

# Modern Linguistic and Rhetorical Studies in the Light of Knowledge Integration Among Algerian Scholars: Sheikh Atfayesh as a Model

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Submitted: 04/09/2024

Accepted: 22/11/2024

Published: 10/12/2024

## Abstract:

My presentation, titled "*Modern Linguistic and Rhetorical Studies in the Light of Knowledge Integration Among Algerian Scholars - Sheikh Atfayesh as a Model*", aims to examine modern linguistic and rhetorical studies by focusing on a scholar who made significant contributions to the fields of jurisprudence, principles of Islamic law, and linguistics. This study highlights the distinguished scholar Sheikh Atfayesh of Algeria and his contributions to modern linguistic and rhetorical studies through his book "*Takhlees Al-Aani Min Ribqat Jahl Al-Ma'ani*" (*Liberation of the Seeker from the Chains of Ignorance about Meanings*). The research seeks to understand the depth, analysis, and investigative approach of Sheikh Atfayesh in modern rhetorical studies, his insights into rhetorical issues and matters, and the manifestations of methodological and epistemological integration in his work.

**Keywords:** Language - Rhetoric - Integration - Knowledge

## Introduction:

Praise be to Allah, who taught the Qur'an, created humanity, and bestowed upon them the gift of eloquence. Peace and blessings be upon the most eloquent of all creation and the most articulate in speech, Prophet Muhammad, his family, companions, and those who follow his guidance until the Day of Judgment.

The virtue of knowledge lies in Allah's praise of scholars, as He states: "*Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge*" [Qur'an 35:28] «إنما يخشى الله من عباده العلماء».

This verse restricts true reverence of Allah to those with knowledge, highlighting that the more a person understands Allah's greatness, His encompassing knowledge, His power, and His sovereignty—contrasted with human weakness and frailty—the more their reverence and glorification of Allah increase. Allah further linked His testimony and the testimony of His angels to that of scholars, as He says: "*Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge—[that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice*" [Qur'an 3:18] «شهد الله أنه لا إله إلا هو والملائكة وأولو العلم قائما بالقسط».

Knowledge is a light that Allah casts into the heart of whomever He wills among His servants. Scholars hold a high status and elevated rank among people. They are the inheritors of the prophets, guiding humanity in both their religious and worldly matters. Their esteemed position is further emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad's statement: *"The superiority of a scholar over a worshiper is like my superiority over the least among you."*

Moreover, Allah and His creation send blessings upon scholars. As mentioned in the hadith: *"Indeed, Allah, His angels, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, even the ant in its hole and the fish in the sea, send blessings upon those who teach people goodness."*

Addressing the contributions of Algerian scholars and shedding light on their contributions to various fields is a significant undertaking that demands intellectual effort and diligence. Among these scholars is the distinguished Sheikh Atfayesh, may Allah have mercy on him, whose legacy remains a valuable treasure worthy of attention.

This research paper seeks to uncover an aspect of linguistic and rhetorical studies in Algeria, utilizing the principles of methodological and epistemological integration in analyzing and commenting on various literary and non-literary texts. We have selected Sheikh Atfayesh as a model for this study, as his work clearly embodies the concept of integration. This paper specifically examines his contributions to modern rhetorical studies, focusing on his book *"Takhlees Al-Aani Min Ribqat Jahl Al-Ma'ani"* (*Liberation of the Seeker from the Chains of Ignorance about Meanings*), due to its linguistic and rhetorical significance and the evident integration in its approach.

## **Introduction to Sheikh Atfayesh (1)**

### **Lineage and Birth:**

Known as "Qutb Al-A'immah" (Pole of the Scholars), his full name is Muḥammad bin Yūsuf Aṭfayesh bin Yūsuf bin 'Īsā bin Ṣāliḥ bin 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin 'Īsā bin Ismā'īl bin Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Bakīr al-Ḥafṣī, Aṭfayesh. He is regarded as the most renowned Ibadi scholar in the Maghreb during the modern era. He was born in Ghardaia in the year 1236 AH / 1820 CE.

### **Education:**

He memorized the Qur'an by the age of eight and began studying various disciplines, such as grammar, morphology, logic, and jurisprudence, under numerous scholars who conducted lessons in mosques and their homes, which served as centers of knowledge throughout the M'zab region. Among his prominent teachers were:

- Ibrahim bin Yusuf Atfayesh
- Saeed bin Yusuf Wenten
- Omar bin Suleiman Nuh
- The family of Sheikh Suleiman bin Isa

Then he relied on himself to deepen his knowledge, demonstrating true self-reliance, a sincere commitment to seeking knowledge, and diligent effort in acquiring it. He earnestly read books, tirelessly sought, procured, purchased, and copied them from various places, even if the distances were great. Through this, he amassed a large and rich library, which was unique in the region during that era.

### **Teaching**

He began teaching the children of Muslims at an institute he established in his own home when he was only sixteen years old. His vast knowledge, ability to keep pace with his era, and dedication to his formative reform mission made him remarkably qualified for this significant role. By the time he reached twenty years old, his reputation had spread throughout the M'zab Valley, earning him recognition as the scholar of the entire region. In his maturity, he reached the rank of *ijtihād* (independent reasoning), and dozens of scholars graduated under his guidance, leading the nation and elevating the banner of knowledge in and beyond the M'zab Valley.

### **His Writings**

Sheikh Atfayesh was a prolific writer with a gifted pen. He authored over 100 books, leaving behind an invaluable scientific legacy. This includes an extensive and esteemed library that remains a source of pride for the M'zab Valley to this day. His works span a wide array of disciplines, including exegesis, jurisprudence, theology, language, grammar, rhetoric, morphology, and prosody. Some notable examples include *Takhlees Al-Aani Min Ribqat Jahl Al-Ma'ani* (*Liberation of the Seeker from the Chains of Ignorance about Meanings*) and *Rabee' Al-Badee' Fi 'Ilm Al-Badee'* (*The Spring of Eloquence in the Science of Rhetoric*).

### **His Death**

Sheikh Atfayesh passed away in his hometown of Bani Yezgen on Saturday, the 23rd of Rabi' al-Thani 1332 AH (March 1914 CE). May Allah have mercy on him.

### **About the Manuscript Under Study: *Takhlees Al-Aani Min Ribqat Jahl Al-Ma'ani***

This book was authored by Sheikh Muḥammad bin Yūsuf Atfayesh as a manuscript and later edited by Professor Muhammad Zamri. It was published in its first edition in 2009 by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture in the Sultanate of Oman. The book consists of approximately 500 medium-sized pages. Its subject matter explores language and rhetoric with a rigorous methodology, reflecting the author's originality, encyclopedic knowledge, and understanding of various levels of comprehension—from instructional and explanatory to analytical and inferential.

The book addresses a wide range of topics, including:

- Eloquence of words

- The topic of dissonance
- The two pillars of attribution and related matters
- Eloquence of speech
- Weakness in composition
- Ambiguity and redundancy
- Eloquence of the speaker
- The concept of news: truth and falsehood
- The benefit of information and its implications
- Addressing different types of listeners (neutral, hesitant, or denying)
- Literal and figurative language (rational metaphor and transferred metaphor)
- Denial of rational metaphor by Al-Sakkaki
- Topics of omission and inclusion
- Precedence and delay
- Definition and indefiniteness
- Separation and conjunction
- Address, command, and prohibition
- Exclusivity
- Conciseness, balance, and elaboration

The book represents an in-depth and organized approach to rhetoric, showcasing Sheikh Atfayesh's profound insights and methodical analysis.

### **Rhetorical Studies by Sheikh Atfayesh**

The rhetorical study is concerned with the principles that govern the nature of speech, including its aesthetic expression, methods of delivery, and laws governing its structure. This encompasses the disciplines of *Ilm al-Ma'ani* (the science of meanings), which deals with declarative and imperative sentences and their relation to the audience and context; *Ilm al-Bayan* (the science of elucidation), which explores how meanings are conveyed with varying clarity and impact; and *Ilm al-Badi'* (the science of embellishment), which focuses on complementary improvements to speech, including verbal and conceptual ornamentation. These fields collectively study words, sentences, expressions, context, text harmony, and even the musicality of the text. The focus of rhetoric is the crafted text, examining its expressive and conceptual values.

In linguistic convention (2), *balagha* (rhetoric) means "reaching or attaining something." From this, the term *balagha* was derived to describe eloquence, as it enables the articulate speaker to achieve their communicative goals. Terminologically (3), it is defined as the alignment of eloquent speech with the requirements of the context or as the delivery of meaning to the heart in the most excellent form of expression (4).

Sheikh Atfayesh's rhetorical prowess, evident through his works, especially *Takhlees Al-Aani Min Ribqat Jahl Al-Ma'ani* (*Liberation of the Seeker from the Chains of Ignorance about Meanings*) and *Rabee' Al-Badee' Fi 'Ilm Al-Badee'* (*The Spring of Eloquence in the Science of Rhetoric*), reflects his deep understanding of the artistic and semantic objectives of rhetoric. His approach demonstrates an integrative perspective, requiring mastery of procedural tools and analytical methodologies to uncover the semantic and aesthetic treasures embedded in texts.

Sheikh Atfayesh prioritized structure, focusing on the correctness of composition and syntactic cohesion. He then examined the semantic aspect, offering insights into the validity of constructs in terms of meaning, their alignment with general taste, and their relevance to the context in which they appear. Sheikh Atfayesh recognized that rhetoric aims to enhance the appreciation of texts in ways that serve their subject matter, illuminate their meaning, and delve deeply into their rhetorical and linguistic nuances. This reveals the beauty of eloquent speech and rhetorical expression.

For Sheikh Atfayesh, rhetoric was not merely a set of abstract rules fostering standardization and independence but an artistic craft when viewed through its literature and a system of principles when considered in its fundamentals. It collaborates with other disciplines to refine taste, nurture emotions, and develop the artistic sensibilities of the audience. It highlights the beauty, artistic value, and creativity of texts while enabling the comparison of different expressions and writers.

Thus, rhetoric for Sheikh Atfayesh is not separate from syntax, meaning, or semantics. It fulfills a dual purpose: artistic and aesthetic enjoyment, alongside the practical function of effective communication and the conveyance of ideas (5).

### **Manifestations of Integration in Sheikh Atfayesh's Approach**

The integrative methodology is based on presenting information holistically or utilizing all methodologies and procedural tools in studying linguistic phenomena, analyzing literary texts, or delving into aspects of Qur'anic inimitability if the text under study is the Qur'an. It rejects fragmenting a singular subject matter and emphasizes the integration of knowledge and the unity of science, removing barriers between the branches of a single discipline. This is because dividing knowledge into isolated segments is impractical in real-life applications. The integrative method, therefore, focuses on eliminating traditional boundaries between fields of knowledge and their subdivisions.

When examining topics in Sheikh Atfayesh's works, one notices the presentation of knowledge in a functional pattern with concepts that are interconnected and layered. These concepts

comprehensively cover the diverse topics under discussion, without fragmentation or division—a feature not commonly observed in the works of modern authors on rhetoric, based on our review.

## **Key Features of Integration in Sheikh Atfayesh's Work**

### **1. Methodological Feature Through Studied Topics**

In Sheikh Atfayesh's book *Takhlees Al-Aani Min Ribqat Jahl Al-Ma'ani*, one immediately notices the integration between syntax and rhetoric in the listed topics. For instance, he includes several syntactic topics such as:

- Attribution (Isnad),
- Subject and predicate (Musnad and Musnad Ilayh),
- Vocative expressions (Nida),
- Prohibition (Nahy),
- Commands (Amr),
- Interrogatives (Istifham),
- Weakness in composition (Du'f al-Tarkib),
- Syntactic complexity (Ta'qid Nahwi),
- Object (Maf'ul bihi),
- Specification (Tamyeez),  
and many others.

These topics, which are typically categorized under syntactic studies in other works, are seamlessly incorporated into Sheikh Atfayesh's rhetorical analysis.

### **2. The Syntactic Feature**

At the outset of his book, Sheikh Atfayesh emphasizes the necessity of syntactic correctness in composition. He states:

*"No one can compose eloquent speech who does not first master composing grammatically correct speech in absolute syntax."* (6)

Here, Sheikh Atfayesh highlights the significance of syntactic correctness, which falls within the domain of syntax and relates to coherence and stylistic excellence in speech.

Upon analyzing his discourse, it becomes clear that Sheikh Atfayesh advocates for focusing on the structure rather than isolated words (7). Studying syntactic structure requires researchers to begin with individual components (words) and then examine the composition as a whole, since structure arises from the combination of individual words. He argues:

*"A single word has no value in isolation; its value emerges when it is combined with other*

words, revealing the interrelations between them. This is evident from the principle that if one claims that the words of language were established solely to indicate their inherent meanings, it would lead to conclusions that no rational person could accept as plausible."(8)

For example, when Sheikh Atfayesh discusses the topic of weak composition, he states: "Weak composition refers to incomplete structure. Composition is broader, as it entails joining words with some degree of harmony, however weak. Generally, composition is the act of combining words or assembling more than two words in a way that forms a coherent unit, even if complete harmony is not achieved."

This explanation reflects his meticulous attention to the nuances of syntactic relationships and their implications for effective communication (9).

Language is described as "a set of dynamic, growing relationships, not merely an assembly of words without interconnection. These relationships emerge through craftsmanship aided by thought, reflection, and taste." (10) This process transforms language "from the realm of spontaneity to the stage of creative awareness, (11)" which "cannot be confined to individual structures but must transcend to the realm of composition (12)," moving from (linguistic ability) to (creative potential).

This results in the various ways of structuring speech, where there is no separation between words and their meanings, nor between form and content, or between shape and substance (13).

Syntactic commentary plays a crucial role in textual and semantic cohesion at the structural level, utilizing its dense semantic capabilities. Structurally, referential elements (such as pronouns or antecedents) serve a functional role, while the flexibility of positional freedom allows for significant textual interplay between the smaller structures of a text.

For example, Sheikh Atfayesh states:

"According to the Basri grammarians, instances of exact apposition include phrases like: ضربتك (I hit you yourself), ضربته اياه (I hit him himself), مررت بك أنت (I passed by you yourself), وقمت أنت (you yourself stood up), and إنك أنت قائم (you are indeed the one standing). However, in my view, these are forms of emphasis, akin to verbal emphasis, as per the Kufian school."(14)

### Morphological Feature

Often, Sheikh Atfayesh provides detailed or concise parsing of examples and references, recognizing the importance of syntax in revealing the intended meaning. For instance, in his explanation of *kamasraj* in the verse by Al-Ajaj:

أزمان أبدت واضحا مفلجا  
أغر براقا وطرفا أبرجا  
ومقلة وحاجبا مزججا  
(15) وفاحما ومرسنا مسرجا

He explains:

"*Azmān*: A circumstantial accusative related to what precedes it, connected to the clause that follows it."\*

### Lexical Feature

In most of the topics Sheikh Atfayesh discusses in his book, he meticulously explains the vocabulary used in examples or references, reflecting his encyclopedic knowledge. For instance:

- In the verse:

أودى فلا تنفع الإشاحة من  
أمر لمن قد يحاول البدعا

He explains:

"*أودى*" means *perished*. "*الإشاحة*" means *caution*. By "*البدع*," he refers to *strange matters*, and "*النجدة*" implies *courage*. (16)

- In the line:

ومهمه مغبرة أرجاؤه  
كان لون أرضه سماؤه

He elaborates:

"*المهمه*" refers to *land without water or vegetation*, also called a "*مفازة*" (*desert*), which is a term of opposites.(17)

- Regarding the name *Imru' Al-Qays*, he explains:  
"*Imru' Al-Qays*" means "*the man of Qays*" or "*a man from the Qays tribe*," which was his title. The word "*Imru*" has a hamzat wasl. However, the correct interpretation is that "*Qays*" means *hardship*, so the name signifies "*the man of hardship and strength*," as a form of optimism. Others have said that "*Qays*" refers to the body. (18)

Sheikh Atfayesh's work demonstrates his deep commitment to uncovering the linguistic, syntactic, and semantic depths of texts. His detailed approach to language, including grammar, composition, and lexicon, reflects his comprehensive and integrative methodology, revealing his unparalleled contribution to the study of language and rhetoric.

### Genealogical Insight

Sheikh Atfayesh was a scholar deeply versed in the science of genealogy. This is evident in his frequent references to notable figures, poets, and writers in his works. For instance, when citing a verse by the poet Al-Farazdaq, he wrote:

"*Al-Farazdaq* is *Hammad ibn Ghalib ibn Sa'sa'ah ibn Isma'il*, nicknamed *Al-Mughira Al-Makhzumi*, from the *Banu Makhzum* clan. They are a tribe from *Quraysh*, to which some Arabs,

*Warjalan, and Berbers in our lands, among others, are affiliated. Among the Makhadimah (a term used incorrectly to refer to them as 'Makhadmi' in singular with a neglected dal, which is an error), the correct term is 'Makhazimah' with a zay, as Makhzumi refers to the Banu Makhzum. Alternatively, one may say 'Makhazim' instead of the waw, akin to talamidhah and talamidh (students)."*

### **Semantic Insight**

Semantics, one of the levels of Arabic language analysis, involves the study of meaning. This includes analyzing sentences and linguistic texts by examining word meanings and uncovering semantic relationships between them.

The purpose of semantics is to explore the relationship between words and meanings, uncovering both explicit and implicit connotations, as well as the semantic relationships between Arabic words, such as synonymy, polysemy, and antonymy.

Sheikh Atfayesh demonstrated a clear understanding of both general and specific meanings, focusing on the semantic significance of individual words and their meanings within specific or broader structures. He states:

*"Some have said that the true indicator is only the word itself, and associating meaning with the intellect is permissible since it is the instrument of understanding meaning." (19)*

### **Phonetic Insight**

Phonetics focuses on the study of linguistic sounds, including their articulation, characteristics, and pronunciation. This level examines words based on their phonetic structure. (20)

Sheikh Atfayesh initiated his phonetic analysis of structures in the section on dissonance in words. He listed whispered and voiced letters, along with their distinguishing features, a modern approach in rhetorical studies. He wrote:

*"The whispered letters are ten, grouped in the phrase hatha shakhsun sakat ('he urged a person to be silent'). Whispered letters are soft because their articulation lacks strong reliance. The zay (ﺯ) is a voiced letter, among the harsh letters, grouped in the phrase ajdaka qatat ('you knitted sternly'), while the soft ones are the rest. Some letters are intermediate between the harsh and soft."(21)*

### **Aesthetic Insight**

The aesthetic aspect is frequently evident in Sheikh Atfayesh's work. It is reflected in his detailed, insightful, and beautiful analyses and interpretations of various examples. This aesthetic sensibility is manifested through his ability to derive rhetorical and imaginative imagery from texts.

### **Philosophical Insight**

Occasionally, Sheikh Atfayesh delves into philosophical or theological aspects when discussing the opinions of others on certain phenomena and issues related to creation, nature, and reason.

For instance, he writes (22):

*"There is a disagreement about whether animals, angels, or all created beings perish, or if the mountains must necessarily vanish. Is time a real entity? Philosophers have affirmed this."*

He further states:

*"Certainty is the mind's submission to the occurrence of a complete relationship between two things. Submission and assent, according to logicians, entail perceiving this relationship as existing or non-existing. Perception of any other elements, such as the subject, predicate, and the relationship forming the basis of affirmation or negation, is conceptualization."*

Sheikh Atfayesh's multidimensional approach highlights his ability to integrate linguistics, rhetoric, semantics, phonetics, aesthetics, and even philosophical thought into his scholarly works, reflecting his profound and holistic understanding of language and knowledge (23).

### **Traditional Aspect:**

Sheikh Atfayesh often employs methods drawn from the approaches of earlier scholars such as Abdul Qahir Al-Jurjani (d. 471 AH) and Al-Jahiz (d. 255 AH). One notable example is his use of the verb "*wa'lam*" (know) at the beginning of sections in his texts. This reflects a scholarly and elevated tone, conveying an educational and instructional purpose. For instance, he states:

*"Know that your statement 'Lam yaqom insan' (no person stood) is a negative indeterminate, containing no specification..."(24)*

### **Doctrinal Aspect:**

The doctrinal aspect refers to faith-based elements, reflecting an individual's religious beliefs.

Sheikh Atfayesh's writings frequently include doctrinal allusions that reveal his faith and theological stance. For example, he states:

*"It appears that the pre-Islamic Arabs were not materialists but rather attributed matters to Allah, exalted is He. This is a presumption based on knowledge and assumption, not doubt."(25)*

### **Jurisprudential Aspect:**

In *Takhlees Al-Aani Min Ribqat Jahl Al-Ma'ani*, Sheikh Atfayesh integrates numerous jurisprudential issues, presented concisely and precisely. These insights highlight his jurisprudential preferences with a scientific rigor, avoiding any claims of absolute certainty. Frequently, he concludes his discussions with the phrase "*Wallahu A'lam*" (And Allah knows best). For example, he states:

*"Ibn Hajar explained that if the blood money were a quarter of a dinar, crimes against life would*

*multiply; and if the threshold for theft punishment were five hundred, crimes against wealth would increase. Thus, wisdom is evident in both cases."*(26)

### **Conclusion:**

After this enjoyable journey through the thought and rhetorical methodology of Sheikh Atfayesh, we summarize the main findings of this study:

1. Sheikh Atfayesh is among Algeria's notable scholars who made significant contributions to linguistic studies.
2. His works and research lean toward an integrative approach, utilizing all methodologies and procedural tools to address various aspects of study comprehensively.
3. Unlike his contemporaries, Sheikh Atfayesh's rhetorical studies were not merely pedagogical; they were scientific, thoroughly examining rhetorical phenomena from all angles.
4. He often includes his opinions on the studied phenomena, frequently stating: "*It appears to me,*" "*In my view,*" "*I say,*" or "*My opinion is...*"
5. Sheikh Atfayesh addressed all levels of language in his rhetorical analyses.
6. His works, particularly *Takhlees Al-Aani Min Ribqat Jahl Al-Ma'ani* and *Rabee' Al-Badee' Fi 'Ilm Al-Badee'*, reveal his understanding of the artistic and semantic purposes of rhetoric, reflecting his integrative approach to rhetorical studies.
7. Sheikh Atfayesh possessed extensive knowledge of genealogy, as evident in his frequent references to notable figures, poets, and writers—a feature rarely found in other rhetorical works within the scope of our research.

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