

The Level of Uslub Al-Khobar and Al-Insya' Mastery among Arabic Language Students at Tertiary Education Level

Nik Nur Aqilah Rahim, Norhayati Che Hat

Center for Arabic Language Studies, Faculty of Language and Communications, Universiti
Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Malaysia.

Email: norhayatich@unisza.edu.my

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Abstract

Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya' are crucial to the composition and meaning of Arabic phrases. The purpose of this article is to determine students' perceptions and level of mastery of towards Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya', as well as the challenges they encounter when learning these Uslubs. The present research used a descriptive analysis approach by distributing questionnaires and tests to 50 semester 6th students in Arabic Language Studies. The findings of the research demonstrated that students had a moderate level of mastery over Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya', as well as a moderate level of perception regarding these Uslubs. This study proposes and outlines a number of measures and tactics to address the difficulties encountered while enhancing the degree of student proficiency in these Uslubs.

Keywords: Knowledge of Balaghah, Mastery, Perception, Uslub Al-Khobar, Uslub Al-Insya'.

Introduction

Balaghah or Arabic rhetoric is one of the important branches of linguistics in Arabic language studies. This knowledge or discipline helps students understand the meaning and correct use of language in various contexts. In Arabic literature, Balaghah is the main tool for appreciating the beauty of language and artistic expression contained in the verses of the Quran, hadith and also classical texts. In addition to comprehending the structure and beauty of Arabic texts, mastery of Balaghah is necessary to appreciate the profound meaning found in literary and religious texts (Al-Mansour, 2021). This demonstrates the significance of Balaghah in comprehending and valuing the diversity of Arabian culture and religion.

Balaghah or Arabic rhetoric is a part of knowledge that studies the best methods to convey meaning in an effective way and helps improve linguistic performance and the ability to influence others (Ibrahim, 2019). The knowledge of Ma'ani is one of the fields of study that

are included in Balaghah. The meaning of words and how they are used in sentences are the main topics of this knowledge (Kamal & Mustafa, 2022). Because words in sentences frequently change their meaning depending on the context in which they are used, it is crucial to comprehend the Ma'ani. A person who understands this knowledge aspect is better able to determine the precise meaning of expressions in particular sentences (Rahman & Hassan, 2023).

There are two main Uslubs studied under the knowledge of Ma'ani, namely Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya'. Uslub al-Khobar refers to speech that can be judged as true or false, while Uslub al-Insya' refers to speech that cannot be categorised as true or false as it is the creation of the person who utters it (Hassan & Abdullah, 2020). Applying different Arabic expressions correctly requires an understanding of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya' (Ali & Zulkifli, 2022). Especially in literary and religious contexts, the use of these two Uslubs is crucial for understanding the implicit meaning of speech and for clarifying the more nuanced meanings found in Arabic texts (Ismail, 2021).

The religious education system in Malaysia has long made Balaghah a subject that must be studied in educational institutions. The advancement of the national education system has coincided with the development of this study system. Balaghah is now one of the key elements of the Arabic language curriculum at the Secondary School Certificate (SPM) and Malaysian Higher Certificate of Education (STPM) levels thanks to an initiative by Malaysia's Ministry of Education. At the Malaysian Higher Certificate of Religion (STAM) level, Balaghah is taught as a specific subject, thus highlighting its continued importance in religious education (Mustaffa, 2023). Meanwhile, at the diploma and degree levels in the field of Arabic Language studies, Balaghah learning is expanded with a deeper exploration of the branches within this knowledge.

Although the subject of Balaghah has long been introduced in the Malaysian education system, the level of students' mastery in this field is still unsatisfactory. Previous studies have shown variations in the level of students' mastery in this subject. According to Samah and Ismail (2006), the level of students' mastery in Balaghah is weaker than other components of Arabic language studies. Lack of reference materials, ineffective teaching methods, and difficulty grasping the fundamental ideas of Balaghah are some of the primary causes of this issue. In addition, students also face challenges in applying Balaghah knowledge in wider situations, although they may obtain good results in theory tests. This phenomenon highlights the need for a more comprehensive and hands-on teaching strategy to enhance students' comprehension and proficiency in the Balaghah subject.

According to a study by Hasan and Ibrahim (2021), university students' proficiency in the Balaghah subject was likewise at a moderate level and did not significantly improve. Despite this, students nevertheless demonstrated a strong interest and expressed favourable opinion of learning Balaghah. The study concluded that despite the challenges in mastering Balaghah, students still appreciate the importance of this subject in their education. Therefore, the study suggested that teaching strategies that are more student-oriented and the use of relevant reference materials should be introduced to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process of Balaghah in institutions of higher learning.

Previous studies generally focused on Balaghah in its entirety. However, this study provides a different approach by focusing on specific topics, namely Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya'. This allows the study to be more detailed and specific towards certain aspects of Balaghah.

Research Objective

This study aims to assess the level of students' mastery and perception of the topics of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya' as well as identifying the challenges faced by students in mastering both topics.

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative case study design. This study uses a descriptive survey method to identify the level of perception, the level of students' mastery on the topics of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya' and the challenges faced by students in learning both topics. This study was conducted at the Faculty of Language and Communications, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Gong Badak Campus, Terengganu. The respondents involved in this study were randomly selected 50 semester 6 students under the Bachelor of Arabic Studies (With Honours) at UniSZA. Respondents were chosen because they had already studied both subjects during the previous semester.

The data was collected using quantitative approaches. Data were collected using surveys and specific exams. The questionnaire was developed from a study by Radzi et al. (2021) and modified to meet the needs of the study. The questionnaire included questions about students' perceptions of the topics of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya', as well as the challenges they faced while learning the topics. A five-point Likert scale was used to indicate the level of student agreement. The Likert scale was detailed as STS = Strongly Disagree, TS = Disagree, TP = Uncertain, S = Agree and SS = Strongly Agree. The data in this study were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software which involves descriptive statistics; namely mean, frequency and percentage. For data interpretation, this study was divided into three categories (Rudzi, 2003), as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Interpretation of Levels Based on Mean Scores

Mean Score	Interpretation of Level
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.67	Moderate
3.68 – 5.00	High

Special test instruments were used to answer research questions related to the level of students' mastery on the topics of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya'. The special test consisted of multiple-choice questions. Before examining the data with SPSS, the researcher divided the students' responses into two categories. There were two categories: correct and incorrect. The test was analysed descriptively, using frequency and percentage. Table 2 shows the frequency of correct responses as a percentage score to measure the level of students' mastery of the Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya' topics.

Mean Score	Interpretation Level
1-20	Very Poor
21-40	Poor
41-60	Moderate
61-80	Good
81-100	Excellent

Findings and Discussions

The following are the findings of a questionnaire regarding the level of perception and mastery of students on the topics of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya' as well as the challenges faced by students in mastering both topics.

Students' Perceptions on the Topics of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya'

Eight items were used to survey students' perceptions of the topics of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya'. Table 3 showed that students have a moderate perception for both topics with an average mean score of 3.67.

No	Item	Frequency					Mean	Level
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1.	Uslub Khobar and Insya' is an easy topic compared to others.	0	0	17 34%	24 48%	9 18%	3.84	High
2.	Uslub khobar and Insya' is important in understanding Arabic.	4 8%	4 8%	9 18%	17 34%	16 32%	3.74	High
3.	Understanding Uslub Khobar and Insya' helps in good communication.	1 2%	8 16%	10 20%	21 42%	10 20%	3.62	Moderate
4.	Interested in learning Uslub Khobar and Insya'.	2 4%	6 12%	10 20%	20 40%	12 24%	3.68	High
5.	Understanding the concept of Uslub Khobar and Insya'.	1 2%	3 6%	24 48%	16 32%	6 12%	3.46	Moderate
6.	Understanding Uslub Khobar and Insya' helps in understanding the message intended to convey.	0	3 6%	17 34%	18 36%	12 24%	3.78	High
7.	Applying Uslub Khobar and Insya' to convey information.	1 2%	3 6%	24 48%	15 30%	7 14%	3.48	Moderate
8.	Understanding Uslub Khobar and Insya' is the basis of good communication.	2 4%	5 10%	14 28%	19 38%	10 20%	3.60	Moderate
Overall Mean Value:						3.67	Moderate	

Based on the findings in Table 3, the study shows that four of the eight items of students' perceptions of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya' are at a high level, while the other four items are at a moderate level. The item that obtained the highest mean value was "Uslub Khobar and Insya' is an easy topic compared to others" with a mean value of 3.84. This was followed by the item "Understanding Uslub Khobar and Insya' helps in understanding the message intended to convey", which recorded a mean value of 3.78. This finding reflects students' awareness of the important role of Uslub in helping to understand the communication message. According to As-Suyuti (2000), Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya' are important tools for interpreting the Quranic text and literary works more accurately. This is in line with the view of Al-Najjar (2020), who stated that Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya' are important elements in rhetorical communication and are often introduced at the early stages of Balaghah learning to make it easier for students to understand its basics.

However, the items that obtained the lowest mean values were "Understanding the Concepts of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya'" with a mean value of 3.46, and "Applying Uslub Khobar and Insya' to convey information" with a mean value of 3.48. This finding shows that although students have a positive interest and attitude towards this topic, they are still less confident in applying the concepts of Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya' in communication. This situation shows that students understand the basic concepts but need further guidance to deepen the differences and practical applications of the two Uslubs.

Overall, these findings reflect that the students acknowledge the importance of Uslub as a basis for communication but face challenges in linking theory with practical applications. As a result, lessons that incorporates theory, contextual exercises, and practical applications can improve students' understanding and confidence in this topic. Al-Fasi (2022) claims that using technology, such as interactive movies or simulations, can assist students to understand this notion. Interactive methods, such as group discussions, can assist students in mastering the application of Uslub (al-Sarhan, 2018). Real-world training is essential for building students' confidence in practical applications. Abu Hani (2019) also proposes that theory and application be blended in learning activities, as the primary challenge in teaching Uslub is ensuring that students can apply said theory in real-world settings.

Challenges for Students in Mastering the Topics of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya'

A total of eight items were used to identify the challenges faced by students in mastering the topics of Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya'. Based on the analysis presented in Table 4, the challenges faced by students in mastering both topics were found to be at a moderate level, with an average mean score of 2.96.

	Item	Frequency					Mean	Level
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1.	The suitability of the time allocated to study the topic of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya'	2 4%	10 20%	23 46%	12 24%	3 6%	3.08	Moderate
2.	The suitability of the content of the textbook and reference materials	2 4%	21 42%	17 34%	9 18%	1 2%	2.72	Moderate
3.	Initial preparation in reviewing the topic of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya'	3 6%	19 38%	18 36%	10 20%	0	2.70	Moderate
4.	Teaching and learning methods for the topic of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya'	3 6%	16 32%	19 38%	10 20%	2 4%	2.84	Moderate
5.	The relevance of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya' in other fields and elements of the language.	2 4%	17 34%	20 40%	9 18%	2 4%	2.84	Moderate
6.	Fear of making mistakes in explaining the topic of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya'	2 4%	9 18%	18 36%	17 34%	4 8%	3.24	Moderate
7.	No enthusiasm in studying the topic of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya'	6 12%	14 28%	16 32%	13 26%	1 2%	2.78	Moderate
8.	The use of the topic of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya' in daily communication.	3 6%	5 10%	17 34%	14 28%	11 22%	3.50	Moderate
Overall Mean Value:							2.96	Moderate

Based on Table 4, the overall study findings show that students face several challenges in mastering Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya'. This can be seen through the overall mean value of 2.96, which indicates that the challenge is at a moderate level. There are eight items identified as the main challenges, and all of these items are at a moderate level.

The main challenge that received the highest mean value was the use of "Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya' in daily communication" with a mean value of 3.50. Students rated the application of this topic as moderate, reflecting awareness of its relevance but lack of mastery in actual application. As-Suyuti (2000), emphasised that teaching Uslub needs to be directly linked to daily communication situations to foster students' understanding and practical skills. In addition, the "fear of making mistakes when explaining or applying this topic" was also identified as a significant challenge, with a mean value of 3.24. Students' lacking confidence in understanding the concept of Uslub may be the main cause of this obstacle. According to

Al-Najjar (2020), an exploratory learning approach and less emphasis on perfect results can help reduce this fear.

The study findings also show that “the suitability of the time allocated to study the topic of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya” is also a moderate challenge with a mean value of 3.08. Ahmad and Zulkifli's (2021), study stated that the time allocated for teaching Balaghah is often insufficient to provide in-depth explanations and practical applications. In this context, students believe that they need more time to understand the concepts and do related exercises. In addition, the “teaching and learning methods for the topic of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya” is also assessed as a moderate obstacle with a mean value of 2.84. Students believe that a teaching approach that is too focused on theory without practical application is less effective. Al-Sarhan (2018) stated that a non-interactive teaching approach can cause students to lose interest in topics that are considered complex. Furthermore, students feel that the connection between “the relevance of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya' in other fields and elements of the language” is less clear with a mean value of 2.84. This makes it difficult for them to understand the practical importance of this topic. Ahmad and Zulkifli (2021), advised emphasising the relationship between Uslub and the domains of communication, translation, and literature in order to boost the topic's importance.

Based on table 4, the item that recorded the lowest mean value was “Student’s initial preparation in reviewing the topic of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya”, with a mean value of 2.70, followed by the item “Suitability of the content of the textbook and reference materials” with a mean value of 2.72. This result shows that the lack of initial preparation is considered a moderate obstacle by students in mastering this topic. Without sufficient basic understanding or review, students face difficulties in following the teaching session effectively. As stated by Al-Zarnuji (2012), students' initial preparation is an important element in ensuring the effectiveness of the learning process, including in learning Balaghah. In addition, students also stated that the content of textbooks and reference materials is not suitable to help them understand the topics of Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya'. Content that is too theoretical and less interactive may make it difficult for students to connect theory to practical applications. Hani (2019), further emphasised that traditional Balaghah reference books are frequently not tailored to the demands of modern students, making it difficult to understand fundamental concepts such as Uslub Khobar and Uslub Insya'. This finding is consistent with the findings of Sulaiman and Wahid (2021), who discovered that many of the shortcomings in learning Balaghah are due to a lack of reference sources. However, recent technology innovations may have made it easier for students to obtain information and learning materials about Balaghah, reducing their reliance on traditional sources.

Level of Student Mastery of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya' topics

Four question forms were used to assess the level of students' mastery of the topics of Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya'. Based on the analysis shown in Table 5, the level of students' mastery of both topics was at a moderate level, with an average mean score of 42%.

Table 5

Student Mastery Level on the Topic of Uslub Al-Khobar and Al-Insya'

Structured Questions	Mean Score of Correct Answer (%)	Level
a) Distinguish the definitions between the Uslub Khobar and Insya'.	73%	High
b) Determine examples between the Uslub Khobar and Insya'.	55%	Moderate
c) Determine the types of Khobar.	53%	Moderate
d) Determine the types of Insya'.	57%	Moderate
Overall Mean Score:	42%	Moderate

Based on Table 5, the results of the study show that the level of students' mastery of the topics of Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya' is comparable and different, with an overall average mean score of 42%. The study findings show that the question form that obtained the highest mean score is in the form of a comparison of "definitions between Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya'", with a score of 73%. This finding shows that students are generally able to understand and differentiate the basic definitions of both Uslubs well. This success is most likely driven by the effectiveness of the teaching approach that emphasises mastery of basic concepts. This is in line with the study of Al-Najjar (2020), which emphasises that understanding definitions is an important basic step in mastering the knowledge of Balaghah, especially in relation to Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya'. As a result, high mastery in this area demonstrates the effectiveness of the teaching technique, which emphasises the introduction and understanding of fundamental concepts as the foundation of learning.

Next, the question involving the "determination of the types of Insya'" recorded a mean score of 57%. This finding shows that the level of students' understanding of Uslub al-Insya' is better than Uslub al-Khobar. However, this finding also reflects the need for additional efforts in strengthening students' understanding of the variations of the types of Insya'. Although Uslub al-Insya' is often considered more intuitive due to its widespread use in daily communication, students still face challenges in understanding the diversity of types of al-Insya' and their applications. This coincides with the view of Al-Azhar (2021), which emphasised that the mastery of Uslub al-Insya' requires a deep understanding of the rhetorical context and the purpose of communication in its use. The findings of this study differ from the results of the study by Radzi et al. (2021), which examined the level of mastery of Tasybih, Uslub al-Khobar, and Uslub al-Insya' among religious secondary school students. The study reported that students showed a very good level of mastery in the topic of Uslub al-Insya' and a good level in the topic of Uslub al-Khobar.

The mean score of 55% for the question "determining examples between Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya'" indicates that students have a moderate level of mastery. Although students appeared to comprehend the core definitions of both Uslubs, this data suggests that they struggle to select accurate examples, indicating problems in the concept's practical application. This situation highlights the need for additional training focusing on the identification and application of examples in more significant contexts. According to Ahmad and Zulkifli (2021), successful Uslub instruction necessitates the use of clear contextual examples to assist students in connecting theory to application in real-world texts.

The level of students' mastery of the types of Uslub al-Khobar was the lowest with a mean score of 53%. This finding indicates that students may face difficulties in understanding the in-depth categories and special characteristics that distinguish each type of Uslub al-Khobar. This weakness may stem from the lack of an effective teaching approach in explaining the classification of Uslub clearly and easily understood. As stated by Abu Hani (2019), one of the main challenges in teaching Balaghah is ensuring that the explanation of the classification of Uslub can be processed in a concise and effective manner, especially for students who lack background or preliminary knowledge in classical Arabic.

Conclusion

This study discloses that students have a moderate understanding of the concepts of Uslub al-Khobar and Uslub al-Insya. Students demonstrate a solid basic comprehension of the definitions of Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya', but struggle to apply instances and comprehend more complex categories for both Uslubs. Students have a moderate perspective of this topic, but they recognise its importance in learning the structure and meaning of Arabic. This study can highlight numerous problems that students encounter when learning Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya', such as time restrictions, less interactive reference material content, less exciting teaching methodologies, and a lack of practical training.

In this regard, this study makes various recommendations for improving the teaching and learning of Uslub al-Khobar and al-Insya. Among these are offering more interactive and relevant reference materials, implementing more innovative and dynamic teaching methods such as simulation and the use of digital technology, and boosting training that concentrates on everyday communication scenarios. It is believed that these recommendations will assist students in better mastering both Uslubs and increasing their interest in learning Arabic rhetoric.

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