (1075 CE) in Zamakhshar, a city among the cities of Khawārizm (present-day Uzbekistan). His nickname "Jarullahi" is said to have been given to him due to his devotion to religious scholarship.

Al-Zamakhsharī travelled extensively in search of Islamic knowledge. He journeyed to many countries of the world, including Baghdad, where he encountered great scholars of different calibres and studied under them. He entered the city of Khurāsān several times and was welcomed by large groups of people who recognized his scholarly achievements. His travels reflect the scholarly culture of his time, in which the pursuit of knowledge often required travel to centres of learning and study with multiple teachers.

Al-Zamakhsharī gained popularity and respect among people due to his vast knowledge across many areas of Islamic scholarship. He was particularly distinguished in the fields of ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth (hadith sciences), Arabic grammar (naḥw), and Arabic literature (adab). In addition to his deep knowledge of the Qur'an, his linguistic expertise made him one of the most prominent scholars of his time. His book of Tafsir, *Al-Kashshāf‘anḤaqā’iq al-Tanzīl*, became his most famous work and established his reputation as a major exegete.

Al-Zamakhsharī was a philologist, and despite his Persian origin, he achieved a level of mastery in Arabic language that impressed his contemporaries and subsequent scholars. His command of Arabic grammar, rhetoric, and literature is evident throughout his works. This linguistic proficiency was not merely academic; he used it to develop systematic

interpretations of the Qur'anic text that drew upon multiple branches of Arabic linguistic science.

The author of *Wafiyāt al-A'yān* reports that al-Zamakhsharī was a Mu'tazilite and that he never concealed this from people. Whenever he would go to someone's house and make the salām, "Assalāmu 'Alaikum," seeking permission to enter, and they would ask who was making the salām, he would answer: "It is Abū al-Qāsim al-Mu'tazilī." This openness about his theological affiliation indicates his confidence in his positions and his willingness to be identified with the Mu'tazilite tradition. In addition to his Tafsir, al-Zamakhsharī wrote numerous works across several fields of Islamic and linguistic scholarship. Some of his major publications include:

1. *Al-Muḥajjahfī al-Masā'il al-Naḥwiyyah* (on grammatical questions)
2. *Al-Mufradwa al-Murakkabfī al-'Arabiyyah* (on Arabic compounds)
3. *Al-Fā'iq fī Tafsīr al-Ḥadīth* (on hadith interpretation)
4. *Asās al-Balāghahfī al-Lughah* (on rhetoric)
5. *Al-Mufaṣṣalfī al-Naḥw* (on grammar)
6. *Ru'ūs al-Masā'ilfī al-Fiqh* (on jurisprudence)

These works demonstrate the breadth of al-Zamakhsharī's intellectual contributions across multiple disciplines. His linguistic works, in particular, have remained influential in the study of Arabic grammar and rhetoric.

Al-Zamakhsharī died on the night of 'Arafah in the year 538 AH (1144 CE) in the city of Zarzāniyyāt in Khawārizm, after his return from Makkah. One of his admirers composed this poem in his honour:

فارضمكة تندب الدمع مقلتها
حذنا لفرقد فجاء الله محمود

(May his soul rest in peace, Āmīn.)

Al-Kashshāf anḤaḡā'iq al-Tanzīl: An Overview

Al-Kashshāf anḤaḡā'iq al-Tanzīl (The Revealer of the Realities of Revelation) is Al-Zamakhsharī's magnum opus in Qur'anic exegesis. The title itself indicates the work's ambition: to uncover the realities and truths contained in the Qur'anic revelation through rigorous analysis. The book covers the entire Qur'an, applying al-Zamakhsharī's linguistic and rhetorical expertise to explain the meanings of verses.

From the characteristics and expertise of the author, it is clear that *Al-Kashshāf* must be rich in linguistic analysis due to al-Zamakhsharī's eloquence and his use of dogmatic and philosophical devices in explaining Qur'anic verses, in addition to orthodox explanations. Among the features of this book are the availability of concrete and original Arabic language due to al-Zamakhsharī's mastery of balāghah, al-i'rāb, and other aspects of Arabic grammar.

Al-Kashshāf comprises elements of 'ulūm al-ma'ānī (the knowledge of meanings of the Glorious Qur'an) and 'ulūm al-bayān (the knowledge of deeper explanations of verses with the use of philosophical evidence). This integration of multiple disciplines makes the work unique among books of Tafsir. Sheikh Ḥaydar Harawī commented extensively on the characteristics of this book and concluded that it has no equal among books of Tafsir because, according to him, it has all the qualities required to be regarded as a great work of exegesis (Al-Dhahabi, 1876).

The book gained immediate recognition for its linguistic sophistication and rhetorical insights. Despite criticism of its Mu'tazilite theological orientation, it has remained one of the most widely studied works of Tafsir, particularly for its grammatical and rhetorical analyses. Scholars across different

theological schools have engaged with *Al-Kashshāf*, some critiquing its theological positions while acknowledging its linguistic excellence, others producing super-commentaries to respond to its arguments. The reception of *Al-Kashshāf* demonstrates both the influence of al-Zamakhsharī's linguistic method and the theological controversies it generated.

His Linguistic Method

Al-Zamakhsharī's linguistic method in *Al-Kashshāf* reflects his extensive training in Arabic grammar, morphology, lexicography, and literary analysis. His approach is characterized by systematic attention to the grammatical structures, lexical meanings, and syntactic relationships of Qur'anic expressions. For al-Zamakhsharī, linguistic analysis was not merely a supplementary tool for interpretation; it was a fundamental method for uncovering the meanings of the Qur'anic text.

One of the central features of Al-Zamakhsharī's linguistic method is his use of word-to-word interpretation. He examines individual words and expressions, considering their grammatical functions, morphological forms, and lexical meanings. This micro-level analysis provides the foundation for understanding how individual elements contribute to the overall meaning of a verse. His examination of vocabulary considers not only dictionary meanings but also contextual usage, relationships with other words, and semantic nuances that affect interpretation.

Al-Zamakhsharī's grammatical analysis extends to the examination of case endings (i'rāb), which he considers crucial for determining meaning. He frequently discusses the possible readings of a word's case ending, the implications of each reading, and the reasons for preferring one reading over

another. This attention to i'rāb is characteristic of his method and reflects the importance of syntax in his interpretive framework (Rasulova & Ahmed, 2026).

Syntactic analysis constitutes another significant component of his linguistic method. Al-Zamakhsharī examines sentence structures, relationships between clauses, ellipsis (ḥadhf), fronting and postponement (taqdīm wata'khīr), and other syntactic phenomena. He considers how the arrangement of words affects meaning and how understanding syntactic relationships can resolve interpretive difficulties. Research by Rasulova and Ahmed (2026) has examined his treatment of syntactic ellipsis, dependencies, and other structures, demonstrating the depth of his grammatical methodology.

Al-Zamakhsharī frequently uses evidence from classical Arabic poetry to support his grammatical interpretations. Poetry was regarded as an authoritative source of linguistic evidence for classical grammarians, and al-Zamakhsharī follows this tradition by quoting verses that illustrate grammatical usages similar to those found in the Qur'an. This practice demonstrates his view that Qur'anic usage should be understood within the broader context of Arabic linguistic conventions (al-Jabbarey, 2024).

Morphological analysis also plays a role in al-Zamakhsharī's method. He examines the forms of words, including verbal patterns, noun forms, and other morphological features, considering how different forms convey different meanings. He also discusses issues of number, gender, definiteness, and other morphological categories. Al-Jabbarey (2024) has shown that al-Zamakhsharī considered morphological forms within their contexts and examined their semantic implications in different Qur'anic passages.

Al-Zamakhsharī's linguistic method is therefore comprehensive, integrating multiple levels of linguistic analysis to explain Qur'anic meanings. His approach demonstrates that, for him, language is not merely a medium for conveying meaning but an integral part of meaning itself. Understanding the linguistic features of a verse is therefore necessary for understanding its intended message.

His Rhetorical Method

Al-Zamakhsharī's rhetorical method in *Al-Kashshāf* is as significant as his grammatical analysis. He pays considerable attention to the rhetorical features of Qur'anic discourse, analyzing figures of speech, sentence construction, emphasis, and other devices through which the Qur'an communicates its message. His rhetorical analysis draws upon the sciences of 'ilm al-ma'ānī (the study of meanings and sentence construction) and 'ilm al-bayān (the study of figurative expression and clarity).

Rasulova (2026) emphasizes that al-Zamakhsharī's interpretation is distinguished by its integration of linguistic and rhetorical analysis. He does not treat rhetorical devices as simple literary embellishments but as integral to the meaning and eloquence of Qur'anic expression. His analyses consider why a particular expression is used, how a sentence is structured, and what effect a particular linguistic choice has within its context.

In 'ilm al-ma'ānī, Al-Zamakhsharī examines sentence types, patterns of construction, emphasis, fronting and postponement, and other features of expression. He considers how the arrangement of words and clauses contributes to the intended meaning and how different possible arrangements would produce different meanings. This analysis is closely connected with his grammatical method, as the two disciplines are integrated in his approach to interpretation.

In *‘ilm al-bayān*, Al-Zamakhsharī examines figurative expressions, comparisons, metaphors, and other forms of non-literal expression. He considers how these devices contribute to the effectiveness of Qur'anic communication and how understanding them is necessary for grasping the intended meaning of a verse. His analysis of rhetorical figures is not merely descriptive; he connects them with interpretive conclusions and theological positions.

Ramadan (2025) has demonstrated al-Zamakhsharī's extensive attention to rhetorical meanings and the relationship between rhetorical choice and Qur'anic expression. His analysis often identifies the rhetorical superiority of a particular expression over alternative ways of expressing the same meaning. This emphasis on the Qur'an's rhetorical superiority is consistent with the doctrine of *i'jāz* (the inimitability of the Qur'an), which holds that the Qur'an's linguistic and rhetorical excellence cannot be matched by human composition.

Al-Zamakhsharī's rhetorical method also considers the communicative situation of Qur'anic discourse. He examines how the Qur'an addresses different audiences, how it uses different stylistic registers, and how its rhetorical strategies are suited to its purposes. This contextual sensitivity is characteristic of his approach and reflects his understanding of rhetoric as a discipline concerned with effective communication.

His rhetorical analysis often supports his theological positions. For example, his interpretation of verses relating to divine attributes reflects Mu'tazilite theological commitments, and he uses rhetorical analysis to support readings consistent with those commitments. This integration of rhetoric and theology

is characteristic of *Al-Kashshāf* and has been as usual the subject of both admiration and criticism among scholars.

Specific Contributions to Linguistic Tafsir

Al-Zamakhsharī's *Al-Kashshāf* makes several specific contributions to the development of linguistic Tafsir. These contributions extend beyond the application of grammatical and rhetorical analysis to the development of an integrated exegetical methodology that brings multiple disciplines into sustained engagement with the Qur'anic text. Different scholars expressed their views on his kind of contributions in this regard:

First, Al-Zamakhsharī developed a systematic method for connecting grammatical analysis with semantic interpretation. Rather than treating grammar as a separate discipline that simply identifies forms and functions, he demonstrated how grammatical choices contribute to meaning. His analyses show that seemingly minor grammatical differences can have significant interpretive implications. This integration of grammar and meaning has influenced subsequent exegetical scholarship and has contributed to the development of linguistic approaches to Tafsir (Rasulova & Ahmed, 2026).

Second, al-Zamakhsharī advanced the application of rhetorical analysis to Qur'anic interpretation. While earlier exegetes had noted rhetorical features of the Qur'an, al-Zamakhsharī developed a more systematic and comprehensive rhetorical method. His integration of 'ilm al-ma'ānī and 'ilm al-bayān provided a framework for analyzing the communicative effectiveness of Qur'anic expression and for connecting rhetorical features with interpretive conclusions (Rasulova, 2026).

Third, al-Zamakhsharī demonstrated the value of classical Arabic literary evidence for Qur'anic interpretation. His use of poetry, proverbs, and established patterns of Arabic expression showed how understanding Qur'anic language requires knowledge of the broader linguistic tradition. This approach established a methodological precedent that has been followed by subsequent exegetes and has contributed to the development of a more historically grounded understanding of Qur'anic language (Ramadan, 2025).

Fourth, Al-Zamakhsharī developed a method for integrating linguistic analysis with theological interpretation. His *Al-Kashshāf* demonstrates how grammatical and rhetorical analysis can be used to support theological positions, as well as how theological commitments can shape linguistic interpretation. While this integration has been controversial, it has also contributed to the development of a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between language and theology in Qur'anic interpretation (Mennad & Dahmani, 2026).

Fifth, Al-Zamakhsharī's work established a model for comprehensive linguistic Tafsir that has influenced subsequent exegetes across different theological schools. His integration of grammar, rhetoric, lexicography, and literary analysis set a standard for linguistic exegesis that has been followed by many subsequent commentators. Even those who criticized his theological positions have acknowledged the value of his linguistic methodology.

Sixth, Al-Zamakhsharī's *Al-Kashshāf* has provided a foundation for contemporary studies of Qur'anic language and rhetoric. Modern scholars continue to engage with his grammatical and rhetorical analyses, using them as starting points for further investigation. His work has therefore

contributed to the continuing development of linguistic Tafsir in both traditional and modern contexts (Abzalova, 2026; Rasulova, 2026).

Mu'tazilite Influence on His Interpretation

Al-Zamakhsharī's association with the Mu'tazilite theological tradition is a significant aspect of his interpretation in *Al-Kashshāf*. The Mu'tazilites were a rationalist theological school that emphasized divine unity and justice, and they developed a number of distinctive doctrines that influenced their interpretation of the Qur'an. Al-Zamakhsharī's theological orientation is evident throughout his commentary, particularly in his treatment of verses relating to divine attributes, human agency, and eschatological matters.

The first thing al-Zamakhsharī wrote in *Al-Kashshāf* after the basmalah was:

الحمد لله الذي خلق القرآن

(Praise be to Allah who created the Qur'an)

This formulation reflects the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'an (khalq al-Qur'ān), which was a central theological issue in early Islamic theological debates. The Mu'tazilites argued that the Qur'an was created in time, while the orthodox position held that the Qur'an is the uncreated speech of Allah. By opening his commentary with this formulation, al-Zamakhsharī signalled his theological allegiance and established a Mu'tazilite framework for his interpretation.

In his explanations of verses, al-Zamakhsharī frequently defends Mu'tazilite doctrines through linguistic and rhetorical analysis. He interprets verses relating to divine attributes in ways that avoid anthropomorphism, reflecting the Mu'tazilite emphasis on divine transcendence. He also interprets verses relating to human action in ways that preserve human free

will, consistent with the Muʿtazilite doctrine of human agency (Mennad & Dahmani, 2026).

His interpretation of verses on the Beatific Vision (ruʿyatAllāh), for example, reflects the Muʿtazilite position that God cannot be seen in the afterlife. He uses grammatical and rhetorical arguments to support this interpretation, arguing that the linguistic evidence supports his theological position. This integration of linguistic analysis and theology is characteristic of his method and demonstrates the influence of Muʿtazilite thought on his interpretation.

Despite his Muʿtazilite orientation, al-Zamakhsharī's linguistic and rhetorical contributions have been recognized by scholars across different theological traditions. Even those who rejected his theological positions have engaged with his commentary for its linguistic insights. This reception reflects the fact that his linguistic methodology is not entirely dependent on his theological assumptions, even where the two are connected in his interpretation.

Scholarly Criticism and Reception

Al-Zamakhsharī's *Al-Kashshāf* has generated considerable scholarly discussion since its composition, with both admiration for its linguistic achievements and criticism of its theological orientation. This section examines the major criticisms of the work and its reception among subsequent scholars.

Primary Criticisms: The major criticism against *Al-Kashshāf* is that al-Zamakhsharī devoted most of his attention to dogmatic exegesis while paying only slight attention to tradition (ḥadīth). His interpretation often reflects Muʿtazilite doctrines, and he is perceived as trying to ensure that all situations and events related to Muʿtazilite positions are

strongly defended within his explanations of the Glorious Qur'an. Doctrines and ideas of the Mu'tazilites are all defended within his Tafsir.

This theological differences has led some scholars to question the reliability of his interpretation, particularly on matters where Mu'tazilite doctrines conflict with orthodox positions. Some have criticized his use of linguistic analysis to support theological positions, arguing that his interpretations are sometimes driven more by theological commitments than by linguistic evidence.

Reception: Despite these criticisms, *Al-Kashshāf* has been widely studied and valued by subsequent scholars. The work has been the subject of numerous super-commentaries (hawāshī) and responses, both defending and criticizing its positions. This scholarly engagement demonstrates the importance of the work in the exegetical tradition and its influence on subsequent discussions of Qur'anic language and rhetoric.

Some scholars produced works specifically refuting the theological positions in *Al-Kashshāf*, while others produced super-commentaries that aimed to correct its theological errors while preserving its linguistic insights. The author of *Wafiyāt al-A'yān* notes that the reading of *Al-Kashshāf* was sometimes restricted or discouraged due to its Mu'tazilite content, as documented in research on the forbidding of reading the *Kashshāf* (Forbidding the Reading of the Kashshāf, 2022). At the same time, scholars across different theological traditions have praised the linguistic and rhetorical achievements of *Al-Kashshāf*. Sheikh Ḥaydar Harawī, for example, commented extensively on the characteristics of the book and concluded that it has no equal among books of Tafsir because it possesses all the qualities required to be regarded as

a great work of exegesis. This appreciation of the work's linguistic excellence reflects its enduring scholarly value (Al-Dhahabi, 1976).

The reception of *Al-Kashshāf* therefore involves a complex relationship between appreciation and criticism. While its theological orientation has been challenged, its linguistic and rhetorical analyses have remained influential. This dual reception has contributed to the continued scholarly engagement with the work and has ensured its place in the history of Qur'anic interpretation.

Contemporary Relevance

Al-Zamakhsharī's *Al-Kashshāf* continues to be relevant to contemporary Qur'anic scholarship for several reasons. Its linguistic and rhetorical methodology provides a model for integrating multiple disciplinary approaches to the interpretation of the Qur'an, and its treatment of specific grammatical and rhetorical issues offers insights that remain valuable for modern scholars.

First, *Al-Kashshāf* provides a rich source of grammatical and rhetorical analysis that continues to inform contemporary studies of Qur'anic language. Modern scholars, including those who do not share al-Zamakhsharī's theological orientation, engage with his linguistic analyses for their insights into the structures and patterns of Qur'anic expression. His treatment of syntax, morphology, and rhetoric offers detailed examinations that remain valuable for understanding the linguistic features of the Qur'anic text (Rasulova, 2026; Rasulova & Ahmed, 2026).

Second, al-Zamakhsharī's methodology demonstrates the integration of linguistic analysis with interpretive reasoning in a way that continues to be relevant to contemporary

discussions of exegetical method. His approach shows how grammatical and rhetorical analysis can be used to support interpretive conclusions and how linguistic evidence can be evaluated in the context of broader interpretive frameworks. This integration of multiple disciplinary perspectives is characteristic of sophisticated exegesis and remains a model for contemporary scholarship (Mennad & Dahmani, 2026).

Third, al-Zamakhsharī's work contributes to contemporary discussions of the relationship between language and theology in Qur'anic interpretation. His *Al-Kashshāf* demonstrates how theological assumptions can shape linguistic interpretation and how linguistic analysis can be used to support theological positions. Understanding this relationship is important for contemporary scholarship, which continues to examine the interplay between linguistic and theological dimensions of interpretation (Abzalova, 2026).

Fourth, the history of reception and criticism of *Al-Kashshāf* provides a case study for understanding how scholarly works are evaluated across different intellectual traditions. The work's dual reception, appreciated for its linguistic excellence while criticized for its theological orientation, illustrates the complexity of scholarly evaluation and the importance of engaging with works on multiple levels. This case study contributes to broader discussions of intellectual history and reception studies (Forbidding the Reading of the Kashshāf, 2022).

Fifth, al-Zamakhsharī's methodology offers a precedent for integrating traditional linguistic sciences with more contemporary analytical frameworks. His work demonstrates the value of close linguistic analysis for interpretation and provides a foundation upon which modern scholars can build. Contemporary studies continue to draw upon his insights,

adapting his methodology to address new questions and to incorporate new perspectives (Ramadan, 2025).

Conclusion

This paper has established that linguistic Tafsir developed through the close relationship between Qur'ānic interpretation and the Arabic linguistic sciences. Within this tradition, al-Zamakhsharī occupies a distinctive position because *Al-Kashshāf* demonstrates how grammar, morphology, lexical analysis, syntax, and rhetoric can function together as interpretive tools rather than as separate areas of study.

The analysis shows that al-Zamakhsharī's major contribution lies in treating linguistic form as central to the determination of Qur'ānic meaning. His explanations demonstrate that changes in grammatical structure, word choice, sentence arrangement, and rhetorical expression can influence interpretation and reveal different dimensions of the Qur'ānic text. This makes *Al-Kashshāf* more than a grammatical commentary; it represents a systematic linguistic approach to Tafsir.

At the same time, the study reveals a significant tension in al-Zamakhsharī's methodology. His linguistic reasoning is closely connected with his Mu'tazilite theological outlook, meaning that language sometimes serves not only to explain the text but also to support particular theological positions. This relationship explains both the enduring value of *Al-Kashshāf* and the criticism directed at some of its interpretations. His work therefore demonstrates that linguistic Tafsir cannot always be separated completely from the theological assumptions of the interpreter.

Overall, al-Zamakhsharī's contribution should be understood in terms of the interaction between language, rhetoric, context,

and theology. His methodology shows how detailed linguistic analysis can deepen Qur'ānic interpretation while also demonstrating the need to critically examine the assumptions underlying exegetical conclusions. For this reason, *Al-Kashshāf* remains an important reference for understanding the development of linguistic Tafsir and for contemporary studies of Qur'ānic language and interpretation.

Recommendations

1. Contemporary Mufasssirun should consider Al-Zamkhashari's methodology in critical analysis of concept implications before utilizations.
2. Researchers should undertake further textual analysis of *Al-Kashshāf* using specific Qur'ānic verses to demonstrate the practical application of al-Zamakhshari's linguistic and rhetorical methodology.
3. Scholars should critically examine the relationship between al-Zamakhshari's linguistic interpretations and his Mu'tazilite theological position to distinguish linguistic evidence from theological assumptions.
4. Contemporary Qur'ānic scholarship should integrate relevant aspects of classical linguistic Tafsir with modern linguistic approaches to enhance the study of Qur'ānic language, meaning and rhetoric.
5. Students and researchers of Tafsir should engage critically with *Al-Kashshāf*, recognising its significant linguistic contributions while considering the theological criticisms associated with some of its interpretations.

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