The Arabic Rhetoric Curricula Prescribed for Students of Malaysian Religious Secondary Schools: An Analytical and Critical Study

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Abstract

Arabic rhetoric (al-balāghah) plays a significant role in developing linguistic competence, analytical reasoning, and expressive ability in Arabic language education. In Malaysian religious secondary schools, rhetoric forms part of the prescribed curriculum; however, limited research has critically assessed its suitability for non-native Arabic learners. This study examines the Arabic rhetoric curricula implemented in Malaysian religious secondary schools to evaluate their alignment with Arabic-as-a-Foreign-Language (AFL) pedagogical standards. The research aims to (1) clarify the pedagogical importance of rhetoric in second-language acquisition, (2) identify instructional standards appropriate for non-native learners, and (3) formulate evaluative criteria for curriculum design within the Malaysian educational context. Using an analytical and critical qualitative approach, the study reviews curriculum content against contemporary AFL teaching principles. The findings indicate that while the curricula reflect strong adherence to classical rhetorical traditions, they require revision in terms of simplification, contextual adaptation, and greater emphasis on practical application. The study proposes criteria for reform that integrate authentic balāghah scholarship with modern language pedagogy, contributing to more effective rhetoric instruction for non-native learners.

Keywords: Arabic Rhetoric, Curriculum Evaluation, Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL), Islamic Secondary Education

Introduction

Arabic rhetoric forms a cornerstone of Arabic language instruction in religious schools, intimately connected to comprehending Qur'anic texts, Prophetic Hadith, and classical literary heritage. Conventionally, rhetoric instruction in educational settings follows a classical tripartite division, al-Ma'ānī (Meanings), al-Bayān (Clarity), and al-Badī' (Figures of Speech), codified since the fifth century AH (Al-Qazwini, 2003).

In Malaysia, Arabic holds a privileged position within religious secondary schools, including those under the Ministry of Education (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama – SMKA) and popular religious schools (Sekolah Agama Rakyat – SAR), where rhetoric integrates into Arabic language or related Islamic studies curricula.

Nevertheless, evolving language teaching theories and modern rhetorical scholarship question the adequacy of these curricula for contemporary students, particularly in fostering critical thinking and textual analysis skills.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the fact that rhetoric curricula serve as an effective tool for developing Arabic language skills and critical thinking among students of Malaysian religious secondary schools. This importance is further heightened by the fact that analyzing these curricula contributes to assessing their alignment with contemporary educational quality standards. Moreover, this study helps enrich field research on Arabic language curricula taught in Malaysian schools, a domain that still requires in-depth scholarly attention.

Problem of the Study

The teaching of Arabic rhetoric in Malaysian religious schools constitutes one of the foundational pillars of the curriculum, as it contributes to the development of students' cultural and religious identity. Malaysian religious secondary schools, through their educational curricula, provide a dynamic environment for teaching Arabic literature within an Islamic framework, aiming to enhance linguistic and rhetorical skills and to cultivate Islamic values among students.

At the same time, the Arabic rhetoric curriculum in Malaysian schools faces several challenges, primarily stemming from the continued use of the traditional approach, which relies heavily on conventional textual analysis without adequately addressing the educational needs of students learning Arabic as a second language. This raises a fundamental question regarding the suitability of these curricula for non-native Arabic-speaking students and their effectiveness in achieving educational and pedagogical objectives, given the specific cultural and linguistic challenges of the Malaysian context.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:
1. Identify the nature of the Arabic rhetoric curricula prescribed for students of Malaysian religious secondary schools and analyze their contents.
2. Evaluate the suitability of these curricula for students in terms of content, objectives, and teaching methods.
3. Propose ways to develop these curricula in a manner compatible with the Malaysian religious context.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of the Arabic rhetoric curricula in Malaysian religious secondary schools?
2. To what extent are these curricula suitable for students in terms of content, objectives, and teaching methods?

3. How can Arabic rhetoric curricula be developed to better meet learners' needs?

Research Methodology
This study adopts an integrative methodology combining descriptive, analytical, and critical approaches. The researcher describes the prescribed Arabic rhetoric curricula, analyzes their contents, and evaluates them according to scientific and educational standards.

Scope of the Study
The study focuses on the rhetoric curriculum in the book *Adab wa Balāghah* prescribed for fourth-year students in Malaysian religious secondary schools. Arabic rhetoric curricula in these schools serve as a bridge between the Arabic language and Islamic heritage, contributing to the development of linguistic sensitivity and value formation among students. However, their development still requires critical review to balance authenticity with modernity, and to align religious educational requirements with the characteristics of Malaysian learners. This underscores the importance of the critical analysis presented in this study.

Arabic Rhetoric and the Challenges of Teaching It in Malaysian Secondary Schools
The Concept of Rhetoric
Arabic rhetoric constitutes a core linguistic science focused on expressive techniques that convey meanings with optimal clarity and impact, attuned to contextual demands. Rhetoricians define it as adapting eloquent speech to situational requirements, selecting styles that fulfill communicative and persuasive aims (Al-Sakkaki, 1987).

Historically, Arabic rhetoric progressed from pre-Islamic fragmentary critiques to systematic formulation during the Abbasid era, spearheaded by scholars like Al-Jahiz and Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani. Al-Jurjani advanced nazm (structural arrangement) theory, positing that expressive beauty derives from word organization and interrelations, beyond lexical choices alone (Al-Jurjani, 2004).

The Importance of Rhetoric in Teaching the Arabic Language
Arabic rhetoric stands as a foundational pillar of Arabic language education, playing a pivotal role in refining learners' linguistic skills while cultivating their expressive and analytical capacities. Its significance manifests through enhanced reading comprehension, where rhetoric equips students to discern implicit meanings, decode diverse expressive styles, and critically analyze literary and religious texts; as Abd al-Ghani (2012) observed, such instruction trains learners to extract intended messages from complex passages, interpret artistic imagery, and navigate varied linguistic structures.

Rhetoric further elevates written and oral expression by guiding learners to select contextually appropriate styles that balance linguistic aesthetics with situational demands, thereby boosting fluency and enabling masterful application of rhetorical techniques in practical discourse (Al-Zayyat, 2010). Simultaneously, it strengthens textual analysis capabilities, furnishing essential criteria for identifying rhetorical devices and grasping the objectives embedded in religious and literary works, a core aim of religious education tied directly to interpreting Qur'anic and Prophetic texts (Al-Kurdi, 2015).

Beyond functional proficiency, rhetoric fosters linguistic and aesthetic sensitivity, nurturing an artistic appreciation for Arabic's beauty and empowering learners to craft impactful expressions that resonate with audiences (Al-Razi, 2008). Language education scholars consistently affirm that instruction in stylistic elements like rhetoric advances communicative competence, the ultimate objective of language teaching (Al-Zayyat, 2010; Canale & Swain, 1980).

Curricula in Malaysian Religious Education

Religious education in Malaysia has witnessed significant development since the early twentieth century, beginning with *katatib* (traditional Qur'anic schools) and *pondok* schools, before evolving into a formal system under state supervision. The Malaysian government established specialized administrations for religious education, such as the Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM), which oversees the formulation of religious curricula in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

The curricula prescribed in religious secondary schools include core subjects such as Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), Hadith, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Arabic language, literature, and rhetoric. These curricula aim to achieve mastery of the Arabic language in comprehension and expression, promote Islamic values through literary texts, and develop rhetorical skills in analyzing Qur'anic and literary texts. Malaysian curricula have been influenced by the curricula of Al-Azhar University in Egypt in terms of subject division and content; however, in recent years, they have sought to adapt their content to the Malaysian context in terms of language and culture (Yunus, 2019).

Religious Education in Malaysia and the Status of Literature

Religious education in Malaysia is considered a fundamental pillar of the educational system and is provided through both public and private schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and the Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM). This type of education aims to prepare a generation proficient in the Arabic language and capable of understanding Islamic sources in their original language.

Secondary-level religious curricula include core subjects such as the Qur'an, Hadith, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and the Arabic language, with literature forming an essential part of the Arabic language curriculum. It is noted that Malaysian literary curricula have been influenced by Al-Azhar curricula in terms of structure and content, with modifications introduced to accommodate the Malaysian cultural context (Yunus, 2019).

Challenges Facing the Teaching of Rhetoric to Non-Native Arabic Speakers

Teaching Arabic rhetoric to non-native speakers encounters fundamental challenges that undermine learning effectiveness. Central among these is the abstract nature of rhetorical concepts like metaphor, metonymy, and figurative language, which demand nuanced comprehension of meaning-formulation-style relationships; non-native learners struggle particularly without practical, contextually relevant examples bridging theory and practice, leaving concepts as inert theoretical knowledge (Abd al-Ghani, 2012).

Compounding this difficulty is the proliferation of complex specialized terminology—such as *majaz mursal* (metonymy), *tibaq* (antithesis), and *jinas* (paronomasia); imposing

substantial cognitive demands that hinder memorization, understanding, and application in analysis (Al-Zayyat, 2010). Traditional curricula often exacerbate these issues through their disproportionate emphasis on theory over practice, sidelining activities for text analysis, writing, and oral expression, thus impeding goal attainment and real-world rhetorical proficiency (Al-Kurdi, 2015).

Moreover, curricula frequently fail to align with learners' linguistic and sociocultural realities, diminishing engagement; as language acquisition research demonstrates, instruction proves most potent when embedded in familiar, realistic contexts attuned to students' backgrounds (Ellis, 2003; Al-Razi, 2008). These persistent obstacles necessitate rigorous curriculum reevaluation, which this study addresses through critical analysis of prescribed materials, as elaborated subsequently.

The Rhetoric Curriculum in the Book Adab wa Balāghah for Fourth-Year Secondary Students: Presentation and Critique

The textbook *Adab wa Balāghah (Tingkatan 4)* forms part of the Integrated Religious Curriculum (Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini) mandated by Malaysia's Ministry of Education, targeting fourth-year students in religious secondary schools. Designed to cultivate literary and rhetorical proficiency, it introduces classical Arabic texts while promoting linguistic, rhetorical, and intellectual analysis.

Positioned as a critical bridge from introductory to intermediate rhetoric instruction, the book demands deeper engagement with rhetorical imagery and literary styles, emphasizing practical training in poetic and prose text analysis from a rhetorical viewpoint.

This section delivers a descriptive-critical evaluation of its rhetoric curriculum, scrutinizing concept presentation, sequencing, educational objectives, and conformity to Arabic-as-a-foreign-language teaching principles.

Formal Analysis and Artistic Presentation

The artistic presentation of the book *Adab wa Balāghah* for fourth-year secondary students is characterized by a clear design quality that contributes to supporting the educational process, especially for non-native Arabic speakers. Curriculum studies indicate that the artistic form of the textbook is an influential factor in learner motivation and learning effectiveness (Taima, 2004). The cover was designed to combine educational and heritage dimensions, with the book's title written in clear Arabic script reflecting the nature of the subject, accompanied by the Malaysian Ministry of Education logo, emphasizing the official status of the curriculum, along with visual heritage elements such as ancient books, manuscripts, and a writing pen, and a background in calm colors that enhance Arab cultural identity. This aligns with the importance of using visual elements to support cultural affiliation within educational content (Madkour, 2009).

The presence of a Quick Response (QR) code indicates an attempt to integrate modern digital tools into learning, a direction emphasized in contemporary educational literature that advocates employing educational technologies to develop curricula and enhance interaction (Zaytoun, 2003).

The interior design is characterized by organization and clarity, achieved by dividing the content into units, using prominent main and subheadings, and educational boxes for definitions and exercises, in addition to a simple decorative frame inspired by Islamic ornamentation. This creates visual balance, facilitates reading, and reduces text congestion, which is considered a fundamental criterion in building a good textbook (Al-Laqani & Al-Jamal, 2003).

The book also employs a systematic use of colors to distinguish between different content elements. Studies indicate that well-organized visual content helps facilitate understanding and structure knowledge for learners (Taima, 2004). However, in this book, the use of colors is mostly limited to organizational purposes without a methodological exploitation to highlight relationships between rhetorical concepts.

Moreover, the book includes a number of illustrations and explanatory images, alongside the use of organizational charts such as tree diagrams, tables, and schematics. These tools help organize abstract concepts and facilitate their learning, especially in subjects that rely on analysis, such as rhetoric (Madkour, 2009). These charts represent one of the most prominent strengths of the artistic presentation, as they contribute to understanding and knowledge organization, particularly for non-native Arabic-speaking learners.

Descriptive Analysis of the Rhetoric Curriculum in the Book
The book *Adab wa Balāghah* for fourth-year secondary students consists of two main sections: the first section is devoted to literature lessons, and the second section is devoted to rhetoric lessons, which is the focus of this study. The rhetoric section begins in the second half of the book and presents the rhetoric curriculum according to the well-known scientific division of Arabic rhetorical sciences, which is divided into three main disciplines: *'Ilm al-Ma'ānī* (the Science of Meanings), *'Ilm al-Bayān* (the Science of Rhetoric/Clarity), and *'Ilm al-Badī'* (the Science of Figures of Speech). This division is illustrated at the beginning of the section through a colored organizational chart that visually presents the three sciences in an orderly manner.

The topics of rhetoric are distributed across ten educational units, with each unit addressing a specific rhetorical topic, as follows:

Eloquence and Rhetoric
This unit is titled *Eloquence and Rhetoric* and begins with the definition of eloquence (*fasāhah*) both linguistically and technically, accompanied by illustrative examples from the Qur'an and the Prophetic Hadith. The unit also presents some examples of non-eloquent expressions found in certain books, which were considered difficult or flawed by the Arabs, in order to clarify the concept of eloquence through comparison.

The unit then presents the conditions of eloquent speech, which are provided in a colored and organized chart that facilitates visual comprehension for the student. Subsequently, the unit defines rhetoric (*balāghah*) linguistically and technically and explains the difference between eloquence and rhetoric through a colored table that clearly illustrates their distinctions.

The unit also includes a colored schematic diagram showing the three divisions of Arabic rhetorical sciences: *'Ilm al-Ma'ānī* (Science of Meanings), *'Ilm al-Bayān* (Science of Rhetoric/Clarity), and *'Ilm al-Badī'* (Science of Figures of Speech). This is followed by a brief presentation of some prominent figures in Arabic rhetoric, such as Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, Al-Zamakhshari, and Al-Qazwini, with short biographical notes on each (Mohamad et al., 2017).

The unit concludes with a variety of exercises, including completing charts, filling in blanks, as well as class activities, such as writing five eloquent and five non-eloquent expressions in designated tables. Additionally, the unit includes a research activity requiring students to write a brief biography of one of the prominent rhetoricians by referring to online resources.

Statement and Composition
This unit is titled *Statement and Composition* and begins with introductory images, such as a student, a phone, a sheet of paper, and pens, to prepare students for the lesson topic. The unit then presents the definitions of *statement* (*khabar*) and *composition* (*inshā'*), with translations of some vocabulary into Malay in the left margin to facilitate understanding for students.

The unit then addresses the types of statements, presented in a colored and organized chart. It also includes a dialogue between two Malaysian students, accompanied by an illustrative image, and students are asked to read the dialogue and observe the difference between the declarative (*khabar*) and compositional (*inshā'*) styles (Mohamad et al., 2017).

The unit further contains a colored table showing some Arabic emphasis tools, followed by the types of compositional style in a colored chart with illustrative examples for each type. This is followed by a modern prose text presented as a model of the compositional style, with examples extracted and placed in a designated table.

The unit concludes with various exercises, including identifying declarative and compositional styles, giving examples, and determining the type of style. It also includes a group activity in which students watch the story *The Frog Prince* on YouTube using a QR code, then extract the declarative and compositional styles present in the story.

Literal and Figurative Language
This unit begins with introductory images related to the lesson topic, then presents the definitions of literal (*haqīqah*) and figurative (*majāz*) language, highlighting the difference between them. The unit uses illustrative images to help students grasp the concepts, followed by various exercises that rely on images and applied questions to reinforce students' understanding of the two concepts.

Simile
This unit begins with introductory images and then presents the definition of simile (*tashbīh*), its components, and its types. These topics are presented through colored charts and organized tables, with illustrative examples. The unit includes various exercises, including a class activity requiring students to identify the components of similes in selected Qur'anic verses.

Metaphor

This unit begins with introductory images, followed by the definition of metaphor (istiʿārah) and its types, which include explicit metaphor (istiʿārah taṣrīḥīyah) and implicit metaphor (istiʿārah maknīyah). These topics are presented through colored charts and organized tables, with illustrative examples.

The unit includes various exercises, such as defining metaphor, providing examples, and expressing ideas using metaphors. It also includes a class activity requiring students to extract metaphors from Qur'anic verses and Prophetic Hadiths.

Metonymy

This unit begins with introductory images, followed by the definition of metonymy (*majāz mursal*), with illustrative examples. The unit also presents the relationships within metonymy in an organized manner, followed by a variety of exercises, including class activities designed to train students to use metonymy in expression.

Metaphorical Expression (Kenāyah)

This unit presents the definition of kenāyah (*metaphorical expression*), its types, and provides illustrative examples. The unit uses colored tables and charts to clarify the concepts. It includes various exercises, such as filling in blanks, providing examples, and expressing ideas using kenāyah. Additionally, it contains a class activity in the form of a crossword puzzle game to enhance learning interactively.

Antithesis and Correspondence

This unit begins with the definition of antithesis (ṭibāq), explaining its two types, with illustrative examples. Exercises include using opposing words in organized tables. The unit also presents the definition of correspondence (*muqābalah*), along with various exercises aimed at enhancing students' understanding of this rhetorical style.

Paronomasia (Jinās)

This unit begins with introductory images, followed by the definition of paronomasia (*jinās*) and its types, with illustrative examples. The unit also includes translations of some words into Malay in the page margins to facilitate understanding. This is followed by various exercises aimed at reinforcing students' comprehension of the concept.

Rhymed Prose (Sajʿ)

This unit begins with introductory images, including an image of *Surah Al-Ikhlāṣ* as a model of rhymed prose (*sajʿ*). The unit presents the definition of *sajʿ*, with illustrative examples. It also includes a section titled *"Dictionary"*, providing translations of some words into Malay, in addition to using a QR code to access additional resources. The unit concludes with various exercises designed to reinforce students' understanding.

Critical Analysis of the Rhetoric Curriculum in Adab wa Balāghah for Fourth-Year Secondary Students

The rhetoric curriculum in *Adab wa Balāghah (Tingkatan 4)* exemplifies a structured approach to teaching Arabic rhetoric within Malaysian non-native contexts, warranting evaluation against contemporary rhetoric pedagogy and language curriculum standards,

including content organization, sequencing, presentation, activities, and learner suitability (Taima, 2004; Al-Naqqah, 1985; Abd al-Hamid, 2014).

A standout strength lies in its adherence to the classical tripartite framework, *'Ilm al-Ma'ānī*, *'Ilm al-Bayān*, and *'Ilm al-Badī'*, introduced via an initial organizational chart that fosters holistic comprehension, mirroring Al-Qazwini's foundational structure in *Al-Iḍāḥ fī 'Ulūm al-Balāghah* (Al-Qazwini, 2003). Unit-based topic distribution further organizes content logically from whole to parts, aligning with established curriculum design principles (Taima, 2004).

Concept progression commences with foundational notions like *fasāhah* and *balāghah*, advancing through *Ma'ānī* (e.g., *khabar*, *inshā'*), *Bayān* (e.g., simile, metaphor, *kenāyah*), to *Badī'* (e.g., *ṭibāq*, *jinās*, *saj'*), embodying a general-to-specific, simple-to-complex sequence (Al-Naqqah, 1985). Yet, this traditional ordering overlooks linguistic difficulty gradients tailored to non-native proficiency, a priority in modern second-language rhetoric instruction (Taima, 2004).

Explanations benefit from vivid visual aids, colored charts, tables, and diagrams, that elucidate concepts and interconnections, proven effective for non-native comprehension (Abd al-Hamid, 2014). Theoretical definitions integrate seamlessly with authentic exemplars from Qur'an and Hadith, echoing Daif's insistence on text-based learning over rote theory (Daif, 2005), while diverse exercises (identification, differentiation, group/research tasks) nurture multifaceted skills (Taima, 2004).

Notwithstanding these merits, exercises predominantly target recognition over production, limiting active rhetorical application, a gap highlighted in contemporary scholarship (Abd al-Hamid, 2014). Positively, Malay translations of terms support accessibility (Cook, 2001), and QR codes enable interactive, self-directed extensions, enhancing engagement for Malaysian learners.

Scientific and Educational Criticisms of the Rhetoric Curriculum in the Book
Despite commendable features, the rhetoric curriculum in *Adab wa Balāghah (Tingkatan 4)* exhibits notable scientific and pedagogical deficiencies, compromising its efficacy for non-native Arabic speakers in Malaysian secondary schools.

The curriculum's excessive scope, encompassing nearly all topics across *'Ilm al-Ma'ānī*, *'Ilm al-Bayān*, and *'Ilm al-Badī'* (e.g., *khabar*, simile, metaphor, *ṭibāq*) within one academic year, overburdens learners' linguistic proficiency, favoring superficial memorization over profound comprehension (Taima, 2004; Abd al-Hamid, 2014). Such breadth proves daunting even for native speakers, hindering objective attainment among second-language students.

A perfunctory introduction neglects rhetoric's historical origins, textual interpretive role, and aesthetic contributions to Arabic, restricting coverage to definitions and divisions without motivational context (Daif, 2005; Abd al-Hamid, 2014). Coverage of key figures remains truncated, omitting pioneers like Al-Jahiz (*Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*) and Al-Sakkākī (*Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm*), whose legacies are indispensable for disciplinary insight (Daif, 2005).

Exemplars from Qur'an and Hadith lack adequate semantic and lexical explication, impeding style appreciation since rhetorical beauty presupposes meaning comprehension (Al-Hashimi, 1999; Taima, 2004). Functional and aesthetic rationales for styles receive scant attention, prioritizing taxonomy over expressive impact (Al-Jurjani, 2001; Abd al-Hamid, 2014). Conceptual presentations occasionally falter scientifically, such as omitting situational bases for *khabar* classification or semantic-phonetic distinctions in *Badī'* (Al-Qazwini, 2003; Al-Hashimi, 1999).

Inconsistent Malay translations hinder accessibility, while some visuals lack content linkage, diluting pedagogical value (Abd al-Hamid, 2014). Digital tools like QR codes appear sporadically, and exercises skew toward recognition over creative production, underemphasizing active rhetorical deployment (Taima, 2004).

In sum, while scientifically structured with varied aids, the curriculum demands refinement: content streamlining, amplified functional-practical focus, enhanced linguistic support, and level-appropriate adaptations for non-native learners.

Table 1

Comprehensive overview of the evaluation criteria for the rhetoric curriculum in the book

Criterion	Level of Achievement	Notes
Form and Artistic Presentation	Average	Traditional in design and colors
Curriculum	Good	Based on the inductive curriculum approach
Language and Vocabulary	Good	Classical language, but sometimes requires translation of some words
Progression and Integration	Good	Topics are presented according to the traditional scientific sequence, but with insufficient consideration of difficulty level or linguistic characteristics of non-native Arabic learners; moreover, the dense content in a single grade weakens educational progression
Connection Between Rhetoric and Text	Good	Rhetoric is linked to text analysis
Use of Visual Educational Tools	Good	The book employs organizational charts, tables, and illustrative diagrams
Development of Rhetorical Appreciation	Average	Emphasis is on analysis rather than aesthetic appreciation
Consideration for Non-Native Arabic Learners	Average	The rhetoric curriculum is extensive and covers most topics of Arabic rhetoric in a single academic level, which exceeds the capacity of non-native students
Activities and Assessment	Good	The book includes various activities, such as individual and group exercises, research tasks, and educational games, enhancing student engagement
Linguistic Authenticity	Good	Reliance on authentic texts

Integration of Rhetoric and Language Skills	Average	Requires further development to achieve full integration
Digital Integration	Good	Incorporates QR code technology within the curriculum to enhance self-directed learning and utilize modern educational tools

Conclusion

This analytical-critical study affirms that the rhetoric curriculum in *Adab wa Balāghah (Tingkatan 4)*, part of Malaysia's Ministry of Education Integrated Religious Curriculum, offers a structured introduction to Arabic rhetoric sciences for non-native secondary students, anchored in the classical tripartite framework of *'Ilm al-Ma'ānī*, *'Ilm al-Bayān*, and *'Ilm al-Badī'*. Spanning ten units, it systematically addresses core topics including *khabar*, simile, metaphor, *kenāyah*, *ṭibāq*, *jinās*, and *saj'*.

Descriptive evaluation highlights its organizational clarity, logical progression, and pedagogical aids, charts, tables, diagrams, diverse exercises, group activities, and QR codes, that enhance accessibility and interactivity.

Critical scrutiny, however, uncovers limitations: overburdened content exceeding learners' cognitive thresholds; superficial historical-functional introductions; truncated coverage of rhetoricians; inadequate textual explication; overemphasis on theory and taxonomy at the expense of functional-aesthetic rationales and productive application; occasional conceptual imprecisions; inconsistent terminology translation; disconnected visuals; and uneven digital integration.

Ultimately, while marking a valuable Malaysian initiative in rhetoric pedagogy, the curriculum warrants refinement to equilibrate scientific depth with educational practicality, accommodating non-native proficiency to prioritize rhetorical comprehension, appreciation, and expressive mastery over rote recognition.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several targeted recommendations emerge to refine the rhetoric curriculum in *Adab wa Balāghah (Tingkatan 4)* and optimize its pedagogical impact for non-native Arabic learners. Curriculum content should be restructured progressively across multiple academic stages, commencing with foundational concepts and escalating to complex topics calibrated to students' linguistic and cognitive capacities.

Rhetorical texts, particularly Qur'anic and Hadith exemplars, require comprehensive linguistic and semantic explication, elucidating vocabulary and structures to enable meaning comprehension and stylistic appreciation. Practical exercises must expand to cultivate productive rhetorical skills, training students in deploying styles within oral and written expression to foster communicative application.

Terminology translation and explanation should achieve consistency, supplemented by a concise glossary of rhetorical terms to scaffold concept mastery. Visual aids demand enhancement through direct content alignment, ensuring images and diagrams reinforce and

clarify scientific material effectively. Digital media integration should extend uniformly across all units, promoting self-directed learning and heightened student-content interactivity.

Finally, instruction should incorporate contemporary rhetoric pedagogy, prioritizing connections to linguistic communication, critical thinking, and aesthetic sensibility over purely theoretical emphases.

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