

## Developing a Method of Understanding Norul Ihsan Using Intertextual Approach: A Critical Analysis based on the Parallel Method

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### Abstract

The Interpretation of Norul Ihsan by Syeikh Muhammad Sa'id ibn Umar is the earliest Jawi work that has been produced. This study was conducted to reveal the reference works used by the author. This study using the intertextual approach in dialogism on the process of analyzing The Interpretation of Norul Ihsan based on the parallel method. The research design used is documentation using the subjective approach that employs descriptive and qualitative data based on the intertextual approach. This research shows that there are 11 works which have been referred to by the author when producing Norul Ihsan i.e The Interpretation of al-Tha'laby, The Interpretation of al-Jamal, The Interpretation of al-Baidawy, The Interpretation of al-Khazin, The Interpretation of al-Baghawy, The Interpretation of al-Tabary, The Interpretation of al-Qurtuby, The Interpretation of al-Razy, The Interpretation of al-Jalalayn, The Interpretation of Ibn Kathir, and The Interpretation of al-Nasafy. Analysis of the findings shows that references from The Interpretation of al-Jalalayn are widely used by the author when writing Norul Ihsan.

**Keywords:** Dialogism, The Interpretation of Norul Ihsan, intertextual approach, parallel method

### Introduction

Various scientific papers in the Malay language were prevalent when Islam began to spread in Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and Thailand. The works cover various fields of Islamic knowledge such as Tawhid, Tajweed, Tarannum al-Quran, the study of Hadith, and The Interpretation of al-Quran. These scientific works that have been produced continue to be important reference materials that remain in use to this day. The production of such works proves the success of earlier Islamic scholars who wrote books that not only benefited them but continued to attract the public to refer to them. Among Islamic scholars who have contributed in the writing area is Syeikh Mohamed Said Umar, who wrote a book in the field of the interpretation of al-Quran in Malay entitled Norul Ihsan [1].

Contemporary scholars and the public have used Norul Ihsan as a reference and a teaching material in understanding Quranic verses. This invaluable piece of literature has contributed to the knowledge of the public at large. Scholars are interested in studying and examining this work from various aspects such as the author's background, the content of the work, and influence in the work.

Norul Ihsan is also one of the scholarly writings on The Interpretation of al-Quran al-Quran. This writing continues to be a reference material and community learning material in the use of the Quran. Institutions of pondok studies, mosques, and suraus use this writing as study material there. For example, a pondok institution such as Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Rifaie, Kedah, Malaysia, and Masjid Abdullah Fahim in Penang, Malaysia use this writing as reference material for compiling the teaching and learning process to the community on a weekly and monthly basis. Even so, some researchers require that this writing has weaknesses that need to be rectified.

Some of them say that the author of the compilation produced the writing deliberately not stating the sources of reference for the facts contained in the writing. This suggests as if the author uses unfounded opinions in his interpretation [2]. Therefore, the public and readers should refer to Norul Ihsan carefully and thoroughly [3].

Nurul Ihsan became a reference for scholars among others as a tool in the process of knowledge related to the interpretation of al-Quran. To deepen and understand the Quran, the community also utilizes this writing in their daily lives [4]. Therefore, there is a need to make efforts to refine this piece of literature. Therefore, the researcher applied an intertextual approach in conducting this research as one of the efforts in improving the content of Norul Ihsan. Through this approach, the researcher reveals references from other works that affect the writing of Norul Ihsan. This study will answer the problem statement mentioned above. Through this approach, this study examines the content of Norul Ihsan to determine whether there is an influence from other works that influence the writing of Norul Ihsan. This study focuses on the application of parallel methods to the content of Norul Ihsan to identify texts that are parallel to the text from other reference works [5], in addition to strengthening the data contained in Norul Ihsan.

## 2. Intertextual Reading Method

The intertextual approach was initially known as dialogic introduced by Bakhtin in 1926 because there was voluminous Russian art literature that was difficult to comprehend. As a consequence, Bakhtin developed this theory to facilitate readers to understand the problematic literature. This theory considered that writers write the literature using dialogues between one text and another. In other words, this theory states that other texts influence any text. One scholar mentions that "every text produced will continue to influence the sorting of another text, this should not be confused with the origin of the text [6]," thus, supporting this theory.

Literary scholars have applied the Dialogue approach aimed at examining the meaning of the literary language used by Dostoevsky. Such literary languages are found in literary works such as *The Idiot*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *The Gambler*. These works were extremely difficult to understand by the reader using a literary approach such as the formalism that was prevalent at the time [7]. The widespread methods of formalism at the time could not help the reader to appreciate the literary languages introduced by Dostoevsky. For this reason, Bakhtin has introduced his approach called Dialogism. This approach takes into account influences coming from outside the author of the work that affects the books being written by the author. Initially, the environmental conditions of the author have influenced the author's reading or comprehension. This has affected the results of the author's writing in the direction or intention that the author wants to convey through his writing. Even so, Bakhtin does not ignore the internal influences that exist from within the author such as thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and other elements [8].

The approach of dialogism introduced by Bakhtin explains that a writer when writing a book will question and answer with his text. This happens because the author is living the elements or external elements that are affecting him. While writing, he recalls past experiences, things that happened around him, as well as the elements that are in him such as his beliefs. The ongoing writing process resulted in the development of new ideas, new approaches, and new problem-solving. Thus, this discussion proves the existence of influences coming from outside the author and influences from within the author, and this is what is discussed in this approach. According to a literary scholar, every text written by one author has been influenced and will be influenced by another text, either from himself or another author. If the connection does not occur, it means that the author's writing is not interesting and cannot be utilized [9]. Schmitz [10] mentions;

"Literary language mostly influences many situations. The meaning of a good text will be interdependent with various influences. These influences will be present from outside the author and in turn, will be combined with influences coming from the author himself. This process will eventually produce a good literary work, which should be appreciated and understood by the readers" [11].

Kristeva [12], in *La revolution du Langage Poetique*, discussed this theory. However, this approach was not propagated by his in the name of dialogism. But, a new name was introduced by his which she thought that this new name was more appropriate and coincided with the requirements of the theory, and she names this approach with intertextuality. According to Hawthorn [13] that every piece of writing produced by an author always has an effect between one text and another, even in different books. Through the intertextual approach disseminated by Kristeva, these matters are discussed at length. He explains: "Kristeva argues in an intertextual approach that a text that has been written will influence the production of other texts to be written, each text in a book exists another text from the same book or another book...[14]".

This approach is spreading in Europe and around the world. Scholars in Southeast Asia have debated this approach in which they argue that it is an appropriately understood approach in the world of modern literature. Sardjono [15] who is one of the scholars in the field of literature has spread this approach, especially in

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Indonesia. Although he followed the method taken by Kristeva, he has further developed this approach by adding another method in the intertextual approach, and he held that as the excerpt. The excerpt method occurs when the author takes the meaning of one text from another work and then includes it in his work. This means, only the meaning of the work of another author is taken, but the form of the text is different from the original text. In Indonesia, scholars appeared in the field of literature besides Sardjono, and they were Umar and Teeuw. While in Malaysia and Singapore, the intertextual approach is widespread when there are literary scholars who discuss this approach. For example, literature produced in 1989 entitled "*Tuah Jebat Dalam Drama Melayu: Satu Kajian Intertekstualiti*", written by Napiyah A. R., and also in some other books [16].

Upon examination of the book entitled *Kakawin Gajah Mada* by Sardjono [17] and *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* by Kristeva [18], ten intertextual approaches will be applied in book texts. These approaches reveal how the author utilizes his reference books when producing his book. The 10 approaches are defamiliarization, demitification, parallel, expansion, transformation, conversion, modification, excerpt, existence, and haplogy. The existence of these methods in a text is not necessarily separate. This means, in a text that has been written there are several methods that are applied together. For example, when an author writes a book, each text written contains the parallel method, conversion method, or haplogy method in the same text [19].

### 3. Application of Parallel Method in Norul Ihsan

Norul Ihsan is an excellent piece of literature that Syeikh Muhammad Sa'id has produced. He began writing the work of literature in the month of *Zulhijjah*, 1344 AH equivalent to January 1925 AD, during Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah ibn al-Marhun Sultan Ahmad Taj al-Din Mukarram Shah (1881-1943), the 25th Sultan of Kedah [20]. The writing of this work took two years and nine months to complete, and it was completed on Wednesday, one *Rabiul Akhir* 1346 AH equivalent to one October 1927 AD [21].

Syeikh Muhammad Sa'id produced Norul Ihsan in four volumes, and he arranged each volume according to the *surahs* of the Qur'an. The first volume includes *Surah al-Fatihah* to *Surah al-Ma'idah*, the second volume includes *Surah al-An'am* to *Surah Hud*, the third volume includes *Surah al-Kahf* to *Surah al-Zumar*, and the fourth volume includes *Surah al-Mukmin* to *Surah al-Nas* [22].

This study examines Norul Ihsan using the intertextual method, namely the application of the parallel method. In Norul Ihsan, Syeikh Muhammad Sa'id elaborates five debates, including the contexts and occasions of the revelation of the *Qur'an*, *hadiths*, the stories of *Isra'iliyyat*, the abrogating and abrogated verses in the Qur'an (*Nasikh* and *Mansukh*), and the text about advantages (*Fadhilat*) [23]. However, the discussion did not include the sources of references. Hence, some scholars have disputed the author's interpretation, especially on explanations that are contrary to reason and *Shariah* [24]. However, the research findings revealed that the author referred to the *muktabar* books, such as The interpretation of Ibn Kathir, The interpretation of al-Baidawy, and The interpretation of al-Qurtuby, which is indeed certified in its interpretation value [25].

The parallel method is one of the methods listed in the intertextual principles used to identify parallel sources of the original text. This method occurs when an author writes a text similar to another text from a particular work into written text. The reason being, the author, having been influenced by his reading material, included it in his text. This method is indeed beneficial to the reader where it can strengthen the reader's confidence in the facts stated by the author and elevate Norul Ihsan on par with other works of *muktabar*. Through the parallel method, when the author transforms a text into his text, changes will not occur in terms of text arrangement, the addition of meaning, or deletion of the text [26].

In addition, as a result of the application of the parallel method, the external text contained in the text of Norul Ihsan has been identified. It can trace the source of the referred text. This can be seen through the writings of Syeikh Muhammad Sa'id in Norul Ihsan, namely: "this verse of the Quran was revealed when the Jews insulted the Muslims because they changed the direction of Qibla during prayers" [27].

While the text from The interpretation of al-Jalalayn [28] which is the original work also states:

وَنَزَلَ لِمَا طَعَنَ الْيَهُودَ فِي نَسْخِ الْقِبْلَةِ أَوْ فِي صَلَاةِ النَّافِلَةِ عَلَى الرَّاحِلَةِ فِي السَّفَرِ حَيْثُمَا تَوَجَّهَتْ

Both texts explain the reason for the decline of the 115th verse of *surah al-Baqarah*, which is the Jewish insult to Muslims for changing the direction of *Qibla* from *Al-Aqsa* Mosque to the Holy Mosque and sunnah prayers on vehicles that allow facing anywhere. They claim that the Prophet PBUH played with Muslims for alleviating the matter, which is indeed the most crucial thing in religion. Even so, their claims are, in fact, based on common sense. Allah answered their accusations to explain that all directions, whether east or west belong to Him, and Muslims should face anywhere following His command. Through this parallel method, the reader can detect connections and relationships between the two texts. Therefore, the application of parallel methods in

conducting this research is vital to identify the source of a text in the text of *Norul Ihsan* used by Syeikh Muhammad Sa'id.

**Table 1:** The List of Works which Influence the Contents of the *Norul Ihsan* Using Parallel Method

No	Works	Contexts and Occasions of the Revelation of the <i>Qur'an</i>	<i>Hadith</i>	
01	al-Jalalayn	89	36	
02	al-Jamal	19	5	
03	al-Bayḍāwy	5	3	
04	al-Khāzin	9	1	
05	al-Baghawyy	-	3	
06	al-Tabary	-	2	
07	al-Qurṭuby	3	5	
08	al-Rāzy	-	4	
09	al-Nasafy	-	1	
10	Ibn Kathīr	-	2	
11	al-Tha'laby	-	-	
<b>Total</b>		<b>125</b>	<b>62</b>	
Stories of <i>al-Israiliyyat</i>	Nasikh and Mansukh	Fadhilat	Total	Percentage
18	13	1	<b>157</b>	<b>60%</b>
28	-	4	<b>56</b>	<b>21%</b>
1	-	-	<b>9</b>	<b>3.4%</b>
3	-	-	<b>13</b>	<b>5%</b>
1	-	-	<b>4</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
-	-	-	<b>2</b>	<b>0.7%</b>
2	-	2	<b>12</b>	<b>4.5%</b>
-	-	1	<b>5</b>	<b>2%</b>
-	-	-	<b>1</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
-	-	-	<b>2</b>	<b>0.7%</b>
1	-	-	<b>1</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
<b>54</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 explains the data which were analyzed based on the excerpt method. This study finds that the *Norul Ihsan* was influenced by The interpretation of al-Jalalayn 157 times (60%), The interpretation of al-Jamal 56 times (21%), The interpretation of al-Baidawy 9 times (3.4%), The interpretation of al-Khazin 13 times (5%), The interpretation of al-Baghawyy 4 times (1.5%), The interpretation of al-Tabary 2 times (0.7%), The interpretation of al-Qurṭuby 12 times (4.5%), The interpretation of al-Razy 5 times (2%), The interpretation of al-Nasafy 1 time (0.3%), The interpretation of Ibn Kathir 2 times (0.7%) and The interpretation of al-Tha'laby 1 time (0.3%) [29]. Therefore, the text which has the most influence on *Norul Ihsan* using the parallel method is The interpretation of al-Jalalayn.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on this study, we conclude that the intertextual approach takes into account two influences found in a written text, namely influences that come from outside the author such as environmental conditions, and influences that come from within the author such as the author's beliefs and thoughts. The influence from within Syeikh Muhammad Said can be traced in *Norul Ihsan* when he interpreted the *Qur'an* based on his role as a judge, therefore there is an explanation of certain laws in his book. Meanwhile, the influence of the author's environment was detected when the author used the Kedah dialect in his writing. This is because he is targeting this book to the people of Kedah [30]. *Norul Ihsan* has become one of the main references of the Muslim community in understanding the contents of the *Quran*. This book is not only referenced in Kedah but also spread in Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and Egypt. This shows the success of Syeikh Muhammad Said in producing a book in the field of tafsir al-*Quran* so that it attracted the attention of many parties. Good use of language, easy to understand text, and less concise descriptions keep the book in check to this day.

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Umar [31] referred to 11 reference books which are The Interpretation of al-Tha'labi, The Interpretation of al-Tabary, The Interpretation of al-Jalalayn, The Interpretation of al-Baidawy, The Interpretation of al-Jamal, The Interpretation of al-Khazin, The Interpretation of al-Qurtuby, The Interpretation of al-Baghawy, The Interpretation of al-Razy, The Interpretation of Ibn Kathir, and The Interpretation of al-Nasafy. The author elaborates 125 contexts and occasions of the revelation of the *Qur'an*, 62 *Hadith* of the Prophet, 54 stories of *al-Isra'iliyyat*, 13 the Abrogating and Abrogated Verses in the *Qur'an* (*Nasikh* and *Mansukh*), and 8 Texts about Advantages (*Fadhilat*), which are very interesting for the people to learn. This study identifies references for all referred texts and the omitted information omitted from the original text. Therefore, this study provides evidence that Umar [32] neither used unsupported facts nor used his own opinion in producing the literature entitled Norul Ihsan.

In conclusion, this study provides evidence that The Interpretation of al-Jalalayn is Norul Ihsan's main reference based on frequency percentage that Umar [33] referred to it more than any other works. While The Interpretation of al-Tha'labi, The Interpretation of al-Tabary, The Interpretation of al-Baidawy, The Interpretation of al-Jamal, The Interpretation of al-Khazin, The Interpretation of al-Qurtuby, The Interpretation of al-Baghawy, The Interpretation of al-Razy, The Interpretation of Ibn Kathir, and The Interpretation of al-Nasafy were the side works which were used by the author as references.

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