

Negotiating Locality in Qur'anic Exegesis: Hamka's Stylistic Strategies in Tafsir Al-Azhar

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Abstract

The relationship between the universality of the Qur'an and the cultural diversity of Muslim societies has become a major concern in contemporary Qur'anic studies. While numerous studies have examined contextual interpretation, limited attention has been given to how locality is constructed through the stylistic organization of exegetical discourse. This study investigates how Hamka negotiates locality in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* by examining the stylistic strategies through which Qur'anic meanings are communicated within the Indonesian socio-cultural context. Employing qualitative library research, the study analyzes selected passages of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* using textual analysis integrated with stylistic and contextual approaches. The analysis focuses on linguistic choices, interreligious discourse, and socio-historical narratives that mediate the relationship between revelation and local realities. The findings reveal three interrelated dimensions of stylistic localization. First, lexical localization utilizes vernacular expressions from Indonesian regional languages to bridge Arabic Qur'anic concepts with local linguistic consciousness. Second, dialogical localization employs interreligious comparisons to explain Islamic monotheism within Indonesia's plural religious landscape. Third, historical localization incorporates Indonesia's collective historical experience, particularly colonial memory, to strengthen the ethical relevance of Qur'anic teachings. These findings demonstrate that locality functions not merely as the background of interpretation but as an internal stylistic mechanism that shapes exegetical discourse. This study proposes Local Stylistics of Qur'anic Exegesis as a new analytical framework, arguing that locality is constructed through lexical, dialogical, and historical mediation rather than simply reflecting socio-cultural context. The proposed framework contributes to contemporary Qur'anic studies by offering a transferable model for analyzing vernacular tafsir traditions across diverse Muslim societies.

Keywords: Local stylistics, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Hamka, Qur'anic exegesis, Indonesian Islam

Abstrak

Hubungan antara universalitas Al-Qur'an dan keragaman budaya masyarakat Muslim merupakan salah satu isu penting dalam studi Al-Qur'an kontemporer. Meskipun kajian mengenai tafsir kontekstual telah berkembang pesat, perhatian terhadap bagaimana lokalitas dikonstruksi melalui organisasi stilistika dalam wacana tafsir masih relatif terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana Hamka menegosiasikan lokalitas dalam *Tafsir Al-Azhar* melalui strategi-strategi stilistika yang menjembatani makna Al-Qur'an dengan konteks sosial-budaya Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan analisis tekstual yang dipadukan dengan pendekatan stilistika dan kontekstual. Analisis difokuskan pada pilihan leksikal, dialog lintas agama, dan narasi sosial-



historis yang membentuk konstruksi makna tafsir. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya tiga dimensi utama stilistika lokal. Pertama, lokalisasi leksikal, yaitu penggunaan kosakata bahasa daerah Indonesia untuk menjembatani konsep-konsep Al-Qur'an berbahasa Arab dengan kesadaran linguistik masyarakat lokal. Kedua, lokalisasi dialogis, yaitu penggunaan perbandingan lintas agama sebagai strategi menjelaskan konsep tauhid dalam masyarakat Indonesia yang plural. Ketiga, lokalisasi historis, yaitu pemanfaatan pengalaman sejarah kolektif Indonesia, terutama memori kolonial, untuk memperkuat relevansi etis ajaran Al-Qur'an. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa lokalitas tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai latar sosial penafsiran, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme stilistika internal yang membentuk struktur wacana tafsir. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, penelitian ini menawarkan konsep Stilistika Lokal Tafsir Al-Qur'an (Local Stylistics of Qur'anic Exegesis) sebagai kerangka analitis baru untuk memahami bagaimana wahyu dinegosiasikan melalui mediasi leksikal, dialogis, dan historis dalam tradisi tafsir vernakular.

Kata Kunci: Stilistika lokal, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Hamka, Tafsir Al-Qur'an, Islam Indonesia.

Introduction

The Qur'an is universally recognized by Muslims as a timeless source of divine guidance whose message transcends geographical, linguistic, and cultural boundaries. Nevertheless, its interpretation (*tafsīr*) has never been culturally neutral. Throughout Islamic intellectual history, Qur'anic exegesis has continuously developed through interactions between the universal authority of revelation and the socio-historical realities of Muslim societies. Consequently, *tafsīr* is not merely a textual endeavor but also an interpretive process through which universal religious principles are negotiated, translated, and communicated within particular cultural contexts (Saeed, 2006, 2013; Saleh, 2010). Contemporary Qur'anic studies therefore increasingly emphasize that the diversity of interpretation reflects not only methodological differences but also the linguistic, historical, and cultural environments in which exegetes operate.

This development has encouraged growing scholarly interest in the concepts of locality, vernacularization, and cultural translation in Qur'anic interpretation. Rather than reducing the universality of the Qur'an, locality functions as an interpretive mechanism through which universal Islamic teachings become intelligible and relevant to specific Muslim communities. Johanna Pink (2010, 2019) argues that contemporary Qur'anic interpretation is characterized by continuous negotiations between inherited exegetical traditions and changing social realities, while Thomas Bauer (2021) demonstrates that plurality and contextual diversity have long constituted intrinsic features of the Islamic intellectual tradition. These perspectives position locality not as a deviation from orthodoxy but as an epistemological strategy that enables the Qur'an to remain socially meaningful across diverse cultural settings.

Indonesia provides one of the richest contexts for examining this phenomenon. As the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia has produced a distinctive tradition of Qur'anic exegesis shaped by its linguistic diversity, cultural plurality, and historical encounters between Islam and local traditions. Indonesian mufasssirs have consistently contextualized Qur'anic teachings through vernacular languages, indigenous cultural expressions, and local social experiences, producing what scholars identify as *Tafsir Nusantara*—an exegetical tradition that integrates Islamic scholarship with Indonesian cultural realities (Riddell, 2001; Feener, 2013; Gusmian, 2013; Mohammad Khoiril Anwar et al., 2022). This tradition demonstrates that locality functions not merely as the background of interpretation but also as an important interpretive resource in constructing Qur'anic meaning.

Among modern Indonesian exegetes, Hamka occupies a central position through his *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, one of the most influential Qur'anic commentaries in Southeast Asia. Previous studies have extensively discussed Hamka's interpretive methodology, reformist orientation, intellectual engagement with Muhammad Abduh, modernization of Qur'anic interpretation, and socio-political concerns (Badawi & Mohammed, 2021; Firdausiyah, 2021; Kadir & Abd, 2024). Other studies have situated *Tafsir Al-Azhar* within the broader development of Indonesian tafsir, emphasizing its contextual and socially engaged character (Gusmian, 2013). These studies have substantially enriched our understanding of Hamka's intellectual contribution to modern Islamic thought.

Despite these important contributions, existing scholarship has largely examined *Tafsir Al-Azhar* from methodological, theological, historical, and socio-political perspectives. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how locality operates as a stylistic strategy within Hamka's exegetical discourse. Previous research generally acknowledges the presence of Indonesian cultural references, regional languages, and historical illustrations, yet these elements are often treated merely as contextual features rather than as integral mechanisms through which Qur'anic meaning is constructed. Consequently, the linguistic and rhetorical dimensions of locality remain theoretically underexplored in the study of Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis.

This article argues that locality in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* should be understood not simply as the incorporation of Indonesian cultural elements but as a deliberate stylistic strategy through which Hamka negotiates the universality of the Qur'anic message with the lived realities of Indonesian Muslims. Through regional vocabularies, local historical narratives, interreligious comparisons, and culturally familiar expressions, Hamka constructs an exegetical discourse

that enhances the accessibility and communicative effectiveness of Qur'anic teachings. Building upon contemporary Qur'anic studies and stylistics (Simpson, 2004; Wales, 2014), this article proposes local stylistics as an analytical framework for explaining how linguistic and cultural resources function as interpretive mechanisms in vernacular Qur'anic exegesis.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the stylistic strategies through which Hamka negotiates locality in *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. Employing qualitative library research combined with stylistic and textual analysis, the study investigates how local languages, cultural references, and socio-historical contextualization contribute to the construction of Qur'anic meaning. Theoretically, this article contributes to three interconnected fields: contemporary Qur'anic studies, Indonesian *Tafsir Nusantara*, and stylistics, by demonstrating that locality is not merely a contextual characteristic of exegesis but a fundamental hermeneutical mechanism through which the universal message of the Qur'an is communicated across diverse cultural landscapes.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative textual research design to investigate how locality is negotiated through stylistic strategies in Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. Rather than treating Qur'anic exegesis solely as a theological product, this research approaches *tafsīr* as a discursive practice in which linguistic choices, cultural references, and socio-historical experiences collectively shape the construction of religious meaning. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate because the objective of the study is to interpret the communicative functions of language within the exegetical text rather than to quantify linguistic phenomena. Accordingly, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* is examined as a culturally situated discourse through which universal Qur'anic teachings are articulated within the historical and social realities of Indonesian Muslims.

The primary source of this study is Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, selected because of its influential position within modern Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship and its extensive engagement with local cultural realities. The analysis focuses on exegetical passages in which Hamka explicitly employs regional vocabulary, indigenous cultural expressions, historical narratives, interreligious dialogue, social analogies, and locally recognizable illustrations. These passages were selected through purposive textual sampling, emphasizing sections that clearly demonstrate the interaction between Qur'anic interpretation and Indonesian socio-cultural contexts. Secondary sources consist of scholarly publications on contemporary Qur'anic studies, Indonesian *tafsīr*, stylistics, vernacular Islam, and Hamka's intellectual

legacy, which provide the theoretical foundation for interpreting the stylistic functions of locality.

Data collection was conducted through systematic document analysis involving repeated close readings of *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. During this process, textual units containing explicit local linguistic and cultural elements were identified, documented, and organized according to their stylistic characteristics. Instead of examining isolated lexical items, the analysis considered each passage as a coherent rhetorical unit in which linguistic form, cultural context, and interpretive purpose interact to construct Qur'anic meaning. This procedure allowed the identification of recurring stylistic patterns that characterize Hamka's exegetical discourse across different thematic contexts.

The analysis is guided by a Local Stylistics Framework, developed in this study by integrating principles of literary stylistics with contemporary approaches to Qur'anic interpretation and vernacular Islam. Conventional stylistics primarily examines how linguistic choices produce aesthetic and communicative effects within literary discourse (Simpson, 2004; Wales, 2014). In contrast, the Local Stylistics Framework proposed here extends stylistic analysis to the field of Qur'anic exegesis by treating locality not merely as contextual information but as an interpretive mechanism through which exegetical meaning is generated, communicated, and legitimized. Within this framework, stylistic choices are understood as deliberate rhetorical strategies that mediate between the universality of the Qur'anic message and the cultural realities of its intended audience.

Operationally, the framework examines five interconnected dimensions of locality within the exegetical text: lexical localization, referring to the use of regional vocabularies and vernacular expressions; cultural contextualization, referring to the incorporation of indigenous customs, traditions, and collective social knowledge; historical localization, referring to the use of Indonesian historical events and collective memory as interpretive illustrations; dialogical localization, referring to Hamka's engagement with religious plurality and local intellectual debates; and rhetorical localization, referring to analogies, metaphors, narratives, and persuasive expressions that enhance the communicative accessibility of Qur'anic teachings. These five dimensions constitute the analytical categories through which locality is examined as a stylistic phenomenon rather than merely as contextual background.

The analytical process proceeded iteratively through four stages. First, relevant passages were identified and coded according to the five dimensions of the Local Stylistics Framework. Second, each passage was subjected to close stylistic reading to identify its

linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural features. Third, the identified stylistic patterns were interpreted hermeneutically to explain how local expressions mediate the relationship between universal Qur'anic principles and Indonesian socio-cultural realities. Finally, comparisons across the analyzed passages were undertaken to identify recurring interpretive strategies and to formulate broader conceptual patterns concerning the operation of locality within *Tafsir Al-Azhar*.

To enhance analytical rigor, this study applies theoretical triangulation by integrating insights from contemporary Qur'anic studies, Indonesian *tafsir* scholarship, stylistics, and cultural hermeneutics. Interpretive findings were continuously evaluated against Hamka's broader exegetical methodology and previous scholarship on *Tafsir Al-Azhar* to ensure consistency and contextual validity. Rather than aiming for statistical generalization, the study seeks to develop an analytically transferable framework for understanding how locality functions as a stylistic strategy in vernacular Qur'anic exegesis. By introducing the Local Stylistics Framework, this research not only analyzes Hamka's interpretive practice but also offers a conceptual model that may be applied to the study of other localized traditions of Qur'anic interpretation across the Muslim world.

Results and Discussion

A. Patterns of Local Stylistic Strategies in *Tafsir Al-Azhar*

The textual analysis of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* identifies a coherent system of local stylistic strategies through which Hamka negotiates the universality of Qur'anic teachings within the Indonesian socio-cultural context. Rather than relying exclusively on conventional Arabic philological explanation, Hamka consistently integrates local linguistic expressions, interreligious comparisons, and Indonesian historical narratives into the construction of Qur'anic meaning. These stylistic features recur throughout the commentary, indicating that locality is systematically embedded within Hamka's exegetical discourse rather than appearing as occasional contextual illustrations. This finding is derived from repeated textual patterns identified across several volumes of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (Hamka, 1983a, 1983b).

Applying the Local Stylistics Framework proposed in this study, three recurrent patterns emerge from the analysis: **lexical localization**, **dialogical localization**, and **historical localization**. Although each pattern utilizes different local resources, all perform a similar exegetical function by reducing the interpretive distance between the Qur'anic text and Indonesian readers. Together, these three dimensions constitute a coherent stylistic system through which Hamka translates universal Qur'anic teachings into culturally intelligible forms.

Table 1. Classification of Local Stylistic Strategies in *Tafsir Al-Azhar*

Local Stylistic Pattern	Primary Local Resource	Stylistic Function	Exegetical Outcome
Lexical Localization	Indonesian regional languages	Semantic mediation	Accessible theological terminology
Dialogical Localization	Religious plurality	Comparative clarification	Contextual understanding of Islamic theology
Historical Localization	Indonesian social and colonial history	Narrative contextualization	Contemporary ethical relevance

The first pattern, lexical localization, appears prominently in Hamka's interpretation of the term *ilāh* in the opening verses of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah. After discussing the Arabic etymology of the word and relating it to other Qur'anic passages, Hamka expands its semantic explanation through vernacular equivalents drawn from several Indonesian languages, including Malay (*dewa, tuhan*), Javanese (*Gusti Allah*), Sundanese (*Pangeran*), and Bugis-Makassarese (*Poang Allah Ta'ala*). Instead of restricting interpretation to Arabic philology, he deliberately incorporates expressions familiar to Indonesian Muslims, thereby broadening the communicative accessibility of Qur'anic terminology (Hamka, 1983a, pp. 67–69).

The second recurring pattern is dialogical localization. The analysis demonstrates that Hamka frequently explains Islamic theological concepts through comparison with religious traditions existing within Indonesia's plural society. In his discussion of divine unity, for example, he relates the Qur'anic understanding of God to the Balinese Hindu concept of *Sang Hyang Widhi* while simultaneously contrasting Islamic *tawḥīd* with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. These comparisons are integrated into the exegetical explanation of Qur'anic terminology rather than presented as independent discussions of comparative religion, indicating that interreligious discourse functions as a recurring stylistic strategy in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (Hamka, 1983a, pp. 68–69).

A third pattern is historical localization, whereby Hamka relates Qur'anic teachings to Indonesia's collective historical experience. This tendency is particularly evident in his interpretation of Q. al-Baqarah [2]:219 concerning intoxicants and gambling. Rather than limiting the discussion to legal or moral aspects, Hamka associates the prohibition with the social consequences of Dutch colonial rule, arguing that colonial policies encouraged alcohol consumption and gambling among indigenous Muslims, thereby contributing to moral and

social decline. Historical experience is therefore incorporated into the exegetical structure as an interpretive resource that reinforces the ethical significance of the Qur'anic message for contemporary readers (Hamka, 1983b, pp. 516–518).

Comparison across these three categories demonstrates both diversity and consistency in Hamka's stylistic practice. Lexical localization operates at the linguistic level through vernacular terminology, dialogical localization utilizes Indonesia's multireligious environment to clarify theological concepts, and historical localization employs collective historical memory to contextualize Qur'anic ethics. Although each category draws upon different local resources, all contribute to enhancing the communicative effectiveness of Qur'anic interpretation.

The analysis further reveals a progressive organization of locality within *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. Interpretation begins with linguistic mediation through familiar vocabularies, expands through dialogue with Indonesia's religious diversity, and culminates in historical contextualization grounded in collective social experience. Rather than functioning independently, these three dimensions interact to produce a coherent stylistic system through which Hamka negotiates the universality of the Qur'an within the particular realities of Indonesian Muslim society.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that locality in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* is not merely a contextual background but an integral stylistic principle organizing the exegetical discourse. The identification of lexical, dialogical, and historical localization provides the empirical foundation for the subsequent discussion, which develops these findings into the conceptual framework of Local Stylistics of Qur'anic Exegesis.

B. Lexical Localization as Stylistic Mediation between Revelation and Vernacular Language

The findings demonstrate that lexical localization constitutes the primary stylistic mechanism through which Hamka negotiates the relationship between the universal message of the Qur'an and the linguistic realities of Indonesian Muslims. The incorporation of regional lexical equivalents, such as *Gusti Allah* (Javanese), *Pangeran* (Sundanese), and *Poang Allah Ta'ala* (Bugis-Makassarese), indicates that Hamka does not regard local languages merely as explanatory instruments. Instead, vernacular vocabulary functions as an interpretive medium through which Qur'anic concepts become cognitively and culturally accessible to readers whose linguistic experience differs from that of the Arabic-speaking world. This finding suggests that locality is embedded not only in the social context of tafsīr but also in its internal stylistic construction. Consequently, lexical choice should be understood as a deliberate

rhetorical strategy that mediates between the semantic authority of revelation and the communicative needs of a multilingual audience.

This interpretation extends existing discussions on contextual Qur'anic exegesis. Contemporary scholars generally agree that Qur'anic interpretation inevitably develops through interaction with changing historical and cultural environments. Abdullah Saeed (2006, 2013), for example, argues that the universality of the Qur'an requires contextual interpretation capable of addressing new social realities, while Johanna Pink (2019) emphasizes that modern tafsīr is shaped by interpretive communities whose linguistic and cultural settings influence the production of meaning. Karen Bauer (2022) similarly observes that contemporary Qur'anic interpretation increasingly reflects the diversity of Muslim societies rather than a single normative exegetical tradition. Nevertheless, these studies primarily discuss contextualization at the level of hermeneutics and social interpretation. The findings of the present study indicate that contextualization also operates through stylistic decisions, particularly lexical selection. Before theological arguments or legal reasoning are developed, readers first encounter Qur'anic meaning through vocabulary that resonates with their own linguistic world. Lexical localization therefore represents the earliest stage at which universality is negotiated within locality.

The importance of lexical choice has long been recognized in stylistic studies. According to Leech and Short (2007), vocabulary is never a neutral component of discourse because lexical selection determines the semantic associations activated in readers' minds. Simpson (2004) likewise argues that stylistic choices shape interpretation by directing readers toward particular conceptual frameworks through diction and semantic emphasis. Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) further demonstrate that lexical variation contributes to the ideological orientation of a text because different lexical forms evoke different systems of meaning. From this perspective, Hamka's use of regional terminology cannot be interpreted simply as linguistic ornamentation or pedagogical simplification. Rather, vernacular expressions perform a stylistic function by enabling readers to understand Qur'anic theology through conceptual categories already embedded in their linguistic experience. The regional equivalents employed by Hamka thus operate as semantic bridges that preserve the doctrinal integrity of the Arabic revelation while simultaneously enhancing its communicative effectiveness among Indonesian audiences.

The findings also correspond with broader discussions in linguistic anthropology concerning the relationship between language, culture, and religious authority. Keane (2007)

argues that religious language derives its social effectiveness from its ability to circulate within culturally recognizable systems of meaning rather than from textual authority alone. Likewise, Asad (1986) maintains that religious traditions are constituted through historically situated discursive practices in which language functions as a medium for producing, transmitting, and legitimizing religious knowledge. Hamka's lexical localization exemplifies this process. By employing terms that already possess cultural legitimacy within Indonesian Muslim communities, he enables readers to approach Qur'anic concepts through familiar linguistic frameworks without reducing the theological authority of the Arabic text. Local vocabulary therefore functions not merely as a translation device but as an epistemic resource that facilitates the social intelligibility of revelation.

This process reflects a broader historical phenomenon commonly described as vernacularization. Ricci (2011) demonstrates that the spread of Islam throughout South and Southeast Asia depended upon the continuous translation and reinterpretation of Arabic religious concepts within local literary traditions. Rather than replacing Arabic terminology, vernacularization created new linguistic spaces through which Islamic knowledge could be understood by diverse societies while maintaining its doctrinal foundations. Similarly, Messick (1993) argues that Islamic textual traditions acquire local authority through interaction with indigenous linguistic practices that render religious discourse meaningful within specific cultural environments. Hamka's interpretation of *ilāh* illustrates precisely this process. His reference to Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, and Bugis terminology does not seek to redefine the theological concept of God but to expand its communicative accessibility by connecting Qur'anic language with Indonesia's multilingual cultural landscape. In this respect, lexical localization represents a process of semantic mediation rather than lexical substitution.

The significance of this finding becomes clearer when compared with the dominant tradition of classical Arabic tafsīr. Classical exegetes naturally devoted considerable attention to Arabic grammar, morphology, rhetoric, and philology because they addressed audiences who shared the linguistic environment of the Qur'an (Saleh, 2010; Shah, 2013). Hamka, however, wrote for readers whose primary linguistic competence lay in Indonesian and its regional languages rather than in Arabic. Consequently, the purpose of lexical explanation shifted from philological clarification toward communicative mediation. This transformation should not be interpreted as a departure from the classical exegetical tradition but rather as evidence of its adaptive capacity across different linguistic communities. Hamka preserves the semantic authority of the Arabic revelation while modifying its stylistic presentation

according to the communicative realities of modern Indonesian society. His contribution therefore lies not in altering the meaning of the Qur'an but in expanding the linguistic pathways through which that meaning becomes intelligible.

C. Dialogical Localization: Interreligious Discourse as a Stylistic Strategy

The second major finding demonstrates that Hamka's negotiation of locality extends beyond vernacular language into the sphere of interreligious discourse. While lexical localization enables Qur'anic concepts to become intelligible through regional languages, dialogical localization functions by situating Islamic theology within Indonesia's multireligious landscape. Hamka's comparison of the Qur'anic concept of *ilāh* with *Sang Hyang Widhi* in Balinese Hinduism and his discussion of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity illustrate that references to other religions are not incidental explanatory remarks. Rather, they constitute a deliberate stylistic strategy through which Qur'anic monotheism is communicated by engaging conceptual frameworks already familiar to Indonesian readers. Locality, therefore, is negotiated not only through linguistic adaptation but also through dialogical interaction with the religious plurality that characterizes Indonesian society.

This interpretation expands existing discussions on contextual Qur'anic exegesis by highlighting the communicative role of interreligious comparison. Studies of modern tafsīr generally explain contextualization in terms of social reform, political engagement, or cultural adaptation (Saeed, 2006; Pink, 2019). The findings of this study, however, indicate that contextualization also occurs through dialogical exposition. Hamka does not simply acknowledge religious diversity but actively incorporates it into the architecture of his exegetical explanation. Through comparison, Qur'anic concepts become clearer because they are interpreted alongside alternative theological formulations. In this respect, dialogical localization functions as a stylistic strategy that transforms religious plurality from a social reality into a rhetorical resource for explaining revelation.

This finding is consistent with developments in comparative theology. Clooney (2010) argues that comparison with other religious traditions is not intended to weaken one's own theological commitment but rather to deepen religious understanding through disciplined engagement with different traditions. Likewise, Cornille (2013) maintains that constructive interreligious dialogue requires firm commitment to one's own faith while simultaneously cultivating openness, humility, and intellectual hospitality toward other religious communities. Hamka's interpretation reflects this dialogical orientation. His references to Balinese Hinduism and Christianity do not seek to establish theological equivalence, nor are

they presented merely as polemical criticism. Instead, they serve as explanatory comparisons that enable Indonesian readers to understand the distinctive characteristics of Islamic *tawhīd* within a religiously diverse society.

Hamka's dialogical strategy can also be interpreted through discourse theory. Bakhtin (1981) argues that meaning is produced dialogically because every utterance enters into conversation with other voices within a particular cultural context. Similarly, Fairclough (1992) explains that discourse is socially constructed through interactions with competing systems of knowledge and ideology. Viewed from this perspective, Hamka's comparison of Islamic monotheism with *Sang Hyang Widhi* and the Christian Trinity demonstrates that Qur'anic interpretation is developed not in isolation but through engagement with concepts already circulating within Indonesian religious discourse. Dialogue therefore becomes a stylistic mechanism that increases the communicative effectiveness of tafsīr rather than merely functioning as theological controversy.

The effectiveness of this strategy is inseparable from Indonesia's socio-religious landscape. As Hefner (2000) observes, Indonesian Islam has historically evolved through continuous interaction with religious pluralism, local cultures, and democratic public life. Likewise, Azra (2006) emphasizes that Indonesian Muslim intellectual traditions have consistently negotiated Islamic teachings within multicultural social settings instead of isolating themselves from local realities. More recently, Menchik (2016) argues that religious coexistence in Indonesia has been sustained through shared social frameworks that allow different religious communities to participate in a common public sphere despite doctrinal differences. Hamka's exegetical style reflects precisely this historical experience by presenting Qur'anic theology through concepts already familiar within Indonesia's multireligious environment.

This dialogical orientation also distinguishes *Tafsir Al-Azhar* from many earlier polemical traditions. Medieval theological writings frequently approached Judaism and Christianity primarily through apologetic refutation. Hamka, by contrast, employs comparison primarily as a pedagogical strategy. His discussion of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is intended to clarify the Qur'anic conception of divine unity rather than merely to reject Christian belief. Likewise, his reference to *Sang Hyang Widhi* functions as an interpretive bridge that helps Indonesian readers recognize both similarities and theological differences. The emphasis therefore shifts from religious polemics toward communicative explanation, illustrating how locality reshapes the stylistic organization of modern Qur'anic exegesis.

Another implication concerns audience reception. Hamka clearly assumes that his readers possess basic familiarity with Indonesia's religious diversity. His interpretive strategy therefore relies upon shared cultural knowledge rather than exclusively upon internal Islamic terminology. This reader-oriented approach corresponds to contemporary theories of audience-centered communication, in which effective discourse is constructed by connecting new ideas with the audience's existing cognitive and cultural frameworks. Through dialogical localization, Hamka transforms religious diversity into an interpretive resource that enhances the accessibility of Qur'anic teachings without compromising Islamic theological principles.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that dialogical localization constitutes the second dimension of what this study conceptualizes as Local Stylistics of Qur'anic Exegesis. If lexical localization mediates revelation through vernacular language, dialogical localization mediates it through Indonesia's multireligious discursive environment. Consequently, references to Hinduism and Christianity should not be interpreted merely as contextual illustrations but as integral stylistic mechanisms through which Hamka negotiates the universality of the Qur'an within a plural society. This perspective expands previous studies of Indonesian tafsīr by showing that locality is constructed not only through language but also through dialogical engagement with the religious traditions surrounding the interpreter.

D. Historical Localization: Negotiating Indonesian Social Experience

The third dimension of Hamka's stylistic negotiation of locality emerges through what this study conceptualizes as historical localization. Unlike lexical localization, which mediates Qur'anic meaning through vernacular language, and dialogical localization, which employs interreligious comparison as an interpretive strategy, historical localization situates Qur'anic interpretation within Indonesia's collective historical experience. Hamka's discussion of *khamr* (Q. 2:219), in which he relates the prohibition of intoxicants to Dutch colonial policies that promoted alcohol consumption and gambling among indigenous Muslims, demonstrates that historical narratives are incorporated not merely as contextual illustrations but as integral components of his exegetical discourse. Historical experience therefore functions as a stylistic resource that enables Qur'anic teachings to acquire immediate social relevance for Indonesian readers.

This finding expands existing scholarship on contextual tafsīr by demonstrating that history itself can become an interpretive language. Contemporary scholars generally agree that Qur'anic interpretation should engage changing historical realities in order to maintain its relevance (Saeed, 2006, 2013). Likewise, Johanna Pink (2019) argues that modern tafsīr

reflects the social and political circumstances surrounding its production, while Karen Bauer (2022) emphasizes that contemporary Qur'anic interpretation increasingly responds to the lived experiences of Muslim communities across diverse cultural settings. The present findings extend these perspectives by showing that historical experience is not merely the background of interpretation but also one of its stylistic components. Hamka transforms Indonesian colonial memory into an interpretive framework through which readers understand the ethical implications of Qur'anic revelation.

From the perspective of memory studies, Hamka's interpretive strategy illustrates how collective memory contributes to the construction of religious meaning. Jan Assmann (2011) argues that cultural memory enables societies to preserve normative values by embedding them within shared historical narratives. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur (2004) maintains that historical memory is not a passive recollection of past events but an active process through which communities interpret the present and project moral visions for the future. Hamka's reference to colonial Indonesia performs precisely this function. Rather than recounting historical events for their own sake, he mobilizes collective memory to demonstrate the enduring ethical significance of the Qur'anic prohibition of intoxicants. Colonial history thereby becomes a rhetorical mechanism that reinforces Qur'anic moral teaching.

The findings also resonate with historiographical approaches to Islamic intellectual history. According to Marshall G. S. Hodgson (1974), Islamic thought has consistently evolved through interaction with changing historical environments rather than through isolation from social realities. Likewise, Richard C. Martin (2004) argues that Qur'anic interpretation is always embedded within the intellectual and historical contexts of Muslim societies. Hamka's treatment of Dutch colonialism illustrates this adaptive character of tafsīr. Rather than interpreting *khamr* solely through classical legal discussions, he situates the verse within Indonesia's colonial experience, thereby demonstrating how revelation continues to address new historical circumstances without abandoning its normative foundations.

Historical localization also distinguishes *Tafsir Al-Azhar* from many classical commentaries. Classical exegetes naturally interpreted Qur'anic verses through the historical experiences of the early Muslim community, employing *asbāb al-nuzūl*, prophetic traditions, and reports from the Companions as primary historical references (Saleh, 2010; Shah, 2013). Hamka does not reject these classical sources; instead, he complements them by introducing another historical layer derived from Indonesia's modern experience. Dutch colonialism thus becomes an interpretive analogy through which contemporary readers recognize the

continuing relevance of Qur'anic ethical principles. This represents an expansion rather than a rejection of the classical exegetical tradition.

The use of colonial history likewise reflects Hamka's broader intellectual project of integrating Islam with Indonesian national consciousness. Robert W. Hefner (2000) argues that Indonesian Muslim intellectuals have frequently interpreted Islamic teachings through the experiences of colonialism, independence, and nation-building. Similarly, Azyumardi Azra (2006) demonstrates that modern Indonesian Islamic scholarship has consistently sought to harmonize religious commitment with national identity. Hamka's interpretation exemplifies this tendency. His discussion of Dutch colonial practices is not intended merely to reconstruct the past but to illustrate how Qur'anic ethics contribute to the moral formation of an independent Muslim society. Historical localization therefore operates simultaneously as a religious and national discourse.

An equally important implication concerns the persuasive function of historical narrative. Contemporary discourse analysis emphasizes that narratives increase the persuasive power of a text because they connect abstract principles with concrete human experience. By relating the prohibition of intoxicants to recognizable events in Indonesian history, Hamka transforms a universal ethical command into a socially tangible lesson. Readers are therefore invited not only to understand the legal prohibition of *khamr* but also to appreciate its historical consequences for the moral well-being of society. History functions as a rhetorical strategy through which Qur'anic values become experientially meaningful.

Collectively, these findings identify historical localization as the third dimension of Local Stylistics of Qur'anic Exegesis proposed in this study. If lexical localization negotiates revelation through vernacular language and dialogical localization through religious plurality, historical localization negotiates revelation through collective social memory. The incorporation of Indonesian colonial history into the interpretation of Q. 2:219 demonstrates that historical experience is not external to tafsīr but constitutes one of its stylistic resources. This perspective broadens contemporary discussions of Indonesian Qur'anic interpretation by showing that locality is constructed not only through language and dialogue but also through historically shared experiences that shape the moral imagination of Muslim communities. Consequently, Hamka's exegetical style illustrates that the universality of the Qur'an is sustained precisely through its capacity to speak within the historical realities of particular societies.

E. Toward a Theory of Local Stylistics in Qur'anic Exegesis

The preceding discussions demonstrate that Hamka's negotiation of locality in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* cannot be adequately explained through contextual interpretation alone. Rather than functioning merely as a reflection of Indonesia's socio-cultural environment, locality operates through identifiable stylistic mechanisms that organize the presentation of Qur'anic meaning. The findings reveal three interrelated dimensions of this process: lexical localization, dialogical localization, and historical localization. Together, these dimensions form a coherent interpretive framework through which universal revelation is communicated within a specific linguistic, religious, and historical setting. This study therefore argues that locality should be understood not only as the context of Qur'anic interpretation but also as an internal stylistic structure that shapes the discourse of tafsir.

The first dimension, lexical localization, demonstrates that vernacular language functions as an epistemic bridge between Arabic revelation and local linguistic consciousness. Hamka's use of regional expressions such as *Gusti Allah*, *Pangeran*, and *Poang Allah Ta'ala* illustrates that lexical choices are not merely translational equivalents but stylistic devices that facilitate conceptual accessibility while preserving theological precision. This finding extends contextual approaches to Qur'anic interpretation by showing that the negotiation between universality and locality begins at the level of linguistic expression rather than only at the level of legal or theological reasoning. Language therefore becomes the first medium through which revelation is culturally intelligible (Leech & Short, 2007; Saeed, 2013; Pink, 2019).

The second dimension, dialogical localization, demonstrates that locality is also constructed through interaction with the religious diversity surrounding the interpreter. Hamka's comparison between Islamic monotheism, *Sang Hyang Widhi* in Balinese Hinduism, and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity illustrates that interreligious discourse functions as a communicative strategy rather than simply a theological polemic. By engaging concepts already familiar within Indonesia's plural religious landscape, Hamka enhances the explanatory power of Qur'anic discourse without compromising Islamic doctrinal commitments. This finding complements contemporary discussions of comparative theology and dialogical interpretation, which regard engagement with religious plurality as a constructive component of theological understanding rather than a challenge to religious identity (Clooney, 2010; Cornille, 2013; Hefner, 2000).

The third dimension, historical localization, reveals that collective historical experience also functions as a stylistic resource in Qur'anic exegesis. Hamka's interpretation of the prohibition of *khamr* through the historical experience of Dutch colonialism illustrates that social memory is incorporated into exegetical discourse as a persuasive mechanism linking scriptural ethics with concrete historical realities. Rather than treating history as external background information, Hamka integrates Indonesia's collective experience into the explanatory structure of tafsīr itself. Historical narratives therefore become rhetorical instruments that strengthen the social relevance of Qur'anic teachings across changing historical circumstances (Assmann, 2011; Ricoeur, 2004; Azra, 2006).

Taken together, these three dimensions provide the basis for what this study proposes as the Theory of Local Stylistics in Qur'anic Exegesis. Unlike existing approaches that generally conceptualize locality as socio-cultural context, vernacular tradition, or historical background, the present framework argues that locality is embedded within the stylistic organization of the exegetical text. Locality is therefore not external to interpretation but constitutes one of the mechanisms through which interpretation itself is produced. The contribution of this model lies in shifting analytical attention from where tafsīr is written toward how locality is discursively constructed through language, dialogue, and historical narration.

This theoretical formulation also contributes to broader developments in global Qur'anic studies. Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized the plurality of Muslim exegetical traditions across different linguistic and cultural settings (Pink, 2019; Bauer, 2022; Daneshgar, 2020). However, most studies continue to identify local characteristics descriptively without explaining the stylistic processes through which those characteristics shape interpretation. The concept of Local Stylistics addresses this gap by offering an analytical framework capable of examining the internal textual mechanisms through which local experience is transformed into exegetical discourse. Consequently, the framework is not limited to *Tafsir Al-Azhar* but may also be applied comparatively to vernacular Qur'anic commentaries produced in Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and other Muslim societies where revelation is continuously negotiated within diverse linguistic and cultural environments.

Finally, the proposed framework carries broader methodological implications for future Qur'anic studies. Rather than approaching locality solely through historical contextualization or sociological description, future research may investigate the stylistic

organization of exegetical texts by examining how linguistic selection, dialogical interaction, historical narration, metaphor, symbolism, and rhetorical structure collectively participate in constructing Qur'anic meaning. Such an approach enables scholars to understand locality not as a peripheral characteristic of regional tafsīr but as a fundamental interpretive mechanism through which the universality of the Qur'an remains communicatively effective across diverse Muslim communities. In this sense, Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* represents not merely an Indonesian commentary but an important example of how universal revelation is continually rearticulated through the stylistic resources of local intellectual traditions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that locality in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* is not merely a socio-cultural background of interpretation but functions as a deliberate stylistic strategy through which Hamka negotiates the universality of the Qur'anic message within the Indonesian context. The analysis identifies three interrelated dimensions of this negotiation. First, lexical localization employs vernacular expressions to bridge Arabic Qur'anic concepts with Indonesia's multilingual linguistic landscape, making revelation more communicative without diminishing its theological authority. Second, dialogical localization incorporates interreligious comparisons as an explanatory strategy, allowing Qur'anic monotheism to be articulated within Indonesia's plural religious environment. Third, historical localization situates Qur'anic interpretation within Indonesia's collective historical experience, demonstrating how social memory and national history strengthen the contemporary relevance of Qur'anic ethics. Together, these findings reveal that Hamka's exegetical discourse systematically negotiates revelation through language, dialogue, and history, thereby transforming locality into an intrinsic component of Qur'anic interpretation rather than an external contextual element.

The principal scientific contribution of this study lies in the formulation of Local Stylistics of Qur'anic Exegesis as a new analytical framework for examining the interaction between revelation and locality. Existing scholarship has generally approached locality as a matter of historical context, vernacular tradition, or sociocultural adaptation. In contrast, this study argues that locality should also be understood as an internal stylistic structure that shapes the construction of exegetical discourse itself. By identifying lexical, dialogical, and historical localization as three complementary dimensions of stylistic mediation, this research extends contemporary discussions on contextual Qur'anic interpretation and offers a conceptual model that is potentially applicable beyond *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. The proposed

framework contributes to global Qur'anic studies by providing a systematic approach for analysing how universal Qur'anic teachings are communicated through diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and historical settings while maintaining their theological coherence.

Despite these contributions, this study is limited to a qualitative textual analysis of selected passages in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* that explicitly demonstrate Hamka's negotiation of locality. Consequently, the proposed framework has not yet been comparatively examined across other Indonesian or non-Indonesian vernacular tafsīr traditions, nor has it been tested through reader reception or discourse-based approaches. Future studies may therefore apply the concept of Local Stylistics of Qur'anic Exegesis to comparative analyses of regional Qur'anic commentaries from Southeast Asia, Africa, South Asia, and other Muslim societies in order to evaluate its broader analytical applicability. Further research integrating stylistics with discourse analysis, reception studies, digital humanities, or corpus linguistics would also enrich understanding of how local intellectual traditions continue to shape the communication of Qur'anic meanings in contemporary Muslim communities.

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