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THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF CLASSICAL ARABIC GRAMMAR: FROM BASHRAH–KUFAH PARADIGM SHIFTS TO CONTEMPORARY LINGUISTICS

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Abstract
Epistemological studies of classical Arabic grammar have so far tended to focus on historical descriptions and methodological comparisons between the Bashrah and Kufah schools, without interpreting their dialectic as a shift in the scientific paradigm that impacts contemporary Arabic linguistics; consequently, the relationship between classical heritage and modern challenges (including pedagogical needs and developments in language technology) has not yet been systematically formulated. This study aims to analyse the epistemological paradigm shift in grammar from the Bashrah School to the Kufah School and to formulate its implications for the development of contemporary Arabic linguistics. The research employs a qualitative approach utilising a literature review and a historical-philosophical analytical design. The research subjects consist of primary classical nahwu texts, specifically representative works of the Bashrah and Kufah schools, which are analysed through documentation techniques, conceptual comparison, and diachronic paradigm reconstruction. The research findings indicate that Bashrah represents a systematic rational-prescriptive paradigm based on qiyas and ta'lil, whilst Kufah presents an empirical-descriptive paradigm that is more accommodating of linguistic variation and auditory data. The dialectic between the two gave rise to an epistemological crisis that culminated in a methodological synthesis in subsequent developments. The integration of the Bashrah school's systemic rationality and the Kufah school's empirical flexibility is theoretically relevant for the reconstruction of the epistemology of nahwu and has practical implications for the development of Arabic language pedagogy and corpus-based linguistic models in the digital age.

Keywords: *Classical Arabic Grammar; Nahwu; Epistemology of Language; Bashrah School; Kufah School; Contemporary Arabic Linguistics;*

المستخلص
دأبت الدراسات الإبستيمولوجية في النحو العربي الكلاسيكي حتى الآن على التركيز في وصف تاريخي والمقارنة المنهجية بين مدرستَي البصرة والكوفة، دون تأويل جدلهما بوصفه تحولًا في النموذج المعرفي العلمي المؤثر في اللسانيات العربية المعاصرة؛ ومن ثَمَّ، لم تُصَغ العلاقة بين التراث الكلاسيكي والتحديات المعاصرة — بما فيها الاحتياجات التربوية والتطورات في تكنولوجيا اللغة — صياغةً منهجية متكاملة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل التحوّل في النموذج الإبستيمولوجي للنحو من مدرسة البصرة إلى مدرسة الكوفة، وصياغة دلالاته ومقتضياته لتطوير اللسانيات العربية المعاصرة. تعتمد الدراسة المنهجَ النوعي القائم على البحث المكتبي، وذلك وفق تصميم تحليلي تاريخي-فلسفي. وتتمثّل مصادر البحث الأولية في النصوص النحوية الكلاسيكية، ولا سيما الأعمال التمثيلية لمدرستَي البصرة والكوفة، والتي خضعت للتحليل عبر تقنيات التوثيق والمقارنة المفاهيمية وإعادة بناء النماذج المعرفية في بُعدها التزامني-الديناميكي. وقد كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن مدرسة البصرة تمثّل نموذجًا معياريًا-عقلانيًا منهجيًا مؤسَّسًا على القياس والتعليل، في حين تقدّم مدرسة الكوفة نموذجًا وصفيًا-تجريبيًا أكثر استيعابًا للتنوع اللغوي والمادة السمعية المروية. وقد أفضى الجدل بين المدرستين إلى أزمة إبستيمولوجية توّجها تركيبٌ منهجي في مراحل لاحقة. إن الجمع بين العقلانية المنهجية للمدرسة البصرية ومرونتها التجريبية لدى المدرسة الكوفية يمتلك أهمية نظرية بالغة في إعادة بناء إبستيمولوجيا النحو، فضلًا عن دلالاته العملية في تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية ونماذج اللسانيات القائمة على المدوّنات اللغوية في العصر الرقمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية :النحو العربي الكلاسيكي؛ النحو؛ إبستيمولوجيا اللغة؛ مدرسة البصرة؛ مدرسة الكوفة؛ اللسانيات العربية المعاصرة

INTRODUCTION

The study of the Arabic language in the 21st century stands at a crucial crossroads. On the one hand, Arabic is experiencing a resurgence in the digital sphere; Saudi Arabia, through its data and artificial intelligence authorities, is leading the development of over 53 large Arabic language models (LLMs) by 2025 to strengthen the language's presence within the global ecosystem. On the other hand, these modernisation efforts face serious challenges, particularly as global models still demonstrate superiority in handling the nuances of the. Arabic language. This phenomenon indicates a gap between advancements in language technology and the depth of the epistemological foundations of the Arabic language itself. Amidst the onslaught of modern linguistics and the demands of artificial intelligence, the study of how the Arab scholarly tradition formulates its linguistic structure has become urgent to re-examine. This is relevant not only to the academic world, but also to strategic efforts to ensure that Arab linguistic and cultural identity remains integrated within technological progress.(Union Of OIC News Agencies, 2026)

Historically, the development of nahwu (Arabic grammar) occupied a central position in the intellectual tradition of the Islamic world from the early centuries of Islam. Many scholars argue that the emergence of grammatical studies was closely related to efforts to preserve the accuracy of Qur'anic recitation and to address linguistic variations that accompanied the expansion of Islamic territories and the increasing interaction between Arabic speakers and non Arabic communities. Within this context, the Bashrah and Kufah schools emerged as two major centres of grammatical scholarship that significantly influenced the formation of Arabic linguistic theory. Although both schools shared the common objective of describing and regulating Arabic usage, they differed in their methodological preferences, sources of linguistic evidence, and approaches to grammatical reasoning. The intellectual dialogue between these traditions contributed substantially to the development of Arabic grammar and produced a rich scholarly legacy that continued to shape subsequent linguistic thought (Ihsanudin, 2017).

However, the development of classical nahwu that was subsequently inherited experienced stagnation. The science of nahwu, which initially functioned as a standard tool for preserving the language of speech, in its development actually became a 'bogeyman' that frightened learners due to the complexity of the rules it produced (Luthfi, 2020). This epistemological unease became increasingly pronounced when classical nahwu was deemed unresponsive to the changing times and the dynamic realities of spoken language.(Luthfi, 2020) The academic urgency to re-examine the paradigm shift from Bashrah to Kufah has become pressing, as the roots of the rigidity or flexibility of modern nahwu actually stem from the dialectic between these two pioneering schools.

A review of previous research indicates that discourse on classical and modern grammar has been extensive. Firstly, numerous historical-philological studies have been conducted to describe the origins and development of grammatical schools Ihsanudin (2017), for example, has provided a descriptive mapping showing that the Bashrah and Kufah schools were the primary founders of Arabic syntax, which subsequently gave rise to branches in Baghdad, Al-Andalus, and the Egyptian (Ihsanudin, 2017).

Secondly, a number of studies on the history of Arabic grammatical thought have highlighted the methodological differences between the Bashrah and Kufah schools. The Bashrah school is generally characterised by its preference for systematic qiyas (analogy), strict linguistic reasoning, and reliance on linguistic evidence considered highly authentic. In contrast, the Kufah school is often described as adopting a more flexible approach by accepting a broader range of linguistic data, including dialectal variations and less frequently attested forms of Arabic usage. These methodological differences influenced not only the formulation of grammatical rules but also the broader epistemological foundations of classical Arabic linguistic thought. Thirdly, entering the contemporary

era, the focus of study shifted to epistemological criticism of classical nahwu. Tammam Hasan, a modern Arab linguist, became a central figure in this critique. He criticised the epistemological foundations of classical nahwu as presented by Imam Sibawaih, particularly regarding dialectal aspects, language periodisation, methods of transmission, and the use of qiyas (Addaraini et al., 2022). Similar criticism was also levelled by Syauqi Dhaif, who sought to reformulate nahwu to make it more practical (Luthfi, 2020). Research by Putri Nurmasyitah et al (2025). even specifically explored the transformation of classical nahwu into modern nahwu from Tammam Hassan's perspective, focusing on word classifications deemed too broad and insufficiently responsive to contemporary complexities (Nurmasyitah, Wahyudi, and Pribadi, 2025).

Although studies on the Bashrah and Kufah schools, as well as critiques of classical nahwu, have been extensive, several academic gaps remain. Firstly, there is a theoretical gap. Most previous studies have focused on comparing grammatical doctrines, methodological differences, or historical developments, whereas relatively few have examined these transformations through a philosophy of science perspective. In particular, the conceptual framework proposed by Thomas Kuhn concerning paradigms, anomalies, scientific crises, and paradigm shifts provides a useful lens for understanding major epistemological changes within intellectual traditions (Kuhn, 1970). From this perspective, the transition from classical grammatical thought to modern critiques of nahwu may be interpreted not merely as a disagreement over linguistic rules, but as a broader shift in the assumptions, methods, and standards that govern the production of grammatical knowledge. Several scholars have identified indications of dissatisfaction with the explanatory capacity of classical nahwu, suggesting the emergence of anomalies that challenge the dominant paradigm and encourage the search for alternative approaches (Luthfi, 2020b) yet this has not been systematically analysed as a shift from one perspective to another. Secondly, a contextual gap. Existing research tends to separate classical studies from modern criticism. It is still rare to find studies that specifically trace how the dialectic between Bashrah and Kufah (particularly their fundamental points of divergence) served as the "seed" or prototype for the epistemological debate between classical and modern grammar. If Tammam Hasan criticises Sibawaih (the representative of the Bashrah school) (Addaraini et al., 2022), what is the actual epistemological position of the Kufah school in this critique? Does Kufah offer an alternative paradigm that is closer to modern linguistic sensibilities? Thirdly, the implicative gap. There has yet to be a comprehensive study that explicitly formulates the implications of the Bashrah-Kufah dialectic for the development of contemporary Arabic linguistics, particularly in responding to the digital and pedagogical challenges of the 21st century. Existing studies have only touched upon general pedagogical aspects,(Luthfi, 2020) but have not linked them to the need for the development of linguistic corpora or natural language processing, which are currently a global concern.

Given this gap, this study offers a novel approach by filling an unexplored void. The study serves as a bridge between classical scholarship and contemporary issues. Whilst previous research has tended to separate or merely compare these areas, this study will reconstruct the diachronic transformation of the nahwu paradigm. The novelty of this study lies in three main aspects. First, the philosophy of science approach: this study employs Thomas Kuhn's epistemological and paradigmatic analytical tools to interpret the shift from the Bashrah School to the Kufah School not merely as a difference of opinion, but as an anomaly and a crisis leading to the emergence of a new paradigm. Second, a connecting critical- historical analysis: this study will test the thesis that the Kufah School, with its more flexible historical approach grounded in spoken reality (Harianto, 2018), Beyond its historical significance, the epistemological debate between the Bashrah and Kufah schools also offers potential insights for contemporary developments in Arabic corpus linguistics and Natural Language Processing (NLP).

Modern Arabic NLP systems increasingly rely on large annotated corpora, morphological analyzers, syntactic parsers, and machine learning models to process diverse forms of Arabic language data. Major projects such as the Penn Arabic Treebank, the Prague Arabic Dependency Treebank, and the Quranic Arabic Corpus demonstrate the importance of establishing clear linguistic criteria for handling grammatical variation, syntactic ambiguity, and dialectal diversity. In this context, the methodological contrast between Bashrah and Kufah provides a valuable historical perspective on the balance between rule based standardization and empirical observation of actual language use.

The Bashrah tradition, with its emphasis on systematic analogy and normative grammatical regularity, may be seen as conceptually analogous to approaches that prioritize standardized linguistic annotation and rule based language processing. Conversely, the Kufah tradition, which exhibited greater acceptance of linguistic variation and broader empirical evidence, offers insights that may be relevant for corpus driven approaches and data oriented NLP systems that must accommodate linguistic diversity in both classical and contemporary Arabic. Although direct historical continuity cannot be assumed, the epistemological principles underlying these two grammatical traditions may contribute to contemporary discussions regarding corpus design, linguistic annotation, and the representation of variation within Arabic language technologies. Further research is needed to explore these connections in a more systematic and empirically grounded manner.

Against this background, this study aims to critically analyse the epistemological paradigm shift in the science of nahwu from the basra school to the kufa school. More specifically, this study seeks to identify the epistemological foundations of the basra and kufa schools and the roots of their differences, analyse the transformation of the classical nahwu paradigm as a response to the intellectual tensions that emerged between the two traditions, and examine the implications of this transformation for contemporary arabic linguistic studies.

To achieve these objectives, this study is guided by two central research questions. The first question concerns how the epistemological paradigms of the basra and kufa schools can be analysed through thomas kuhn's framework of paradigm shift and scientific change. The second question examines how the epistemological legacy of classical nahwu, particularly the methodological contributions of the basra and kufa traditions, remains relevant to the development of contemporary arabic linguistic models, including corpus based approaches and digital language studies. By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the historical transformation of arabic grammatical thought and its significance for contemporary linguistic scholarship.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research, chosen because its objective is to conduct an in-depth and interpretative analysis of classical texts to reconstruct the epistemology and paradigm shift in nahwu from the Bashrah School to the Kufah School. The design applied is a historical-philosophical analysis, which allows the researcher not only to trace the historical chronology but also to explore the philosophical foundations underlying the methodological differences between the two schools. Primary data sources consist of classical nahwu texts such as Al-Kitab by Sibawaih (representing the Bashrah school) and Ma'ani Al-Qur'an by Al-Farra' (representing the Kufah school), whilst secondary data includes modern literature on the history of nahwu and contemporary Arabic linguistics. Data was collected through documentation techniques, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument, aided by data categorisation sheets to maintain systematic organisation. Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of condensation, presentation, and drawing of

conclusions, with data validity tested using source triangulation, observational rigour, and peer debriefing to ensure the credibility and transferability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Epistemological Foundations of the Bashrah and Kufah Schools and Their Differences Historical Background and Causes of the Emergence of Nahwu

The birth of the science of Nahwu cannot be viewed as a standalone linguistic event, but rather as a dialectical response between the internal character of the Arabic language and the of radical external changes following the spread of Islam. Discourse on the origins of this discipline requires an understanding that Nahwu emerged from a 'crisis' that threatened identity and sacred texts, whilst also stemming from structural potential long latent within the oral traditions of Arab society.

Internally, the seeds of Nahwu's emergence were in fact already embedded within the structure of the Arabic language itself. Pre-Islamic Arab society was known for its exceptionally strong oral tradition, in which poetry occupied a central position not only as an art form, but as a social authority and historical record. Within a tribal social structure, verbal eloquence (al-fashahah) served as a symbol of a tribe's honour and distinction. Paradoxically, this literary richness depended on a complex grammatical system, particularly i'rab (the inflection of word endings due to syntactic factors). It is this i'rab that forms the 'backbone' of meaning in Arabic; it is an internal mechanism that renders the language precise yet simultaneously fragile. A contemporary study confirms that i'rab is not merely a system of diacritics, but an essential mechanism for organising meaning (semantics), phonetic coherence, and syntactic flexibility, which distinguishes Arabic from many modern languages that rely heavily on word order.(Ağırkan, 2025) Due to its complexity, the potential for error (lahn) is inherently embedded within the language's structure, even amongst native Arabic speakers, particularly when they begin to interact intensively with non-Arabs. In other words, the grammatical complexity of the Arabic language is a linguistic 'time bomb' that will eventually explode into semantic chaos if not codified.

This explosion was triggered by an unavoidable external factor: the expansion of the Islamic world. When Islam spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula and interacted with various peoples (Mawali) in Persia, Rome and elsewhere, the purity of the Arabic language began to be contaminated. Arab linguists were concerned about the mixing of Arabic with the languages of other peoples who had converted to Islam, whilst the enthusiasm for studying Islam and Arabic (the language in which the religion was revealed) grew ever stronger amongst non-Arabs.(Anwari, 2020) The phenomenon of لَحْنٌ / (linguistic error) was no longer a trivial individual issue, but a mass phenomenon that threatened the very foundations of the religion. Critically speaking, it can be argued that concerns regarding lahn are, in fact, concerns regarding two matters: firstly, the purity of Arab-Islamic identity amidst the dominance of foreign cultures; secondly, and more fundamentally, the integrity of the sacred text of the Qur'an. As a sacred text in Arabic that relies on the precision of i'rab for the depth of its meaning, reading errors (such as incorrect harakat) can drastically alter the meaning of a verse. This argument underscores that Nahwu did not emerge from a vacuum or merely as an intellectual pursuit, but from pressing theological and sociological needs: safeguarding God's word from distortion and preserving Arab cultural superiority amidst global interaction. In "Madaris al-Nahwiyyah", Syauqi Dhaif classifies these factors into two categories: theological factors (relating to the Qur'an) and political factors (relating to the expansion of Islam into non-Arab regions).(Anwari, 2020)

It is within this context of crisis that the role of Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali as the initiator becomes particularly crucial and significant. The account of his appointment by Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib indicates that the project of the

birth of Nahw was a state and religious project from the very beginning. It is narrated that Abu al-Aswad's concern reached its peak when he heard someone reciting Surah At-Taubah, verse 3, with a fatal error: "innallāha bari`un mina l- musyrikina wa rasulihi" (with a kasrah on "rasulihi"), which means "Verily, Allah is free from the polytheists and from His Messenger." Hearing this error, which could mislead one's faith, Abu al-Aswad said, "I did not expect people's errors in the Arabic language to be this severe." (Ruslan, 2013) At the request of Ali ibn Abi Talib, he subsequently formulated the grammatical rules and added vowel marks (harakat) to the Qur'anic manuscript. Ali ibn Abi Talib, known as the foremost authority on eloquence, not only ordered the formulation of these rules but also established the fundamental principles of Arabic sentence structure, namely the classification of words into nouns, verbs, and particles. When Abu al-Aswad presented his work, Ali remarked, "Mā ahsana haza an-naḥwa alladzi naḥauta" (how excellent is this grammar you have compiled). From that time onwards, the study of Arabic grammar has been known as Nahwu.(Asror, 2020)

Analytically speaking, Abu al-Aswad's work laid the initial foundations by introducing the concepts of fa'il (subject) and maf'ul (object), as well as sections on *rafa'*, *nashab*, *jar* and *jazm*.(Kojin, 2013) Another innovation was the system of using dots as syakal (diacritical marks), employing red ink to distinguish them from the black text of the Qur'an: a dot above a letter for fathah, a dot below for kasrah, and a dot beside for dhammah. This was an epistemological revolution. He did not create a linguistic structure, but he 'unpacked' the subconscious structure of native speakers into scientific awareness. His contribution lies in the effort to transform linguistic instinct into linguistic rules. This phase in history is known as the phase of wadh'u wa takwin (establishment and formation), during which Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali made a significant contribution to establishing the rules of grammar, albeit in a still rudimentary form. Thus, Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali became not only the "father of Nahwu", but also a symbol of the transition from a spontaneous oral tradition to a systematic written tradition, a bold step that saved the Arabic language from ambiguity in a multicultural era.

The Epistemological Foundations of the Bashrah School in the Science of Grammar

The Bashrah School, which originated and developed in the city of Bashrah in the 2nd century AH/8th century AD, is known as a leading pioneer in the codification and systematisation of the science of grammar. The epistemology of this school is built upon a solid foundation characterised by rationality, systematisation, and normativity.

1. Sources of Knowledge of the Bashrah School

In establishing the rules of grammar, the Bashrah School relied on selective and measured sources of knowledge. The primary sources they utilised included : The Qur'an serves as the highest and primary reference. As the preserved word of Allah, the verses of the Qur'an are regarded as an authoritative source that is beyond dispute. The scholars of Bashrah were highly selective in utilising data from the Qur'an, taking into account aspects of qirā'āt and context. Mutawatir hadiths occupy the second position after the Qur'an, although their use is not as extensive as that of the Qur'an due to issues regarding the authenticity of the isnād. Only hadiths whose authenticity is absolutely guaranteed are accepted as evidence. Classical Arabic poetry (syair) is the next important source, though with a high degree of selectivity. The Bashrah school only accepts poetry from Bedouin tribes considered to preserve the purity of the Arabic language, such as the Quraysh, Tamim, Qais, and Asad tribes. Poetry from tribes living on the borders or those influenced by non-Arabic languages is not accepted as evidence. Prose and expressions of eloquent Arabs also served as sources, but with strict criteria. Only expressions originating from native speakers considered eloquent were accepted.

This strict selection of sources reflects the Bashrah School's efforts to preserve the purity and consistency of Classical Arabic. They rejected linguistic forms deemed syaz (deviant) or inconsistent with the original purity of the Arabic language.

2. The Rational Approach (Qiyas) as the Primary Method

The most distinctive feature of the epistemology of the Bashrah School is the dominance of the rational approach through Qiyas (analogy). For the scholars of Bashrah, Qiyas is not merely an auxiliary tool, but the primary method for establishing and expanding the rules of nahwu.

This method of analogy operates on the principle that a rule established based on abundant data (kathrah) can be applied to new cases sharing the same 'illat (cause). Through this approach, the Bashrah School succeeded in creating a coherent, logical, and predictive system of grammar. The rational character of the Bashrah approach is reflected in the principle that rare examples (نَادِرٌ) cannot serve as evidence for establishing general rules. If a linguistic form deviates from established analogy, it is considered an exception (شَاذٌّ) and is not used as a basis for forming new rules (Harianto, 2018). Sibawaih, as a central figure of the Bashrah School, demonstrates remarkable consistency in applying the method of analogy in his work (Al- Kitab). Every rule he formulates is based on a careful analysis of linguistic data and rigorous analogical reasoning.

3. Methodological Characteristics of the Bashrah School

The methodological characteristics of the Bashrah School can be identified as follows Systematic: The scholars of Bashrah organised the rules of grammar within a structured and hierarchical framework. They clearly distinguished between the discussion of words (*kalimah*), sentences (*jumlah*), and utterances with a clear systematics. Rigorous and Prescriptive: The Bashrah School tended to establish binding (prescriptive) rules based on logical consistency. They placed greater emphasis on how language ought to be used rather than how it is practised in its various forms. Based on Ta'lil: Every rule must have a logical 'illat (cause) that can be explained. This ta'lil approach gives Bashrah grammar a strong philosophical dimension. Prioritising Numerous Examples: Rules are established solely on the basis of frequently occurring phenomena (kathrah), whilst rare phenomena (nādir) are disregarded (Harianto, 2018).

4. Critical Analysis of the Bashrah Approach

The systematic and rational approach developed by the Bashrah School has significant advantages in establishing Arabic grammar as a coherent discipline that can be studied in a structured manner. The method of analogy enables learners to generalise rules from known cases to new ones, thereby facilitating the learning process.

However, this approach also has its weaknesses. The tendency to disregard rare phenomena and forms that do not align with analogy can lead to the loss of the linguistic diversity that actually exists in the Arabic language. An overly prescriptive stance sometimes forces linguistic reality into a logical framework that does not always represent actual language practice.

The Epistemological Foundations of the Kufahn School in the Science of Grammar

The Kufahn School developed in the city of Kufah, which from the outset possessed scholarly characteristics distinct from those of Bashrah. Kufahn epistemology is more open, flexible, and grounded in linguistic reality as found in society.

1. A Broader and More Flexible Range of Knowledge Sources

In contrast to Bashrah's strict selectivity, the Kufahn School utilised more diverse and inclusive sources of knowledge, namely: the Qur'an remained the primary source, but with a more open approach to variations in recitation (qira'at). This is inseparable from the fact that Kufah was a centre for the study of Qur'anic recitation (qira'at), which emphasised the importance of transmission (*naql*) and the diversity of authentic recitations. Hadith were utilised more extensively by the scholars of Kufah, including ahad hadith, as Kufah was also a significant centre of hadith scholarship. Arabic poetry and prose were accepted from various sources, not limited to specific Bedouin tribes. Kufah was more open to variations in Arabic dialects, including those developed in border regions. Variations in Arabic dialects were a key concern for the scholars of Kufah. They not only accepted the Quraysh dialect but also considered other dialects spoken among Arabic speakers.

This more inclusive approach reflects the socio-cultural reality of Kufah, which was more heterogeneous than Bashrah. From the outset, Kufah was a city inhabited by various ethnic groups and tribes, resulting in greater exposure to linguistic diversity (Hamid, 2011).

2. The Empirical Approach: Prioritising Samā' over Qiyas

The most distinctive feature of Kufahn epistemology is the dominance of an empirical approach that prioritises sama' (linguistic tradition) over Qiyas. For the scholars of Kufah, language is a living reality within society, not merely a logical construct. The main principle of the Kufahn School is that "the correct language must be as narrated by its speakers, however unusual that narration may be".(Harianto, 2018b) This is a very strong epistemological statement: linguistic reality takes precedence over logical consistency. Al-Kissa'i, the founder of the Kufahn School, is known to have travelled directly into the Arabian interior to collect linguistic data from Bedouin tribes. He did not rely solely on existing texts, but conducted field research to capture the living and natural Arabic language.

This approach makes the Kufahn School more descriptive than prescriptive. They describe language as it is, not as it ought to be according to a particular logical construct. Al-Farra', Al- Kissa'i's principal disciple, emphasised that when an expression corresponds to its meaning in the linguistic practice of the Arabs, that expression is considered correct, without needing to be forced into a specific framework of analogy.

3. Methodological Characteristics of the Kufahn School

The methodological characteristics of the Kufahn School can be summarised as follows: Flexible and Adaptive: The rules of nahwu are not rigid but can be adapted to the linguistic realities encountered . Descriptive: The primary focus is on describing linguistic phenomena as they are, rather than establishing rules based on logic alone. Based on Tradition: The method of samā' (tradition) is prioritised over Qiyas (analogy). Open to Variation: The diversity of dialects and rare forms (nawadir) is acknowledged and taken into account in the formulation of rules. Respect for *'Urf* (Linguistic Custom): Common linguistic practices in society are accepted as an authoritative source.

4. Analysis of the Kufahn Approach

The Kufah School's empirical and descriptive approach excels at capturing the true linguistic reality. Their flexibility allows for accommodation of the diversity of dialects and living linguistic forms within society. This approach better reflects the nature of language as a dynamic social phenomenon. However, this approach also has its weaknesses. The lack of a strict systematic framework sometimes makes the Kufahn rules appear inconsistent. The attitude of accepting almost all traditions, including those that are syaz, has the potential to blur the line between what is eloquent and what is not.

Analysis of Epistemological Differences between the Bashrah and Kufahn Schools

The differences between the Bashrah and Kufahn schools cannot be understood merely as technical disputes, but rather as manifestations of fundamental epistemological differences. The following is a comparative analysis of various epistemological aspects:

1. Differences in the Sources and Validity of Knowledge

Aspect	Bashrah School	Kufah School
Primary sources	The Qur'an, mutawatir hadith, certain Bedouin poetry	The Qur'an, hadith (including ahad), poetry from various sources, prose, dialects
Selection of sources	Highly selective and strict	More flexible and inclusive
Attitude towards syaz	Rejected or set aside	Accepted as part of linguistic reality

The Bashrah school established a strict hierarchy of sources with clear criteria. Only those sources considered the purest and most authoritative were accepted. Conversely, the Kufah school believed that the correct language is that used by its speakers, without excessive filtering.

This difference reflects a difference in criteria of truth: Bashrah uses coherence (logical consistency) as its primary criterion, whilst Kufah uses correspondence (conformity with reality) as its primary criterion.

2. Differences in Reasoning Methods: Rational vs Empirical

The most fundamental difference between the two schools lies in the methods of reasoning employed:

Aspects of Reasoning	The Bashrah School (Rational-Deductive)	Kufah School (Empirical-Inductive)
Primary Method	Qiyās (analogy)	Samā' (narration)
Direction of reasoning	From general principles to particular cases (deductive)	From particular data to generalisation (inductive)
Priority	Logical consistency over empirical variation	Linguistic reality over logical consistency
Attitude towards variation	Rejected; considered syādz	Accepted as linguistic richness
Distinctive theory	Systematic 'āmil theory; taqdir	Accepts nawādir without complex taqdir

This methodological difference is clearly reflected in the famous debate between Sibawayh, representing the Bashrah school, and al Kisā'ī, one of the most prominent scholars of the Kufah tradition, in the event commonly known as Mas'alat al Zanbūriyyah (The Hornet Question). This debate is frequently cited in the history of Arabic grammar as an illustration of the contrasting methodological orientations of the two schools. The discussion took place in the presence of the influential Abbasid vizier Yaḥyā ibn Khālid al Barmakī, who played an important role in adjudicating the dispute. The central issue concerned the grammatical acceptability of a particular linguistic construction, and the disagreement ultimately highlighted broader differences regarding linguistic evidence, analogy, and the authority of native Arabic usage in grammatical reasoning.(Al-Anbari, 2003)

I used to think that the scorpion's sting was more painful than that of the wasp, but it turns out to be the wasp

Sibawaih argued that the correct form, by analogy, was fima huwa hiya'', whilst al-Kissa'I argued that the correct form was fima huwa iyāha'', based on a tradition from the Bedouins. When al-Kissa'i was supported by four Bedouins (who were later found to have been bribed), he was declared the winner.

Although al-Kissa'i 'won' this debate due to external factors, this incident clearly illustrates a difference in approach: Sibawaih upheld logical consistency (huwa hiya, where hiya is the predicate in the nominative case), whilst al-Kissa'i followed linguistic tradition as it
stood (huwa iyyāhā with the accusative pronoun).

3. Differences in the Method of Establishing Grammar Rules

The epistemological difference between the Bashrah and Kufah schools has a direct impact on how the two schools establish grammatical rules. The Bashrah school establishes rules based on generalisations drawn from a large body of linguistic data considered standard (kathrah al-samā'), and prioritises qiyās (analogy) in the formulation of grammatical rules. If a linguistic form deviates from the general rule, it is categorised as syaz and is not used as a basis for invalidating the established rule. Consequently, the Bashrah approach tends to be prescriptive and normative.(Asrina, 2016) Conversely, the Kufah school prioritises linguistic tradition (samā') and accepts a wider range of Arabic dialectal variations as a source of argumentation. If a linguistic form is found that differs from existing rules, they tend to expand or revise those rules to align with the linguistic data observed. Thus, the Kufah approach is more descriptive and empirical.(Nurhayati and Rudi, 2022) A concrete example of this difference can be seen in the issue of the '*amilal-tanazu*' (the competing agent). In the case of two consecutive verbs competing to act as the 'amil for the same subject, the Bashrah school holds that the second 'amil takes precedence, whilst the Kufah school holds that the first 'amil takes precedence.

This difference arises because the Bashrah School prioritises logical consistency: the verb closer to the subject has a greater right to affect it. Meanwhile, the Kufah School prioritises linguistic usage: in Arabic language practice, it is often found that the first verb plays a more significant role.

4. Relevance in the Context of Contemporary Arabic Language Learning

The epistemological difference between Bashrah and Kufah remains relevant to the learning of modern Arabic, particularly in the context of pedagogy within Islamic educational institutions. Some practical implications are as follows: Firstly, for beginners, the systematic and structured Bashrah approach is easier to follow. Clear and consistent rules help learners build a solid foundation. Secondly, for advanced learners, an understanding of the flexible Kufah approach helps learners realise that Arabic possesses a natural diversity. Not all forms that do not conform to standard rules are 'wrong'. Thirdly, in the teaching of Qur'anic recitations (qira'at), the Kufahn approach, which values variation, is highly relevant, as recitations are inherently diverse and cannot be forced into a single system. Fourthly, as noted by researchers, teaching the differences between these two schools is best suited to higher education, whilst at secondary school level it may confuse students who are new to the Arabic language.(Chaqoqo, 2004) Fifthly, the development of modern nahwu, which places greater emphasis on communicative and pedagogical aspects, needs to take into account the epistemological legacy of these two schools. An integrative approach that draws on the systematic strengths of the Bashrah school and the flexibility of the Kufah school will result in a more effective nahwu pedagogy.

B. The Transformation of the Classical Nahwu Paradigm and the Epistemological Response through the Dialectic of the Bashrah and Kufah Schools

Analysis of the Classical Nahwu Paradigm

The classical nahwu paradigm is built upon a distinctive epistemological foundation, which distinguishes it from other academic disciplines. The main characteristics of classical nahwu lie in three main pillars: sama' (linguistic tradition), qiyas (analogy), and the authority of Fusha Arabic. These three pillars form a complementary framework whilst simultaneously becoming a field of debate in later times.

'*Sama'* as a primary source refers to the collection of linguistic data from authentic sources such as the Qur'an, hadith, classical Arabic poetry, and Fusha prose, which are considered to represent the purity of the Arabic language.(Team, 2020) Classical grammarians, particularly those from Bashrah, established strict criteria regarding the authenticity of 'sama' sources. Sibawaih, for instance, accepted linguistic data only from Bedouin tribes, who were deemed to preserve the purity of their language due to their isolation from external influences. The authority of Fusha served as the vanguard in distinguishing between expressions that were eloquent (*fasih*) and those that were deviant (*shaz*).

Meanwhile, qiyas served as a tool of reasoning to extend grammatical rules from limited data to new cases not found in primary sources. This method of analogy enabled nahwu to develop into a coherent and predictive system. The scholars of Bashrah were known for their strict application of qiyas, whilst the scholars of Kufah were more lenient and tended to allow for linguistic forms that did not always align with strict analogy.

Interestingly, the classical nahwu paradigm is also rich in philosophical and theological approaches. The methods of ta'lil (causation) and ta'wil (interpretation) employed demonstrate that nahwu is not merely descriptive, but also prescriptive and imbued with rational considerations.(Team, 2020) This gives classical nahwu a philosophical-ideological-prescriptive character, in which rules are constructed not only on the basis of linguistic facts, but also on considerations of logic and specific theological beliefs.

The Dialectic of the Bashrah and Kufah Schools: The Roots of Methodological and Epistemological Differences

The differences between the Bashrah and Kufah schools cannot be reduced merely to technical disputes over certain issues of furu', but stem from fundamental differences in epistemological approaches to language. These differences reflect two major poles in the philosophy of science: rationalism and empiricism.

The Bashrah School, pioneered by figures such as Sibawaih and al-Khalil bin Aḥmad al- Farahidi, placed qiyas and ta'lil at the centre. This approach reflects a rationalist tendency that emphasises the importance of logical consistency in establishing rules. For the scholars of Bashrah, rules must be established on the basis of numerous examples and examples that are few in number (nadir) cannot be used as evidence or, at the very least, are considered to be something syaz (deviant).(Harianto, 2018)

This rationalist Bashrahn approach is reflected in the way they treated the concepts of 'āmil (factor) and i'rab. They developed a systematic theory of factors, in which every change in the final sound of a word must be explained by a clear factor that can be logically analysed. The method of taqdir (inference) they employed, as seen in their debate with Al-Kissa'i, was an effort to maintain logical consistency, even if it sometimes appeared forced.(Adib, 2025)

In contrast, the Kufahn School, pioneered by figures such as Al-Kissa'i and al-Farra', placed greater emphasis on an empirical approach based on tradition. This school emerged in the city of Kufah, which was a centre for the study of qira'at (recitations of the Qur'an), a tradition that placed great emphasis on naql (transmission) and talaqqi (direct instruction from a teacher).(Hasyim, 2014) In the tradition of qirā'āt, one cannot establish a

particular recitation based on logic alone, but must rely on a chain of transmission (*sanad*) that extends back to the Prophet.

The influence of this qirā'āt tradition shaped the epistemological character of the Kufahn School, making it more open to linguistic diversity. For the scholars of Kufah, the correct language is that which is narrated by its speakers, however rare the narration may be.(Harianto, 2018) They were not as strict as Bashrahh in selecting data from sama' and were more willing to use rare forms as the basis for establishing grammatical rules. This approach reflects an empiricism that prioritises observational data (waq'i al-lughah) over logical constructions.

This methodological difference results in concrete differences on a number of grammatical issues. In the case of the subject (fa'il), for example, Bashrah rejects the possibility of a phrase (kalimat) functioning as a subject and prefers to use taqdir (implication), whilst Kufah explicitly accepts phrases as subjects based on the linguistic reality they observe.(Hasyim, 2014) Similarly, regarding the maf'ūl, Bashrah considers the verb alone sufficient to establish naṣab, whilst Kufah requires the presence of both the verb and the subject.

Paradigm Shift: From Conflict to Synthesis

The dialectic between the Bashrah and Kufah schools gave rise to a significant paradigm shift in the development of the science of grammar. This process did not stop at debates over furū', but extended to fundamental aspects such as the method of establishing rules, the flexibility of interpretation, and the epistemological construction of the science of grammar itself.

The most fundamental transformation occurred in the method of establishing legal principles. Whilst in the early phase Bashrah and Kufah held diametrically opposed positions, subsequent developments showed a tendency towards synthesis. Later schools, such as the Baghdad School, sought to strike a balance by adopting the methodological strengths of both schools. Figures such as Ibn al-Anbari, in his book "al-Inṣaf fi Masa'il al-Khilaf", systematically compared and evaluated the differences between the two schools with a more moderate approach.(Harianto, 2018)

This transformation also gave rise to greater interpretative flexibility. The tension between the rationalist approach of Bashrah and the empirical approach of Kufah encouraged grammarians not to become trapped in one extreme. The acceptance of linguistic diversity and the recognition of the limits of qiyas became hallmarks of the development of nahwu following the Abbasid Caliphate. Ibn Malik, for instance, in his "Alfiyyah", demonstrated an eclecticism that drew from various schools, not merely adhering to Bashrah.

Conceptually, this transformation shifted the orientation of nahwu from merely 'ilm al- 'arabiyyah (the science of the Arabic language) towards the more comprehensive 'ilm al- lughah al-'arabiyyah (Arabic linguistics). This change has implications for the purpose of studying nahwu: it is no longer merely about avoiding lahn (grammatical errors), but also about understanding the nature and structure of language in greater depth.

Epistemological Response: The Institutionalisation of Debate and Methodological Enrichment

The debate between Bashrah and Kufah made a fundamental contribution to the development of the epistemology of nahwu. The epistemological response that emerged can be seen in three main aspects: the validity of sources, methods of reasoning, and the construction of knowledge.

Firstly, regarding the validity of sources, the dialectic between the two schools prompted a more systematic elaboration of the criteria for the authenticity of linguistic data. Bashrah, with its strictness, and Kufah with its flexibility, compelled subsequent scholars to formulate the hierarchical levels of sources (maratib al-masadir). The

Qur'an is placed as the highest source, followed by mutawatir hadith, classical poetry, and prose, with varying degrees of authenticity.

Secondly, in terms of methods of reasoning, this debate spurred the development of the science of usul al-nahw, which ran parallel to usul al-fiqh. Methods such as ijma' (consensus), istiḥsān (preference), and istishab (legal continuity), which were originally known in usul al-fiqh, began to be adopted and adapted within nahwu.(Holilulloh, 2020) This demonstrates that nahwu did not develop in isolation, but through an intensive dialogue with other Islamic disciplines.

Thirdly, the construction of nahwu as an autonomous discipline was also reinforced through this epistemological response. The use of terms such as 'illah (cause), ta'lil (causation), and taqdir (estimation) indicates that nahwu had developed a complex conceptual apparatus. Tammām Ḥassān, a modern Arab linguist, even acknowledges that although classical nahwu has distortions in its focus on 'amil-ma'mul and i'rab, the logical constructs it established still possess significant scientific value.(Team, 2020)

Based on these three aspects, it can be analysed that the dialectic between the Bashrah and Kufah schools played a crucial role in maturing the epistemology of the science of nahwu. Debates regarding the validity of sources led to the emergence of a more systematic hierarchy of linguistic sources; differences in reasoning methods gave rise to the development of usul al-naḥw, which strengthened the methodological foundations of grammar; whilst the development of concepts such as 'illah, ta'lil, and taqdir affirmed the autonomy of nahwu as a discipline possessing its own conceptual apparatus and theoretical framework. Thus, the differences in perspective between Bashrah and Kufah not only produced a diversity of rules but also became a key factor in the formation of nahwu as a science possessing valid sources, a methodology of reasoning, and a mature scientific structure.

Contemporary Relevance: Reflecting on the Legacy of Dialectics for Modern Arabic Language Learning Modern Arabic

The paradigm shift resulting from the Bashrah-Kufah dialectic holds profound relevance for the teaching of Modern Arabic, particularly within the context of nahwu pedagogy in contemporary Islamic educational institutions. This relevance can be analysed across several dimensions.

Firstly, in the context of developing teaching materials, an understanding of the methodological differences between the two schools of thought provides an awareness that no single approach is entirely superior. The need to develop pedagogical nahwu suited to the characteristics of non-Arab learners, such as in Indonesia, requires careful selection and adaptation from the classical nahwu tradition.(Nashrullah, 2020) The Kufahn descriptive approach, which is more open to linguistic realities, can serve as inspiration for simplifying grammatical rules, whilst the logical consistency of the Bashrahn school remains essential for building systematic understanding.

Secondly, in teaching practice, the dialectic between the two schools highlights the importance of a balance between reasoning (*'aql*) and transmission (*naql*). Nahwu instruction that over-emphasises the memorisation of rules without logical understanding (*ta'lil*) will produce rigid learners, whilst that which over-emphasises reasoning without an adequate foundation of linguistic data risks deviating from fusha. The integration of these two approaches is key to the success of nahwu pedagogy.

Thirdly, from a broader perspective, the study of the epistemological dialectic between Bashrah and Kufah contributes to the development of a modern nahwu that is more responsive to the changing times. Modern linguists such as Ibrāhim Mustafa, who simplified the theory of *i'rab* from three to two categories, are in fact continuing the spirit of paradigm shift initiated by the classical debates.(Holilulloh, 2020) Criticism of classical

nahwu, which was considered too philosophical and prescriptive, has led to efforts to develop a more scientific, descriptive, and educational form of nahwu.(Team, 2020)

The teaching of Arabic in Indonesian Islamic educational institutions, which is often fixated on classical texts such as al-Ajurrumiyyah and Alfiyyah, actually has scope to embrace this transformative spirit. The understanding that classical nahwu itself emerged from a dynamic dialectic should encourage a critical and creative attitude, rather than mere blind imitation. As demonstrated by research on Spiritual Nahwu in Salafi pesantren, the reinterpretation of nahwu as a medium for the formation of ethics and spirituality shows that this scholarly tradition still possesses extraordinary vitality and flexibility.(Rohman, Maksum, and Wargadinata, 2025)

The study of nahwu in Indonesian Islamic educational institutions needs to be understood as a dynamic scholarly tradition, not merely a collection of rules to be memorised. The awareness that classical nahwu emerged through a process of intellectual dialectic should encourage students to adopt a critical, reflective, and innovative approach to understanding the Arabic language. Furthermore, the reinterpretation of nahwu from a spiritual perspective demonstrates that this discipline functions not only as a linguistic tool but also as a means of character formation and the cultivation of ethical values. Therefore, the teaching of nahwu must be developed contextually to remain relevant to the needs of contemporary Islamic education.

C. Implications of Classical Nahwu for the Development of Contemporary Arabic Linguistic Studies

Theoretical Implications

The legacy of classical epistemology continues to exert a significant influence on modern Arabic linguistic theory, albeit through a complex dialectic between tradition and renewal. The classical debate between the schools of Bashrah and Kufah, which reached its zenith in the monumental debate between Imam Sibawaih and Imam Al-Kisa'i, is not merely a historical footnote but remains relevant in contemporary linguistic discourse. This debate, known as the Al-Zanbur case, demonstrates how methodological differences (Bashrah with its analogical rationalism and Kufah with its sima'i empiricism) have shaped the way linguists view language structure to this day.(Adib, 2025) Nevertheless, the political climate and sectarian fanaticism (ta'ashub) that influenced the character of nahwu in each region during the classical period also serve as a valuable lesson regarding the necessity of independence in the development of knowledge.(Kojin, 2013)

Fundamental concepts such as qiyas (analogy), *ta'lil* (grammatical causality), and 'amil (operational factor) remain hotly debated topics within the modern linguistic perspective. On the one hand, reformist figures such as Ibrahim Musthafa, through his work "Ihya' al-Nahwi", levelled sharp criticism at the complexity of classical theory, particularly the concept of "*'amil*" and the "*i'rab*" system, which were deemed overly speculative and confusing, whilst offering a profound transformation towards a more functional and communicative approach.(Attila Rifiananda et al., 2025) On the other hand, thinkers such as Thamam Hassan have sought to transform classical nahwu into a modern paradigm whilst retaining its traditional roots, for instance through a critique of the traditional word classification (noun, verb, particle), which is deemed too broad and insufficiently responsive to the complexities of contemporary language. Efforts to link classical Arab theorists such as Sibawaih with modern functional linguistics (such as the Prague School or Halliday) represent a promising new trend, in which the concepts of al-'amal and functional structure in Sibawaih's Kitab are re-examined using a modern linguistic framework.(Nurmasyitah et al., 2025)

Developments in modern linguistics do not negate the relevance of classical nahwu, but rather encourage the reinterpretation and reconstruction of its fundamental concepts. The critique put forward by Ibrahim Musthafa highlights the need to simplify and functionalise nahwu theory to better suit the needs of modern

language learning. Meanwhile, Thamam Hassan's efforts emphasise that the renewal of nahwu need not sever ties with classical tradition, but can be achieved through the adaptation of concepts and methodologies. Thus, the dialogue between classical nahwu and modern linguistics serves as a vital means of ensuring the continuity and enhancing the relevance of nahwu studies within a contemporary linguistic context.

Methodological Implications

The contribution of the classical heritage to the development of contemporary Nahwu teaching methods is evident in various innovations that seek to bridge tradition and modern needs. The Al-Fuadi method, for example, is a breakthrough in nahwu learning that addresses the classical difficulties in understanding the '*kitab kuning*' through a systematic and practical approach. What is interesting about this method is the 'reverse' approach employed : its authors first created a practical resource in the form of the Mushaf Quran Nahwu Al-Fuadi, and only then formulated its methodology.(Admin, 2025) This demonstrates that methodological innovation does not necessarily mean abandoning tradition, but can instead utilise classical texts (the Qur'an) as contextual learning materials. Testimonials that this method enables junior secondary students to analyse sentences within Qur'anic verses in just one month prove the effectiveness of an approach responsive to the needs of contemporary learners.

The relevance of the typology of nahwu—ta'limi (educational), 'ilmi (scientific), and qur'ani (Qur'anic)—in curriculum development is becoming increasingly important to understand distinctly. Epistemological discussions regarding modern nahwu emphasise the need to draw a clear distinction between classical nahwu, which has direct relevance to the theological aspects of Islam, and modern nahwu, which places greater emphasis on communicative and pedagogical aspects. With regard to sacred texts of a classical nature, such as the Qur'an and Hadith, the process of understanding is only possible by utilising classical grammar, as these texts present more philosophical aspects than prescriptive- descriptive ones. Meanwhile, for the purpose of learning Arabic as a language of communication, modern grammar with its functional approach becomes more relevant.(Luthfi, 2020) This realisation opens up opportunities for the synergistic integration of classical and modern approaches, whereby Arabic language research offers three fundamental steps: a proportional correction of assumptions regarding traditional and modern concepts of truth, the synergistic repositioning of research methods, and the integration of innovative research methods.

Philosophical Implications

Nahwu is not merely grammar, but a mirror of the epistemology and holistic worldview of Islam. The interconnection between the science of nahwu and all disciplines within Islam (*fiqh, hadith, tafsir*, and even *tasawwuf*) demonstrates that nahwu functions as a fundamental instrument in uncovering the exoteric meanings within religious texts. Furthermore, the Sufi tradition of nahwu, as developed by *al-Qushayri* in his work "*Nahw al-Qulub"*, demonstrates that nahwu possesses the flexibility to engage with various scholarly approaches, wherein nahwi rules are interpreted esoterically without departing from the conventional scholarly systematics of nahwu. In this work, *al-Qushayri* employs the epistemological concept of 'irfani (intuitive-spiritual) reasoning when revealing the esoteric meanings of grammatical rules, whilst for the systematic exposition he continues to use bayani (textual-analytical) reasoning. This demonstrates that between sharia and reality, between the formal and spiritual aspects, there is an interconnection and they cannot be separated within the Islamic worldview.

The urgency of a critical-historical approach in the study of Arabic is becoming increasingly prominent amidst contemporary dynamics. The critical thought of Ibn Madha' al- Qurthubi, for example, which rejects the concepts of ushul al-nahwi such as qiyas, 'amil, ta'lil, and ta'wil, opens up space for the freedom of reason to express itself in the quest to uncover meanings not explicitly stated in the text.(Faisol, 2009) His critique of concepts

regarded as interpretative mental constructs in laying the foundations of the Arabic language demonstrates that the classical nahwu tradition actually possesses a rich internal dynamic, including a tradition of self-criticism. A critical-historical approach allows us to see that nahwu, like other academic disciplines, continues to evolve in response to the context of the times without losing its traditional roots.

Challenges and Opportunities for Revitalisation

The dominance of certain paradigms in contemporary nahwu teaching faces increasingly sharp criticism. The complexity of classical theory, particularly the concept of *'amil*, the *i'rab* system, and the analogical approach deemed overly speculative, has become the primary target of reform.(Attila Rifiananda et al., 2025) In Indonesia, for instance, complaints about the difficulty of studying nahwu have persisted for a long time, as acknowledged by the Regent of Kebumen when recalling his experience studying *tamyiz* at a pesantren some 15 years ago.(Admin, 2025) Responses to these challenges have given rise to various methodological innovations, such as the Al- Fuadi method, which has been adopted not only in Indonesia but also in Malaysia and Singapore, with its intellectual property rights donated for the benefit of all Muslims. Nevertheless, concerns that the renewal of nahwu will alter Muslims' understanding of the sacred texts and undermine the scholarly authority of Islam remain a resistance that needs to be overcome through healthy epistemological dialogue.(Luthfi, 2020)

The prospects for developing a nahwu responsive to the needs of the times are wide open through the integration of classical heritage and modern linguistics. At the ontological level, a proportional correction is required to the assumptions of traditional and modern concepts of truth: *i'tiqadi* (doctrinal) and *syar'i* (legal) truth in Arabic language research must continue to employ both aqliyyah (scientific-rational inquiry) and naqliyyah (transformative contemplation) methods, whilst at the waqi'iy level (scientific facts and proficiency) deductive-inductive scientific methods may be employed. This radical fundamental approach is grounded in the recognition of the importance of scientific discovery in the field of Arabic as a mabda'iy (ideological) language, which serves as one of the pillars shaping a better civilisation. The transformation of classical nahwu into a modern form, as developed by Thamam Hassan, demonstrates that nahwu must be dynamic in accordance with the needs of the times, whilst remaining grounded in the foundations laid by our predecessors.(Nurmasyitah et al., 2025) Thus, the revitalisation of nahwu does not mean abandoning tradition, but rather reviving it within a new context so that it remains relevant and functional.

CONCLUSION

This study has achieved its objectives concerning the analysis of the epistemological transformation of nahwu from the basra school to the kufa school. The first objective, namely to identify the epistemological foundations of the two schools and the roots of their differences, was addressed through the finding that the basra school developed a systematic and rational grammatical framework based on qiyas and taʿlil, whereas the kufa school adopted a more empirical orientation that was relatively open to linguistic variation and actual language use. These differences were not merely technical or methodological but reflected distinct assumptions regarding the sources and validation of linguistic knowledge.

The second objective, namely to analyse the transformation of the classical nahwu paradigm through the lens of thomas kuhn's theory of paradigm shift, was addressed by demonstrating that the dialectic between the basra and kufa traditions generated intellectual tensions that may be interpreted as anomalies within the dominant grammatical paradigm. These tensions encouraged the emergence of alternative epistemological perspectives and contributed to the development of subsequent grammatical traditions, particularly the baghdad

school, which incorporated elements from both approaches. This finding indicates that the history of nahwu was characterised not only by continuity but also by processes of intellectual adaptation and epistemological renewal.

The third objective, namely to examine the relevance of classical nahwu epistemology for contemporary arabic linguistic studies, was addressed through the finding that both traditions continue to offer valuable insights for modern scholarship. The systematic reasoning of the basra school remains important as a theoretical foundation for grammatical analysis, while the empirical orientation of the kufa school provides useful perspectives for approaches that emphasise linguistic data, language variation, and contextual language use. The integration of these two traditions therefore offers a broader framework for understanding the development of arabic linguistic thought in contemporary contexts.

This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that the debate between the basra and kufa schools can be understood not only as a grammatical dispute but also as an epistemological transformation within the history of arabic linguistic thought. The findings support the view that the classical tradition of nahwu possesses an internal capacity for intellectual development and adaptation that remains relevant to contemporary academic discussions.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. As a library research study, the analysis relies primarily on secondary sources and does not directly examine primary grammatical texts produced by scholars of the basra and kufa schools. Consequently, some interpretations remain dependent on existing scholarly reconstructions of the historical and epistemological development of nahwu. Future research is therefore encouraged to conduct direct textual analyses of primary nahwu works from both traditions in order to obtain a more detailed understanding of their epistemological assumptions and methodological practices. In addition, further studies may explore the practical application of kufa's empirical linguistic orientation in the design of corpus based arabic linguistic models and contemporary arabic language technologies. Such investigations would provide a valuable bridge between the classical intellectual heritage of nahwu and current developments in digital linguistics.

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