Pedagogical Approach to Developing Linguistic Competence through Contextual Semantics in Classical Texts

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of contextual semantic theory in the teaching of *Qirā'ah al-Kutub* as a means to strengthen students' linguistic competence. The approach emphasizes understanding word meanings (*mufradāt*) within social, cultural, and pragmatic contexts rather than focusing solely on grammatical structures. A descriptive-qualitative method was used, with data collected through questionnaires and interviews involving 10 students from the Islamic Family Law program who studied classical texts from *Fiqh al-Sunnah*. The findings indicate a significant improvement in meaning comprehension, learning motivation, and students' interpretative skills. Contextual semantics proved relevant for Arabic language education, especially in enhancing the ability to read and understand authentic texts. This research contributes to the development of context-based linguistic pedagogy in advanced Arabic language learning.
Keyword	Arabic language; classical texts; contextual semantics *Qirā'ah al-Kutub*; *mufradāt*

مستخلص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة فاعلية نظرية الدلالة السياقية في تعليم قراءة الكتب بوصفها وسيلة لتعزيز الكفاءة اللغوية لدى الطلاب. يركز هذا المنهج على فهم معاني المفردات في سياقاتها الاجتماعية والثقافية والبراغماتية، بدلاً من الاكتفاء بالبنية النحوية فقط. استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي النوعي، حيث جُمعت البيانات من خلال الاستبيانات والمقابلات مع عشرة طلاب من قسم الأحوال الشخصية الإسلامية الذين درسوا نصوصاً كلاسيكية من كتاب فقه السنة. وأظهرت النتائج تحسناً ملحوظاً في فهم المعاني، ودافعية التعلم، والمهارات التفسيرية لدى الطلاب. وتبيّن أن الدلالة السياقية ذات صلة كبيرة بتعليم اللغة العربية، لا سيما في تعزيز مهارة قراءة النصوص الأصيلة وفهمها. وتُسهم هذه الدراسة في تطوير التربية اللغوية المبنية على السياق في تعليم اللغة العربية المتقدم.

كلمات أساسية	قراءة الكتب، النظرية الدلالية السياقية، اللغة العربية، المفردات

INTRODUCTION

According to Masdar F. Mas'ud (Bisri Mustofa, Taa'ib Maghfur, 2024), one of the competencies of Islamic Higher Education graduates is Arabic language skills, minimum mastery of reading the book of turâts. This competency is necessary to independently study Islamic sciences contained in Arabic-language books or books written in Arabic script, which are masterpieces of classical scholars' thoughts written in a pre-modern format.

The ability to comprehend classical Arabic texts (*Qirâ'ah al-Kutub*) is an essential skill within the context of Islamic higher education. This skill serves as a foundational pillar for understanding classical Islamic scholarly literature, which encompasses various disciplines such as *fiqh*, *tafsir*, and family law. Mastery of *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* involves not only phonetic and grammatical aspects but also a deep, contextual understanding of meaning. In classical texts, vocabulary is often polysemous and subject to semantic shifts depending on its contextual usage. Thus, lexical mastery (*mufradât*) becomes a crucial element in the process of interpretation (Effendy, 2009) dan (Keraf, 2008).

One linguistic approach that can enrich the teaching strategy of *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* is the theory of contextual semantics. This approach emphasizes the meaning of words as they appear in actual usage, encompassing lexical, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects (Dâyah, 1985). This aligns with Wittgenstein's perspective that the meaning of a word is determined by its use in language (Wittgenstein, 1983). When reading classical Arabic texts, students are required to interpret word meanings based on *al-siyâq al-lughawî* (linguistic context), while also considering situational, emotional, and cultural factors (Umar, 1998).

Integrating contextual semantics into the teaching of *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* not only reinforces the linguistic dimension of textual interpretation but also opens up space for more adaptive and reflective pedagogical approaches. Students are not merely expected to understand words in a dictionary sense but are encouraged to think critically about meanings within specific contexts. This approach has the potential to enhance students' language awareness and equip them with more meaningful reading strategies.

Unfortunately, studies on the implementation of contextual semantic approaches in *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* instruction remain limited, particularly in the context of Arabic language learning in Islamic higher education institutions. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the contribution of contextual semantics as both a linguistic and pedagogical approach in developing the skill of reading classical Arabic texts.

This research seeks to explore the role of the contextual semantic approach in developing students' *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* skills in Islamic higher education, with a case study focused on the Islamic Family Law Study Program.

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions: (1)How is the contextual semantic approach implemented in *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* instruction?, (2) How does this approach influence students' understanding of *mufradât* within linguistic contexts?, (3) What are the pedagogical challenges and opportunities in applying contextual semantics in *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* instruction?

By emphasizing both linguistic and pedagogical dimensions, this study is expected to contribute to the development of Arabic language teaching methods that are more contextual, critical, and relevant to the needs of modern readers of classical Arabic texts. This study offers a novel perspective by integrating contextual semantics with reflective pedagogy, thereby addressing both the linguistic intricacy and interpretive demands of classical Arabic reading within modern academic settings.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at exploring in depth the application of contextual semantics in *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* instruction. The research was conducted within the Islamic Family Law Study Program at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, with a primary focus on instructional activities that emphasize the skill of reading classical Arabic texts. Although the institutional setting lies within the domain of Islamic law, this research is explicitly directed toward the linguistic and pedagogical aspects of Arabic language instruction.

The research subjects consisted of three lecturers and ten students who had taken the *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* course. Informants were selected purposively based on their active involvement in the teaching and learning process. Data were collected through participant observation in classroom settings, in-depth interviews to explore the informants' understanding and experiences related to the use of the contextual semantic approach, and documentation analysis of syllabi, teaching materials, and student assignments.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes the stages of data reduction, data display in narrative form, and drawing conclusions that link the findings to the theoretical framework of contextual semantics. Data validity was ensured through methodological and source triangulation, as well as member checking techniques with key informants. Additionally, a systematic audit trail was maintained to ensure transparency in the data analysis and interpretation processes.

Through this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the potential integration of contextual semantics as both a linguistic and pedagogical strategy in the teaching of *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub*.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Implementation of *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* Instruction through the Contextual Semantic Approach

The *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* instruction in the Islamic Family Law Study Program at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang demonstrates a significant integration between contextual semantic theory and the development of students' linguistic competence. This study utilized the chapter *al-Zawâj* from *Fiqh al-Sunnah* by Sayyid Sabiq as an authentic classical Arabic text source. The focus of instruction was not directed at the legal aspects of the text, but rather at its linguistic richness—especially in understanding the meanings of words based on their contextual usage. Hence, the scope of this study remains within the domain of Arabic language education and linguistics, without emphasizing the religious or legal content of the text. The selected material (the theme of marriage in *Fiqh al-Sunnah*) functions solely as a linguistic medium for developing students' semantic and contextual competence, not as a subject of *fiqh* or *sharī'ah* inquiry.

Theoretically, the contextual semantic approach is rooted in linguistic studies, particularly in the field of pragmatic semantics, which emphasizes the relationship between word meanings and their social, cultural, and emotional contexts. Within classical Arabic instruction, this approach enables a dynamic and context-sensitive analysis of meaning and offers a more comprehensive interpretative framework than traditional grammatical approaches.

Instructional activities emphasized the classification of *mufradât* into three primary categories: general or ambiguous terms (*al-Mujmalât*), words with potential multiple meanings (*al-Muhtamalât*), and explicitly defined terms (*al-Wâdhihât*). Students were guided to identify these categories through close reading of texts. For instance, terms such as *nikāḥ* (marriage), *walī* (guardian), and *mahr* (dowry) were analyzed based on the variation in meanings that emerged within different cultural and discursive contexts. This approach aimed to enhance students' linguistic awareness of ambiguity and semantic variation in classical texts.

Situational context was also employed as a pedagogical strategy for interpreting texts in ways relevant to contemporary social realities. Students were encouraged to understand how the meanings of words or terms in the texts may shift when applied in different communicative situations. Similarly, emotional

aspects such as love, responsibility, and justice were discussed to demonstrate how affective elements also shape meaning within the discourse of marriage.

Furthermore, cultural dimensions were used as a comparative lens. Students compared the practices reflected in the texts with local Indonesian cultural norms to explore how culture influences meaning interpretation. This activity reinforced the understanding that classical texts are not static entities but are dynamically engaged with evolving cultural and social values.

The implementation of this approach spanned the full instructional process—from lesson planning to evaluation. Learning materials were developed around themes with high semantic potential, and learning resources were supplemented with dictionaries, commentaries, and linguistic references. During the learning process, the approach was realized through group discussions, linguistic case studies, and contextual analysis assignments. Students were not only expected to read the texts but also to construct critical interpretations through lexical and pragmatic analysis.

The development of the syllabus and semester learning plans (RPS) explicitly reflected the integration of contextual semantic theory. Learning outcome indicators were designed to assess students' abilities to analyze *mufradât* contextually rather than merely lexically. This made the *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* instruction more interpretative and reflective, moving beyond rote memorization or repetition.

Comparison with Previous Studies

Observational data indicate that instructors implemented the contextual semantic approach progressively, beginning with the introduction of *mufradāt* in sentence-level contexts, followed by syntactic and pragmatic analysis. For instance, in interpreting the word ʿaqd in the chapter *al-Zawāj*, students were guided to distinguish its meaning in the context of Islamic jurisprudence on marriage from its general usage in modern Arabic, where it may refer to any contractual agreement. This strategy confirms the pedagogical value of contextual semantics in facilitating deeper lexical comprehension.

This finding aligns with the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model proposed by Johnson (2002), which asserts that learning becomes more meaningful when students are able to connect academic content with real-life experiences or relevant contexts. Johnson emphasizes that students achieve greater understanding when academic content is grounded in their personal, cultural, or situational experiences (Johnson, 2002, *Contextual Teaching and Learning*, Corwin Press).

Furthermore, interview results indicate a significant improvement in students' ability to understand vocabulary contextually. Rather than relying solely

on dictionary definitions, students began to pay attention to syntactic functions and semantic relations between words. For example, terms such as wilāyah, maḥram, and ṣadāq were no longer interpreted merely in a definitional sense, but analyzed within the framework of classical Islamic legal discourse. This supports the findings of Suharto (2016), who noted that contextual approaches foster *deep reading* and linguistic awareness in students engaging with classical Arabic texts.

Despite these strengths, several challenges were identified, including limited instructional time and the lack of structured learning materials supporting the contextual semantic approach. Nonetheless, these findings highlight the opportunity to develop teaching models centered on critical reading and context-sensitive vocabulary acquisition. This resonates with Ilyas and Sulkifli (2022), who emphasize the need for *recontextualization* of classical texts to enhance depth of understanding. They argue that classical Arabic texts should not merely be treated as linguistic artifacts but as culturally and historically situated discourses requiring reflective and holistic engagement.

The primary contributions of this approach lie in its linguistic and pedagogical dimensions:
(1) Enhancing students' semantic awareness in reading classical Arabic texts.
(2) Promoting lexical comprehension that encompasses not only denotative but also connotative and pragmatic meanings.
(3) Strengthening students' interpretative skills through engagement with authentic texts in real contexts.

These findings also reaffirm al-Harbi's (2020) assertion that comprehension of classical Arabic texts is more effective when interpreted through cultural and affective lenses rather than solely through structural analysis. Conversely, the structural-grammatical approach promoted by Mahfudz (2018) tends to confine comprehension to syntactic and morphological aspects, thereby limiting the scope of understanding.

Moreover, this study is consistent with Widdowson's (1990) work on foreign language pedagogy, which argues that understanding meaning in language learning should always be contextualized within the social and cultural backgrounds of its speakers. Therefore, the integration of contextual semantics into Qirâ'ah al-Kutub pedagogy aligns with contemporary trends in communicative and reflective language teaching.

In sum, this study confirms the effectiveness of the contextual semantic approach in enhancing students' linguistic competence in reading classical Arabic texts. It fills a significant gap in the literature, which has largely neglected the practical application of semantic theory in Qirâ'ah al-Kutub instruction within Islamic higher education contexts. Hence, this study contributes both

theoretically and pedagogically to the innovation of Arabic language education grounded in classical textual traditions and contextual linguistic awareness.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria for *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* Instruction Using the Contextual Semantic Approach

In *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* instruction that employs the contextual semantic approach, learning outcomes are not limited to lexical mastery of texts. Greater emphasis is placed on students' ability to interpret word meanings (*mufradât*) based on discursive, social, cultural, and emotional contexts. This instructional model also cultivates critical reading skills and nuanced comprehension of classical Arabic texts—moving beyond rigid, literal understandings.

The following table outlines the learning outcomes and their corresponding assessment indicators based on this approach:

Table 1. Learning Outcomes and Indicators for Qirâ'ah al-Kutub Using the Contextual Semantic Approach

No.	Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria (Indicators)
1	Contextual Vocabulary Comprehension	Students are able to identify key vocabulary within the *al-Zawâj* theme and explain its meaning contextually.
2	Lexical and Semantic Analysis	Students can classify vocabulary based on types of meaning (explicit, implicit, polysemous) and present linguistic analysis.
3	Analysis of Linguistic and Situational Context	Students are able to explain how sentence structure and situational context influence interpretation.
4	Emotional and Cultural Interpretation	Students can demonstrate how emotions and cultural values in the text shape the meaning of vocabulary.
5	Application of Contextual Semantic Theory	Students are able to apply contextual semantic theory in text interpretation and demonstrate understanding of the linguistic approach used.
6	Critical Reflection on the Learning Process	Students can produce reflective writing on the learning approach and its relevance in understanding classical texts linguistically.

These learning outcomes aim to assess the extent to which students are able to integrate contextual semantic theory in analyzing classical Arabic texts, as well as how they relate the discovered meanings to their social, cultural, and emotional contexts.

Instructional Process and Learning Stages

The instructional process implemented in *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* teaching using the contextual semantic approach is designed to ensure that students not only comprehend the text at a surface level, but also develop deeper linguistic analytical skills. The following steps are intended to enhance students' abilities in

reading, interpreting, and critically analyzing classical texts using a more contextual and reflective approach.

Table 2. Instructional Process and Learning Stages in Qirâ'ah al-Kutub Using the Contextual Semantic Approach

Steps	Process	Description
Introduction	Orientation and Overview	Explanation of the importance of *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* in Arabic language studies and an introduction to the contextual semantic approach.
	Introduction to the Text	Background of *Fiqh al-Sunnah* and the selection of the *al-Zawâj* chapter as linguistic teaching material.
	Group Formation	Students are divided into discussion groups for collaborative learning activities throughout the course.
Core Learning	Reading and Vocabulary Identification	Students read the text, identify key vocabulary (*mufradât*), and analyze it lexically.
	Contextual Semantic Analysis	Students analyze word meanings based on sentence structure, discourse, and the surrounding cultural context.
	Group Discussion	Each group discusses their analysis results and formulates a shared interpretation.
Integration and Presentation	Presentation of Findings	Students deliver oral presentations of their contextual analyses.
	Inter-Group Discussion	The instructor facilitates open discussion and clarification of each group's findings.
Conclusion	Reflection and Evaluation	Students write reflective essays and are given a quiz or follow-up assignments.
	Follow-Up	Recommendations for further reading texts and the development of contextual reading projects.

Active Learning Methods

The instructional methods employed in *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* aim to actively develop students' interpretive and linguistic analytical skills. A variety of pedagogical techniques, such as group discussions, case studies, and role-playing, are used to deepen students' understanding of classical Arabic texts through a contextual semantic approach.

Text Discussion and Analysis

Students engage in collective reading and discuss key vocabulary (*mufradât*) and its contextual usage.Each student is asked to provide their interpretation based on linguistic understanding, which is then debated in group settings.

Linguistic Case Studies and Role-Playing

Case studies highlight the ambiguity or richness of certain terms found in the text. Role-playing simulates contextual communication situations represented in the text.

Translation and Presentation

Students translate selected passages using the contextual semantic approach. The translated work is critically analyzed and presented in class to receive feedback from both the lecturer and peers.

Reflection and Evaluation

At the end of each session, students write reflective pieces on the challenges faced in contextual meaning interpretation. Evaluation focuses on the ability to apply the contextual semantic theory to textual interpretation.

Ongoing Assessment

Tests and quizzes are used to measure students' comprehension of contextual semantics. Continuous feedback is provided to enhance the learning process and deepen students' understanding.

Final Project

Students complete a final project consisting of a linguistic analysis of a selected passage from the *al-Zawâj* chapter using the contextual semantic framework. This project serves as a practical application of the linguistic competencies developed throughout the course.

The Contribution of *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* Learning Using a Contextual Semantic Approach
Learning Context and Linguistic Scope

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the contextual semantic approach in the teaching of *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* as part of a pedagogical strategy to enhance students' competence in reading classical Arabic texts from both linguistic and educational perspectives. The focus lies on the development of reading skills that emphasize the contextual understanding of lexical meanings, which is a key competence in advanced Arabic language acquisition.

The selected topic for this trial was the chapter on marriage (*Bâb al-Zawâj*) in *Fiqh al-Sunnah* by Sayyid Sabiq. However, the legal content of the text was not the main focus. Instead, the emphasis was placed on how the contextual semantic approach enhances students' linguistic understanding of classical Arabic text structures, particularly in terms of vocabulary (*mufradât*) and its contextual usage.

Learning Design and Implementation

The trial was conducted over five in-person sessions, each lasting 60 minutes. The instructional design focused on contextual lexical comprehension, semantic text analysis, and the application of meaning within social and cultural contexts. Learning activities were structured to cultivate students' semantic sensitivity in interpreting texts based on context rather than merely relying on grammatical structure.

Student Survey Results

Students' perceptions of the learning process were assessed through a questionnaire distributed to 10 students enrolled in the *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* course. Their responses were analyzed descriptively using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree). The results are summarized in the table below:

Table 3. Summary of Student Perceptions on the Contextual Semantic Approach in Qirâ'ah al-Kutub Learning

No	Assessment Component	Score 5	Score 4	Score 3	Score 2	Score 1	Total Score	Percentage	Category
1	I understand the text faster after learning through the contextual semantic approach.	7	3	–	–	–	47	94%	Very High
2	This approach makes me more interested in reading classical Arabic texts.	6	4	–	–	–	46	92%	Very High
3	I feel more capable of understanding vocabulary meaning in sentence contexts.	8	2	–	–	–	48	96%	Very High
4	My understanding of classical Arabic vocabulary improved after this learning	9	1	–	–	–	49	98%	Very High
5	The contextual semantic approach helps me understand the text more meaningfully.	5	5	–	–	–	45	90%	Very High
6	This approach is relevant to my needs in Arabic language learning.	8	2	–	–	–	48	96%	Very High

The results indicate that all aspects of the contextual semantic-based instruction received very high scores from students, with percentages ranging from 90% to 98%. This finding shows that the approach is well accepted and perceived as effective in improving students' linguistic abilities, particularly in understanding classical Arabic texts contextually. It also affirms the core principle

of the contextual semantic approach in linguistics: that the meaning of vocabulary cannot be separated from the context of the sentence and the overall discourse.

Student Interview Results

Qualitative data were obtained through interviews with the students participating in the trial. Below is a summary of the main findings:

Table 4. Summary of Student Responses

Aspect Asked	Summary of Student Responses
Ease of understanding the text	"This approach really helps in understanding the author's intent, not just the literal meaning of the words."
Change in perspective on classical Arabic texts	"It turns out that understanding Arabic texts isn't just about knowing syntax and morphology, but also about the context."
Improvement in contextual reading skills	"I feel more confident reading the text because I can understand its meaning in its entirety."
Relevance to Arabic language learning	"This method is really suitable for advanced Arabic language learning at university."

These findings reinforce the quantitative data, showing that the contextual semantic approach broadens students' reading skills, especially in linking the form of the language with culturally and situationally relevant meaning.

Looking ahead, this study opens several important avenues for further development. First, the integration of a contextual semantic approach into Qirâ'ah al-Kutub and other classical Arabic text courses should be more explicitly designed to enhance students' ability to interpret meaning not only grammatically but also contextually and discursively. Such integration enables learners to navigate the complexities of classical texts with greater semantic awareness.

This is particularly relevant to the exploration of denotative and connotative meanings, which fosters a deeper understanding of the lexical and pragmatic dimensions embedded in Arabic expressions. As Khairani and Susiawati (2024) highlight, semantic instruction that combines denotation and connotation equips students to critically interpret textual meaning within cultural and ideological frameworks. Expanding on this, Thayyibah and Susiawati (2025) demonstrate that a thematic semantic analysis approach facilitates structured comprehension of layered meanings, particularly in texts that intertwine theological, political, and ethical discourses.

From a pedagogical perspective, this semantic framework can inform the development of digital and contextual learning tools. For example, the Android-based app Mahir Baca Kitab (AARAVI) has proven effective in helping Islamic education students engage more critically with classical texts, providing accessible learning pathways beyond traditional classroom boundaries (Furdianto, 2021).

Moreover, the development of digital materials on Arabic grammar and semantics can further improve reading accuracy and interpretive skills. Mustofa, Ali, and Rosyidah (2025) provide empirical evidence that learners who use interactive digital tools grounded in nahwu and semantic theory show significant improvement in textual analysis and reading comprehension.

Finally, reflective engagement with classical texts must also account for the ideological underpinnings of linguistic traditions. As Rosyidah (2011) explains in her study of Ibn Maḍāʾ, Arabic grammar is not ideologically neutral—it reflects dynamics of power, theological debates, and political contexts. A contextual semantic model, therefore, should empower students not only to decode texts but also to critically interrogate the frameworks in which such texts were produced.

In conclusion, this research contributes to a forward-looking vision of Arabic language instruction that is semantically rich, digitally integrated, and critically reflective, aligning with the evolving pedagogical and epistemological needs of 21st-century learners.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that the application of contextual semantics theory in the teaching of *Qirâ'ah al-Kutub* significantly contributes to enhancing students' linguistic understanding of classical Arabic texts. This approach not only helps students comprehend texts more quickly and effectively, but also broadens their mastery of vocabulary in context. This allows students to interpret word meanings in more realistic communication situations, thus improving their ability to interpret classical Arabic texts. Additionally, the contextual semantics approach has successfully increased students' motivation and interest in learning Arabic, as the method is more communicative, reflective, and based on real language usage.From a linguistic perspective, this research reinforces the relevance of contextual semantics in the development of Arabic pedagogy. This approach teaches students to interpret meaning based on pragmatic and socio-cultural context, enriching and deepening their understanding of classical texts. Therefore, this approach offers a valuable alternative in Arabic language learning that is not solely focused on grammatical rules but also on the living meanings within the texts.

Looking forward, this study provides several directions for further development. First, the integration of the contextual semantics approach into the curriculum of Qirâ'ah al-Kutub and other classical Arabic text courses should be carried out more explicitly to strengthen students' semantic and pragmatic

competencies. Furthermore, for Arabic language instructors, this approach can serve as a reference for designing more contextual and applicable teaching strategies. Future research is also encouraged to broaden the range of themes used in texts and to develop a more comprehensive model for evaluating contextual understanding. The integration of this approach with digital learning technologies could also be a future focus for exploration. Overall, this research is expected to contribute to the development of Arabic language education that is more contextual, critical, and reflective, in line with the evolving academic and pedagogical needs of today.

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